EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP:
APPRECIATIVE LEADERSHIP WITHIN BC COMMUNITY COLLEGES

by

THOMAS WEEGAR

B.A., University of Victoria, 1987
M.E.S., York University, 1991

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ABSTRACT

This study explores Appreciative Leadership as it is being practiced by college educational leaders in British Columbia. Appreciative Leadership in education is a unique, strength-based approach to leadership which focuses continually on capacity-building and seeing possibilities and opportunities. Appreciative Leadership in education is, I argue, an approach that could help address the leadership “skills shortages” and the challenges facing BC colleges in the twenty-first century.

Conceptually, the research is informed by a social constructivist approach to educational leadership and how leadership is an area of practice distinct from management. The notion of Appreciative Leadership, a relatively new and emerging concept in relation to educational discourse, is carefully considered in relation to the larger conversation about educational leadership and conceptions of power. Appreciative Leadership, Appreciative Intelligence, and the Five Core Strategies of Appreciative Leadership are central elements of this study.

This study involved three stages: 1) a pilot study of my survey instrument among three community college educational leaders; 2) a questionnaire sent to 25 BC community college leaders (Deans, Vice-Presidents – Education [or Academic], Associate Vice-Presidents, Education, and Presidents); and 3) follow-up interviews with a select number of survey respondents where further explorations about the practices of Appreciative Leadership and shared leadership were discussed.

The study developed three empirical assertions about Appreciative Leadership in education based on an analysis of the data. First, Appreciative Leadership in education is a gendered practice that requires an exercise of power-with rather than power-over others. Second, Appreciative Leadership in education requires that leaders imagine and create opportunities and are adept at reframing issues in this way. Third, Appreciative Leadership in education requires a productive, creative engagement with conflict (as opposed to avoiding conflict entirely or trying to “placate” it through rationalistic conflict-resolution strategies).
This research contributes to the emerging theory around Appreciative Leadership and specifically for educational contexts.
PREFACE

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of the author, Tom Weegar, and was undertaken under the supervision of principal investigator Dr. Shauna Butterwick of the University of British Columbia (Faculty of Educational Studies). The fieldwork reported in Chapters 3-5 was covered by the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board number H11-01092.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ................................................................................................................................................... ii
Preface ...................................................................................................................................................... iv
Table of Contents ..................................................................................................................................... v
List of Tables .......................................................................................................................................... viii
List of Figures .......................................................................................................................................... ix
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................................... x
Dedication ............................................................................................................................................... xii

Chapter 1  Rationale for Appreciative Leadership Research .............................................................. 1
  Research Opportunity ........................................................................................................................... 5
  Research Questions ............................................................................................................................. 10
  Locating the Researcher ....................................................................................................................... 11
  My Personal Philosophy ..................................................................................................................... 11
  Significance of Research ..................................................................................................................... 12

Chapter 2  Literature Review of Leadership and Appreciative Leadership ........................................... 15
  Definitions of Leadership and Management ....................................................................................... 15
  Exploring Educational Leadership within the Context of Leadership .............................................. 18
    Educational Leadership ..................................................................................................................... 18
    General Leadership and Educational Leadership ........................................................................... 21
    Definition of Shared Leadership ...................................................................................................... 26
    Shared Leadership and Conceptions of Power ............................................................................... 29
    Appreciative Leadership ................................................................................................................. 31
    Philosophical Foundations of Appreciative Leadership ............................................................... 37
    Appreciative Leadership’s Parallels to Education Leadership ....................................................... 42
    Critique of Appreciative Leadership around Notions of Power .................................................... 44
  Chapter Summary ............................................................................................................................... 47
Chapter 3  Research Methodology .............................................................. 48
  Qualitative Analysis .................................................................................. 48
  Sampling Procedure and Generalizability .................................................. 50
Three-Stage Inquiry Approach .................................................................. 54
  Stage 1 – Piloting of Appreciative Leadership Questionnaire .................... 54
  Stage 2 – Appreciative Leadership Questionnaire ....................................... 55
    Questionnaire Construction ....................................................................... 56
    Questionnaire Response ........................................................................... 59
  Data Analysis Methodology – Stage 2 ......................................................... 60
  Stage 3 – Appreciative Leadership Interviews ........................................... 64
    Interview Sampling Strategy ..................................................................... 64
    Interview Methodology ............................................................................ 64
  Research Reliability and Trustworthiness .................................................... 66
  A Caution on the Use of Data in this Study ................................................ 71
  Chapter Summary ..................................................................................... 72

Chapter 4  Findings from Stage Two Questionnaire ..................................... 74
  Themes Arising from Questionnaire Data .................................................. 77
    Productive Use of Conflict ....................................................................... 77
    Recognition of Shared Values and the “Delicate Interplay of Where Value Sets are in Dissonance ................................................................. 78
    Soulful Listening ....................................................................................... 79
    Shared Leadership and Creating a Leaderful Organization ....................... 80
    Support through Mentorship and Coaching ............................................. 81
    Use of Power and Criticism Judiciously .................................................... 81
    Evidence-Based Decision-Making ........................................................... 83
    Creating Opportunities for Creative Thinking ......................................... 83
    Debate and Discourse (and Consultation and Collaboration) .................... 83
    Student-Centred ...................................................................................... 84
View People from a Strengths-Based Perspective ........................................ 84

Chapter Summary .......................................................................................... 85

Chapter 5  Appreciative Leadership in Community College Leaders:
Three Empirical Assertions ............................................................................. 86

Empirical Assertion #1 – Appreciative Leadership in Education
is a Gendered Practice that Requires an Exercise of Power-with
rather than Power-over Others ........................................................................ 87

Empirical Assertion #2 – Appreciative Leadership in Education
Requires that Leaders take a Strength-based Approach to Imagine
and Create Opportunities and are Adept at Reframing Issues in this Way .......... 103

Empirical Assertion #3 – Appreciative Leadership in Education
Requires a Productive, Creative Engagement with Conflict ............................. 114

Chapter Summary .......................................................................................... 121

Chapter 6  Conclusion ...................................................................................... 122

Findings Related to Research Questions .......................................................... 123

Appreciative Leadership and Issues of
Power, Criticality, and Power Inequality .......................................................... 129

Chapter Summary .......................................................................................... 131

Limitations of Research ................................................................................... 132

Further Research .............................................................................................. 133

Personal Reflections on My Leadership Practice ............................................. 134

Concluding Statement ...................................................................................... 135

References ........................................................................................................ 136

Appendix A – Preliminary Themes from Questionnaire Research ......................... 147

Appendix B – Survey Questions ........................................................................ 151

Appendix C – Interview Questions and Coding Sheet ......................................... 156

Appendix D – Invitation to Participate Letter ..................................................... 161

Appendix E – Consent Form to Participate in Interview ....................................... 164

Appendix F – List of Research Participants and their Pseudonyms ....................... 168

Appendix G – Example of a Questionnaire Coding Sheet ................................... 170

vii
### LIST OF TABLES

| Table 1 | Distinguishing Leadership from Management | 17 |
| Table 2 | Aspects or Dispositions of Appreciative Intelligence | 34 |
| Table 3 | Five Core Strategies of Appreciative Leadership | 37 |
| Table 4 | Five Principles of Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership | 38 |
| Table 5 | Aspects of Appreciative Leadership Demonstrated by Questionnaire Respondents | 75 |
| Table 6 | Shared Leadership Survey Question | 124 |
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1  Increased Focus of Appreciative Leadership ........................................ 18
Figure 2  The Revolution in Leadership Research .................................................. 42
Figure 3  Appreciative Leadership Research Process ............................................. 70
Figure 4  Appreciative Leadership is a Gendered Practice ...................................... 88
Figure 5  Features of Collaboration ........................................................................ 92
Figure 6  Appreciative Leaders take a Strength-Based Approach .......................... 105
Figure 7  Appreciative Leadership Requires a Productive, Creative Engagement with Conflict ......................................................... 115
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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER 1 – RATIONALE FOR APPRECIATIVE LEADERSHIP RESEARCH

This first chapter is intended to give the reader a broad overview of both the research on Appreciative Leadership and who I am as a researcher. First, I discuss the rationale and the need for research on Appreciative Leadership in education. Next, I discuss the research opportunity of this study followed by my research questions, a section on locating the research, and a brief discussion on my personal philosophy. The final section of this chapter will deal with the significance of the research.

Leadership in community colleges is becoming a critical issue for many institutions. The reasons leadership is becoming a critical issue are varied and diverse and include the need for new leadership (as a result of impending retirements and the “skills shortage”), increasing demands on community colleges by society, greater expectations by faculty and staff of being involved in decision-making, and the need to harness the “human capital” within faculty and staff to address these important concerns.

As colleges enter periods of rapid technological change, dwindling resources, and increased demands in terms of training and community development (e.g., to meet the training needs of community businesses and industries in terms of their “skills shortages”), strong, visionary, educational leadership will often determine the degree to which colleges can accomplish the many demands facing them. Stewart (2006) emphasized this point by explaining that “leading and managing effective schools to respond to increasingly complex demands of society will require the knowledge and technical skills of committed and competent leaders” (p. 3). While Stewart’s comments were made in regard to public schools, they also apply to public community colleges. In fact, when looking at leadership generally, Fullan (2001) asserted that effective leadership is in short supply. As a result, he believed there will be a number of “leadership development initiatives dominating the scene over the next decade” (2001, p. xii).

Shults (2001) emphasized the need for educational leadership in community colleges: “Community colleges are facing an impending leadership crisis. College presidents, senior administrators, and faculty leaders have been retiring at an alarming rate – a trend
that is expected to continue as baby boomers age” (p. 1). As a result, for community colleges, a period of increased growth and organizational diversification (along with the challenge of meeting increasingly diversified and multicultural global learning needs) means that leadership is becoming even more challenging due to unprecedented administrative turnover. Furthermore, Shults explained in the American Association of Community Colleges 2001 online survey, “community college presidents indicated their belief that future presidents will need an even more entrepreneurial spirit, a greater command of technology, and a more adaptive approach than presidents need today” (2001, p. 1). These educational leadership demands on community colleges point to the need for exceptional leadership throughout the system.

This study explores what this exceptional leadership might look like, and it does so by exploring a new and emerging form of leadership within community college leaders called Appreciative Leadership. The study suggests that Appreciative Leadership, by focusing on shared leadership and a strong sense of collegiality with co-workers, offers a new form of excellence in educational leadership.

In discussing leadership generally, Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, and Rader (2010) asserted there are currently four important trends defining communities and organizations in the twenty-first century:

1. *New generations have come of age.* Younger people expect different things from work, from community, and from leadership than the generations that preceded them. Today, people want to be engaged and be heard. They want to be involved in the decisions that affect them and to be acknowledged for a job well done.

2. *Diversity is the norm.* Organizations and communities are no longer homogenous. Whether local or global, small town or corporate, they are composed of people with a wide variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, or differing ages and preferences. Speaking many languages and sharing many different histories, people in today’s organizations want leadership to be collaborative and just.

3. *Institutions are being reinvented.* The context of leadership is no longer stable or predictable. In all sectors of industry and society, institutions have failed and are being reimagined and redesigned. These new institutions are more fluid and more agile. In them, distributed leadership and power emerges as people self-organize to meet the needs of the whole.
4. Holistic, sustainable approaches are essential. Today’s decisions will cast the die for generations to come. The most pressing social, economic, environmental, and political challenges of our time are global in nature. They cannot be resolved by one person, one country, or one business. They require unprecedented appreciation of differences and collaboration. In short, they call for Appreciative Leadership. (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Rader, 2010, pp. 2-3)

Based on my 16 years working as an educational leader within community colleges in British Columbia and Minnesota, I attest that many of these changes are also impacting community colleges. For example, as senior faculty retire and younger faculty come into the community college system, the new, younger faculty often have greater expectations of being involved in the decision-making of the college. As Raelin (2003) attested, many new faculty expectations around change management are that “everyone has to be involved in leadership; everyone has to take part in the change” (p. 25). Within community colleges, many faculty are developing expectations where there is a need to “establish communities where everyone shares the experience of serving as a leader, not serially, but concurrently and collectively” (Raelin, 2003, p. 5).

Furthermore, my experience in community college leadership over the years has demonstrated that community colleges are increasingly being required to be more entrepreneurial and more responsive to a diverse set of community needs and they are also being asked to do so within a tight fiscal environment (an environment that is increasingly scarce of fiscal resources). Indeed, this is all part of the neoliberal context in which community colleges find themselves in BC.

The neoliberal context in BC is composed of a number of principles. The main principles of neoliberalism are the rule of the market and the importance of free enterprise (including the requirement for a multiplicity of choice of “educational consumers”), cutting public expenditures for social services (including reducing funds to public education), deregulation and reducing the government’s role over public services, privatization (encouraging the growth and development of private colleges and institutes), and eliminating the concept of the “public good” and “community” and replacing it with much more of an emphasis on “individual responsibility” (Jubas, 2012).
Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum (2006) concurred with these environmental changes to the context in which community colleges operate and they suggested these changes require bold, new leadership approaches. They explained:

The need for leadership in post-secondary education has only become more urgent as the fat days with regular increases from state governments are long over, and the days of accountability and assessment, globalization, and competition are here to stay, providing new pressures for colleges and universities. Policymakers regularly implore campuses to integrate technology, respond to community needs, and provide high quality education for less money. (p. 1)

To address these issues, a number of community colleges in BC are taking creative approaches. For example, many community colleges are seeking collaborative partnerships between institutions to better serve their students. As well, to address issues of reduced funding, many community colleges are seeking sources of revenue from areas they have not attempted previously – international students, overseas international partnerships, and increased continuing education (cost-recovery) within their communities are good examples of this.

This demonstrates how community colleges, too, are facing the four important trends defining organizations in the twenty-first century as indicated above by Whitney et al. (2010, pp. 2-3). Community colleges in BC are working in an environment where faculty and employees have increasing expectations to be part of decision-making. Community colleges also work in increasingly diverse environments and engage in unique and creative approaches and partnerships to address funding issues and to better serve their students.

Another area of growing interest amongst a number of educational leaders and faculty within community colleges is Appreciative Leadership. As Bushe (2001) explains, Appreciative Leadership refers to leaders who take a positive, appreciative approach – they continually look for the good in their colleagues and what is being done right.

Through my research, I take a social constructivist approach to explore what Appreciative Leadership looks like from the perspective of community college educational leaders in BC. Social constructivism rejects universal qualities of the world
and believes that social constructs (such as leadership) are developed by an individual’s experiences with the world and the manner in which they interpret those experiences (Bensimon, Neumann, & Birnbaum, 2006). Thus from a social constructivist paradigm, leadership is seen as a social construct developed through interaction and people will differ in how they define leadership based on their backgrounds, experiences, perceptions, and worldviews. Indeed, these perceptions and worldviews will become very important to Appreciative Leadership as this study discusses aspects of reframing and seeing the world for opportunities and potentials.

My research also explores the degree to which Appreciative Leadership incorporates shared leadership approaches with faculty and staff. Raelin (2003), in discussing the need for shared leadership, stated “the turbulent world that characterizes our organizations today, staffed by increasingly diverse and skillful people, can no longer be pulled together by bureaucratic authority or by charismatic personality. The only possible way to lead ourselves out of trouble in management is to become mutual and to share our leadership” (p. xi). So while Raelin asserted shared leadership is important to community colleges, the question remains, to what degree is shared leadership being practiced by educational leaders in BC, and how does shared leadership interact with Appreciative Leadership? My research addresses these questions.

**Research Opportunity**

Rather than present my research focus as a “research problem” (which is often the traditional approach to undertaking graduate research), in the spirit of Appreciative Leadership, I have chosen to reframe the research problem as a “research opportunity.” This presents a more accurate reflection of my research interests, as this particular research area (Appreciative Leadership in community colleges) has opened up a wealth of exciting opportunities for me in this field of research to which I am fascinated and to which there is great opportunity for scope and breadth of research. For example, very little literature has explored Appreciative Leadership in educational contexts. Thus, this area is ripe for research exploration and study. Furthermore, there is much opportunity to develop workshops and presentations around Appreciative Leadership in education and I hope to do this in my future work in this area.
My research focuses around two separate, but interrelated, aspects of leadership which have been found to be of concern to post-secondary leadership – 1) taking a top-down, hierarchical approach to decision-making (and avoiding a shared leadership approach) and 2) taking a problem-focused, deficit-based approach to addressing issues. The first aspect of my research, which I see repeatedly in my work as an educational leader in the post-secondary system, is that many educational leaders in community colleges do not tend to use the abilities of their faculty and staff well. In a general sense, the post-secondary system in BC (and North American more generally) are based on a top-down, hierarchical approach to decision-making that often excludes the input of faculty and staff (or perhaps more dangerously, includes faculty and staff participation in a superficial manner, or in a manner not according to their own requirements, only to ignore their input – something Hargreaves (1991) has referred to as “contrived collegiality”). So when critical institutional decisions are made, these decisions are often made by administrators with very little input from faculty and staff. This particular approach was supported by the US Association for Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (1996) who have “supported the continuance of hierarchical leadership in a call for more efficient, issue responsive, and centralized decision making procedures” (Sumrall et al., 2008, p. 39). In contrast, many faculty members, along with their support organizations, continue to stress the importance of a decentralized, shared leadership approach to decision-making (Leatherman, 1998). So clearly, many community colleges in Canada and the US tend to take a top-down, hierarchical approach to decision-making, whereas many college faculty seek a greater degree of shared-leadership approaches.

Fontaine, Strotts, Saxe, and Scott (2008), in looking at shared leadership, highlighted the need to move from a top-down, hierarchical model of decision-making:

Some would suggest that institutions of higher education have taken on the “corporate model” where the focus is on generation of earnings for the stakeholders. Shared governance takes into account the fact that administrators have time-limited roles in the university and the tenured faculty, who are the permanent employees, should set the direction for the future… (pp. 167-168)

There are a number of significant problems with taking a top-down, hierarchical approach to decision-making. The primary problem is when making decisions in this
manner, educational leaders do not effectively use the expertise or knowledge of their faculty and staff. As a result, these decisions may not be the best decisions for students or for the institution. Floyd (1985) supported the premise of shared leadership with faculty:

Faculty expertise on the subjects on which decisions are to be made is perhaps the most fundamental factor supporting faculty participation in institutional decision-making. But faculty also tend to accord legitimacy to fully cooperate in the implementation of those policies that faculty have helped to formulate because they believe faculty have a right to participate. (p. 4)

Furthermore, in attempting to operate community colleges in an increasingly neoliberal context, where community colleges are continually asked to do more with less (often in creative and innovative ways), harnessing the ideas of the faculty and staff within these colleges becomes essential. For example, Kowal (2006) suggested there is a positive relationship between faculty participation in decision-making and institutional effectiveness. He stated, “most full-time faculty members participating in this study desire a higher level of participation [in decision-making] than that perceived as currently existing” (Kowal, 2006, pp. 139-140). Kowal’s research demonstrated faculty generally want a greater degree of shared leadership.

In many ways, this aspect of my research relates to the issue of faculty and staff accessibility to decision-making and the manner in which decision-making is undertaken in a community college. In a top-down system as described previously, faculty and staff have very little access to the substantive decision-making of their institution. Also, in terms of the manner of decision-making, if educational leaders take a “conventional approach” to leadership (as defined by Raelin, 2003, pp. 10-11), they will take an approach which views leadership as serial, individual, controlling, and dispassionate (as opposed to a shared leadership approach which tends to view leadership as concurrent, collective, collaborative, and compassionate) (Raelin, 2003, p. 14).

The second aspect of my research addresses the concern that within the community college sector, educational leaders often take a problem-focused, deficit-based approach to addressing the issues they face. Thus, typically when educational leaders in community colleges enter a meeting room with their colleagues (faculty and staff), they
tend to ask, “What is the problem we are concerned about, and how are we going to fix it?” Cockell and McArthur-Blair (2012) concurred that this is the predominant approach within post-secondary education:

In higher education, the problem-solving paradigm is the predominant paradigm. People working in higher education have arrived there by going through higher education themselves. They have honed the skills of research, problem solving, and writing and continue to use all these abilities and skills to teach others how to use them. (p. 14)

At the same time, Cockell and McArthur-Blair (2012) emphasized this problem-solving approach is not necessarily a bad thing. In speaking to this particular approach, they suggested it “is a good thing and not something to be abandoned. Problem solving is a useful skill” (pp. 14-15).

However, Cockell and McArthur-Blair (2012) discussed the concerns with taking a problem-based approach in post-secondary education:

In higher education, people can choose what to focus on. In many cases, the choice is predominantly focused on what is wrong with the institution, with little time spent on focusing on what is right and good, the best of what is. The impact of this predominantly deficit-based focus is negative morale, frustration with trying to make positive change, no positive change, or recycling of problems over and over rather than moving to better futures, that is, generative and positive change. (p. 18)

This research attempts to address this negative morale and the frustration that results.

Lehner and Hight (2006) discussed a deficit-based approach taking place within student affairs: “Individuals, including student affairs professionals, often find themselves focusing on what is wrong with their organization rather than what is right. Most are guilty of criticizing their organization and its leadership about what needs to be done differently” (p. 141). Thus, Lehner and Hight demonstrated a deficit-based approach is not only used within educational departments in post-secondary education, but also within student services.

In taking a deficit-based approach, educational leaders often tend to spend an inordinate amount of time in a negative, problem-based orientation to address an issue. In fact, there is often so much of a focus on “the problem,” that it takes a great deal of time to move on to address the solution (this has certainly been my personal experience).
Cockell and McArthur-Blair (2012) told a story of how a deficit-based approach could bring an English Department within a post-secondary institution down:

…an English department wanted to make some dysfunctional working relationships within the department more positive and effective. Unfortunately, when people are told that they are not working well together and need to change based on the analysis of the problem, they get demoralized, thinking that they are bad and wrong… (p. 14)

Instead, Cockell and McArthur-Blair (2012) suggested an alternative approach:

Using an appreciative paradigm allowed the department members to work together to discover what was working well, however small, and to pay attention to that in order to get more of it. When people are recognized for their strengths, successes, and effective work, they are energized into doing more of that instead of being discouraged by the focus on their weaknesses and failures. (p. 14)

As can be seen, an Appreciative Leadership perspective turns a deficit-based approach around. Rather than focusing on deficits within the organization, Appreciative Leadership examines the organization’s strengths and successes (Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012). Rather than begin to address what they want less of (i.e., a deficit-based approach), an Appreciative Leader focuses on what they want more of. This is a far more progressive approach that avoids spending so much time focusing on the problem, and begins by taking a strengths-based approach by focusing on what we want more of (and thereby avoiding the negative problem-based discussion altogether). Thus, an Appreciative Leadership approach is focused on a positive, generative approach that looks toward the full capacities of human creativity and imagination (Bushe, 2007).

It is because of these two separate, but interrelated, aspects of our work as educational leaders – that educational leaders often take a top-down approach to decision-making and that they tend to take a deficit-based approach to leadership – that I’ve become interested in Appreciative Leadership. Appreciative Leadership takes a strength-based approach to looking at leadership issues and tries to look for the good in colleagues and the contributions they are able to make. As well, Appreciative Leadership tends to take a collaborative or shared approach to leadership that allows for greater faculty and staff accessibility to decision-making.
Research Questions
The overarching research question for my research is as follows: From the perspective of educational leaders working within the BC community college system (using a social constructivist framework), how does their leadership practice reflect an approach to decision-making that is aligned with Appreciative Leadership and notions of shared leadership? Given this overarching research question, through my research, I answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent is Appreciative Leadership present within community college settings in British Columbia?

2. How do community college leaders in BC discuss their approach to Appreciative Leadership?

3. From the perspective of these participants, in what ways do gender and power influence or otherwise affect the practices of Appreciative Leadership?

These research questions have evolved from the original research questions with which I started my research two years ago. These questions evolved because after undertaking my research and analyzing my data, I realized I had been presented with information that was far more useful and salient to the research questions I have formed above.

The original research questions with which I began my research were as follows:

- Can I identify a distinctive Appreciative Leadership ontology for community college educational leaders?

- To what extent is Appreciative Leadership present within community college settings and to what degree does it allow faculty to be involved in the decision-making of the college?

- To what extent are issues of power articulated, practiced, co-opted, and/or avoided within Appreciative Leadership in a community college setting?
• Do community college leaders in BC consider shared leadership part of their Appreciative Leadership style, and if so, how do they demonstrate this in practice?

Locating the Researcher
I am interested in this area of research because I have long been interested in aspects of Appreciative Leadership, particularly as it applies to community colleges. As well, since I have been in a leadership position within community colleges for the past sixteen years (in both the United States and Canada), this type of research can greatly assist, and be informed by, the work I do within the college system. Further, because I take a strongly social constructivist perspective to leadership, I am very interested in learning what other educational leaders see as important to leadership from their own particular perspective. This information, I believe, will better inform my work (and that of other educational leaders) within community colleges. My ultimate goal is to become a President/CEO of a community college in Canada or the US.

My Personal Philosophy
I am a person who strongly favours Appreciative Leadership and the Appreciative Inquiry four-stage methodology to approaching change. I have been trained through a five-day Appreciative Inquiry Facilitator’s Training (AIFT) workshop in 2005 which demonstrated the importance in using this approach to gather the best from the faculty and staff that one works with. As a result, for effecting change processes, I value the Appreciative Inquiry methodology and I like the manner in which it both engages participants and energizes their creative capacities.

I am also very biased towards Appreciative Leadership perspectives. My work within community college tends to take an appreciative focus congruent with Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS). As Cameron et al. (2003) explained, “Positive Organizational Scholarship is concerned with the study of especially positive outcomes, processes, and attributes of organizations and their members” (p. 4). My work in community colleges certainly takes an approach that focuses on the positive aspects of the faculty and support staff who are my colleagues. I tend to take a solutions-focused
approach to my work and continually have a positive perspective on projects that we’re undertaking.

My personal belief in leadership takes a very social constructivist perspective. That is, I see leadership as being very contextual and situational. Accordingly, similar to Raelin (2003), I believe educational leadership occurs at a variety of levels amongst faculty, support staff, administrators, and students. In fact, in many cases, due to the imposition of a hierarchical structure of decision-making within most community colleges (i.e., administrators are the principle and substantive decision-makers), I believe community colleges do not use the full potential of the human social capital (the “brain base”) that exists within their organizations. Bushe (2001) concurred with this perspective: “Instead of using the minds of everyone to achieve and sustain competitive performance, most people are used as the hands and feet of the organization while only a comparative few are used for their brains” (p. 156).

I also had a number of years of experience leading a community college in a shared leadership environment in the United States. This experience has led me to believe many faculty and support staff have a desire and willingness to become more fully involved in substantive college decision-making. I believe very strongly in this approach to shared leadership, although through my Ed.D. studies at UBC, I have also become more aware of its limitations.

**Significance of Research**
Appreciative Leadership is a new and emerging field of study. In fact, little has been written about Appreciative Leadership, and only three books have delved into the topic (Bushe, 2001; Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006; Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Rader, 2010). Of these three books, one focused on “the appreciative self” (Bushe, 2001) and another focused on Appreciative Intelligence and how leaders may have a high level, or develop a higher level, of Appreciative Intelligence to undertake their work (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006). Only in the past three years has an entirely new book been published on Appreciative Leadership – *Appreciative Leadership: Focus on What Works to Drive Winning Performance and Build a Thriving Organization* (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Rader, 2010). Another recent book has been published called
Appreciative Inquiry in Higher Education: A Transformative Force (Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012). However, this book examines more specifically Appreciative Inquiry as a change process, rather than Appreciative Leadership as an emerging leadership style.

Further, there has been very little literature around Appreciative Leadership at community colleges. While there has been much discussion, review, and writing around Appreciative Inquiry in community colleges (and my intent is not to focus on the process of Appreciative Inquiry), there has been relatively little around Appreciative Leadership.

As a result, this area of study – Appreciative Leadership in community colleges – is ripe for research and development. This particular study makes a contribution to college educational leadership that may not have been done before. For these reasons, this area of study has much significance to the area of educational leadership in particular, and to leadership studies in general.

This chapter has outlined an overview of the reasons why I decided to undertake research on Appreciative Leadership in education including my research opportunity, the significance of the research (based on my research questions), and how my personal philosophy fits with the importance of the research.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review on leadership. Beginning with a working definition of leadership (and a corresponding definition of management), the chapter provides an overview of leadership literature moving from general leadership to the increasingly specific aspects of educational leadership, shared leadership, and Appreciative Leadership. In looking at Appreciative Leadership as an emerging area of leadership studies, Chapter 2 outlines the specific aspects and components of Appreciative Leadership as identified within the literature.

Chapter 3 defines the qualitative research methodology and the three-stage inquiry approach used for this research. The three stages are outlined and defined in this chapter and a discussion of the distribution of questionnaire respondents is provided. This chapter also discusses the reliability, trustworthiness, and generalizability of this research.
Chapter 4 presents the data from the survey questionnaire distributed during Stage 2 of this study. The chapter also explores the themes which emerged from this study.

Chapter 5 presents the data which allow this study to make three empirical assertions about Appreciative Leadership. These empirical assertions are 1) Appreciative Leadership is a gendered practice that requires an exercise of power-with rather than power-over others, 2) Appreciative Leadership requires that leaders see potentials and opportunities and are adept at reframing issues in this way, and 3) Appreciative Leadership requires a productive, creative engagement with conflict (as opposed to a rationalistic approach to ameliorate conflict through conflict resolution strategies).

Finally, Chapter 6 presents the conclusions to this study. This chapter also outlines the limitations to this research and offers potential areas for further study and research.

The last section of this study lists the references used for the research and includes the appendices. The appendices include preliminary themes from questionnaire research (Appendix A), the survey questions (Appendix B), the interview questions and coding sheet (Appendix C), the invitation to participate letter (Appendix D), and the consent form to participate in the interview (Appendix E), a list of the research participants and their pseudonyms (Appendix F), and an example of a questionnaire coding sheet (Appendix G).
CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW OF LEADERSHIP AND APPRECIATIVE LEADERSHIP

This chapter reviews the literature on leadership and Appreciative Leadership, starting with a review of leadership, then moving to a review of the more specific dimensions of educational leadership, shared leadership, and Appreciative Leadership (see Figure 1). I begin with definitions of leadership and management to be used within this study.

Definitions of Leadership and Management

After thoroughly reviewing the leadership literature over the past seventy years, Rost (1993) concluded there are a vast number of inconsistencies and irregularities in definitions of leadership that have come out over the years. To address these inconsistencies and irregularities, Rost has provided a simple definition of leadership which I use in this study.

Rost’s definition of leadership was: “Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (p. 102).

The primary reason I like Rost’s definition of leadership is because of its focus on the leader-follower relationship. As Gergen stated in his forward to Appreciative Leadership, “the success of an organization does not reside in the actions of individual actors but in the relationships among them” (Whitney, et al., 2010, p. xii; emphasis in original). This statement resonates well with both shared leadership and Appreciative Leadership.

Others have echoed this focus on the relational aspects of leadership. For example, Gergen (2009), in his book Relational Being, described the paradigm shift of seeing leadership as an individualistic concept to seeing it in a more relational perspective:

  None of the qualities attributed to good leaders stands alone. Alone, one cannot be inspiring, visionary, humble, or flexible. These qualities are the achievements of a coactive process in which others’ affirmation is essential. A charismatic leader is only charismatic by virtue of others who treat him or her in this way; remove the glitter in their eyes and the ‘charisma’ turns to dust… Leadership resides in the confluence. (p. 331)
Some researchers tend to be more critical of Rost’s singular definition of leadership. As Kezar et al. (2006) stated, “Even though Rost believes leadership is socially constructed and we must change our assumptions to match the postindustrial age, we argue that he does not seem to realize that these assumptions will then change again as time evolves. His single paradigm will become outdated and will prevent movement toward helpful new ideas for leaders” (p. 158). Notwithstanding this comment, my study is an attempt to do just that, and to build from Rost’s ideas that leadership is relational.

Having defined leadership very specifically, this study now turns to a definition of “management.” As Rost (1993) explained, “Confusing leadership and management and treating the words as if they were synonymous have a long and illustrious history in leadership studies. The practice is pervasive in the mainstream literature of leadership. It is pervasive in all academic disciplines where one can find the literature on leadership.” (p. 129). While Rost does not agree with the synonymous use of leadership and management, and while many authors support this perspective, Rost noted “these works have had little impact on the mainstream of literature or the practice of leadership. The melding of these concepts and understanding leadership as good management still dominate leadership studies…” (p. 129).

Having suggested leadership is different than management, and having come forward with a specific definition of leadership, it is now imperative to also come forward with a corresponding definition of management (if for no other reason than to distinguish it from the definition of leadership articulated previously). As with the definition of leadership, Rost (1993) offered a succinct definition of management: “Management is an authority relationship between at least one manager and one subordinate who coordinate their activities to produce and sell particular goods and/or services” (p. 145).

From this definition, Rost has identified four essential elements for management to be taking place:

1. Management is an authority relationship.
2. The people in this relationship include at least one manager and one subordinate.
3. The manager(s) and subordinate(s) coordinate their activities.
4. The manager(s) and subordinates(s) produce and sell particular goods and/or services. (1993, p. 145)

In formulating these definitions of leadership and management, Rost does not include a value judgment in his definitions. Thus, there is no requirement to be “effective or ineffective, good or bad, efficient or inefficient, excellent or mediocre,” etc. (p. 148). In discussing the definition of management specifically, Rost stated “all of these words are adjectives that people can apply to particular managerial relationships when they evaluate the management of an organization according to stated criteria” (p. 148). He believed these evaluative criteria are very different from the criteria to determine whether something is management or not. Rost saw a two-step process: “First, one must determine if the phenomenon is management. Second, the analyst can then determine if the relationship that is management is effective or ineffective, good or bad, efficient or inefficient, excellent or mediocre” (p. 148). This two-step process, according to Rost, would apply equally to leadership. Table 1 outlines the distinguishing elements between leadership and management.

**Table 1: Distinguishing Leadership from Management**
(adopted from Rost, 1993, p. 149)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEADERSHIP</th>
<th>MANAGEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence relationship</td>
<td>Authority relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders and followers</td>
<td>Managers and subordinates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intend real changes</td>
<td>Produce and sell goods and/or services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intended changes reflect mutual purposes</td>
<td>Goods/services result from coordinated activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exploring Educational Leadership within the Context of Leadership

As many writers have indicated, there is an immense body of literature related to leadership and leadership topics (Bass, 1990; Bensimon et al., 2006; Breaux, 2006; Bushe, 2006; Hockaday & Puyear, 2000; Kouzes & Posner, 2003; Krass, 1998; Lindsay, 2003; Rost, 1993; Sodar, 1991; Van Dusen, 2005; Yukl, 2002). It is not the purpose of this literature review to examine all of the sources available on the topic of leadership given the breadth of that discussion. Instead, this literature review takes a focused approach, starting with educational leadership in the broader sense, moving on to distributive/shared leadership, and then focusing specifically on Appreciative Leadership (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1 – Increased Focus of Appreciative Leadership](image)

**Educational Leadership**

It is useful to discuss what is, in fact, meant by “educational leadership” (or, rather, what distinguishes educational leadership from other forms of leadership). In their article, “What is Educational about Educational Leadership?” Coulter and Wiens (1999) discussed how educational leadership differs from other forms of leadership. They suggested “leadership is a parasitic concept, dependent upon purposes” (p. 5) and discussed that while various types of leadership (corporate, military, etc.) all have features in common, “the nature of the activity determines what counts as good leadership” (Coulter & Wiens, 1999, p. 5). Coulter and Wiens explained: “Being an educational leader, therefore, requires becoming clear about what is meant by education,
which, following Peters, involves preparing people to lead good and worthwhile lives” (1999, p. 5).

Others also note this moral dimension to educational leadership. Burrello, Lashley, and Beatty (cited in Foster, 2004) talked about this moral dimension in discussing how educational leaders engage their profession:

The call here is for a public intellectual to take up the critical project and its sophisticated analysis of society and culture. Public intellectuals use their knowledge to create new vocabularies and frameworks that emphasize notions of ethics, power, personal agency, and the common good. They merge theory and discourse to construct practices, policies, and programs that address important social problems and foster democratic participation as their central task. (as cited in Foster 2004, p. 191)

Interestingly, while this quote highlights the moral dimension to educational leadership, it also has much to say about Appreciative Leadership. In many ways, Appreciative Leadership merges “theory and discourse to construct practices… that address important social problems and foster democratic participation.”

Foster (2004) also suggested educational leadership involves a moral dimension. Speaking about the K-12 public school system in the United States, Foster stated, “The achievement of excellence in, for example, schools depends not on adding value or changing cultures but on the development of a community of practitioners who encourage virtuous activity in each other” (2004, p. 185; emphasis added). While this encouragement of a moral dimension in educational leadership is important, Foster believed American schools may have become too focused on the economic dimension of preparing students for the workplace:

This emphasis on the economic dimension of schools in preparing students for the workplace seems to be missing a number of what might be considered to be important dimensions. Such standards have, indeed, resolved an age-old question without even bothering to ask it: What is the end of education? Do we educate to produce an effective workforce? Or is there more to be accomplished? (Foster, 2004, p. 183)

By referring to “more to be accomplished,” Foster (2004) suggested educational leadership might also focus on “the raising of political consciousness or to the formation and reformation of democracy” and global citizenship within our schools (p. 182). He
lamented that “schooling, once considered as the means for the development of the educated and liberal person, has increasingly come to be seen as the venue for increasing the economic competitiveness of the state” (p. 182). Thus, certainly within the K-12 school system, Foster believed the economic imperative has a dramatic effect on educational leadership.

While increased levels of accountability can certainly be seen within the community college system in BC, these levels of accountability do not manifest themselves in the same manner as they do within the K-12 school system. Typically accountability measures for community colleges have more to do with FTE production, utilization rates (of classrooms and facilities), and student satisfaction rates.

One of the impacts on educational leadership which Foster refers to may be a trend which Lindle noticed as well. As a result of the accountability around national performance standards, Lindle (2004) believed schools “rarely provide a safe space for thinking and certainly not thinking aloud. For many school administrators, the political and logistical realities of their schools suppress deeply reflective thinking by leaders, teachers, or pupils” (p. 170).

To a certain extent, I have experienced this phenomenon of suppressed discourse within community colleges as well. That is, in some faculty forums where contentious topics are raised, when someone suggests an idea or opinion which may “go against the grain” of predominant thinking, I have experienced some faculty “shutting down” other faculty whose ideas they disagree with. Fortunately, these types of dynamics are the exception rather than the norm; however, one must question the degree to which they may take place as a result of neoliberal financial pressures (i.e., the “economic imperative”) within the institution. Fortunately, Appreciative Leaders tend to encourage and promote a diversity of ideas and perspectives within their community college.
General Leadership and Educational Leadership

Breaux (2006) pointed out, after an exhaustive search through ProQuest’s Digital Dissertations database, that there were over 68 Ed.D. and Ph.D. dissertations produced on the community college presidency over the past 10 years. These studies could be broken down into a number of categories: a large number were focused around “the differences between male, female, and minority presidents’ leadership styles” (Breaux, 2006, p. 15); other studies looked at presidents from a particular region or State; and a third common category was “personal and professional demographic profiles and preparation efforts” (Breaux, p. 15). Another popular focus of study on community college presidents had to do with presidents’ roles, characteristics, and competencies (Breaux, 2006).

Although much research has been undertaken around leadership traits and characteristics, the vast majority of it has been undertaken within the corporate/business world, with only some of these studies being directly related to the post-secondary education sector. Scharmer et al. (1999) suggested leadership involves the generative qualities of spirit, energy, patience, perseverance, and imagination. Reave (2005) suggested effective leadership is closely linked with values that have long been associated with spiritual ideals – values such as honesty, integrity, and humility. Although there really is no specific blueprint for leadership skills in the community college sector, Vaughan and Weisman (1998) identified certain skills they believe are important for effective presidents: the ability to bring a college together in the governing process (i.e., shared leadership), the ability to mediate, having a strong command of technology, being able to maintain a high tolerance for ambiguity, understanding and appreciating multiculturalism, and having the ability to build strong and vibrant coalitions. Hockaday and Puyear (2000) identified the traits a president must have to be effective including the ability to develop a vision of the future direction for the college, having a collaborative spirit, demonstrating good judgment, and having a desire to lead. Values and traits such as integrity, honesty, confidence, and courage were also found to be important. Hockaday and Puyear also suggested these traits need not be inherent, but could be learned or developed over time.
While trait theory has been an important aspect of leadership studies over the past decades (and some would argue it remains an important part of leadership studies), Rost (1993) suggested this should no longer be the case. While Rost explained that “other researchers looked for universal traits of leaders in order to understand what really makes leadership tick… that effort was demolished in the 1950s by Stogdill, who compared the results of numerous traits studies and found that they were contradictory and inconclusive” (p. 22). Nevertheless, the traits approach to leadership continued, and in fact the leadership-as-excellence movement (itself a traits-based approach) predominated into the 1980s (Rost, 1993). However, Rost found of all the books written throughout the 1980s, very few articulated a “clear, concise definition of leadership in their work” (1993, p. 82). Rost went on to lament, “Not one of the 312 definitions from the 1980s that were collected for this review articulated a traits concept of leadership. Yet, the leadership literature of the 1980s is littered with a traits orientation.” (1993, p. 82)

Bass (1990) asserted leadership is, of course, important to post-secondary institutions. In fact, he believed the success or failure of a particular community college could often be attributed to its leadership (although Bass didn’t discuss it at the time, this leadership could occur at a variety of levels throughout the institution). However, when one begins to define leadership, it becomes very challenging. For example, Rost (1993) found over 221 definitions of leadership after reviewing 587 books and a number of articles published between 1900 and 1990. Lindsay (2003), reviewing Rost’s work, did a nice job of summarizing these leadership definitions. She wrote that prior to the 1980s, definitions of leadership were written primarily by male writers and it was not until the mid-1980s that women began to have an impact on the leadership literature (Lindsay, p. 8). Rost (1993) found that for the first three decades of the twentieth century, leadership definitions really focused on issues of control and centralization of power. This began to change in the 1940s when, although a hierarchical, military focus of leadership still heavily emphasized leadership based on centralization and control, a new collective, group approach to leadership began to come forward (Lindsay, 2003; Rost, 1993). During the 1950s, leadership began to be defined as a relationship involving shared goals (Lindsay, 2003; Rost, 1993), and in the 1960s “leadership definitions reflected increasing
support for leadership being viewed as a behavior that moves people toward shared goals” (Lindsay, 2003, p. 9).

As Rost explained, “the leadership literature showed an important shift from the group approach of the social psychologists to the organizational behavior approach of the management scholars” (1993, p. 57). In fact, this is perhaps one of the reasons it has been difficult to develop an understanding of the term leadership, because it has often been used (or confused) with the term “management.” Of course, these terms are entirely different constructs (Kouses & Posner, 2003; Rost, 1993; Yukl, 2002; Zaleznik, 1992).

During the 1970s, the most accepted definition of leadership was that provided by Burns (1978). Burns (cited in Rost) defined leadership as “the reciprocal process of mobilizing persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers” (p. 65).

The 1980s saw “an explosion of books and articles about leadership” with over 132 books being published (Rost, p. 68). These books could be grouped into a number of conceptual frameworks such as leadership as influence, leadership as traits or characteristics, leadership as management, leadership as transformation (this was to become an even more important focus of the 1990s), and leadership toward achieving organizational or group goals (Lindsay, 2003). Rost (1993) saw leadership definitions of the 1980s as focused on “the conservative and individualistic Yuppie character of Western society and in the end articulated an updated version of the industrial view of the leadership paradigm” (p. 91).

The 1990s saw leadership defined in terms of transactional leadership, and in particular moving from transactional leadership to transformational leadership. Typically, transformational leadership is defined as a “power and influence theory in which leaders act in mutual ways with the followers, appeal to their higher needs, and inspire and motivate followers to move toward a particular purpose” (Bensimon et al., 2006, p. 34). Further to this, Burns (1978) delineated two basic types or styles of leadership – transactional and transformational. Whereas transactional leaders approach their co-
workers with the intent of engaging in some kind of exchange or trade (“you do this and I’ll reward you in this manner,” etc.), a transformational leader looks “for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person as the follower” (Burns, p. 4).

Burns defined transformational leadership as “leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and motivations – the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations – of both leaders and followers” (1978, p. 19; emphasis added). Therefore, transformational leadership seeks to “raise the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both the leader and the led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both” (Burns, 1978, p. 20).

As Stewart (2006) explained, “transformational leadership encompasses a chance to benefit both the relationship and the resources of those involved. The result is a change in the level of commitment and the increased capacity for achieving mutual purposes” (p. 9). Bass (1998) further defined transformational leadership as encompassing four aspects: 1) charismatic leadership or idealized influence (transformational leaders are seen as role models, respected and admired by their peers), 2) inspirational motivation (through leading the way, transformational leaders behave in a manner which motivates and challenges others and generates a sense of enthusiasm), 3) intellectual stimulation (transformational leaders encourage new ideas and creativity; while having high standards, they never publicly criticize or correct others), and 4) individualized consideration (transformational leaders respect individual differences [and even celebrate them!] and establish a supportive environment to develop the needs of others).

Not all researchers support the model of transformational leadership. As Stewart explained, Gronn (1995) “charges transformational leadership with being paternalistic, gender exclusive, exaggerated, having aristocratic pretensions and social-class bias, as well as having an eccentric conception of human agency and causality” (p. 21). Stewart elaborated on Gronn’s shortcomings of transformational leadership: “a lack of empirically documented case examples of transformational leaders; a narrow methodological base; no causal connection between leadership and desired organizational outcomes; and the unresolved question as to whether leadership is learnable” (Stewart,

As is the case with the study of leadership traits and characteristics, much study has been done around transformational leadership within the corporate and business sectors of North American society, but not much has been done around the post-secondary educational sector. For example, Kouzes and Posner (2003), in their seminal study of corporate leadership, examined the characteristics of what makes for successful and transformational leaders within corporate and business society of North America. However, Bensimon, Neuman, and Birnbaum (1989) made the point that “only one or two studies have examined the role of transformational leadership in addressing complex issues that challenge the status quo of campuses” (p. 171).

Reave (2005) believed effective leadership has much to do with what she terms “spiritual values and practices” (p. 657). While not referring to transformational leadership directly, Reave believed spiritual ideals such as honesty, integrity, and humility have a direct effect on leadership success. Furthermore, “spiritual practices” such as showing respect for others, demonstrating fair treatment, expressing care and concern, listening responsively, recognizing the contributions of others, and engaging in reflective practice have also been found to be important to effective leadership (Reave, 2005). Along these lines, Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) found leaders excel and become successful by connecting with others using emotional intelligence competencies such as empathy, self-awareness, and relationship management. Many of these ideals have strong connections to Appreciative Leadership.

Some research has also been undertaken over the past ten-fifteen years around the characteristics of successful college leaders, and of presidents in particular (Campbell & Leverty, 1997; Van Dusen, 2005; Yukl, 2002). Sullivan (2001), for example, identified four generations of college leaders. The first generation, which she termed “founding fathers,” focused on pioneering a new accessible and democratic form of post-secondary education. The second generation, which Sullivan referred to as the “good managers,” oversaw the rapid expansion and development of post-secondary resources (this was clearly a time of abundant fiscal resources). Sullivan referred to the third generation as
“collaborators.” These were “leaders with the ability to draw groups together to leverage scarce resources and make access to higher education truly universal” (Van Dusen, 2005, p. 18). Finally, the fourth generation, according to Sullivan, has yet to be defined, but would definitely be required to “inspire trust in followers as higher education continued to evolve and even reinvent itself” (Van Dusen, 2005, p. 18).

Van Dusen’s (2005) study of the leadership styles of 209 college presidents examined their perceptions regarding five different styles of leadership – consultative, participatory, delegative, negotiative, and directive or autocratic. She found 79.4% of respondents (166 college presidents) felt the consultative style of leadership was the most important form of leadership for current leaders (this increased to 86.0% when consideration was given for future leaders) and the second highest score (76.7% for current leaders and 80.8% for future leaders) suggested a participative or democratic form of leadership was most desirable. Both these leadership styles point to the desire among college leaders for moving toward more of a shared leadership style.

**Definition of Shared Leadership**

Shared leadership may be loosely defined as a process whereby all members of a community or organization are involved in the substantive decision-making of that community or organization. As opposed to a top-down, hierarchical approach to decision-making, shared leadership involves a much more flat structure where decision-makers are perceived as being equal in terms of their ability to make decisions and affect leadership.

Shared leadership is consistent with what Raelin (2003) referred to as “leaderful leadership” or “leaderful practice.” In his book, *Creating Leaderful Organizations*, Raelin described the four-C’s of leaderful practice: *concurrent* (“more than one leader can operate at the same time, so leaders willingly and naturally share power with others”) (p. 13), *collective* (leadership may arise from multiple members of the community), *collaborative* (“all members of the community, not just the position leader, are in control of and may speak for the entire community”) (p. 15), and *compassionate* (“Shareholder’s views are considered before making a decision for the entire enterprise. Each member of the community is valued regardless of his or her background or social standing, and all
viewpoints are considered regardless of whether they conform to current thought processes” (p. 16). Shared leadership, as I use it in this research, is consistent with Raelin’s perspective on leaderful organizations.

Shared leadership became popular in the 1990s and 2000s. In fact, Hallinger (2003) believed transformational leadership fully recognizes the notion of shared leadership and allows for multiple sources of leadership. Lanning (2006) suggested while a number of terms have been used to describe it (“distributive leadership,” “shared leadership,” “shared governance,” “participative decision-making,” or “team leadership”), shared leadership is really a “process involving anyone affected by the outcome of the decision” (p. 2). Trites and Weegar (2003) discussed why they prefer “shared leadership” as the appropriate term for the model at their community college:

The term “shared governance” has evolved to “shared leadership,” largely because leadership involves the positive aspects of looking to the future with a sense of vision and hope. Shared leadership deals with planning for the future, determining how to become better educators, and determining how to better serve students and the community. (p. 47)

Lanning discussed the common themes which emerge from a review of the various definitions of shared governance including “inclusive decision-making, responsibility shared by those affected by decisions, right to collaborate, mutual decision-making, participation by constituencies, and the right to advise the leaders on decision-making” (2006, p. 3). However, as Tierney (2004) explained, “like the U.S. population’s definition of democracy, there are multiple and conflicting interpretations of shared governance, not simply from campus to campus, but also within the institution” (p. 202).

The term “shared governance” was first used in 1966 when the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) published their report, “Statement on Government of Universities and Colleges” (Dossett, 2005; Lanning, 2006). The report suggested all stakeholders of a post-secondary institution should take a shared responsibility in the actions of their institution. As Lanning explained, “In effect, the AAUP suggested that faculty members become co-managers of their institutions, a model that is called “joint effort” in the statement and has come to be called shared governance in the parlance” (2006, p. 12).
As Astin and Astin (2000) discussed in their report entitled *Leadership Reconsidered: Engaging Higher Education in Social Change*, there are really three main approaches to leadership in community colleges:

In American higher education, we typically find two approaches to leadership: a hierarchical model where authority and power is assumed to be proportional to one’s position within the administrative pecking order, and an individualistic model where “leaders” among the faculty tend to be those who have attained the most professional status and recognition. We could also include here a third model, the “collegial” approach exemplified by the faculty committee structure. (p. 5)

Astin and Astin (2000) stated this “collegial” approach (which might be viewed as a form or shared leadership) is “seldom given any leadership responsibility for policy setting or decision making” (p. 5). As a result, committees are often ineffectual, committee reports often gather dust on shelves, and many faculty dislike their administrative responsibility on committees and dislike participating on them.

Despite the hierarchical and individualistic approach that takes place within many community colleges, Astin and Astin (2000) still believed a collaborative approach to leadership is possible (and this is their third approach). However, it is only possible if members of the academic community bring a particular set of values and beliefs to their group work. These values and beliefs include creating a “supportive environment where people can grow, thrive, and live in peace with one another;” promoting “harmony with nature and thereby provide sustainability for future generations;” and creating “communities of reciprocal care and shared responsibility where every person matters and where each person’s welfare and dignity is respected and supported” (p. 11).

Alfred (1998) believed there are both advantages and disadvantages to shared governance. The advantages of shared governance include a greater degree of empowerment, taking responsibility for decisions, better buy-in and acceptance of decisions, improved morale, improved communication, promoting a diverse range of perspectives, and an “improved likelihood the college will move forward in responding to critical issues” (p. 4).

As well, Alfred (1998) also listed the disadvantages of shared governance which include slower decisions, it hampers management efficiency, it diminishes the
quality of decisions, slower progress on institutional development, and it adds to the workload burden of administrators while taking their focus away from strategic responsibilities. Alfred also suggested shared governance makes teaching and learning a secondary priority, results in an unfavourable distribution of power (which in turn causes polarization and an adversarial approach to governance), and it “disguises the self-serving agendas and political maneuvering of faculty and staff” (p. 5).

Certainly, with a couple of exceptions, my experience of shared leadership at a US community college demonstrated both the advantages and disadvantages which Alfred outlined (e.g., it was not my experience that shared leadership diminished the quality of decisions – in fact, I felt it enhanced the quality). In my experience of shared leadership, I certainly found power relations were important, and therefore a discussion of shared leadership and conceptions of power is necessary.

Shared Leadership and Conceptions of Power

To describe how power operates within community colleges is a complex task and could embody an Ed.D. dissertation topic in-and-of itself. In researching conceptions of power within educational leadership, Brunner (2002) acknowledged that “conceptions of power as dominance, control, and authority permeates all levels of education settings” (p. 699). Having interviewed over 700 participants about their conceptions of “power,” Brunner conceded the majority would be categorized by what she defines as “power-over” conceptions. As Brunner (2002) explained, this conception sees power conceived as dominance, authority, control, influence, or power over others or things… It is not difficult to understand that positional and hierarchical power fall within the same conception; those in higher positions are powerful and those in lower positions are powerless. (pp. 695-696)

Brunner saw the power-over perspective as dualistic – from this perspective, people either have power or they do not. Further, Brunner stated, “people who conceived of power as authority, control, or dominance over others or things most often used power to control, dominate, or be in charge and had difficulty collaborating or considering the views of others as equal to their own” (2002, p. 696).
Brunner also outlined an alternative perspective to this power-over conception, which she
called a power-with/to perspective (which is referred to within this study as the power-
with perspective). The power-with perspective sees power as an ability to accomplish
goals through a collaborative process. That is, Brunner believed “people who conceived
of power as coactive, collective, or cocreative most often tended or were predisposed to
work with others to accomplish things through collaborative work” (2002, p. 699).
Contrary to the dualistic conception of power-over (people are either powerful or
powerless), Brunner saw the power-with perspective as not being dualistic: “this
conception describes power as something everyone holds synergistically and jointly” (p.
699).
Brunner (2002) suggested there is a third perspective on power, something she calls a
mixed or multiple conception of power. As Brunner explained, people who hold mixed
conceptions of power
  most often enact power using a combination of top-down and collaborative
  processes – somewhat equal numbers of acts of dominance or authority and
  acts of collaboration – depending upon the circumstances. (p. 702)
The additional key finding of Brunner’s research was that people tended to exercise
power based on their foundational beliefs or understandings of power – something she
referred to as having “high fidelity.” As Brunner explained:
  The final key understanding identified for this article and gained from my
  research is that ontologically held conceptions of power have high fidelity
  with their enactments – not perfect fidelity – but very high fidelity. That is,
  a person’s particular conception or definition of power results, not always,
  but most of the time, in particular uses or enactments (the doing) of power.
  (2002, pp. 703-704)
I would assert that Brunner’s “power-over” conception of power also predominates
within many community colleges as well. However, this study also asserts that when it
comes to Appreciative Leadership, “power-over” is not the norm and expressions of
“power-with” are much more common. It is to a discussion of Appreciative Leadership
this study now turns.
Appreciative Leadership

Appreciative Leadership\(^1\) is a new and emerging area of leadership studies. It involves taking a unique strength-based approach to leadership which focuses continually on capacity building and seeing possibilities and opportunities. While Appreciative Leadership has a strong connection to, and indeed takes its foundational principles from, Appreciative Inquiry (Saiduddin, Larsson, & Lundqvist, 2009), it does not necessarily involve a change management process, \textit{per se}. Although “leadership,” by definition (see Rost above), attempts to effect change, Appreciative Leaders do not necessarily and absolutely use Appreciative Inquiry to effect this change – in many circumstances Appreciative Leaders may use Appreciative Inquiry to effect change, and in some other situations they may not. But the essential point is that Appreciative Leadership and Appreciative Inquiry are two distinct and different constructs.

If we can say there is a huge volume of material on topics of general leadership, the opposite can be said about material on Appreciative Leadership – there is very little literature on Appreciative Leadership, as it is indeed an emerging field. Much of what has been written about Appreciative Leadership takes it roots from Appreciative Inquiry (Saiduddin, Larsson, & Lundqvist, 2009). As Watkins and Mohr explained, Appreciative Inquiry is a “theory and practice for approaching change from a holistic framework” (2001, p. xxxi). Watkins and Mohr elaborated: “Based on the belief that human systems are made and imagined by those who live and work within them, AI leads systems to move toward the generative and creative images that resides in their most positive core – their values, visions, achievements, and best practices” (2001, p. xxxi).

Breaux (2006) asked the question of her survey respondents, “Which leadership characteristics and practices are perceived by exemplary community college presidents to

\(^1\) Appreciative Leadership is not Appreciative Inquiry! While many people confuse the two (including a number of my survey respondents and interview participants), these two constructs are very different.

Appreciative Inquiry is a change management approach that uses a specific and structured four-stage future-oriented, generative inquiry process. Many people believe this change process is inherently positive, but Bushe explains this it is not necessarily so: “A focus on the positive is useful for appreciative inquiry, but it’s not the purpose. The purpose is to generate a new and better future” (Bushe, 2007, p. 33). Thus, Appreciative Inquiry’s purpose is more around generativity and producing new and innovative ideas (Bushe, 2007).
have facilitated their success?” The responses identified seven practices associated with exemplary community college presidents: (a) communication skills; (b) vision; (c) integrity; (d) consistency; (e) courage; (f) passion; and (g) humility (p. 135). While Appreciative Leadership was not spoken of specifically, the fact that communication skills and vision were number one and two respectively, speaks to the importance of Appreciative Leadership. As Breaux explained, “while writing and speaking were considered important, the majority of respondents singled out listening to constituents as a key to their success” (pp. 135-136).

Breaux’s (2006) research also supported a move toward shared leadership: “The participants unanimously agreed that others’ ideas should be solicited as early as possible when decisions and plans are being made. The respondents credited being willing to consider alternative ideas and adjust their original plans, if better ones emerged, with helping them to earn broader support for their efforts” (p. 136).

The notion of building capacity is at the core of Appreciative Leadership. In fact, one of the first (and few) books on Appreciative Leadership focuses on capacity building in its subtitle: *Appreciative Intelligence: Seeing the Mighty Oak in the Acorn* (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006). Lannsjö (2009) also focused on this notion of capacity building:

> Appreciative Leadership is where every member of a group counts, makes a difference, and knows and feels this. AL is of great importance for a company’s growth and wellbeing because an appreciative leader can see the good things and make them even better. (p. 41)

In *Appreciative Intelligence*, Thatchenkery and Metzker (2006) focused on the construct of Appreciative Intelligence. However, they use the construct in a manner that is consistent with framing it as a type of leadership. That is, persons who have high tendencies for Appreciative Intelligence would also have high tendencies to be Appreciative Leaders. While the topic of Thatchenkery and Metzker’s book is not about leadership per se, the instances and examples they portray in the book of Appreciative Intelligence are rife with examples of Appreciative Leadership. For these reasons, when

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2 They define construct as a “concept that has been deliberately and consciously invented or adopted for a specific scientific purpose” (Kerlinger, 1973).
I use “Appreciative Leadership” within this study, I use it to refer to the components of both Appreciative Leadership and Appreciative Intelligence together.

Thatchenkery and Metzker (2006) put forward three aspects or dispositions of Appreciative Intelligence, each of which is essential to the construct (like three legs of a three-legged stool). These three aspects are: 1) Reframing, 2) Appreciating the positive, and 3) Seeing how the future unfolds from the present (p. 6). Each of these aspects will be explained briefly in the following table (see Table 2).

While Appreciative Intelligence and Appreciative Leadership are new and exciting constructs within the leadership literature, as might be expected with any new constructs, there are still a number of questions and areas of debate that remain outstanding. Yoder (2005), in discussing some of the concerns of emotional intelligence, outlined a number of issues which are equally applicable to Appreciative Intelligence:

There is still much conflict and controversy among researchers and practitioners about emotional intelligence as a construct. Unresolved issues include: the definition of the concept itself; measuring emotional intelligence; relevance of emotional intelligence (EI) with IQ; the relationship between individual and group emotional intelligence; and the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational effectiveness. (p. 46)

As one reads this passage from Yoder (2005), one could substitute “Appreciative Intelligence” for “emotional intelligence” and the paragraph would be equally applicable.

In their recent book, *Appreciative Leadership*, Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, and Rader (2010) began to articulate what is meant by Appreciative Leadership. They began with a general statement, citing Appreciative Leadership as a “philosophy, a way of being and a set of strategies that give rise to practices applicable across industries, sectors, and arenas of collaborative action” (p. 3). They then came up with a more specific definition:

Appreciative Leadership is the relational capacity to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power – to set in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance – to make a positive difference in the world (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Rader, 2010, p. 3).
### Table 2

**Aspects or Dispositions of Appreciative Intelligence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect or Disposition</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Reframing                   | Reframing is a process of re-looking at something or reviewing an issue or problem in a positive light. The proverbial glass of water, and one’s ability to see it as either half-empty or half-full, is a good example of reframing. As Thatchenkery and Metzker stated, “regardless of how the glass is described, the amount of water is the same; it is only the perception that is different” (2006, p. 6).  
As Thatchenkery and Metzker explained, “using Appreciative Intelligence, the person consciously or unconsciously reframes what is in the present, thereby shifting to a new view of reality that leads to a new outcome” (p. 6). |
| Appreciating the Positive   | Thatchenkery and Metzker stated, “the term appreciation specifically refers to a process of selectivity and judgment of something’s positive value or worth” (p. 7). Through appreciating the positive, “successful people have a conscious and unconscious ability to view everyday reality – events, situations, obstacles, products, and people – with appreciation. Because they are reframing to see the positive, they often see talents and potential that others might miss” (p. 7). The implication here is that positive attributes of people or things already exist, but they “sometimes must be revealed, unlocked, or realized” by persons who see them (p. 7). |
| Seeing How the Future Unfolds from the Present | Thatchenkery and Metzker explained, “people with high Appreciative Intelligence connect the generative aspects of the present with a desirable end goal. They see how the future unfolds from the present, the third aspect of Appreciative Intelligence” (p. 7). While many people have the ability to undertake the first two aspects of Appreciative Intelligence, without the ability to concretely see ways that present circumstances can be channeled into new circumstances, they have not become Appreciative Leaders. |
| Persistence                 | Persistence is a significant quality for Appreciative Leaders. As Thatchenkery and Metzker explained, “individuals with high Appreciative Intelligence tend to persist longer – behaviorally and cognitively – than people with low intelligence, but not indefinitely. They know when to quit and look for alternatives” (p. 21). Thatchenkery and Metzker concluded: “In the end, individuals with high Appreciative Intelligence succeed in their objectives either by perseverance or by adjusting their goals and ensuing strategies” (p. 21). |
| Convictions that One’s Actions Matter | Appreciative Leaders have a strong conviction their actions matter and they will make a difference. Part of this belief could be related to the concept of self-fulfilling prophecies. That is, when people expect to do well and have positive results, they often do! As Thatchenkery and Metzker stated, “this proactive, positive conviction that their actions matter is very much present in people with high Appreciative Intelligence” (p. 25). |
| Tolerance for Uncertainty   | Appreciative Leaders have a high tolerance for uncertainty. Thatchenkery and Metzker explained: “The ability to successfully reach toward the unknown, to take risks, and to grapple with the discomfort of uncertainty and ambiguity – even to feel comfortable with it – is the second quality that stems from Appreciative Intelligence” (2006, p. 25). |
| Irrepressible Resilience    | Appreciative Leaders also show irrepressible resilience, or the ability to bounce back from very difficult situations, as the fourth quality that stems from Appreciative Intelligence. As Thatchenkery and Metzker explained, “rather than experiencing a position of impossibility, and therefore a situation without hope or remedy, intelligent leaders showed the capacity to see what is possible and to set a plan of action with concrete steps to create the envisioned positive state” (p. 29). Appreciative Leaders who have high levels of resilience make “positive adjustments when circumstances become challenging. Irrepressible resilience is the quality of not buckling under stress and returning to a state of strength despite weakening forces around” (Thatchenkery and Metzker, p. 30). |
This definition contains four essential ideas that are important to Appreciative Leadership: “(1) it is relational; (2) it is positive; (3) it is about turning potential into positive power; and (4) it has rippling effects” (Whitney et al., p. 3). The authors also believed these four ideas, and indeed their definition of Appreciative Leadership, are about a paradigm shift:

A clear movement away from the habitual, traditional, and individualistic command and control practices of leadership toward a “new normal”: the positive, socially generative principles, strategies, and practices of Appreciative Leadership. (Whitney et al., 2010, p. 3)

When comparing this definition of leadership to Rost’s definition of leadership mentioned previously, two things become clear. First, like Rost’s definition, the definition of Appreciative Leadership focuses on relationships (“the relational capacity”). Second, unlike Rost’s definition (which is very non-evaluative), the definition of Appreciative Leadership does have an evaluative aspect – the focus is on positive power, making “positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance” (words which themselves have evaluative connotations), and making a positive difference in the world. The reason for this is precisely because of the nature of this kind of leadership – it is appreciative in nature, it focuses on positive potential and the strengths of people within an organization. At the same time, I do not believe there is a contradiction between Rost’s definition of leadership (non-evaluative) and Whitney et al.’s definition of Appreciative Leadership. I believe Whitney et al.’s definition satisfies the four criteria Rost set out in his definition of leadership, plus it adds an additional aspect of appreciation or positive approach (which is fine by Rost; he simply did not undertake an evaluative aspect).

Whitney et al. contended Appreciative Leadership is very consistent with shared leadership. “Appreciative Leadership embraces collective practices and shared leadership as well as what is traditionally considered the leader-follower relationship” (Whitney et al., 2010, p. 17). However, they also understood shared leadership is not for everyone: “While we do believe that everyone has leadership potential, our experience has shown that not everyone wants to be a leader or part of the leadership team” (Whitney et al., 2010, p. 17). This was certainly my experience working with shared leadership at a US community college. While many faculty were very keen on the shared
leadership model the college had embraced, a number of other faculty had said to me, “I just want to teach in my classroom; I’m not interested in this team-based, shared leadership approach.”

Whitney et al.’s definition of Appreciative Leadership is the first definition I have encountered within the literature. As a new book, *Appreciative Leadership* is on the vanguard of discussing this concept. Having said that, the book offers little discussion of how Appreciative Leadership interacts with educational leadership within the community college system.

Whitney et al. have identified what they call Five Core Strategies of Appreciative Leadership, each of which “meets a different need that people have for high performance: to know they belong; to feel valued for what they have to contribute; to know where the organization of community is headed; to know that excellence is expected and can be depended upon; and to know that they are contributing to the greater good” (2010, pp. 23-24). The Five Core Strategies of Appreciative Leadership are Inquiry, Illumination, Inclusion, Inspiration, and Integrity (see Table 3).

As Whitney et al. (2010) concluded, although Appreciative Leadership is “a growing force, it is not yet the norm in all organizations or communities around the world, but it has been fully embraced in many” (p. 206). This study explores what Appreciative Leadership looks like specifically within community colleges in British Columbia.

To more fully understand Appreciative Leadership, one must also understand its philosophical underpinnings or foundations. The next section explores these philosophical foundations.
Table 3

**Five Core Strategies of Appreciative Leadership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five Core Strategies</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry</td>
<td>As Whitney et al. (2010) explained, inquiry “let’s people know that you value them and their contributions” (p. 24). By inquiring into people’s thoughts, feelings, perspectives, and opinions (including their visions of the future), and listening sincerely, you say to them, “I value you and your thinking” (p. 24).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illumination</td>
<td>Whitney et al. explained, illumination, “helps people understand how they can best contribute” (p. 24). Through illumination, Appreciative Leaders help people identify their strengths thereby giving them confidence “to express themselves, take risks, and support others in working from their strengths” (p. 24).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Inclusion involves helping co-workers to have a sense of belonging. Inclusion allows Appreciative Leaders to be accessible, inclusive, and to promote collaborative and cocreative processes. In taking this approach, and in helping ensure people feel they are part of the process, Appreciative Leaders help create “buy-in” and help ensure people care about what they are doing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration</td>
<td>Inspiration helps people have a sense of vision and a sense of direction to an organization. As Whitney et al. explained, “by forging a vision and a path forward, you give people hope and unleash energy. These are the foundations for innovation and sustainable high performance” (p. 24).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Integrity, “lets people know that they are expected to give their best for the greater good, and that they can trust others to do the same” (p. 24). By leading with integrity, an Appreciative Leader models what is expected of her colleagues and sets the standards and expectations for others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Philosophical Foundations of Appreciative Leadership**

What are the philosophical foundations or underpinnings of Appreciative Leadership? What distinguishes Appreciative Leadership from other forms of leadership? As stated previously Appreciative Inquiry, as a particular and structured change management process, is very different from Appreciative Leadership. Nevertheless, while they are different concepts, both Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership share a similar foundational underpinning (Saiduddin, Larson, & Lundqvist, 2009; Skarin, 2009; Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2005). That is, both Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership are based on five principles which are deeply grounded in scientific research (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2005). These five principles are (1) the Constructionist Principle, (2) The Principle of Simultaneity, (3) The Poetic Principle, (4) the Anticipatory Principle, and (5) the Positive Principle. In the next section, I review the basis of these five principles and I connect them to the four essential elements of Rost’s definition of leadership mentioned previously.
Table 4
*Five Principles of Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership*
(adopted from Cooperrider et al., 2005, p. 7)

1. The Constructionist Principle
2. The Principle of Simultaneity
3. The Poetic Principle
4. The Anticipatory Principle
5. The Positive Principle

The first principle of Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership is the Constructionist Principle. The Constructionist Principle recognized that “social knowledge and organizational destiny are interwoven” (Cooperrider et al., 2005, p. 8). Furthermore, a constructionist would suggest the seeds of organizational or societal change are implicitly found within the original questions that are asked. “The questions asked become the material out of which the future is conceived and constructed. Thus, the way of knowing is fateful” (Cooperrider, et al., p. 8). As Cooperrider and Whitney explained, “constructionism is an approach to human science and practice which replaces the individual with the relationship as the locus of knowledge, and thus is built around a keen appreciation of the power of language and discourse of all types (from words to metaphors to narrative forms, etc.) to create our sense of reality – our sense of the true, the good, the possible” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999, p. 15).

The Constructionist Principle, which suggested the questions we ask become fateful, related most strongly to Rost’s suggestion that leadership is a relationship based on influence, and this influence relationship is multidirectional and should be noncoercive. That is, the language we use and the questions we ask determine the kinds of relationships that ensue between leaders and followers.

The Principle of Simultaneity is the second principle, and it is very much related to the Constructionist Principle. The Principle of Simultaneity recognized that “inquiry and change are not truly separate moments; they can and should be simultaneous. Inquiry is
intervention. The seeds of change are the things people talk about, the things people
discover and learn, and the things that inform dialogue and inspire images of the future.
*They are implicit in the very first questions asked*” (Cooperrider, et al., 2005, p. 8;
emphasis added). Thus, when a leader begins to ask questions of an organization, those
questions become fateful – they end up setting the stage for what is “found” and what is
“discovered” (the data) (Cooperrider et al., 2005). In essence, this “data” becomes the
substance and the narrative (the stories) of what is discussed by employees around the
water-cooler. Cooperrider and Whitney talked about the potential impacts on an
organization of these “first questions”:

One great myth that continues to dampen the potential here is the
understanding that first we do an analysis, and then we decide on change.
Not so says the constructionist view. Even the most innocent question
evokes change – even if reactions are simply changes in awareness,
dialogue, feelings of boredom, or even laughter. When we consider the
possibilities in these terms, that inquiry and change are a simultaneous
moment, we begin reflecting anew. It is not so much, “Is my question
leading to right or wrong answers?” but rather, “What impact is my
question having on our lives together… is it helping to generate
conversations about the good, the better, the possible… is it strengthening
our relationships?” (1999, pp. 15-16)

The Principle of Simultaneity, similar to the Constructionist Principle, is also related to
Rost’s suggestion that leadership is a relationship based on influence. However, it also
relates to the element of Rost’s definition that leaders and followers intend real changes –
that is, they purposefully choose their language and their questions to move their
organization in the direction they would like to see it go. Furthermore, these questions
are intended to elicit substantive and transforming change, something which is also
important to this element of Rost’s definition of leadership.

The third principle is the Poetic Principle. This principle suggests, as with the limitless
possibilities of interpretation of a good piece of poetry, human organizations may be
viewed using the metaphor of an open book. “An organization’s story is constantly being
coaauthored. Moreover, pasts, presents, and futures are endless sources of learning,
inspiration, and interpretation” (Cooperrider et al., 2005, p. 8). The implication here is
that as a researcher explores an organization, he or she has a choice as to the types of
things he/she will look for. “The choice of inquiry can be in the nature of alienation or
joy in any human organization or community. One can study moments of creativity and innovation or moments of debilitating bureaucratic stress. One has a choice” (Cooperrider et al., p. 9). A further assumption of the Poetic Principle is that one will find what one seeks. Thus, if one is looking for stress and failure in an organization, that is what one will most likely find.

As with the previous principle, the Poetic Principle connects with Rost’s suggestion in his definition of leadership that leaders and followers intend substantive and transforming change. The specific kind, or types, of change relate directly to the kinds of questions which are asked.

The Anticipatory Principle is the fourth principle and it suggests that an organization or community’s collective vision and imagination of the future guides the current behavior of that organization or community. As Cooperrider and Whitney explained, “much like a movie projector on a screen, human systems are forever projecting ahead of themselves a horizon of expectation (in their talk in the hallways, in the metaphors and language they use) that brings the future powerfully into the present as a mobilizing agent” (1999, p. 16). This principle recognizes Aristotle’s statement many years ago: “A vivid imagination compels the whole body to obey it.”

The Anticipatory Principle relates to the fourth element of Rost’s definition of leadership which is that leaders and followers develop mutual purposes, and these mutual purposes become common purposes. This principle suggests leaders and followers develop common purposes and the intended changes that are part of leadership reflect these common purposes.

The final foundational principle of Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership is the Positive Principle. Cooperrider and Whitney (1999) explained it well:

Put most simply, it has been our experience that building and sustaining momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding – things like hope, excitement, inspiration, caring, camaraderie, sense of urgent purpose, and sheer joy in creating something meaningful together. What we have found is that the more positive the question we ask in our work the more long lasting and successful the change effort. (p. 17)
Cooperrider and Whitney concluded it is much healthier to take an approach with organizations or communities that is positive and affirmative.

The Positive Principle is perhaps the one principle which does not connect directly to one of the elements which Rost proposed within his definition of leadership. The reason for this is because in formulating his definitions of leadership (and management), Rost did not put forward a value judgment on these definitions. As stated previously, in Rost’s definitions, there is no requirement to be “effective or ineffective, good or bad, excellent or mediocre” (1993, p. 148), or positive or negative. And since the Positive Principle places an emphasis on forming positive questions, this emphasis is not supported (nor is it unsupported) within Rost’s definition of leadership.

These five principles form the philosophical foundation of both Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership. As Cooperrider et al. concluded, “these five principles are central to AI’s theoretical basis for organizing for a positive revolution in change. These principles clarify that it is the positive image that results in positive action” (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2005, p. 9).

Having reviewed the philosophical foundations of Appreciative Leadership, the next section of this study will discuss how Appreciative Leadership connects with the changes to educational leadership as articulated by Kezar et al. (2006). These changes are summarized in Figure 2.
Appreciative Leadership’s Parallels to Educational Leadership

As mentioned previously, there has been a huge amount of change in educational leadership over the past twenty years (Kezar et al., 2006). As Kezar et al. explained:

Leadership has moved from being leader centered, individualistic, hierarchical, focused on universal characteristics, and emphasizing power over followers to a new vision in which leadership is process centered, collective, context bound, nonhierarchical, and focused on mutual power and influence processes. (2006, p. 33)

These changes in leadership are once again summarized in Figure 2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Then</th>
<th>Now</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Search for universal leadership characteristics</td>
<td>Context bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examine power and hierarchy</td>
<td>Focus on mutual power and influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study individuals</td>
<td>Emphasis on the collective and the collaborative (i.e., relationships)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predict behavior and outcomes</td>
<td>Promote learning, empowerment, change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader centered</td>
<td>Process oriented</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2 – The Revolution in Leadership Research**
(adopted from Kezar et al., 2006, p. 34)

There are a number of parallels between these changes to educational leadership over the past twenty years and Appreciative Leadership. As leadership has moved from being individualistic and leader centered to become more context bound, this is congruent with the “Art of Illumination” as described by Whitney et al. (2010, p. 23) in *Appreciative Leadership*. That is, by bringing out the best of people and situations, illumination helps people to understand how they can best contribute to a project or to their employment more generally, demonstrating a more context bound approach to leadership.

As leadership has moved from examining power and hierarchy to have more of a focus on mutual power and influence, this is congruent with the “Genius of Inclusion” mentioned by Whitney et al. (2010, p. 23). That is, “Appreciative Leadership extends its relational reach in order to ensure that everyone whose future it is has a voice in creating
the future. It fosters inquiry and dialogue across divides and among improbable pairs” (Whitney et al., p. 205). This is also very consistent with shared leadership.

As leadership has moved from studying individuals to an emphasis on the collective and the collaborative, this is also congruent with the “Genius of Inclusion” as outlined by Whitney et al. (2010). Appreciative Leadership is about engaging as many people as possible into the project, activity, or decision in a collaborative manner.

As leadership has moved from predicting behavior and outcomes to promoting learning, empowerment, and change, this is congruent with the “Courage of Inspiration” as described by Whitney et al. (2010, p. 23). That is, “Appreciative Leadership unleashes the creative spirit and gives hope for the future” consistent with empowerment and change (Whitney et al., p. 205). Whitney et al. stated: “In so doing, it mobilizes people’s hearts, minds, and hands towards visions of a better world” (p. 205). This, too, is consistent with leadership that emphasizes empowerment and change.

As leadership has moved from being leader centered to being process oriented, this is congruent with a number of the Five Core Strategies of Appreciative Leadership including the “Wisdom of Inquiry” (to ask positive questions to move in the direction of this positive basis of inquiry), the “Genius of Inclusion” (to foster inquiry and dialogue across a wide range of people), the “Courage of Inspiration” (to unleash people’s creative spirit and mobilize their “hearts, minds, and hands” towards creating a better future), and the “Path of Integrity” (to lead by example and to use integrity as a guiding principle) (Whitney et al., 2010, p. 23 and p. 205).

As this section has shown, the emerging area of Appreciative Leadership, as defined by Whitney et al. (2010) in Appreciative Leadership is very consistent with the changes in educational leadership that have occurred over the past twenty years (as indicated by Kezar et al., 2006). However, literature in Appreciative Leadership has primarily focused on the corporate sector; very little has been written about Appreciative Leadership in the post-secondary education sector. The purpose of this study is to begin exploring what Appreciative Leadership looks like within the post-secondary education sector of BC.
Before this study explores Appreciative Leadership in BC community colleges, I would like to discuss one of the primary critiques of Appreciative Leadership and Appreciative Inquiry. The critique is that these processes do not attempt to address issues of power and privilege.

Some researchers suggest Appreciative Leadership and Appreciative Inquiry do not make a valid attempt to address issues of power, privilege, and inequality. The concern is that Appreciative Leadership ignores issues of power, privilege, and inequality altogether or at least does not attempt to address them. This is a very legitimate critique, and upon review of the literature, I found that, indeed, issues of power, privilege, and inequality are not addressed very strongly within the Appreciative Inquiry or Appreciative Leadership literature.

The Critique of Appreciative Leadership around Notions of Power
To address this critique, I decided to ask a question about how Appreciative Leadership and Appreciative Inquiry address issues of power and privilege and I sent the question to a globally distributed Appreciative Inquiry listserve (hosted by the David Eccles School of Business at the University of Utah) to which I am a member. While I received a number of responses, many of them contained a somewhat romantic and superficial understanding of power associated with “personal empowerment” (as opposed to the issues of structural power and privilege associated with differences in class, race, gender, etc.). One of these respondents informed me that “… the answers lie in the process itself. In the Appreciative Inquiry process, three things are clear: ‘every voice gets heard, every voice counts, every voice matters’ (Dr. Cathy Royal, NTL Institute)” (Anonymous, Oct. 5, 2010a). These responses seemed to support the concern that Appreciative Inquiry ignores issues of power and privilege.

Other respondents to my e-mail inquiry offered a more nuanced, comprehensive response. For example, one person wrote:

Congratulations on such a fabulous topic, and hats off to your committee for asking the rather obvious but overlooked critical questions about power within the supremely postmodern practice of AI.

However, your research is in part the answer to their queries about what’s (sic) the literature say about critical issues within the use and application
of AI; namely that the AI literature has not adequately addressed these issues. Now, I think that this is partly because there is relatively little written about AI within the contexts outside of corporations, particularly discourse with an explicit focus on the issues of power. That said, I believe these are among the brilliant, and needed, contributions of your work: what does a process like AI reveal about power dynamics within the community college context; does it, indeed, create space for people’s (sic) on the margins, and if so, how does it’s (sic) application shift the landscape; would your study contribute to our better understanding of the facilitators and barriers of the AI process when we include the power elements present within the social context. (Anonymous, Oct. 5, 2010b)

One of the few researchers who addressed the issue of power well within her writing is Cockell in her Ed.D. dissertation, Making Magic: Facilitating Collaborative Processes (2005). Cockell acknowledged “the literature on appreciative inquiry says little about the structural constraints in human systems that can impede people’s choice and ability to contribute equally in dialogue. Where structural constraints are considered, they include brief mentions of oppression and power in relation to organizational culture and structures” (p. 61). In her further critique around this issue, Cockell stated the appreciative inquiry literature lacks substantive discussion of the impact of the differences that people bring into the process. In particular, the appreciative inquiry literature does not explore the impact on human system change of the differences in power and privilege based on, for example, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, ability, and age.” (p. 74)

In Appreciative Leadership, Whitney et al. (2010) stated that power dynamics occur within every situation and every conversation. As they explained, “by virtue of their status, resources, presence, style, gender, race, or culture, some people are granted conversational privilege and become the focus of attention” (pp. 99-100). They suggested Appreciative Leadership does deal with issues of power and privilege by attending to equality of voice: Appreciative Leadership “makes certain that everyone who wants to contribute feels safe and has an opportunity to do so. Appreciative leaders lead with questions and listen more than they talk. They may even stay out of the conversation” (Whitney et al., p. 100).

Whitney et al. described how “Appreciative Leadership is aware of how status and authority dynamics influence people’s willingness to participate” (2010, p. 100). They
suggested that through a variety of methods, “Appreciative Leadership finds ways to share authority so that everyone feels invited and safe to openly communicate and participate in coauthoring the future” (p. 100).

Nevertheless, questions remain around who decides what we appreciate and who frames the inquiry. For example, Grant and Humphries (2006) referred to the Appreciative Inquiry process which begins by asking questions about “what should be the ideal?” Grant and Humphries stated “the extent to which people are, or feel obligated, to be motivated by expectations of another person’s ‘should’ (for example in this case the researcher) needs to be considered” (p. 412). They suggested that through the proactive focus and encouragement of a positive discourse (associated with Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership), the potential exists for “participants’ local and grounded knowledge” to be disqualified (p. 412). They elaborated: “Through the evocation of ‘the positives’ that which might have been perceived as negative may have been ‘dismissed’, ‘overlooked’, or ‘suppressed’ in the discussion” (Grant & Humphries, pp. 412-413). The real danger of this “dismissal” of negative information could result in “missed opportunities” of knowledge: “In deflecting attention away from the seeming negative issues shared by participants, we may have lost valuable opportunities: to learn something unexpected; to demonstrate our commitment to participant directed research; and to deepen trust!” (Grant & Humphries, p. 413).

Based on my review of the literature, little is discussed within the Appreciative Inquiry or Appreciative Leadership genre about issues of power and privilege – there is definitely a gap in the literature around this area. As a result, as I began my research to explore what Appreciative Leadership looks like within a community college context, I asked questions around how leaders deal with, or address, issues of power and privilege.
Chapter Summary

Chapter two has provided the reader a broad overview of the literature on leadership and a discussion of the dearth of literature on Appreciative Leadership. The chapter has outlined that whereas three books have recently been published on Appreciative Leadership in the corporate and business sectors, nothing has been written about Appreciative Leadership in education. The primary intent of this research is to address this lack of a focus on Appreciative Leadership in education. The next chapter will outline the research methodology used in this study.
CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the research methodology used for this study. Initially starting with a broad discussion of qualitative analysis, this chapter then details the sampling strategy, generalizability, and the deductive approach to how my questionnaire was constructed. The chapter then discusses in detail the three-stage inquiry approach of this research including a specific discussion on my questionnaire methodology (Stage 2) and my interview methodology (Stage 3). The later part of this chapter discusses research reliability and trustworthiness.

Qualitative Analysis

As with other research on community college leadership (Breaux, 2006; Dossett, 2005; Lanning, 2006; Lindsay, 2003; McArthur-Blair, 2004; Van Dusen, 2005), this research employs qualitative analysis as its primary methodology. Qualitative analysis could be defined as follows:

Qualitative data consists of detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors; direct quotations, from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts… The data are collected as [an] open-ended narrative without attempting to fit program activities or people’s experiences into predetermined, standardized categories… Qualitative measures describe the experiences of people in depth. The data are open-ended in order to find out what people’s lives, experiences, and interactions mean to them in their own terms and in their natural settings. (Patton, 1980, p. 22)

As Breaux (2006) explained, qualitative research is useful because it focuses on “purposively selected information-rich cases for in-depth analysis… information-rich cases are instructive because they provide for opportunities of in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations and zero-in on the questions being studied” (pp. 8-9).

In my research, leadership is examined from a social constructivist paradigm. As Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum (2006) explained, “social constructivism is the belief that reality is developed through one’s interpretation of the world and a denial of essences or universal qualities” (p. 19). They went on to explain that social constructivism focuses on the manner in which “leadership itself is a social construct
developed through interaction and that the way people define leadership differs based on their experience and background” (p. 19). Sloan and Canine (2007) elaborated on social constructivism:

> The principle of Social Constructivism recognizes that meaning is made and futures are created through conversations; that our perceptions of reality itself are the product of these conversations; and that our perceived reality defines what we see or do not see… The stories that are told and retold both formally and informally create and perpetuate the reality of our perceptions. These stories have the power to limit our options as well as to expand the possibilities we can imagine and create. Social constructivism is happening all the time, everywhere. In organizations, we refer to the socially constructed environment and belief system as the organization’s culture. (p. 2)

The social constructivist framework suggests “there is no single reality of how followers or others interpret leadership, and these perceptions affect notions of effectiveness and quality. In addition, when and if a situation requires leadership is determined through analysis of individual perspectives” (Bensimon et al., 2006, p. 19). Thus, social constructivism sees leadership as an ever-evolving concept that changes over time and which is also very dependent upon culture and context.

The social constructivist perspective fits well with my thinking that Appreciative Leadership is very situational and contextual and people may have very different interpretations of this concept. Thus, some college leaders may have very different views of what they interpret as “Appreciative Leadership.”

Bensimon et al. (2006) suggested researchers using the social constructivist paradigm tend to put an emphasis on “interpretation, multiple realities, meaning making, perception, and subjective experience as they are important to understanding leadership” (p. 20). This is precisely the approach I undertook by engaging educational leaders about how they perceive, interpret, and understand their Appreciative Leadership practices.
Sampling Procedure and Generalizability

Since my research is about Appreciative Leadership in BC community colleges, I decided to focus my research sample on educational leaders within community colleges in British Columbia. As well, since my research is provincial in scope (focusing on BC), it did not make sense to include educational leaders from other provinces in Canada (researching Appreciative Leadership in educational leaders from other provinces is an excellent area for further research).

I selected participants through a method of purposive sampling. Purposive sampling could be defined as:

A form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research. (Oliver, 2006, p. 244)

As Patton (1990) explained (cited in Yoder, 2005), “The logic and power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth” (p. 50). Oliver (2006) stated the principal advantage of purposive sampling “is that the researcher can identify participants who are likely to provide data that are detailed and relevant to the research question” (p. 245). As Oliver explained, the principal disadvantage of this sampling approach lies with the subjectivity of the researcher in selecting his/her sample population. He went on:

This is a source of potential bias and a significant threat to the validity of the research conclusions. These effects may be reduced by trying to ensure that there is an internal consistency between the aims and epistemological basis of the research, and the criteria used for selecting the purposive sample. (p. 245)

Eisenhart (2009) connected this sampling approach to theoretical generalization, the type of generalizability important to qualitative research. She explained,

In striving for theoretical generalization, the selection of a group or site to study is made based on the likelihood that the case will reveal something new and different, and that once this new phenomenon is theorized, additional cases will expose differences or variations that test its generalizability. The criterion for selecting cases from which one will generalize is not random or representative sampling but the extent to which the cases selected are likely to establish, refine, or refute a theory. (p. 60)
Thus, rather than use random or representative sampling common in quantitative research which attempts to generalize to a population, this qualitative research used purposive sampling to choose a sample of educational leaders who reveal something “new and different” about Appreciative Leadership. In so doing, this research provides additional information about the emerging practice of Appreciative Leadership in education and it generalizes to the emerging theory of Appreciative Leadership.

As qualitative research, this study cannot purport to generalize its findings to people or to groups of people. Instead, this study offers a third kind of generalization, and that is a generalization to theory or a generalizing to a description of practice. That is, if we view Appreciative Leadership as an emerging leadership practice, or a way of interacting in complex post-secondary environments, then the findings of this study helps to further define and elaborate on this emerging practice of leadership. This approach to theoretical generalizability is consistent to that put forward by Eisenhart (2009). As Eisenhart explained,

…generalizability from qualitative studies is more often based on the development of a theory that can be extended to other cases or redefined in light of them. This approach, also referred to as “analytic generalization,” has been termed “theoretical inference” – where “the conclusions of [a qualitative study] are seen to be generalizable in the context of a particular theoretical debate rather than being primarily concerned to extend them to a larger collectivity” (Davies, 1999, p. 91). (Eisenhart, 2009, p. 59)

So, rather than generalizing to “a larger collectivity” as is common with quantitative research, this research generalizes to broader theory (in this case, Appreciative Leadership), and attempts to extend that theory to other cases (i.e., Appreciative Leadership in education) and therefore inform the debate about Appreciative Leadership.

Firestone (1993) supported this perspective. In discussing how generalizing to a theory is very different from generalizing to a population, Firestone stated, “To generalize to a theory is to provide evidence that supports (but does not definitively prove) that theory” (1993, p. 17). Thus, the three empirical assertions put forward in this study are meant to provide evidence that supports Appreciative Leadership, and further defines the theory within the context of educational settings.
Eisenhart (2009) went on to describe how theoretical generalization could show how examining particular and specific groups of people could demonstrate something new or different with respect to a particular theory. As she explained:

In striving for theoretical generalization, the selection of a group or site to study is made based on the likelihood that the case will reveal something new and different, and that once this new phenomenon is theorized, additional cases will expose differences or variations that test its generalizability. The criterion for selecting cases from which one will generalize is not random or representative sampling but the extent to which the cases selected are likely to establish, refine, or refute a theory. (p. 60)

As this study has undertaken a purposive sampling approach, the sample of Appreciative Leaders in education used in this study has been purposively chosen to “select information-rich cases for study in depth” (Patton, 1990 – cited in Yoder, 2005, p. 50). Furthermore, the selection of this sample population has been specifically chosen to “reveal something new and different” about Appreciative Leadership (within the context of education). Thus, it is hoped the case studies of these educational leaders will “establish, refine, or refute” the emerging theory of Appreciative Leadership (which, as I’ve indicated previously, has really only been studied from the context of the business and corporate sectors). As such, the generalization of this study is focused on theoretical generalization.

Eisenhart (2009) (citing Becker (1990)) described theoretical generalization as “the attempt to develop a refined understanding of a generic process… that have wide applicability in social life” (p. 60). My research establishes and refines the emerging theory of Appreciative Leadership and adds a dimension to the theory that looks specifically at Appreciative Leadership from an educational perspective. In so doing, my research “refine[s] understanding of a generic process” (i.e., Appreciative Leadership), and establish and refine how this theory applies to an educational context. In this way, the generalizability of this research is all about theoretical generalization and not about generalizing to a population.

The purposive sampling approach used in my study began by surveying (via an online questionnaire) all Deans, Associate Vice-Presidents (Academic or Education), Vice-Presidents (Academic or Education), and Presidents of the eleven community colleges of

This purposive sampling was designed to specifically look at educational leaders (at least those who occupy formal administrative leadership positions) within community colleges in BC. By focusing on this particular sample, I limit my respondents to a manageable population size (N=62), while at the same time focusing my research on the area of practice which is most important and relevant to me – that of community college leaders in the province in which I live and work.

In focusing on community college leaders, I expressly declined to survey leaders of universities or technical institutes (e.g., UBC, BCIT, NVIT). While Appreciative Leadership may have striking similarities between these types of institutions, I believe there may be substantial enough differences between them to warrant focusing specifically on educational leaders from one type of institution – that is, community colleges.
Three-Stage Inquiry Approach

My research methodology used a three-stage inquiry approach to gathering data. This three-stage approach was designed to allow (a) for the piloting of my questionnaire with three community college educational leaders (Stage 1), (b) a wider distribution of the questionnaire to explore how Appreciative Leadership is being used by educational leaders within their community colleges (Stage 2), and (c) a further and deeper analysis of Appreciative Leadership by interviewing questionnaire respondents (Stage 3).

This three-stage research approach is remarkably similar (by coincidence, not by design) to a research study undertaken by Strachan (1999). In her study, Strachan contacted twenty-five women who were principals of elementary schools in New Zealand. From these twenty-five women, Strachan chose to interview thirteen women who self-identified as feminists (this is very similar to how I chose nine educational leaders to interview from a sample of twenty-five questionnaire participants, based on their showing strong aspects of Appreciative Leadership) (2009, p. 311).

Stage 1 – Piloting of Appreciative Leadership Questionnaire

The first of these stages involved piloting my Appreciative Leadership questionnaire by distributing it online to three community college educational leaders. Once they completed the questionnaire, I asked the three college leaders further questions about their experiences using the questionnaire and how long it took them to complete. The purpose of this pilot stage was to ensure my questionnaire asked the correct questions (thereby helping to ensure its validity), the questions were not confusing in any manner, and the questionnaire was not too tedious to complete.

I asked Stage 1 participants the following questions about their experiences in completing the questionnaire:

1. How long did it take you to complete the questionnaire?

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3 Although I identified nine educational leaders who demonstrated strong aspects of Appreciative Leadership to interview, and although all nine individuals (100%) agreed to be interviewed, I was only able to connect with eight persons to conduct interviews.
2. Were all of the questions in the questionnaire clear? If not, which questions were not clear?

3. Were any parts or portions of the questionnaire confusing?

4. Were any parts or portions of the questionnaire annoying or uncomfortable to complete? If so, why?

5. Were any questions not included that you think should have been included? If so, what are these questions?

I received feedback from all three pilot questionnaire respondents which then allowed me to reduce the length of my questionnaire and reword some of the questions. The data gathered from these three educational leaders is included as part of my data into Appreciative Leadership in education.

**Stage 2 – Appreciative Leadership Questionnaire**

The second stage of my research involved surveying educational leaders about their use of Appreciative Leadership within their work at community colleges. In this stage, I surveyed all Deans, Associate Vice-Presidents (Academic or Education), Vice-Presidents (Academic or Education), and Presidents of the eleven community colleges of BC (N=62). I accessed these individuals by their e-mail addresses at their place of work (obtained from a director published by the Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology). This research stage was undertaken in the late Spring of 2011.

The purpose of this questionnaire was two-fold. One purpose was to begin exploring what Appreciative Leadership looks like to community college leaders in BC. The second purpose, and perhaps the more salient one, was to allow me to identify and select educational leaders who demonstrate strong aspects of Appreciative Leadership (as defined by the literature). This, in turn, would allow me to move into the third stage of my research – Appreciative Leadership interviews – with a strong sense of validity. That is, because I had carefully selected those educational leaders who were showing strong aspects of Appreciative Leadership (as defined by the literature) in their questionnaire
responses in Stage 3, I could now, with a greater degree of validity, start exploring with these educational leaders what their Appreciative Leadership practices actually look like.

The questionnaire is attached in Appendix B to this dissertation. The questions in this questionnaire were designed to address my research questions and to explore what Appreciative Leadership looks like within community colleges in BC. The following section outlines how my questionnaire was constructed.

Questionnaire Construction
To construct the questionnaire for my research, I initially took a deductive approach by looking at the components of Appreciative Intelligence and Appreciative Leadership as defined by the literature (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006; Whitney et al., 2010). Deductive reasoning is an approach that moves from the general to the more specific (sometimes referred as a “top-down” approach). In this case, I looked at the three components and four dimensions of Appreciative Intelligence (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006) and the Five Core Strategies of Appreciative Leadership (Whitney et al., 2010), which comprised “the general” in my deductive approach. Then, from these more general notions of Appreciative Leadership, I moved toward the specific aspects of my research questions, which are as follows:

1. To what extent is Appreciative Leadership present within community college settings in British Columbia?
2. How do community college leaders discuss their approach to Appreciative Leadership?
3. From the perspective of these participants, what ways do gender and power influence or otherwise affect practices of Appreciative Leadership?

Thus, in a deductive manner I moved from the general aspects of Appreciative Leadership in the literature to forming specific questions to ask my research participants through my questionnaire. The reason I took a deductive approach to forming my questions, at this point, was because I was very interested in looking more specifically at what Appreciative Leadership looks like within a post-secondary context, and moving in
a deductive manner from theory in the literature to specific questions in Appreciative Leadership was the best way to do this.

So after reviewing the Appreciative Leadership literature, I consulted with my research supervisor and together we identified 24 questions to gain a sense of what Appreciative Leadership looks like within community colleges in BC. These 24 questions were grouped by their relatedness into six sections as follows:

1. **Background Data** – this section provided background data on the participant including gender, the position they hold (President, Vice-President, or Dean), how long they’ve held the position, and whether they come from a rural or urban college.

2. **Leadership Strengths** – since Appreciative Leadership is essentially a strength-based approach to leadership, I used this section to inquire into what strengths educational leaders believe they bring to their leadership practice.

3. **Leadership Practices that Engage Faculty and Staff** – as Appreciative Leadership is about bringing out the best in people, I inquired into how educational leaders recognize the strengths of their staff, how they decide what gets valued (which also gets to issues of power within Appreciative Leadership), and how they motivate their colleagues.

4. **Dealing with Challenges** – one of the essential aspects of Appreciative Leadership (and Appreciative Inquiry, for that matter) as defined by the literature is the ability to “reframe” issues or problems into possibilities or opportunities. Thus, in this section, without specifically asking about “reframing,” I inquired about how educational leaders deal with issues or concerns brought before them. I also inquired about issues of uncertainty and ambiguity, “habitual problems,” and issues of performance and quality control. Finally, in this section I asked how educational leaders cope with cynical people, challenges, and set-backs (which get to the Appreciative Leadership notion of persistence).
5. **Shared Decision-Making/Leadership** – since I have a college background in shared leadership, I am interested in the degree to which shared leadership is part of educational leaders’ Appreciative Leadership practice. Therefore, I inquired as to participant’s views on shared leadership and how they implement it.

6. **Addressing Power Relations** – in this section of questions, I inquired as to how educational leaders conceive of power and privilege, how they deal with power relations between faculty, and how they approach conflict.

Overall, these 24 questions in six areas comprised my research questionnaire (see Appendix B for a full version of my questionnaire). As a final question in the questionnaire, for those participants who may be interested in my research, I asked if they would like to receive a copy of my dissertation once it was completed. For those participants who responded “yes,” I kept a list of their e-mail addresses and I sent them a copy of my dissertation once a final copy had been submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies at UBC.

Based on these 24 questions, my questionnaire took a decidedly qualitative approach to gathering data. The questionnaire used a non-numerical, non-statistical approach that used mostly open-ended questions to gather data. Only one Likert scale was used throughout the entire questionnaire, and this Likert scale was used to gauge the degree to which participants used a shared leadership approach – the question was: “During a typical week at work, how often do you make decisions using a shared leadership approach?” and participants were asked to respond on a scale from 1 (Never) to 6 (Always).

I decided to construct my questionnaire using open-ended questions because I wanted data on the stories, narratives, experiences, and practices of educational leaders who used an Appreciative Leadership approach. In the case where I used a Likert scale question – which was essentially to ask participants how often they used a shared leadership approach – a numerical approach was most appropriate.
Questionnaire Response (Stage 2)

After the first initial questionnaire send-out (Thursday, Aug. 25, 2011) to 62 persons in the BC community college system, two additional reminders were sent out to complete the questionnaire (Wed., Sept. 9, 2011 and Mon., Sept. 26, 2011). I then personally e-mailed all persons who had not yet responded to my questionnaire. As a result of the e-mail prompts, a number of individuals indicated they would respond to the questionnaire shortly.

In total, I received 25 responses, including the three pilot questionnaire respondents and myself (as an additional respondent). In addition to this, I also received six responses from people who completed the initial data for the questionnaire (gender, position, length of time in position, rural vs. urban) but then declined to answer the remainder of the questions. As well, I received one response from a person who answered approx. ½ of the questionnaire and one person who answered approx. ⅓ of the questionnaire. So in total I received eight responses which were either partially completed (N=2) or only the background information was included (N=6).

Out of the total of 62 questionnaire participants initially surveyed, I received a response rate of 53.2% (N=33). Out of the total of 62 surveyed participants, 40.3% responded and completed the questionnaire in full (N=25).
The responders came from a fairly well-represented background (as follows):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deans</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-Pres.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pres.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Of the respondents who either did not answer the questions (N=6) or who answered partial questions (N=2), the distribution was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deans</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-Pres.</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pres.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Through e-mailing all persons who had not yet replied to my questionnaire, I increased the response rate substantially. Due to these “encouragements,” my response rate increased almost 13% from 27.4% (N=17; Sept. 30/11) to 40.3% (N=25).

Data Analysis Methodology – Stage 2 (Appreciative Leadership Questionnaire)

To protect the anonymity of all the research participants in this research, I allocated each of the educational leaders a one-name pseudonym. These pseudonyms were chosen in a rather light-hearted manner and included popular singular names of singers, politicians, and entertainers (although not all pseudonyms were chosen in this manner); I have used these pseudonyms throughout this document. A list of the research participants and their pseudonyms is attached in Appendix F.

After I received the questionnaire data from the online surveys, I inputted the data into a questionnaire format sheet that reflected the ordering of questions within the questionnaire. This questionnaire format sheet included a column to the left where the raw data was inserted verbatim, and a corresponding column to the right which, while
originally blank, allowed me to fill in coding analysis data as I reviewed and analyzed the data. An example of a completed questionnaire coding sheet is contained in Appendix G.

I initially went through all questionnaires together and coded the responses (data) according to significant concepts, themes, and aspects of responses. This coding was placed within the right-hand column of my questionnaire format (the left-hand column was used for the raw data). I then went through all of the questionnaires a second time, notating where a participant demonstrated aspects of Appreciative Intelligence or Appreciative Leadership (see list of aspects below). When a participant demonstrated aspects of Appreciative Intelligence or Appreciative Leadership, I noted the aspect in red font within the right-hand column. This allowed me to better see which participants were showing strong aspects of Appreciative Leadership and Appreciative Intelligence.

In this manner, this study used a system of values coding. Saldaña (2009) explained, “Values coding is the application of codes onto qualitative data that reflect a participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldview” (p. 89). Values coding is particularly appropriate for those qualitative studies that “explore cultural values and intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions in case studies” (Saldaña, p. 90). Thus, I chose values coding as an opportunity to explore the participant’s interpersonal experiences of Appreciative Leadership within the context of their own leadership practice (in itself, a case study).

The values coding codes I used for my second stage of analysis were based on the aspects of Appreciative Intelligence (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006) and Appreciative Leadership (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Rader, 2010). However, at the same time, I allowed other coding aspects to emerge from the data. The Appreciative Intelligence and Appreciative Leadership codes are listed in Table 2 and Table 3 mentioned previously.

These codes served as referent points to allow me to discern the degree to which participants exhibited aspects of Appreciative Leadership. In essence, this turned out to be a form of content analysis where I specifically examined the content of the questionnaire responses to recognize which of the educational leaders were showing the strongest connection to the aspects of Appreciative Leadership mentioned above. While
not all participants exhibited all aspects of Appreciative Leadership, I chose to interview nine participants who most strongly exhibited these aspects of Appreciative Leadership based on the content analysis I had undertaken (I was unable to connect with one of these educational leaders).

Although I initially used this system of codes to organize my data (and determine the degree to which participants used aspects of Appreciative Leadership), the coding process evolved as the data collection and analysis process unfolded. As Glesne explained, “As the process of naming and locating your data bits proceeds, your categories divide and subdivide. Learn to be content, however, with your early, simple coding schemes, knowing that with use they will become appropriately complex” (Glesne, quoted in Saldaña, 2009, p. 45).

After I had coded the data, I started identifying preliminary themes emerging from the data. I identified these preliminary themes based on a preponderance of statements and comments which could be attributed to each of these themes. For example, as a participant had said, “I address conflict head-on,” and another participant stated, “I am comfortable with conflict,” and yet another said, “I feel that conflict can be very constructive” (and there were many other positive comments about conflict), I was quickly able to discern a preliminary theme around being comfortable with conflict. All the other themes were determined in a similar manner.

I then separately placed each of these preliminary themes as a heading at the top of a page and I copied the participant statements which corresponded to each of those themes below them (and the participant’s pseudonym was placed immediately after the statement to identify from whom it came). Thus I was able to identify twenty-two preliminary themes which initially seemed to be important to Appreciative Leadership as it is practiced within community colleges (the preliminary themes are listed in their entirety in Appendix A).

I then reviewed these twenty-two preliminary themes carefully and was able to combine some of them together based on similarity (e.g., debate and discourse was combined with consultation and collaboration). From these twenty-two preliminary themes, I was able
to determine that some of them had a greater degree of relevance to Appreciative Leadership in education than others (demonstrated by the number of comments attributed to each theme). Through combining similar themes, and by removing themes which had a lesser degree of saliency, I was able to consolidate the original twenty-two preliminary themes into eleven themes which show strong importance to Appreciative Leadership in education.

In an inductive manner, these eleven themes then informed the construction of my interview questions. An inductive approach is one which moves from specific observations to broader generalizations or theories. Sometimes referred to as a “bottom-up approach,” this approach is the opposite of the deductive approach used to form the questions for my Stage 2 questionnaire. Thus, the specific themes I began to identify from my questionnaire data (the “specific observations”) were used to develop the more general questions (the “broad generalizations”) I would ask/probe during my interviews. Thus, most of the questions in the interview questionnaire are directly related to one of the emerging themes coming out of the data from the questionnaire distributed by online survey in Stage 2 of this study. Only two interview questions were not formed from the themes coming out of my questionnaire data. These two questions were as follows:

- Question #12 – As I’ve gone through the process of identifying interview candidates for my research (those survey respondents showing strong aspects of Appreciative Leadership), the majority of those I’ve identified (7 out of 9 interview candidates) are women. Can you comment on why this might be the case? and

- Question #15 – Are you familiar with Appreciative Inquiry as part of a change process? If yes, what are your thoughts around the suggestion, or perhaps even the critique, that Appreciative Inquiry, and by extension, Appreciative Leadership, does not deal with issues of criticality (or critical theory) or power inequality?
Stage 3 – Appreciative Leadership Interviews

Interview Sampling Strategy
I was pleased to find 100% of my interview sample agreed to be interviewed. I was able to connect with and interview all participants but one, whom I was unable to connect with for scheduling reasons. What was particularly interesting about this sample population is that seven of the nine participants whom I identified as potential interview candidates (based on having strong aspects of Appreciative Leadership) were women. In fact, I was so intrigued by this, that I decided to ask interviewees a question as to why they thought this was the case.

These interviews offered a further, more in-depth, exploration of the responses participants gave to their initial questionnaires. One-on-one interviews (either in person or by telephone) took place where I asked participants a number of in-depth questions about their experiences with Appreciative Leadership. These interviews took place between August and October 2011.

Interview Methodology
Qualitative interviews have been used by researchers in education and health sciences as a common research methodology for decades (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). As a result, I chose research interviews as my primary research methodology for gathering in-depth data from the participants in my study whom I had identified as showing strong aspects of Appreciative Leadership. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) explained,

> The research interview is based on the conversations of daily life and is a professional conversation; it is an inter-view, where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee. An interview is literally an *inter view*, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest. (p. 2; emphasis in original)

I, too, was interested in having professional conversations with my research participants about daily experiences as Appreciative Leaders within their educational roles. Similar to how themes had inductively emerged from my questionnaire data, I anticipated themes and knowledge about Appreciative Leadership would be inductively constructed from the conversations I would have with interview participants.
Interview participants were initially contacted via e-mail and were informed their questionnaire responses indicated they held strong Appreciative Leadership components as part of their educational leadership. As a result, I invited them to be interviewed further as part of my research. If they agreed to be interviewed further, via e-mail we agreed upon a mutually acceptable date and time and the interview proceeded on that date.

In all cases except for one (which was a face-to-face interview), interviews took place by telephone. Once I had connected with the interview participant by telephone, I asked if they would be comfortable with my tape recording the interview. In all interviews, participants allowed me to record their interview session. As I undertook the interview, I used an interview question sheet which allowed me to ask the question exactly as I had it written down (and each interview participant received the same questions asked in the same manner), and the question sheet also allowed me to take occasional notes as required (since I was recording all sessions, I did not take a large amount of notes). Each interview took between 45 minutes to 1 hour 10 minutes.

Once the interview was completed, the tape recording was transcribed by me verbatim on a coding sheet that was very similar to the style of coding sheet used for the Stage 2 questionnaire data. These texts were then analyzed through two stages of coding using focused coding. As Saldaña explained (citing Charmaz, 2006), “Focused coding searches for the most frequent or significant initial codes to develop ‘the most salient categories’ in the data corpus and ‘requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense’” (2009, p. 155). Saldaña (2009) stated focused coding is particularly useful for studies which allow for “the development of major categories or themes from the data” (p. 155). Since the primary purpose of the interviews is to continue the exploration of themes which emerged from the questionnaires (Stage 2), focused coding seemed the most appropriate coding format for this type of data.
Research Reliability and Trustworthiness

Reliability for this study is centred around the concept of trustworthiness. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) explained, “reliability pertains to the consistency and trustworthiness of research findings; it is often treated in relation to the issue of whether a finding is reproducible at other times and by other researchers” (p. 245). Agar (1986) (cited in Krefting, 1991) cautioned that “terms like reliability and validity are relative to the quantitative view and do not fit the details of qualitative research” (p. 214). Some researchers suggest the issue in qualitative research is not so much whether the data is reliable or valid, but rather how reliability and validity are defined (Krefting, 1991). Leninger (1985) (cited in Krefting, 1991) suggested the term validity may be recast in a qualitative sense to mean “gaining knowledge and understanding the nature (i.e., the meaning, attributes, and characteristics) of the phenomenon under study” (p. 215). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) noted, although reliability is important, “a strong emphasis on reliability may counteract creative innovation and variability. These are more likely to follow when interviewers are allowed to follow their own interview styles and to improvise along the way, following up with promising new hunches” (p. 245).

Krefting (1991) suggests four aspects of trustworthiness are relevant to qualitative research: 1) truth value, 2) applicability, 3) consistency, and 4) neutrality. These aspects are important to readers to assess the value of qualitative research.

As Krefting (1991) stated with respect to qualitative research, “truth value is usually obtained from the discovery of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by informants” (p. 215). Krefting explained that internal validity is based on the assumption there is one single reality, one standard view of the world. She went on, “if this assumption is replaced by the idea of multiple realities, the researcher’s job becomes one of representing those multiple realities revealed by informants as adequately as possible” (p. 215). Lincoln and Guba (1981) referred to truth value as credibility.

This perspective is consistent with the social constructivist approach of my research. That is, my study presupposes there are multiple perspectives of Appreciative Leadership in education, and given that very little is written about it, my research attempts to best represent “those multiple realities revealed by informants as adequately as possible.”
this manner, this study seeks to further define Appreciative Leadership, and focuses on what Appreciative Leadership looks like within the educational sector.

Applicability, the second aspect of trustworthiness, considers the degree to which research findings can be applied to other contexts and other settings (or other populations) – essentially it is about generalizing from the data to a larger population (Krefting, 1991). However, as Krefting explained, for qualitative research, “generalization is somewhat of an illusion because every research situation is made up of a particular researcher in a particular interaction with particular informants.

Applicability, then, is not seen as relevant to qualitative research because its purpose is to describe a particular phenomenon or experience, not to generalize to others” (p. 216).

Guba (1981) suggested applicability could also be referred to as fittingness or transferability. As Krefting (1991) explained, “research meets this criterion when the findings fit into contexts outside the study situation that are determined by the degree of similarity or goodness of fit between the two contexts” (p. 216). In the case of my research, the degree to which the findings on Appreciative Leadership may fit or transfer from the participants I considered to Appreciative Leaders in other community colleges will reflect on this research’s applicability. However, Krefting cautioned that “transferability is more the responsibility of the person wanting to transfer the findings to another situation or population than that of the researcher of the original study” (p. 216). As long as the original researcher has presented sufficient depth of material and data to allow a proper comparison, then the issue of applicability has been addressed (Krefting, 1991).

The third criterion for trustworthiness is consistency, which assesses whether the findings “would be consistent if the inquiry were replicated with the same subjects or in a similar context” (Krefting, 1991, p. 216). The quantitative data perspective on consistency, like that of internal validity, is based on the assumption that there is one, single reality, “that there is something out there to be studied that is unchanging and can be used as a benchmark” (Krefting, 1991, p. 216).
Qualitative research takes a different perspective on consistency. As Krefting (1991) explained, “The key to qualitative work is to learn from the informants rather than control for them… Qualitative research emphasizes the uniqueness of the human situation, so that variation in experience, rather than identical repetition is sought” (p. 216).

Neutrality is the fourth aspect of trustworthiness. As Krefting (1991) explained, “Neutrality refers to the degree to which the findings are a function solely of the informants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivations, and perspectives” (p. 216). Other researchers have suggested the equivalent to this is confirmability – that is, rather than looking at the neutrality of the researcher (which is very common in quantitative research), the neutrality of the data is also to be considered.

As Appreciative Leadership is a new area of research, and to address the aspect of truth value to trustworthiness, I had to think carefully about what kinds of inquiries I wanted to make of my research participants. Thus, since Appreciative Leadership is a strength-based approach to leadership, I asked a question about participant leadership strengths. Also, since Appreciative Leadership is about bringing out the best in people, I inquired into how educational leaders recognize the strengths of their staff, how they decide what gets valued, and how they motivate their colleagues. Since one of the essential aspects of Appreciative Leadership is the ability to “reframe” issues or problems into possibilities or opportunities, without specifically asking about “reframing,” I inquired about how educational leaders deal with issues or concerns brought before them. I also inquired about issues of uncertainty and ambiguity, “habitual problems,” and how educational leaders cope with cynical people, challenges, and set-backs. Since I have a college background in shared leadership, I am interested in the degree to which shared leadership is part of educational leaders’ Appreciative Leadership practice. Therefore, I asked a question as to participant’s views on shared leadership and how they implement it. Finally, since one of my original research questions asked how Appreciative Leadership addressed issues of power and privilege, I decided to ask a question as to how educational leaders conceive of power and privilege, how they deal with power relations between faculty, and how they approach conflict. In this manner, the vast majority of my questions (except the questions on shared leadership and power and privilege) were
deductively formed from the literature on Appreciative Leadership. This, in turn, helped to ensure the initial reliability and trustworthiness of the questions I would ask through my initial questionnaire distributed by online survey.

I also “tested” my questionnaire by passing it by three educational leaders for their review and comment. These three pilot-stage individuals were all seasoned educational leaders and Appreciative Leaders in their own right – one is a retired President from the US college system, another is a retired Vice-President, Education from the BC system, and the third is a Dean from a BC community college. Thus these individuals were reliable candidates through which to pilot my questionnaire. They provided me with important feedback that allowed me to reduce the number of questions and reword others for clarity and purpose.

After receiving responses on the questionnaires from my overall sample population, and after analyzing and coding the data, I began to notice a number of significant preliminary themes emerging from the data. These preliminary themes were in addition to the components and aspects of Appreciative Leadership in the literature which participants also demonstrated. These themes included such areas as productive use of conflict, evidence-based decision-making, listening soulfully, shared leadership and creating a leaderful organization, the importance of debate and discourse, servant leadership, being a positive person, removing obstacles for staff, etc. From the questionnaire data, I identified a total of 22 preliminary themes.

I then reviewed these 22 preliminary themes carefully and was able to combine some of them together based on similarity. From these 22 preliminary themes, I determined some had a greater degree of significance to Appreciative Leadership in education than others (demonstrated by the number of comments attributed to each theme). Through combining similar themes, and by removing themes which had a lesser degree of saliency, I was able to identify eleven themes which show strong importance to Appreciative Leadership in education. From these eleven themes, and using an inductive approach, I developed specific interview questions to have a further conversation about Appreciative Leadership with participants whom I would interview.
So whereas the questions in my questionnaire were developed using a deductive approach, moving from the generality of Appreciative Leadership in the literature to the specifics of Appreciative Leadership in education, my interview questions were formed the opposite way. For the interview questions I used an inductive approach to draw general questions from the specific themes which had emerged from the questionnaire data. The results of the interview process – the data – were then able to “complete the circle” (Figure 3) by informing the emerging literature on Appreciative Leadership. This line of question construction (see Figure 3 below) allowed me to maintain a high level of reliability around my research process about Appreciative Leadership.

![Figure 3 – Appreciative Leadership Research Process](image)

I undertook the third stage of my research after I had gathered the questionnaire data and had undertaken data analysis. Using the data accumulated from the individual questionnaires, I identified nine individuals whose responses indicate they took a strong Appreciative Leadership approach to their work within their community college. To
determine who this case study sample would be (i.e., to locate the nine individuals who took an Appreciative Leadership approach to their work at their community college), I analyzed the questionnaire responses using a content analysis approach to see which participants aligned themselves with the aspects of Appreciative Intelligence (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006) and Appreciative Leadership (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Rader, 2010) and I chose the nine individuals who showed the strongest aspects of Appreciative Leadership. Thus the individuals I chose to interview were already showing strong tendencies towards Appreciative Leadership.

As I attempted to connect with the interview participants to see if they were interested in continuing on with the research, I was very pleased to find 100% of the participants I contacted were interested in being interviewed. To me, this was a strong indication these interview participants were interested in leadership studies, and they were potentially intrigued by this emerging area of leadership called “Appreciative Leadership in education.”

What I found particularly interesting about this interview sample population is that seven of the nine participants I identified as potential interview candidates (based on having strong aspects of Appreciative Leadership) were women. In fact, I was so intrigued by this finding that I decided to ask interviewees a question as to why they thought this was the case, and this data became the basis of one of my empirical assertions (that Appreciative Leadership is a gendered form of leadership practice).

A Caution on the Use of Data in this Study
All data presented in this study refers to Appreciative Leadership in education (rather than other employment contexts). So when data is presented on Appreciative Leadership, it refers to Appreciative Leadership in the context of education, and particularly in post-secondary education at community colleges. Furthermore, the data presented in this study on Appreciative Leadership refers to the data gathered primarily from the participants surveyed and interviewed through my research. As a result, the findings in this study are provincial in nature (both “provincial” in the sense that the data applies to a rather small sample of people who participated in this research, and “Provincial” in the sense that this data applies only to educational leaders within the province of BC).
another way, the data in this study applies to the Appreciative Leadership practices of the participants who participated in the questionnaires or the interviews of this study.

Chapter Summary
This study used a quantitative research methodology informed by social constructivism. Social constructivism suggests there is no single, universal reality of the world. Rather, social constructivism recognizes that people come from multiple realities and have multiple perspectives on the world around them based on their background, values, culture, perceptions, and life experiences. Using purposive sampling to gather information-rich cases to be examined and researched, the study produces something new and unique to our understanding of Appreciative Leadership in education.

As qualitative research, this study does not purport to generalize its findings to other people or groups of people. Rather, this study instead generalizes to theory and to practice. That is, as Appreciative Leadership is an emerging field of leadership studies, this study adds and expands upon that theory (and indeed, the practice of Appreciative Leadership) by giving a greater degree of understanding and insight into how Appreciative Leadership applies to the context of education.

This study undertook a three-stage inquiry approach involving a pilot stage, then a questionnaire/survey was distributed to educational leaders throughout British Columbia, and finally, interview participants were selected based upon their tendencies to use Appreciative Leadership practices in their educational leadership practice. This three-stage approach is similar methodologically to other qualitative research undertaken in other parts of the world.

The questionnaire was sent out to sixty-two educational leaders during Stage 2, and I received responses from twenty-five participants (for a response rate of 40.3%). The data was then coded (using values coding) and analyzed based upon the aspects and components of Appreciative Intelligence and Appreciative Leadership. Through this analysis, I was able to discern twenty-two preliminary themes emerging from the data. These themes were later reduced to eleven themes which represented significant aspects
of the data. These eleven themes then informed the development of my interview questions for Stage 3 of my research.

This chapter then discussed the reliability and trustworthiness of this study, suggesting the data should be considered based on four aspects of trustworthiness: truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. Having reviewed the research methodology and the approaches used for this research, in the next chapter the data from the questionnaires that were distributed through Stage 2 of my research is discussed and analysed.
CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS FROM STAGE TWO QUESTIONNAIRE

In this chapter, I review and summarize the data from the questionnaires I undertook with community college educational leaders in BC (N=25). In undertaking my research, I have addressed the following research questions:

1. To what extent is Appreciative Leadership present within community college settings in British Columbia?

2. How do community college leaders in BC discuss their approach to Appreciative Leadership?

3. From the perspective of these participants, in what ways do gender and power influence or otherwise affect the practices of Appreciative Leadership?

As Table 5 below shows, the initial survey responses demonstrated that educational leaders in BC show strong Appreciative Leadership tendencies based on the original Appreciative Leadership and Appreciative Intelligence categories defined in the literature (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006; Whitney et al., 2010). As well, the data from the questionnaire supported and illustrated the empirical assertions developed in this research.

The strongest aspect of Appreciative Leadership put forward within the questionnaires is the Genius of Inclusion (206 responses were coded to this aspect). This demonstrated many educational leaders in BC (and every one of my questionnaire respondents) have a strong tendency towards being inclusive, collaborative, and consultative. These leaders encouraged faculty and staff to make substantive decisions in the areas in which they have defined responsibility, and they greatly valued debate and discourse around important issues which affected their post-secondary institution.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appreciative Leadership Aspect</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reframing</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciating the Positive</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing How the Future Unfolds from the Present</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conviction that One’s Actions Matter</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance for Uncertainty</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrepressible Resilience</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wisdom of Inquiry</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Art of Illumination</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Genius of Inclusion</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Courage of Inspiration</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Path of Integrity</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The questionnaire responses also pointed to another strong theme, which is how these leaders exercised power-with rather than power-over others (consistent with being a gendered practice of leadership). That is, when an educational leader took a shared leadership approach, she worked in collaboration with others rather than power-over (i.e., making decisions by one’s self, generally in a top-down manner). By its very nature, shared leadership involves a large degree of letting go of power and allowing others to
exercise that power to make decisions. This is very much consistent with a power-with orientation (Brunner, 2002).

The next strongest aspect was Appreciating the Positive (73 responses), showing many educational leaders in BC took a very strong strengths-based approach to their educational leadership, followed by the Art of Illumination (54 responses), showing that educational leaders in BC tried to bring out the best in the colleagues they work with, and the Courage of Inspiration and Reframing (both with 51 responses each), demonstrating many educational leaders provided a strong vision and sense of direction to their work and had the ability to reframe issues, challenges, and problems with the intent to shift to a new view of reality that leads to new outcomes and opportunities. The questionnaire data suggested Appreciative Leaders generally take a strength-based approach to their work with faculty and staff, and they were likely to continually look for creative opportunities and work with the creative ideas of their faculty and staff. This is also consistent with the empirical assertion of using a leadership approach that requires an exercise of power-with rather than power-over others.

Questionnaire responses coded to Persistence (49 responses) and the Wisdom of Inquiry (asking positive and provocative questions) (44 responses) were next in strength, and these responses (particularly asking positive and provocative questions) supported Appreciative Leaders engaging in conflict in a productive way. This was a theme which emerged very early within the questionnaire data.
Themes Arising from Questionnaire Data

Through analyzing and coding the data from my questionnaire responses, I identified twenty-two preliminary themes which initially seemed related to Appreciative Leadership as it is practiced within community colleges (the preliminary themes are listed in Appendix A). Through combining similar themes, and by removing themes which had a lesser degree of saliency, I was able distill the themes down to eleven themes which show strong importance to Appreciative Leadership in education. The themes are presented below in no ordering of priority.

Productive Use of Conflict

Participants talked about being comfortable with conflict and valuing people to express their opinions (which itself could raise conflict situations). That is, participants were not afraid to address conflict and felt the need to address it head-on. For example, Levi explained,

I am comfortable with conflict. I like people to be able to express their opinions. That way, I am also well informed of the issues. I take a lot of time to talk to people and understand what the conflict is about. I always ask if they want my opinion and I don’t expect people to always see things my way. I am comfortable with ambiguity and involving others in defining positive outcomes. (QR, Aug. 27/11)

Clinton also spoke about the importance of being comfortable with conflict:

You have to love conflict or you’re in the wrong place. I approach it as emotionally open as I can… It is critical to see conflict as the sign of health and a sign of the opportunity to gain clarity. Clarity is a difficult destination, but it is worth the effort. (QR, Sept. 6/11)

In saying “you have to love conflict,” Clinton implicitly recognized in the post-secondary environment, faculty and staff tend to have strong perspectives on issues, and they are not afraid to voice those perspectives. As a result, there was sometimes a clash of these perspectives, and Clinton recognized one must be comfortable in educational leadership with this conflict to be able to manage it well. Troy echoed this perspective when he stated, “… conflict can be very constructive. It has to be managed well, but when it is, conflict can be a very constructive force that helps move an organization forward” (QR, Sept. 8/11).
The productive use of conflict theme became important to my research because it was clearly unique. That is, in most cases, literature on conflict in educational leadership tended to focus on the rationalist approach to conflict management and conflict resolution (Hamlin and Jennings, 2007; Kane, 2004; Walton, 1987). There was very little discussion in educational leadership literature around the productive use of conflict. Nevertheless, this theme was a prominent one within the initial data I gathered through my questionnaire responses. This raised questions for me as to why some educational leaders were comfortable with conflict and others were not? How is this useful to one’s Appreciative Leadership practice? Why do Appreciative Leaders tend to see conflict as potentially productive and useful when the literature does not mention it?

**Recognize Shared Values and the “Delicate Interplay of Where Values are in Dissonance”**

Participants recognized, in the post-secondary world, they continually need to bring together powerful personalities and strong opinions and perspectives that may not be readily compatible. Stormy coined this theme when she talks about the need, in her questionnaire, for “recognizing shared values and the delicate interplay of where value sets are in dissonance” (QR, Aug. 26/11). In so doing, Stormy spoke about the delicate balance of recognizing and moving towards shared values (as a post-secondary institution) but also understanding that faculty and staff have powerful value sets, and these value sets may clash or contradict one another (be “in dissonance”).

Joy implicitly talked about the balance between shared values and individual perspectives within her department when she explained,

All of my programs have disciplinary standards of practice and codes of ethics which guides their values and how decisions are made. I have to work with each program culture and appreciate their strengths. All of the programs in my division have similar values guiding them and are based on feminist and critical social theory, phenomenology and collaborative decision-making. This is how decisions are made at the level of the programs and at the level of our division. Everyone’s voice is valued and people are encouraged to give voice in decisions. (QR, Sept. 10/11)

In this quote, Joy spoke about how her programs were based on the values of feminist and critical social theory, phenomenology, and collaborative decision-making. Yet Joy emphasized, “everyone’s voice is valued and people are encouraged to give voice in
decisions,” highlighting the potential tension inherent between shared values and individual perspectives. This theme, related to how Appreciative Leaders in education took a productive approach to the use of conflict within their work as educational leaders.

**Soulful Listening**

All of my research participants talked about the need to listen with a deep intensity to fully understand the issues and the intent of the message. Maud highlighted this perspective when she said,

> I take every opportunity to listen and am attentive to signaling behaviour, silence, non-verbals and the words people choose. Signaling behaviour gives you cues to follow up with people and get at what is really at the heart of what they say, think, or believe. (QR, Aug. 27/11)

Maud demonstrated a high level of listening when she talked about much more than simply listening to what people say – she focused on signaling behaviour, silent periods, non-verbals, and the particular words people chose to convey meaning. In taking this approach, Maud modeled a very high level of listening congruent with Martin Buber’s perspective on listening (Gordon, 2011).

While soulful listening appeared as a theme in my research, the particular aspect of “listening” was not mentioned as a singularly important component of Appreciative Leadership within the literature. Why is this? Might it be the case that listening is more important in an educational context than in corporate and business contexts?

This theme became important to my research on Appreciative Leadership in community colleges partly because of its lack of discussion in the literature on Appreciative Leadership (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006; Whitney et al., 2010) and partly because it was mentioned so often by questionnaire participants. While there was an incidental reference to listening in the literature (Whitney et al., 2010), there was no singular focus on it. However, within my initial questionnaire data, every single respondent spoke about the importance of listening. It was thus apparent to me that listening was a very important aspect of Appreciative Leadership for educational leaders.
Shared Leadership and Creating a Leaderful Organization

Many participants believed leadership takes place at all levels throughout the organization. Within this theme, there were 33 statements about shared leadership (a number of them were paragraph-style statements demonstrating a high level of importance of shared leadership to Appreciative Leadership). This spoke favourably about participants’ views of shared leadership and about how shared leadership could help engage and motivate faculty and staff in their work. For example, Levi spoke about why she liked shared leadership:

The outcome is always much, much stronger and effective. It works. I value the diversity that the other institutional leaders (administrators, faculty, students, employees) bring to the table and to the problem solving process. I don't have to define all the outcomes that fall within my portfolio. I work with highly skilled individuals who inspire and motivate me. (QR, Aug. 27/11)

Trudeau explained why he liked shared leadership:

This approach provides a basis for shared responsibility and growth with the faculty. The shared decision-making/shared leadership approach allows me to make decisions in a collaborative manner, opportunities for input from faculty, and shared responsibility of success. (QR, Aug. 27/11)

Walt talked about the need to define communities of interest and work towards consensus, as opposed to imposing his perspective and position on others: “We can’t achieve anything without the support of many other people, so the ability to build communities of interest or consensus around topics is more important than trying to impose my vision of the right answer!” (QR, Aug. 29/11).

This theme of shared leadership is an area of research I wished to explore for this study – that is, to what degree is shared leadership involved in Appreciative Leadership? Given the strength of questionnaire responses in this area, it appeared shared leadership and creating a leaderful organization was a very important aspect of Appreciative Leadership in education.
Support through Mentorship and Coaching
Participants talked about the notion of helping others grow and encouraging personal growth and development (which also related to shared leadership and creating a leaderful organization). For example, when asked how she recognizes and harnesses the strengths of her faculty and staff, Stormy talked about a number of notions of coaching and mentoring: “Consistent and appropriate feedback in tackling issues/concerns focused on how to make it better, always the positive! Asking and valuing feedback, as well as immediate public and private recognition of ideas, contributions and a job well done, no matter how large or small” (QR, Aug. 26/11). Joy offered a similar response to the same question: “Harnessing strengths of my faculty and staff requires that I sometime challenge them with learning opportunities while working alongside them. Trust that they will do a good job is fundamental to empowering people to take risks to do things differently” (QR, Sept. 10/11).

This theme was important because it is an aspect of leadership that is not commonly mentioned within the leadership literature. While there was some mention of mentorship and coaching within the literature on Appreciative Leadership (Whitney et al., 2010, pp. 72-76), it was also an important theme within my research on Appreciative Leadership in education.

Use of Power and Criticism Judiciously
Participants recognized the inherent power of their positions, the importance of power, and how it could be potentially used for harm. For instance, Levi wrote eloquently about her understanding of power and privilege and her colleague’s perception of that power and privilege:

I do value the power and privilege of my position as I have extensive resources to support both my personal vision for our institution and our collective vision. One must be very careful about understanding this power as others can experience fear given that leadership positions hold power. I try to dispel people's fears. I am cognizant to always explain before a meeting what the purpose of the meeting is and what kind of information I will be seeking at the meeting. This helps others prepare well and helps to alleviate that negative response to power and privilege. (QR, Aug. 27/11)
Walt wrote about the importance of being careful with how power is used: “To be used sparingly and gently. Use of power to force an issue is never a solution” (QR, Aug. 29/11). In this manner, Walt highlighted the importance of using power judiciously and carefully.

As well, participants talked about the need to reframe criticism in such a way that it was supportive and constructive. For example, Maud wrote about the need to use power cautiously and about the need to reframe criticism so it was not as potentially damaging:

> I use criticism very judiciously and will endeavour to reframe it in such a way that it is supportive and constructive. I find people remember one criticism long after they remember lavish heaps of praise. I work with my colleagues to reframe critical or negative comments through a positive or appreciative lens. (QR, Aug. 27/11)

Not all respondents agreed with the perspective on power and privilege, however. For example, Gloria stated,

> I do not agree with that, I empower my staff to act, sometimes they have more power than me (because they are unionized) and I'm not. I believe that power and privilege is not given in a role, it is gained in trust and good leadership (at least among the people that are following you).” (QR, Sept. 10/11)

There is often very little discussion of the concepts of position-power within the leadership literature, and there is little within the literature on Appreciative Leadership (there is some discussion on “status and authority dynamics” (Whitney et al., 2010, p. 99)). As a result, when my questionnaire participants talked about being aware of the inherent power within their positions, I realized this is an important part of Appreciative Leadership for educational leaders. So this made me wonder about the importance of power and privilege to Appreciative Leadership. How do Appreciative Leaders incorporate this recognition of power and privilege into their educational practice?
Evidence-Based Decision-Making
Participants emphasized the importance that decisions were made based on a regular and comprehensive review of relevant data and information – both qualitative and quantitative. For example, Elvis wrote about the need to ensure the “focus is on evidence-based decision-making” (QR, Aug. 25/11) and Barbie wrote that “the more evidence-based yet collaborative the approach, in my experience, the more effective the outcomes” (QR, Sept. 27/11).

Creating Opportunities for Creative Thinking
Participants valued creativity and believed in the importance of creative thinking. This made me wonder, what role does creative thinking play in Appreciative Leadership in education? For example, Barbie wrote quite simply about how she could “create spaces on a regular basis – to allow exposure to new ideas and strategies, creating forums to share successes and learnings across the College” (QR, Sept. 27/11). Further, Stormy wrote about the creative manner in which she addressed faculty concerns: “I ask what their ideas, strategies, or suggested options might be. I draw on their expertise in the area and then ask them what they would need from me to achieve a solution” (QR, Aug. 26/11).

Debate and Discourse (and Consultation and Collaboration)
Participants talked about how, as they work in the area of ideas and knowledge transfer, debate and discourse (and consultation and collaboration) became very important. They talked about the importance of consulting faculty and colleagues on a diverse range of issues and suggested this was central to their work as educational leaders. For example, when talking about how she gets her colleagues excited or motivated about a particular issue, Stormy replied: “Consultation, consultation, consultation with all areas potentially involved, integration of feedback, communication on all levels and through all channels, attention to detail and oodles of appreciation and recognition” (QR, Aug. 26/11). As well, Troy talked about the process he used for debate and discourse:

I try to ensure that everyone has an equal say, and that their perspective is continually valued. When we have "tough conversations," I try to set the context that all perspectives are to be valued, and that the process of discussing one another's perspective, is a very beneficial one. So I try to
make sure that one faculty member does not dominate conversations about various issues. (QR, Sept. 8/11)

**Student-Centred**

Participants talked about the need to keep students foremost in mind when making decisions. For example, Levi stated, “I keep students foremost in mind when making decisions and I take great care in dealing with difficult issues such as student grade appeals and complaints” (QR, Aug. 27/11). When talking about program accessibility and program quality, Troy took a student-centred perspective and wrote:

> What compels me is to ensure student satisfaction with programming, and to continually optimize accessibility for students to our courses and programs. To frame these discussions, I will typically ask questions around, “What do we need to do to make this program/course more beneficial/accessible to students?” (QR, Sept. 8/11)

**View People from a Strengths-Based Perspective**

Participants tended to focus on individual’s strengths and worked to ensure they were able to use their strengths and talents in their work. Participants did not tend to view people as those who need to be “fixed” or changed. For example, Maud stated, “I view people from a strengths perspective and work to ensure that they are able to use their strengths and talents in their work – I will work with individuals to find the right fit in the organization” (QR, Aug. 27/11). As well, Troy stated, “I take an appreciative, strengths-based approach to my work as an educational leader. I use the principles of appreciative inquiry in my work, and I often will approach issues and concerns from an appreciative perspective” (QR, Sept. 8/11).
Chapter Summary
With respect to my first question (To what extent is Appreciative Leadership present within community college settings in British Columbia?), the questionnaire responses suggested there was evidence of Appreciative Leadership being practiced in community colleges throughout BC. Furthermore, these eleven themes expanded on the components and aspects of Appreciative Leadership found in the literature. In these themes, I began to see aspects of Appreciative Leadership in education that distinguishes it from Appreciative Leadership in the corporate and business sectors.

The interview process further demonstrated Appreciative Leaders in education had a number of unique aspects of their leadership which are important to them. These unique aspects of Appreciative Leadership in education allowed me to form three empirical assertions about Appreciative Leadership in education. It is these empirical assertions which I will explore in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5 – APPRECIATIVE LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERS: THREE EMPIRICAL ASSERTIONS

Consistent with a social constructivism methodology within qualitative research, I constructed three broad empirical assertions about Appreciative Leadership in education. I have used my research questions as an additional method of developing these assertions (the research questions for this study are listed on p. 10). These empirical assertions were:

1. Appreciative Leadership is a gendered practice that requires an exercise of power-with rather than power-over others.

2. Appreciative Leadership requires that leaders see potentials and opportunities and are adept at reframing issues in this way.

3. Appreciate Leadership requires a productive, creative engagement with conflict.

To accurately present a full picture and understanding of research participant’s perspectives and beliefs, the presentation of this material relies on direct quotes from the research participants themselves to put forward each of these empirical assertions. The majority of the data around the empirical assertions used interview data and interview quotes from the participants. When I reference quotations as coming from Questionnaire Research, they are denoted with a “QR.” When quotations are from Research Interviews, they are denoted with “RI.” I have also used three figures that represent particular thematics. These figures are an attempt to present the data in ways that readers could make independent judgment about the qualitative nature of the data – hence, improving the reliability of my research.
Empirical Assertion #1 – Appreciative Leadership in Education is a Gendered Practice that Requires an Exercise of Power-with rather than Power-over Others

This query related directly to my research question: From the perspective of these participants, in what ways do gender and power influence or otherwise affect the practices of Appreciative Leadership? It also quickly led to discussions on power within educational leadership. Participants clearly noted that gender and power were important factors within Appreciative Leadership. More importantly, participants recognized the relationships between gender and power. Figure 4 illustrates these ideas.

Most research participants in this study, as they spoke about power in their educational leadership practices, tended to focus on power within the interpersonal dimensions of their work. Very few spoke about power as it related to structural dimensions of their work. To some extent, this lack of attention by my participants to structural aspects of higher education and the role they play in creating inequalities may be due to the approach I took to the interviews where I did not directly explore this area with my participants. However, the absence of commentary about structural inequalities as a dimension of power suggest further inquiry is needed.

In suggesting Appreciative Leadership is a gendered practice of leadership, research participants outlined how their leadership practices are manifest in ways that tended to be more predominant with the practices of women leaders as outlined by Brunner (2002) later in this chapter. This gendered practice is framed around a power-with perspective (as opposed to a more traditional power-over perspective) that encourages a collaborative, inclusive, consensus-building approach to leadership.

In talking about the importance of shared leadership to Appreciative Leadership, Lucy spoke about the need to allow for empowerment and self-control of her faculty and staff (at all levels) (see Figure 4). As she took this perspective, she put forth a decidedly power-with approach to leadership and talked about establishing a leaderful organization (consistent with shared leadership).

Raelin (2003) spoke at length about creating leaderful organizations, which is exactly what Lucy referred to in her quote (“people at all levels of the organization need to have
... you allow empowerment and control where you can, so people at all levels of the organization need to have the parameters within which they have the autonomy to make decisions and to carry forward with their work. If they constantly feel like they can’t do anything, like they can’t make decisions, because it’s not their job, it’s somebody higher up who’s got to make the decision, they will become disengaged and disenfranchised...

But they also need to know that this is the framework within which they’ve got the capacity and the mandate to make decisions, but they’re also going to be held accountable for them. So you can’t give them decision-making power within levels where they’re not equipped or comfortable or empowered... Because they need to know that yes, you’re going to make the decisions, but then if something goes wrong, and it’s something that needs to be fixed, you need to take accountability and responsibility for it and fix it. - Lucy

The complexity of the environments that we work in are uncontrollable and diverse. And a person who has a need for a high degree of control I think is just going to be very frustrated and ineffective within these complexities. So... being comfortable with ambiguity means that you recognize that you don’t have all the answers. That you don’t need to have all the answers. And that if you’re doing a good job of facilitation and working to people, you know, those answers will come and whether they’re yours or not, or they belong to somebody else or... they’re a group response, they are what they are... it’s really an exciting thing to be able to facilitate and really listen to what people need and then be able to provide support. - Levi

When everything’s too much the same and there’s no differing opinions, it doesn’t open to change, it doesn’t open to innovation, you become very stale in what you’re doing. So the first thing is that one has to be open to doing that. And the second thing is you have to be prepared and open to listening to other people’s points-of-view, and to accepting that the way you think, perhaps, is not the only way, that there are other ways, and there are other opinions... that’s how innovation happens. I think, an idea is presented, and it’s work that may say, you know, “hmm, it’s not exactly what I wanted to do, or where I wanted to go, but, listen to it, I’ll accept it, and then we’ll see what happens from there.” And it turns out that... it may even enrich the thinking of other individuals within that group. - Bono

... when people say, “well, you’re the Dean,” I say, “But my job as Dean is to support the work that you do, or my job as Dean is to support your success as a student,” but I really see my role as one of service. I need to articulate that clearly and make sure that people understand that’s the position where I see myself coming from... I’m not comfortable viewing leadership from a position of power. I see it more as a... position of service. - Maud

I felt like I was a woman leader in a male world, right? Which was... based in power and hierarchical. And I think what I’ve appreciated in the change in leadership over the years is that organizations are more distributed and that, the more I’ve learned about leadership and found my own comfort level with leading from a position of service, rather than power, for me that’s a comfortable place to be, that’s where I’m happiest, where I feel most valuable and valued in my work... for me work has always been about service, and... I’m not particularly comfortable in a place of authority and power... - Maud

**Figure 4 – Appreciative Leadership in education is a gendered practice that requires an exercise of power-with rather than power-over others**
the parameters within which they have autonomy to make decisions and to carry forward with their work”). His suggestion to create a leaderful organization “directly challenged the conventional view of leadership as ‘being out front’” (p. 5). Instead, leaderful organizations transform “leadership from an individual property into a new paradigm that redefines leadership as a collective practice” (p. 5). Viewing leadership as a “collective practice” is what Lucy referred to when she talked about people having the capacity to become empowered, take control, and make decisions about the areas of their work over which they have responsibility. In taking this approach, Lucy demonstrated a power-with perspective to educational leadership.

Lucy and Raelin’s (2003) approach to collaborative or collective practice was consistent with a gendered form of leadership practice. Viewing leadership as a collaborative practice (i.e., shared leadership) supported power-with notions of power, which viewed “power as a source of energy for achieving shared goals and purposes” (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. 86; emphasis added). This collaborative approach to shared goals and purposes was consistent with a “connected” approach to educational leadership – an approach which is very often practiced by women to a far greater extent than men (Cockell, 1993).

Cockell (1993) suggested shared leadership is also a gendered perspective to educational leadership. She explained that whereas men often tend to see their leadership as separate from others, women tend to take a connected leadership perspective. As Cockell (1993) explained, “Separate leaders view themselves hierarchically as leaders above or in front of their followers. They are bosses. They see themselves as separate from those they lead. They see the issues from their own point-of-view. They solve problems alone since they see themselves as the ones with the solutions” (p. 26). Alternatively, connected leaders perceive themselves as at the centre of a web rather than at the top of a hierarchy. They tend to work alongside or with those they lead. They are members of a group or team. Connected leaders see themselves as connected to those they lead. They see the issues from others’ points-of-view. They solve problems with others and recognize that others have expertise. (Cockell, 1993, p. 26)

From Cockell’s description of separate and connected leaders, Appreciative Leadership is very consistent with a connected leadership perspective which is the predominant approach taken by women in their educational leadership. That is, most Appreciative
Leaders in education work alongside those they lead, they see themselves as members of a group, they see issues from other’s points-of-view, and they solve problems in partnership with those around them who have expertise. In fact, this is the essence of shared leadership and this is why Appreciative Leaders in education tend to view shared leadership as essential to the work they do in educational leadership. Thus not only is Appreciative Leadership in education a gendered practice of leadership, but shared leadership, which is also an important aspect of Appreciative Leadership in education, is also a gendered practice of leadership.

Cockell (1993) suggested connected leaders take a very strong power-with approach to educational leadership. As she explained:

> Connected leaders use power with others. They rely on influence, rather than authority, to facilitate and empower rather than to control. They share power and, as a result, share the responsibility. Ideas are generated within appropriate settings and relationships rather than in a purely hierarchical manner of superior to subordinate. Decisions are made with others and therefore the credit for a good decision and the criticism for a bad decision are taken by all those involved. (pp. 26-27)

It is no coincidence the last sentence by Cockell above was very similar to Lucy’s perspective on shared leadership (Figure 4): “Because they need to know that yes, you’re going to make the decisions, but then if something goes wrong, and it’s something that needs to be fixed, you need to take accountability and responsibility for it and fix it” (Note: the “you’re” and “you” in this quote refers directly to Lucy’s perception of the shared leadership group making the decisions).

Lucy (Figure 4) suggested taking a collaborative, shared leadership approach helps ensure faculty and staff are able to make substantive decisions related to their areas of responsibility, which then helps ensure they remain engaged and committed to their work (otherwise, “they will become disengaged and disenfranchised”). Raelin (2003) supported this perspective: “Leaderful behaviour is inherently collaborative. It is control by the many rather than from the few. For most problems in our era, two heads are better than one” (p. 72). He went on to elaborate, a leaderful organization “builds capacity to take mutual action. It ignites the natural talent in people to contribute to the productiveness and growth of the community” (p. 72). Similar to Lucy’s point, Raelin
stated “leaderful practice requires people to be engaged – to have the ability, motivation, and confidence to participate in leadership” (p. 74).

Participant responses highlighted that shared leadership is a very important aspect of Appreciative Leadership. Shared leadership also involves being comfortable with letting go of power and letting go of the ability – and responsibility – to make decisions. Most Appreciative Leaders in education are very comfortable with shared leadership and with allowing control and decision-making responsibility to be transferred to other members of their community college. At the same time, Appreciative Leaders in education need to be cautious they use shared leadership in an authentic manner and constituents are trained in how to engage in authentic forms of shared leadership. For example, Levi warned about using shared leadership inappropriately and talked about her experience using shared leadership in a college where her colleagues did not support it. Levi explained, “… as an organization, a lot of activities that might look like they were shared leadership, that in fact, hidden behind the scene, there was almost a contempt for those perspectives” (RI #8, p. 19).

As Lucy talked about decision-making, she mentioned the need to approach shared leadership from an authentic perspective. Similar to Levi (cited above), Lucy cautioned about involving faculty and staff in decision-making in a superficial manner, or in a manner that is not according to their own requirements, only to ignore their input – something Hargreaves (1991) has referred to as “contrived collegiality.” That is, when critical institutional decisions are to be made, input is sought from faculty and staff, but in the end, the decisions are made by administrators at the administrative table with very little regard for the input from others.

Hargreaves (1991) discussed this in his article (“Contrived Collegiality: The Micropolitics of Teacher Collaboration”) where he suggested an impetus for change may come from two sources: from within the school (i.e., from teachers themselves) or from without the school (from advocates of reform). To the extent that an impetus for change comes from beyond the school, and teachers are asked to be collegial around this reform, Hargreaves argued this becomes a form of “contrived collegiality” where teachers really don’t have a full degree of input into the direction of the reform. Hargreaves further
delineated contrived collegiality by its predominate features: administratively regulated, compulsory, implementation-oriented, fixed in time and space, and predictable (see Figure 5 below). As this study demonstrates, most Appreciative Leaders in education take an approach to leadership (the opposite to “contrived collegiality”) that characterizes collaborative cultures: full input from colleagues, spontaneous, voluntary, development-oriented, pervasive across time and space, and unpredictable (that is, outcomes cannot be predicted or controlled – and this inability to predict or control outcomes relates directly to what the data suggests is the case, which is that Appreciative Leaders in education tend to be comfortable with high levels of uncertainty and ambiguity).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contrived Collegiality</th>
<th>Collaborative Cultures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little or No Input from Colleagues</td>
<td>Full Input from Colleagues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compulsory</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administratively Regulated</td>
<td>Spontaneous</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementation-Oriented</td>
<td>Development-Oriented</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fixed in Time and Space</td>
<td>Pervasive Across Time and Space</td>
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<tr>
<td>Predictable (Outcomes Controlled)</td>
<td>Unpredictable (Outcomes cannot be Controlled)</td>
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*Figure 5 – Features of Collaboration*
(adopted from Hargreaves, 1991)

There are a number of significant problems with taking a “contrived collegiality” approach. The primary problem when making decisions in this manner is that educational leaders do not effectively use the expertise or knowledge of their faculty or staff. As a result, these decisions may not be the best decisions for students or for the institution. Furthermore, in attempting to operate community colleges in an increasingly neoliberal context, where community colleges are continually asked to do more with less (often in creative and innovative ways), harnessing the creative ideas of the faculty and staff within these colleges becomes essential. If an educational leader hampers his/her ability to do this by taking a contrived collegiality approach, then the institution as a
whole suffers and it becomes very challenging to garner the trust of one’s colleagues to take an authentic shared leadership approach to leadership.

Maud warned of the dangers of a false sense of consultation, or what she referred to as “contrived collaboration” or “contrived consultation,” where “the decision has already been made and you act like you’re collaborating or consulting” (RI #3, pp. 11-12). She suggested this approach is inherently inauthentic and ultimately does more harm than good. That is, if the goal of Appreciative Leadership and shared leadership (as a distinctive part of Appreciative Leadership) is to obtain a greater degree of faculty input and involvement into decision-making (as this helps to harness the “brain-base” of faculty and staff), one of the quickest ways to turn faculty and staff away from this process is to engage them in an inauthentic approach to decision-making where their input and involvement is sought and then essentially ignored at the administrative table where decisions are being made. Bono talked about her experiences with this particular dynamic – an environment where there was not an openness or willingness to hear a diversity of ideas or opinions:

…I have made some observations about what’s happening at [college name], that I haven’t been totally comfortable with, and to be quite frank, quite disappointed in. And that’s where people don’t seem to be as open to hearing diverse ideas or to accepting discussion and, you know, to talking through things. It’s more of a matter of, this is the way it is and that’s it… So, people are afraid to speak too much, to say their opinions, to put forward varying or differing opinions because they’re fearful that it won’t be accepted in the intention that it’s meant. (RI #4, p. 1)

Bono explained the potential consequences of such a perspective: “It causes unhappiness, it causes conflict, it causes mistrust, and a whole lot of negative things” (RI #4, p. 2). This is very much contrary to the approach an Appreciative Leader in education would take. Rather than shutting down or opposing a diversity of opinions, Appreciative Leaders in education tend to seek out a diversity of perspectives and ideas. They often do this through a high degree of consultation and collaboration and through listening carefully to their colleagues.
The autocratic, top-down approach to leadership outlined by Bono was consistent with a male-oriented gendered practice of leadership. As Cockell (1993) explained, men, who tend to view themselves as “separate” leaders,

use rational approaches to decision making based on the ethic of justice and rights. They value decisiveness and objectivity. They give clear instructions to their subordinates based on policies and procedures. Valuing productivity and efficiency, they try to bring order to chaos. This type of leadership is traditional in a bureaucracy where leadership is based on position (formal leadership) and comes from the top down. (p. 26)

Thus, Bono described a dynamic (above) consistent with the need to make decisive, objective decisions in a timely manner, to bring order to the chaos of indecision, and to undertake meetings with productivity and efficiency. These are aspects of a traditional, top-down from of leadership and decision-making which are not conducive to a shared leadership approach. They are also practices of leadership associated with a “separate” and male-oriented approach to leadership.

Lucy (Figure 4) discussed another important feature of collaboration and shared leadership as an aspect of Appreciative Leadership, and that was the requirement to not only share decision-making, but also to share the accountability that goes along with shared decision-making. This is very important, for in a true shared leadership culture, individuals and groups (or teams) are accountable for the decisions being made (for better or for worse). Thus, if a decision made through shared leadership has gone awry, participants are aware of the need to take accountability, take action, and take responsibility to change the outcome (or as Lucy put it, to “fix it”).

Lucy fostered a sense of collaboration which is consistent to Brunner’s notion of equality. As Brunner stated, “I define a collaborative group as one in which all members are considered as equal in worth and importance – in other words, one in which everyone has the same fair chance to be heard, to contribute, and to be taken seriously” (2002, p. 718).

As Brunner talked about the need to be heard and to contribute, this brought forth the critical importance of listening to Appreciative Leadership. One Appreciative Leader responded to my initial survey by commenting on the critical importance to “listen
soulfully.” After talking with this questionnaire participant by telephone to determine what he meant, he explained “listening soulfully” means to listen deeply and carefully to whomever is speaking with you, to be fully present (in-the-moment), and to listen intently and with no distractions to gather vital information. Thus, an Appreciative Leader who is listening soulfully to someone in her office is not going to be distracted by an incoming phone call (she will likely ignore the call or have turned the phone off) and she will not be texting while listening to the person (again, she will likely have the cell phone turned off and stored away).

Listening soulfully was consistent with Martin Buber’s perspective:

> For Buber, to truly listen entails being present to the other, that is, responding to the other as a whole person and creating a space in which the other can speak his or her own words and meaning. When one is open to the other’s being, one does not try to speak for the other or to impose one’s own language, concepts, and interpretive schemes on the other. From Buber’s perspective, genuine listening involves encouraging the other to create his or her own meanings, which may be very different from one’s own. (Gordon, 2011, p. 207)

Thus, listening soulfully allowed Appreciative Leaders in education to fully hear and understand others’ perspectives and meanings.

Levi spoke about a power-with perspective when she discussed the uncontrollable and diverse environments of community colleges (Figure 4). As a result of these diverse and uncontrollable environments, Appreciative Leaders in education must be very comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity (or as I have heard it put: “Have a high chaos threshold”). This comfort level with uncertainty and ambiguity goes hand-in-hand with a power-with perspective and shared leadership, where decisions are being made at multiple levels, often after a great deal of consultation and collaboration, and they often take much more time than decision-making in an autocratic manner.

Brunner (2002) explained that “people who conceived of power as authority, control, or dominance over others or things most often used power to control, dominate, and be in charge and had difficulty collaborating or considering the views of others as equal to their own” (p. 696). This was very consistent with Levi’s belief (Figure 4) that those requiring a high degree of control would be very uncomfortable, frustrated, and
potentially ineffective in the complex environments of community colleges. Further, Brunner’s comments supported the inauthentic approach to shared leadership outlined above by Bono. That is, leaders who take a power-over approach often have difficulty accepting the opinions and perspectives of others – this was clearly what Bono found at her community college.

Levi also talked about Appreciative Leaders in education recognizing they don’t always “have all the answers” and that they “don’t need to have all the answers” (see Figure 4). This is very significant, for I have seen in my practice some educational leaders, when they are questioned by their peers or by their faculty, become very concerned (some might say distressed or defensive), when they don’t have the answers in public. This was very much an approach by educational leaders who see their leadership as “separate” from their colleagues (that is, an approach most often used by male leaders). These leaders tended to value decision-making that is decisive, objective, orderly, and efficient and they tended to make decisions by themselves (Cockell, 1993). As a result, they were not likely to consult with others when asked questions in public, but had expectations of themselves to “know it all” and to be able to answer any question put to them.

Where educational leaders become much more effective, in my view, is when they are able to acknowledge they don’t have all the answers and where they say to their questioner(s) in public: “You know… I’m not really sure on that question right now. But if you let me think about it over the next few days, I’ll be sure to get back to you with my thoughts and considerations.” With this response, educational leaders do not become defensive and they do not feel threatened by the fact they may not have an immediate answer. Rather, this type of response recognizes one does not necessarily have all the answers, and it implicitly acknowledges that the responder may speak with other colleagues to form an appropriate answer to the question. In fact, this is exactly what Levi suggested – that an Appreciative Leader in education, as a good facilitator, will work with others to define the answers and it really does not matter to whom the answers belong. As Cockell (1993) explained, “Connected leaders use power with others… Decisions are made with others and therefore the credit for a good decision and the criticism for a bad decision are taken by all those involved” (pp. 26-27). As mentioned
previously, a connected leadership approach is often used by women, and this again demonstrates the gendered practice of Appreciative Leadership in education.

Bono talked about the importance to Appreciative Leaders in education of seeking a diversity of opinions and perspectives in their educational leadership (Figure 4). To be successful in doing this, she suggested Appreciative Leaders in education need to be open to listen to other people’s perspectives and points-of-view (again, the critical importance of listening comes into play) and to accept that other’s perspectives and opinions may differ remarkably from one’s own. This is consistent with Buber’s conception of listening:

Buber’s conception of dialogue implies that people who are engaged in a conversation listen in such a way that they hear what the other person is actually saying and that they leave themselves open to being influenced by the other’s words. Genuine listening requires that we pay close attention to the other’s words and meaning rather than, as so often happens, thinking about and planning our own response while the other is still speaking. (Gordon, 2011, p. 217)

In my leadership experience, I have noticed when educational leaders are not able to listen well to other’s perspectives, or to open themselves to alternative ways of seeing things, this is when dissatisfaction and discontent arises from faculty and staff. I have seen this dissatisfaction and discontent evolve into faculty and staff apathy and even into a situation where faculty and staff seek to undermine the plans of educational leaders.

This approach of being open to other people’s perspectives and points-of-view is very much a process of power-with in engaging others. It allows Appreciative Leaders in education to be very collaborative and consultative with others, and ultimately, it allowed Appreciative Leaders in education to incorporate the full perspectives and opinions of others. Furthermore, by listening soulfully, or genuinely listening (as Buber proposed), Appreciative Leaders in education may also be able to fully understand other’s perspectives and values to a degree that they may not otherwise have been able.

The critical importance of listening (listening soulfully; genuine listening) is consistent with a gendered practice of Appreciative Leadership in education. Sergiovanni (2007) emphasized the importance of relationships to women in educational leadership and with it, the importance of listening: “Women spend more time with people, communicate
more, care more about individual differences, are concerned more with teachers and marginal students, and motivate more” (p. 88). With such a strong focus on communication, motivation, and relationships, listening was a critical aspect of the educational leadership of women.

Maud embraced the power-with philosophy when she stated her work as an educational leader viewed leadership from the role of service rather than as a position of power (Figure 4). This role of service allowed her to continually support the work of her faculty and staff and to support the success of her students. She stated very directly, “I’m not comfortable viewing leadership from a position of power. I see it more as a… position of service.”

Maud also talked about the gendered practice of Appreciative Leadership when she described herself as being “a woman leader in a male world” – a world which is based on a foundation of power and hierarchy. Power and hierarchy are implicit within the world of community colleges. As Cockell (1993) explained, “Bureaucratic organizations are hegemonically male. If there are men in an organization, they usually hold the highest authority positions. Since power in a bureaucracy is based on position in their hierarchy, those holding these positions are also holding the power” (p. 14). Cockell went on to describe the process of control: “Paternalism is a controlling mode where the person (male or female) in authority, the “father figure,” takes care of subordinates in exchange for their subordination. Leadership in this mode comes from the top down” (1993, p. 14).

When Maud talked about feeling like she’s a woman leader in a male world – a world of power, authority, and hierarchy – she is really describing her perspective as one of being remarkably different from these male conceptions of educational leadership. She then went on to talk about how community colleges have become more distributed over the years, meaning that decision-making has become more collaborative and consultative (perhaps as a result of more women obtaining leadership roles in community colleges). In support of this, Cockell (1993) quoted Naisbett and Aburdene (1990) who suggested “the 1990s will be the decade of women in leadership, because they see the world moving away from the ‘bureaucratic, authoritarian military model’ and towards a model
of leadership which calls for the ability to ‘coach, inspire, and gain people’s commitment’” (p. 24).

Maud also distinguished her educational leadership at one coming from a position of service, rather than from a position of power (and by this, she refers to a power-over perspective). In doing so, Maud referred to the use of power in facilitative ways, rather than a direct, controlling use of power. That is, she believed power could best be used when it is manifested through someone (Strachan, 1999; Dunlop & Goldman, 1991).

Brunner (2002) suggested power-with is a gendered form of practice because many women who obtain educational leadership positions “are more successful when they adopt female approaches to power which stress collaboration, inclusion, and consensus-building – models based on the belief that one person is not more powerful than another” (p. 701). Having said that, Brunner believed – and I would agree – that not all women take a power-with approach to educational leadership, and not all men are inclined to take a power-over approach. In fact, I have encountered women in educational leadership positions who take a very strong power-over approach to their leadership. As well, I’ve encountered a number of men who take more of a power-with approach to educational leadership. But nevertheless, a substantial number of women tend to take a more collaborative, power-with approach to their work as educational leaders, and the majority of men take a power-over approach to their work as educational leaders. As Brunner explained:

a substantial number of women have done research and written about power in a way that distinguishes power-over from power-with/to, that generally eschews applications of power-over, and that finds that power-with/to exemplifies the roles and experiences of women. This is not to say that power-with/to is an exclusively feminist idea. To be sure, male philosophers and theorists have attended to the collaborative view of power. (2002, p. 701)

Brunner (2002) suggested there is a high fidelity (although not a perfect fidelity) between one’s conception of power (e.g., whether one views power from a power-over perspective or a power-with perspective) and in their enactment of power (the doing). Thus regardless of whether a person is a man or a woman, if one has a conception of power as power-over, one is likely to enact power in a power-over orientation.
Brunner’s perspective was supported by other researchers on women in leadership. For example, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) explained that many “writers have claimed the leadership styles of women and men are different, mainly along the lines of women being less hierarchical, more cooperative and collaborative, and more oriented to enhancing others’ self-worth” (p. 782). Cockell (1993) explained many women, in their approaches to educational leadership, tend to take an approach which is “connected,” believing they do not need to be at the top of hierarchies to be influential. These educational leaders did not necessarily equate leadership with power, authority, and hierarchy, but rather equated leadership with relationships and connecting well with others. Rather than seeing leadership through the image of a hierarchy (as do many men), women tended to use “the image of a web with its interconnecting circular strands” (Cockell, p. 21).

Cockell (1993a) further outlined the differences between men’s and women’s leadership styles based on research on moral development between genders. As Cockell explained:

The literature on women’s leadership is based on research on women’s development which shows that men and women tend to reach different “highest” stages of moral development (Gilligan, 1982). Women tend to reach an ethic of care and connection which leads to empowerment or “power with,” and men tend to reach an ethic of justice and rights which leads to control or “power over.” (p. 2)

Brunner also spoke strongly about a gendered practice of leadership. In discussing the views of Miller (1993), Brunner (2002) explained:

Women have, according to Miller, traditionally enacted their power by producing change and by empowering others through their roles as mothers and teachers. Further, Miller asserts that because a woman’s identity demands that her power be regarded as neither destructive nor selfish for fear that she will be rejected, women are encouraged to use their capacities in collaborative ways that serve the needs of broader communities. (pp. 700-701)

Brunner further connected power-with perspectives, and Appreciative Leadership approaches, with a gendered practice on power:

Thus, the power-with/to model of power is not only a feminist idea that represents the experiences of women, it is an important emergent paradigm of power whose development coincides with and is necessary for the
continued maturation of authentically democratic processes in increasingly pluralistic and fragmented societies. (2002, p. 701)

Since Appreciative Leadership in education, and its strong connection to shared leadership, could be viewed as an emerging paradigm of leadership, this connects directly with what Brunner (2002) referred to as “an emergent paradigm of power” (p. 701). Furthermore, since Appreciative Leadership is a determinedly democratic process, Brunner made a strong connection between the gendered practice of a power-with model of power and Appreciative Leadership in education.

Brunner (2002) went on to address how the notions of power-with could apply to school and community college environments. She stated, “Traditional understandings of power as over others must be complemented with emerging understandings of power as with others, or as social production” (p. 702). Brunner elaborated:

In no small measure, the productive conception of power is appropriate for the pluralistic and fragmented cultures found in schools. Further, the social production notion – potentially a conception able to honor and value collective efforts involving a wide diversity of people – is an essential element in any caring school culture led by educators who wish to address social injustice. (2002, p. 702)

Thus, Brunner connected power-with conceptions of power associated with Appreciative Leadership in education to working in “the pluralistic and fragmented cultures found in schools” and community colleges. According to Brunner, not only is power-with associated with authentically democratic leadership as conceptualized by Appreciative Leadership in education, but it was also a useful approach for working within the complex environments (“pluralistic and fragmented cultures”) found in community colleges.

This section demonstrates very strongly that Appreciative Leadership in education is a gendered practice of educational leadership that requires an exercise of power-with rather than power-over others. This is supported by the fact that Appreciative Leaders in education tend to take a collaborative, inclusive, consensus-building approach to their leadership practice and they tend to share decision-making at all levels (to create a leaderful organization within their community college). Furthermore, Appreciative Leaders in education tend to be comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity as inherent to
their educational leadership practice, and they understand they “don’t need to have all the answers.” Indeed, through a collaborative process, if they don’t know the answers, Appreciative Leaders in education will often seek input from those around them who have more expertise in the area. All of these approaches to leadership speak to a gendered practice of Appreciative Leadership in education. Finally, that Appreciative Leadership in education is a gendered practice of leadership is very directly supported by the fact that seven of the nine research participants whom I interviewed – who show strong aspects of Appreciative Leadership – were women.

While the data demonstrated Appreciative Leadership in education was a gendered practice which generally took a power-with perspective, in practice many Appreciative Leaders in education likely take a mixed approach to conceptions of power (Brunner, 2002). That is, when the situation requires it (e.g., time is limited, budgetary decisions need to be made, etc.), Appreciative Leaders in education may enact power using an authoritative, top-down, power-over approach. So rather than taking a power-with approach all the time, in reality, there are likely circumstances where Appreciative Leaders in education need to take a more direct, power-over approach.
Empirical Assertion #2 – Appreciative Leadership in Education Requires that Leaders take a Strength-Based Approach to See Potentials and Opportunities and are Adept at Reframing Issues in this Way

The data to this study clearly showed Appreciative Leaders in education have a capacity to see situations from a strengths-based perspective and to see potentials and opportunities in situations before them. Further, when issues or problems arise, Appreciative Leaders were adept at re-framing these issues so they and their colleagues could view them as opportunities to be attained rather than problems to be solved.

Appreciating the Positive

For Appreciative Leaders in education to consistently see potentials and opportunities supported what Thatchenkery and Metzker (2006) defined as one of the components of Appreciative Intelligence – appreciating the positive. Thatchenkery and Metzker stated, “the term appreciation specifically refers to a process of selectivity and judgment of something’s positive value or worth” (p. 7). Appreciating the positive is when respondents demonstrate a “conscious and unconscious ability to view everyday reality – events, situations, obstacles, products, and people – with appreciation. Because they are reframing to see the positive, they often see talents and potential that others might miss” (p. 7). The implication here is that positive attributes of people or things already exist, but they “sometimes must be revealed, unlocked, or realized” by persons who seek them (p. 7).

Reframing

Reframing is another component of Appreciative Intelligence (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006). As mentioned previously, reframing is a process of seeing an issue or problem in a positive light. As part of their process of reframing, Appreciative Leaders in education tend to be very future-oriented and solutions-focused. Rather than looking to the past and determining what has gone wrong (and attempting to change it or fix it), Appreciative Leaders typically look to the future, often in partnership with their colleagues, to determine what success will look like and move toward that vision of success. As Stormy put it, “the presumption always is that people are doing their very best” (RI #5, p. 5). Thus Stormy demonstrated the Appreciative Leadership perspective of taking a very positive view on her colleagues that highly appreciates the value of their contributions.
Stormy described the future-oriented, solutions-focused approach she took with her colleagues when she provided them with feedback:

And in providing the feedback around that, it’s not in the context of “what-you-could-have-done-better,” as much as it is in the context of, “How can we help make this a better situation?” “What are the object lessons we can take away from this?” Because… you really need to have that team aspect. And “team” can be two people. (RI #5, p. 5)

Here Stormy clearly demonstrated an act of reframing. Rather than take a deficit-based approach which looks to the past (the “what-could-you-have-done-better” perspective) and tries to “fix” it, she reframed this to a future-oriented, “How can we make this a better situation?” While this perspective does, invariably, address the issues of the past, it does so by focusing on the future and taking a future-oriented, solutions-focused approach to “where do we want to be?” in the next few years (or months).

In reframing this statement, Stormy worked in partnership with her colleague and asked, “How can we help make this a better situation?” and essentially, “What can we learn from this?” (“What are the object lessons we can take away from this?”). In taking this approach, Stormy demonstrated a strong power-with perspective of working in collaboration and co-creation with her colleague.

In taking a future-oriented, solutions-focused approach, Appreciative Leaders often greatly valued their colleagues coming to them with solutions. Once again, Appreciative Leaders tended to see their colleagues as valuable contributing members of their college and they appreciated the solutions which may be presented to them. Stormy outlined this perspective:

You’re saying, “Okay, we’re a team, we do things together, you know I should have seen it. I didn’t. Thanks for catching it”… So people are coming to you with solutions it’s like, “Wow, I love your solution. This is great!” You reinforce that “coming with a way to fix something” and not focusing on how it happened or why it happened or what shouldn’t have happened. (RI #5, p. 6)

Figure 6 below illustrates participants’ ideas about developing opportunities.
...when we have to go through our external accreditations... there are different people who are brought into the process. I mean, we do work on it collectively, but different people bring their strengths to the table. Like I try to draw out those people who are really organized and those people that can get a team built and get some collegiality going and then those that are the creative, out-of-the-box thinkers, and then really draw their strengths into the process. And so, at the end of the day... we had all contributed to this process as colleagues, not one person leading it, because we all led in different ways... Shared leadership is really about figuring out where people’s strengths and passions lay and then how to harness those so that they commit willingly to the process, rather than trying to fit a square peg into a round...

- Maud

...we work to our strengths, right? And I know I work to my strengths, but there are parts of my job that I’m really good at and parts of my job that I’m not good at, and the parts of the job that I’m not very good at are a struggle for me... so knowing that that’s my bent, and understanding that we really are sort of geared to work to our strengths, that’s where our passions and our energies lay, that’s where, for me, when I’m working to my strengths, I have an inordinate, unending supply of energy to contribute to that. And so... if you can tap into people’s strengths and really identify what they are and what they can offer, then you harness the best in them, right? And then, they’re not so demoralized by the work. Really, you want them to be engaged and passionate about what they do, and happy at work... and being able to use your strengths at work every day... best supports... being happy at work.

- Maud

There are going to be, within any team, people who have strengths in certain areas. And you play to their strengths... you put in place the things that are required to minimize the areas where, or to support them, in areas where they don’t have that strength. And you don’t put them into positions where you would set them up based on a weakness rather than a strength.

- Stormy

So if you have shared leadership, yeah, you may have a point person, which rotates, and usually people pick up the lead... based on their strengths and their skill-set, but it doesn’t live with that person all the time. You have to let it go, and you have to let it move through a whole bunch of people so everyone can have that sense of being in that position and you see that in a sports team, you see that in, you know, the quarterback is not going to try to punt the ball... why would he? Because he’s probably a piss-poor kicker! You know? It’s the punter who does it, it’s the person who’s got to put the ball through the goal post. And in that instance, that person is the leader on that team. And everybody’s focus is making sure that that person can get to the ball and get it through the goal posts. That’s the focus. So, it’s not about who is the most important person.

- Stormy

Figure 6 – Appreciative Leadership in education requires that leaders take a strength-based approach to see potentials and opportunities and are adept at reframing issues in this way
In Figure 6, Stormy demonstrated how she reframed issues in this passage. Rather than focusing on why something happened or how it happened, Stormy explained she took a solutions-focused approach and tried to turn it into a positive experience.

This passage also highlighted the future-oriented approach of Appreciative Leaders in education. Rather than looking to the mistakes of the past, they look to the future of where they want to be. As Stormy stated, “the whole blame-game is just a huge waste of time and energy and everything else!” (RI #5, p. 6). This is consistent with how Appreciative Leaders continually look for the good in their colleagues:

Instead of focusing on problems, they [Appreciative Leaders] focus on solutions. They are continually looking for instances where things are going right: where quality is increasing, where customers are being satisfied, where internal processes are being managed seamlessly, and where wealth is being created. They get clear about where things are working well and they work to amplify it. They focus on increasing what is already working well. Instead of trying to compensate for weaknesses, they build on strength. Instead of criticizing and punishing people for their failures, they praise and reward people for their successes. (Bushe, 2001, pp. 156-157)

Appreciative Leaders in education valued their faculty and staff and viewed them as contributors to the organization. At the same time, the faculty and staff needed to see themselves as valued, contributing members to the organization. As Stormy explained in the work with her colleagues, “People need to feel that they’re being supported and valued… I know very few people who sit down and go, “I’m just going to do this the worst possible way I can think of” or “I’m just going to really screw this up!” (RI #5, p. 5). This, too, demonstrated Stormy was looking for, and finding, the positive aspects and positive potential in her colleagues. She took the approach that her colleagues were basically good people who wanted to do good work.

Returning to Figure 6, Maud described the various strengths of her faculty to undertake an external accreditation process for one of her programs (see Figure 6). She described taking a strengths-based approach to determine who should be on her accreditation committee – faculty who are organizers, faculty who are team players and collegial, and faculty who are creative and innovative thinkers. By considering the task at hand, and by thinking about the opportunities inherent in undertaking an external accreditation process, Maud determined specifically who should be on this particular committee.
Maud then connected the external accreditation process with her approach to shared leadership and creating a leaderful organization. She explained that everyone leads at various times (based on their particular strengths) and everyone contributes to the process. In this manner, Maud helped create a leaderful organization consistent with the writings of Raelin (2003).

Maud also talked about working to one’s strengths from a personal perspective (Figure 6). She explained that if she worked to her own personal strengths, she was able to access “an inordinate, unending supply of energy” from herself. Maud then translated this perspective to other people, and recognized that when she was able to identify and tap into other’s strengths, she could truly harness the best in them. By harnessing the best in her faculty and staff, Maud helped ensure they remain engaged, passionate, and committed to their work. As a consequence, faculty and staff are much more likely to be happy with their work (as Maud indicated). When faculty and staff are happy with their work, they are much more likely to remain at their place of employment (that is, retention of employees is enhanced). Thus, focusing on the strengths of her faculty and staff will help address the community college “skills shortage” which is one of the key reasons for the need to research Appreciative Leadership in community colleges (see page 1).

This focus on strengths could also have a dramatic impact on an organization’s “bottom line.” Clifton and Harter (2003) found, in a study of 10,885 work units in 51 different companies (comprising 308,798 total employees), the work units which scored above the median when asked the question, “At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day” were remarkably more successful than other work units. The work units which scored above the median on this question had “44 percent (1.4 times) higher probability of success on customer loyalty and employee retention, and 38 percent (1.4 times) higher probability of success on productivity measures” (p. 116). Thus, taking a strengths-based approach could have success for organizations in a number of ways, including through an enhanced bottom line and enhanced employee retention.

Stormy talked about her experience taking a strengths-based perspective (Figure 6). She explained how she supported faculty and staff strengths, while minimizing their weaknesses. In particular, she explained that she avoided placing colleagues in a
situation where they are not working to their strengths, and a weakness becomes the focus of what they are doing. In supporting faculty and staff strengths, Stormy highlighted the strong level of coaching and mentoring which is important to Appreciative Leadership in education.

When one thinks of coaching and mentoring, a person often thinks about his/her experiences with sports in junior and senior high school. However, coaching in education is very different from the junior and senior high school experience. As Zenger, Folkman, Sherwin, and Steel (2012) explained:

> Say the word coaching, and the average person instantly thinks of what he or she experienced in junior high school, high school, or college sports. One can scarcely imagine any activity where there is a higher level of flat-out autocratic leadership being practiced. The junior high and high school coach decides who will play, where they will play, when they will play, and what the game strategy will be – and often calls the specific plays during the game. (p. 115)

Zenger et al. (2012) suggested the high school example of coaching is “the complete antithesis of good coaching” in the educational context (p. 115).

The other major misconception about coaching is it involves giving advice. As Zenger and Stinnett (2010) defined coaching, it involved “Interactions that help the individual being coached to expand awareness, discover superior solutions, and make and implement better decisions” (p. 6). Nowhere in their definition do they suggest coaching involves giving advice or telling people what to do. In fact, Zenger et al. (2012) believed good coaching happened when people resolve to “talk less (not more than 20 percent of the conversation), ask more questions, listen more intently, refrain from giving advice, and plan the interview more thoroughly” (p. 116). With the emphasis on talking less, the importance of soulful listening (discussed in Empirical Assertion #1) is even more evident.

Appreciative Leaders in education often used coaching and mentoring to focus on the development of their faculty and staff. For example, Maud used her department meetings to “coach good instructional practice or when dealing with student issues or student concerns or even going through accreditation” of programs (RI #3, p. 13). The department meetings also allowed Maud and her colleagues to have “those courageous
conversations about practice and focus on how to really do things better and to serve our students well…” (RI #3, p. 13). This last statement illustrates the Appreciative Leader’s emphasis on both continuous quality improvement and on taking a student-centred approach.

One of the key challenges with taking a strength-based approach to leadership is that it could be difficult to determine what are people’s strengths. As Elvis explained, “often times, people don’t know what their strengths really are…” (RI #2, p. 10). To deal with this, Maud believed “real development, personal and professional, of folks happens through ongoing and continuous conversations” (RI #3, p. 14). Thus, it was essential for Appreciative Leaders in education to know their faculty and staff well, and to understand their aspirations in terms of professional development. As Maud explained,

… for me, that’s essential… conversations are either tailored to the faculty or department that I’m working with or to the individual member themselves. So you really need to know your people and the way to get to know those people is to have those conversations, right?… I think that constant sort of checking-in and making sure it’s an ongoing and continuous conversation and that it’s focused on what I call the big ideas, about what we do, that we don’t get bogged down in minutiae, that we do have some of those courageous conversations around philosophy and quality and concepts and outcomes… (RI #3, p. 14)

Maud has mentioned “courageous conversations” on two occasions in this study. To Maud, courageous conversations involved asking the “hard questions” about how we engaged in our work, how we best served students, and whether we needed to undertake things differently for better outcomes. These are important questions to ask of ourselves as community colleges, and they are also very difficult questions to ask of ourselves, because they directly challenge the status quo – the current manner in which we operate and serve our students. It is largely through challenging the status quo, and perhaps “bumping ourselves” outside of our comfort levels, and compelling ourselves to look at things differently (or through a different lens), that we will truly begin to innovate and undertake things differently. Thus, Appreciative Leaders in education will take the opportunity to have these “courageous conversations” and ask the “hard questions” to lead their institutions to a greater sense of innovation.
Implicit within this empirical assertion of Appreciative Leaders in education taking a strength-based approach to see potentials and opportunities and being adept at reframing issues is the whole question of values. I have sometimes been asked about Appreciative Leadership, “who determines what is valued, what is “reframed,” and what is appreciated (that is, what is determined to be “positive”)?” These are very important questions to Appreciative Leadership, and they are also very challenging questions to address.

To address the issue of what gets valued, or the “management of meaning,” Smircich and Morgan (1982) focused on “the way leadership actions attempt to shape and interpret situations to guide organizational members into a common interpretation of reality” (which is essentially what the process of reframing involves) (p. 261). They discussed this from the perspective of the relationship between figure and ground. As they explained, “leadership action involves a moving figure – a flow of actions and utterances (i.e., what leaders do) within the context of a moving ground – the actions, utterances, and general flow of experiences that constitute the situation being managed” (p. 261).

Smircich and Morgan (1982) suggested “leadership works by influencing the relationship between figure and ground, and hence the meaning and definition of the context as a whole” (p. 261). As a result, these actions by leaders “guide the attention of those involved in a situation in ways that are consciously or unconsciously designed to shape the meaning of the situation” (p. 261). This shaping of meaning of a situation is precisely what is involved when Appreciative Leaders in education attempt to reframe a particular issue. In fact, Smrichich and Morgan (1982) were precise about this process: “The actions and utterances draw attention to particular aspects of the overall flow of experience, transforming what may be complex and ambiguous into something more discrete and vested with a specific pattern of meaning” (p. 261). This “specific pattern of meaning” may be a positive, reframed perspective on a particular issue. As Smircich and Morgan (1982) explained, “this is what Schultz (1967) has referred to as ‘bracketing’ of experience, and Goffman (1974) as a ‘framing’ of experience” (p. 261).

Smircich and Morgan (1982) described how Appreciative Leaders may be able to manage meaning by reframing issues in a desired manner:
The actions and utterances of leaders frame and shape the context of action in such a way that the members of that context are able to use the meaning thus created as a point of reference for their own action and understanding of the situation.” (p. 261)

In this manner, Appreciative Leaders in education were able to reframe particular issues to allow their colleagues to “use the meaning thus created as a point of reference for their own action and understanding” of that same particular issue. In this way, Appreciative Leaders reframed an issue to shift to a new reality which might allow them to potentially see a new, positive outcome.

Even three decades before Appreciative Leadership was first conceptualized, Smircich and Morgan (1982) talked about the importance of framing (and by extension, reframing) to the importance of managing meaning within organizations: “… effective leadership rests heavily on the framing of experience of others, so that action can be guided by common conceptions of what should occur” (p, 262). Smircich and Morgan went on:

The key challenge for a leader is to manage meaning in such a way that individuals orient themselves to the achievement of desirable ends. In this endeavor the use of language, ritual, drama, stories, myths, and symbolic construction of all kinds may play an important role.” (p. 262)

This perspective is consistent with the Poetic Principle, one of the philosophical foundations of Appreciative Leadership. The Poetic Principle suggests, as with the limitless possibilities of a good piece of poetry, human organizations may be viewed as using the metaphor of an open book. As Cooperrider et al. (2005) explained, “an organization’s story is constantly being co-authored. Moreover, pasts, presents, and futures are endless sources of learning, inspiration, and interpretation” (p. 8). This principle is consistent with the use of stories, myth, and ritual to manage meaning within organizations. Almost as if they were talking specifically about reframing in Appreciative Leadership, Smircich and Morgan explained the process: “Through words and images, symbolic actions and gestures, leaders can structure attention and evoke patterns of meaning that give them considerable control over the situation to be managed” (p. 263).

However, the question of who decides what gets valued within an organization is left unanswered by Smircich and Morgan, and it is an important question for all leaders and
all educational leaders. Ultimately (at least for the purposes of this study), this question gets back to the difference between power-over and power-with leadership approaches.

Educational leaders who take a power-over approach to their work are most likely to be the principal determiners of what gets valued within their organization. Power-over educational leaders conceive of power as “dominance, authority, control, influence, or power over others and things” (Brunner, 2002, pp. 695-696). These individuals are most likely to decide, in a singular fashion, what is to be valued within their college.

On the other hand, educational leaders who take a power-with approach to their work are more likely to work closely with their colleagues to determine what gets valued. Power-with educational leaders are more likely to conceive of power as “coactive, collective, or cocreative” (Brunner, 2002, p. 699). This is where most Appreciative Leaders in education will likely find themselves. Although there will be variations within Appreciative Leaders (of course), most Appreciative Leaders in education will tend to take an approach to deciding what gets valued which involves working closely in collaboration with colleagues, being cocreative with them, and determining the future jointly. Appreciative Leadership in education is a democratic form of leadership, and while democratic forms of leadership may not always work for everyone, they may be the closest model we have to facilitating equal access to decision-making and full involvement by all constituent groups.

This section demonstrates Appreciative Leadership in education requires leaders take a strength-based approach to see potentials and opportunities and are adept at reframing issues this way. As the data shows, Appreciative Leaders in education tend to view people from a strengths-based perspective. In doing so, Appreciative Leaders in education often focus on an individual’s strengths and work to ensure those individuals are able to use their strengths and talents in their work. Appreciative Leaders in education do not generally view people as those who need to be “fixed” or changed. By connecting people to their strengths, Appreciative Leaders in education tend to harness their energy and their passions, and this has positive implications on an organization’s employee retention and their bottom line.
Appreciative Leaders in education also tend to be very future-oriented and solutions-focused. Rather than looking to the past and determining what has gone wrong (and attempting to change it), Appreciative Leaders in education looked to the future, often in partnership with their colleagues, and tried to determine what success will look like and move toward that vision of success. In taking a future-oriented, solutions-focused approach, Appreciative Leaders in education were very adept at reframing past, negative issues to present them as opportunities for future development.

Appreciative Leaders in education also greatly valued their colleagues coming to them with solutions. Appreciative Leaders in education saw their colleagues as valuable contributing members of their organization and they appreciated the solutions which might be presented to them by their colleagues.
Empirical Assertion #3 – Appreciative Leadership in Education Requires a Productive, Creative Engagement with Conflict

The data suggested Appreciative Leaders were often comfortable with conflict and tended to take a positive or productive approach to its use. Conflict was not seen as something which should be feared or avoided, or that should only happen under extreme circumstances. Rather, conflict was seen as an opportunity for learning and for re-evaluating current approaches. As Joy explained, conflict was “an opportunity to inquire into what we are doing and not accept our status quo but maybe move ourselves forward” (RI #1, p. 1). Further to this, Appreciative Leaders saw conflict as potentially healthy to an organization and stressed how that conflict is managed within the organization is important: “healthy organizations need a certain level of conflict and it’s how you manage that conflict that determines whether it’s used in a positive way or if it becomes destructive or divisive within your areas” (RI #3, p. 1).

Conflict can be viewed from two different perspectives – the cognitive and the interactional perspective (Rout & Omiko, 2007). The cognitive perspective focused on what people think or what goes on intellectually (or cognitively) in a given conflict situation. A person’s interpretation of an issue is framed by a person’s values, beliefs, schemata, attitudes, and perceptions. The cognitive perspective of conflict is based on a number of assumptions:

(i) It assumes that individuals are fundamentally goal-oriented whose capacities to use information to accomplish personal and social objectives drive their existence; (ii) People are unique; they interpret and produce messages in unique ways. Therefore, the personal characteristics of communicators play a central role in understanding conflict. (Rout & Omiko, 2007, pp. 7-8)

Note this definition also took a social constructive perspective on conflict – it suggested people were unique and how they interpreted and produced the various messages and meanings coming at them influenced the degree of conflict which might take place.
When I first started as a Dean here at the College, I walked into a very volatile situation where there was conflict on one of the faculties and... I gather the previous Dean had been fairly conflict-adverse. And so even though we had a different agenda topic, I actually stopped the meeting and addressed the conflict in the room, and named the “elephant in the room...” and felt that before we could proceed that we needed to address the issue that was causing tension at that moment, and it took a number of them by surprise. It wasn’t a pleasant period of time to go through, as some emotions were very strongly aired.

So it was working though, separating peoples’ emotions from the issue and acknowledging those emotions, and owning those emotions... by the end, after things had been aired and worked through and mediated, the calm came over the room, and people actually sat down instead of standing up and hollering, and we eventually could have a calm, sort-of focused problem-solving, and focused on solutions and really what it ended up doing was setting the tone for the faculty that conflict is not to be avoided, ‘cause I’m not conflict-averse, ‘cause I prefer when there are challenges that they are aired, and that we do so in a respectful manner.

- Maud

So when conflict occurred... I used my role as a facilitator to explore that conflict in an open setting. And I think that can be more intimidating to people. Some people are comfortable in that kind of a setting and other people aren’t. To be really successful in bringing conflict to the forefront, we really have to have the same kind of skill-set and frame of reference... It’s my experience again that in general people are quite uncomfortable with conflict, initially, but if you help them get forward in a non-threatening kind of environment, I think in the end, a lot of people are invigorated by... being able to talk with some of the issues and have some kind of common understanding after that particular event.

- Levi

I am comfortable with conflict. I like people to be able to express their opinions. That way, I am also well-informed of the issues. I take a lot of time to talk to people and understand what the conflict is about. I always ask if they want my opinion and I don't expect people to always see things my way.

- Levi

*Figure 7 – Appreciative Leadership in education requires a productive, creative engagement with conflict*
The interactional perspective of conflict suggested the interaction, or the relationship, between two or more people was the key aspect of conflict. This perspective maintained that the way an individual behaved in a given situation influenced how others would react to that same situation (Rout & Omiko, 2007). This perspective held that actions and behaviours were a series of interconnected and interrelated events. Also important to the interactional perspective was the idea of mutual influence. As Rout and Omiko (2007) explained, “Communication is not so much a product that is produced, but it is a process that is enacted. As an ongoing process, any given behaviour is influenced more by preceding behaviours than by personality and situational constraints” (p. 8).

I suggest that Appreciative Leaders in education, in taking a productive approach to conflict, viewed conflict from both perspectives – the cognitive and the interactional. That is, both perspectives on conflict were important to Appreciative Leaders at various points of their educational leadership. For example, Maud talked about her experiences with conflict when she first started at her community college (see Figure 7). She described how, when she arrived at this college, she had replaced a previous Dean who was rather “conflict-adverse.” When she first met with one of her faculties, she noticed an underlying tension and conflict in the room among the faculty members present. Rather than hold to the agenda topics, Maud stopped the meeting and addressed the conflict in the room (or as she framed it, “named the elephant in the room”). This surprised her faculty colleagues, as they had been previously accustomed to not addressing conflict directly with their previous Dean. However, in this case, as an Appreciative Leader, Maud decided to address the tension and the conflict head-on and talk about it. In taking this approach, Maud clearly demonstrates an interactional perspective toward conflict.

Maud then talked about the process she used to engage in conflict resolution with faculty. Importantly, Maud talked about the need to legitimize and acknowledge people’s emotions during a time of conflict (she talked about “acknowledging those emotions, and owning those emotions”). This once again highlights the need to be an exceptional listener as an Appreciative Leader in education (which was previously discussed under Empirical Assertion #1). As Gordon (2011) explained when discussing Buber’s
approach to listening, for individuals to listen well, they need to “listen in such a way that they hear what the other person is actually saying and that they leave themselves open to being influenced by the other’s words” (p. 217). Thus acknowledging and owning emotions is part of this intensive listening and it allows individuals to be influenced by the other’s words and the other’s perspectives and feelings. This, in turn, helps all participants to feel like they are being heard, their feelings and perspectives (and emotions) are being acknowledged and accounted for, and this will likely lead to a more productive and fruitful discussion.

In taking this approach to owning and acknowledging emotions, Maud took a cognitive perspective on conflict. That is, this approach recognized that a person’s perspective (and emotions) on an issue are framed by that person’s values, beliefs, schemata, attitudes, and perceptions. In recognizing these aspects of a conflict, Maud acknowledged the personal characteristics (and emotions) of her faculty colleagues played a central role in understanding and resolving the conflict.

Having acknowledged and owned the emotions, Maud then encouraged her faculty to separate the emotions from the issues. Maud described how this allows participants to become calm (as emotions have been separated from the issue) and to engage in discussion in a respectful, calm, and solutions-focused manner. What Maud did, then, is “set the tone for the faculty that conflict is not to be avoided” (and this gets back to her previous statements about having “courageous conversations” – by not avoiding conflict, faculty could “ask the hard questions” and address substantive issues of importance to the institution), and to encourage faculty to engage in debate and discussion around important issues (issues for which there is a high likelihood that individuals will have different perspectives) in a respectful manner (as Maud indicated, in her experience with this approach to conflict, “people actually sat down instead of standing up and hollering”). This approach highlighted the importance of managing conflict well. As an Appreciative Leader in education had indicted previously, it was “how you manage that conflict that determines whether it’s used in a positive way or if it becomes destructive or divisive within your areas” (RI #3, p. 1).
Levi also talked about taking a positive approach to conflict and focuses on the procedural aspects of resolving it (Figure 7). She suggested while many people are uncomfortable with conflict (it can be “intimidating to people”), one needed to have a strong “skill-set and frame of reference” to adequately deal with it. That is, Levi suggested people have to feel comfortable engaging in conflict in a non-threatening and safe environment and in a respectful manner. Creating an environment conducive to addressing conflict was part of the “skill set” of an Appreciative Leader in education. Based on Levi’s and Maud’s comments, this skill set involved genuine or soulfully listening (and acknowledging and owning people’s emotions), creating a respectful environment for debate and discussion, and separating the issues from personal emotions. When these aspects of engagement could be brought about, Levi suggested “…people are invigorated by bringing it [conflict] to the forefront and being able to talk with some of the issues and have some kind of common understanding” about what is being discussed and debated.

In her final quote (see Figure 7), Levi talked about being comfortable with conflict and encouraging people to express their unique perspectives and opinions. As she stated, “that way, I am also well-informed with the issues.” This again harkened back to the need for an Appreciative Leader to be a very good listener. As Gordon (2011) suggested earlier (when talking about Buber’s perspective on listening), it is very important for people to “listen in such a way that they hear what the other person is actually saying and that they leave themselves open to being influenced by the other’s words” (p. 217). This is exactly what Levi suggested – that she did not “expect people to always see things my way” and she sought to “understand what the conflict is about.” If Levi did not expect people to always see things her way, then she presumably believed people could have different perspectives or opinions and she listened actively (and genuinely) to understand what those different perspectives are (to be able to “understand what the conflict is about”).

Stormy also talked about how Appreciative Leadership facilitates conflict to allow colleagues the opportunity to voice their dissent, and thereby potentially address some of the structural inequalities in community colleges. Stormy stated Appreciative Leadership
in education provides “space for people to go, ‘You know, I’m really not sure about this. This is kind of uncomfortable for me. I need to be able to say this.’” (RI#5, p. 23). In demonstrating how Appreciative Leadership allows people to voice their opinions and perspectives, even when they are strongly contrarian perspectives, Stormy cited the example of the trades faculty at her college.

...as my diesel folks say, “You know, this is bull-shit!” (laughs). You need to be able to feel they can say it!.. it’s not going to be pushed under the carpet, and “Oh, yeah, you’re just a bunch of monkey-wrenchers. You’re not going to be able to make a decision.” That has to be heard. People have to be able to express that. (RI#5, p. 23)

In expressing this, Stormy demonstrates how Appreciative Leaders facilitate conflict to allow people to challenge power perspectives and potential structural issues at their community college.

A number of questionnaire respondents also talked about being comfortable with conflict. Troy stated, “I feel that conflict can be very constructive. It has to be managed well, but when it is, conflict can be a very constructive force that helps move an organization forward” (QR, Sept. 8, 2011). Reagan stated, “Conflict is inevitable and should be regarded as an opportunity for learning, growth, and discovery” (QR, Oct. 1, 2011). Joy brought up a key concern about ethics and argued it is unethical to avoid conflict:

In my view it is not ethical to avoid conflict as it often means that someone is being hurt and that you turn your back on them. It takes a lot of courage to deal with conflict. At the same time there is much to be learned from conflictual situations and the outcomes of going through the resolution process can assist you in improving the situation at hand. (QR, Sept. 10, 2011)

In suggesting that it may be unethical to avoid conflict, Joy took an interactional perspective of conflict. She recognized the mutual influence of the conflict on both parties to the dispute and understood the manner in which the conflict was resolved would influence how others reacted to one another and to that particular situation – again, the relational and interactional aspects of conflict management become important.

All of these Appreciative Leaders in education were comfortable with conflict and saw it as potentially constructive or productive. To them, conflict was an opportunity for learning and re-evaluating current approaches and perspectives. However, Appreciative
Leaders attested that the conflict must be managed in skillful, deliberate ways – the group must be facilitated well to explore the conflict in an open, transparent, and respectful manner. Furthermore, many Appreciative Leaders believed that conflict must be addressed – there is an ethical dimension to conflict that suggested to many Appreciative Leaders in education the conflict must be facilitated within the group of people – to not do so meant that one is turning his back on someone and this could potentially do harm.

Having this comfort level with conflict allowed Appreciative Leaders in education to have the “courageous conversations” mentioned previously in this study. These courageous conversations involved asking the “hard questions” about the work we do within the community college system – how we best serve students, how we engage in our work, and whether we need to undertake things differently for better outcomes. These are often difficult questions to ask of ourselves because they directly challenge the status quo of how we currently operate and serve our students. However, by challenging the status quo, and compelling ourselves to think creatively and approach things differently, we might find ways to innovate in what we do (through “bumping ourselves” outside of our comfort levels). Thus, Appreciative Leaders took the opportunity to have these “courageous conversations” and asked the “hard questions” to lead their institutions to a greater sense of innovation.

The experiences of these Appreciative Leaders in education countered one of the central critiques of Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership: that through the proactive focus and encouragement of a positive discourse, the potential exists for “participants’ local and grounded knowledge” to be disqualified (Grant & Humphries, 2006, p. 412). These authors explained that “through the evocation of ‘the positives’ that which might have been perceived as negative may have been ‘dismissed’, ‘overlooked’, or ‘suppressed’ in the discussion (2006, pp. 412-413). As seen from the experiences of Appreciative Leaders interviewed for this study, in their practices of educational leadership, they did not attempt to dismiss, overlook, or suppress any information having to do with conflict or conflicting perspectives. Rather, these Appreciative Leaders embraced conflict and used it to the benefit of their organization. They supported what Zenger, Folkman, Sherwin, and Steel (2012) believed when they suggested, “Good
decisions are more likely to occur when there is an open exploration of conflicting points of view” (p. 111).

Chapter Summary
In this chapter, I explored in more depth the evidence found in my study regarding these three empirical assertions. These three empirical assertions were not intended to provide “proof” that Appreciative Leadership in education must absolutely be this way (and conform to these three empirical assertions). Rather this data is meant to generalize to the emerging theory of Appreciative Leadership as it now stands, to further define and expand how it may apply to educational leadership. As mentioned previously, only three books have been written on Appreciative Leadership, and none of these three have a focus on post-secondary education (they all tend to focus on the business and corporate sectors). As a result, these empirical assertions are meant to begin “broadening the conversation” about Appreciative Leadership and begin defining what it looks like within educational settings.

As Firestone (1993) explained, “to generalize to a theory is to provide evidence that supports (but does not definitively prove) that theory” (p. 17). Thus, the three empirical assertions put forward in this study are meant to provide evidence that supports Appreciative Leadership, and further defines the theory within the context of educational settings.

Having reviewed the three empirical assertions made by this study, this paper now concludes its findings and proposes possibilities for further research. This will be done in the next, and final, chapter.
CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the findings of this research and discusses these findings relative to the research questions posed through this study. The chapter also discusses limitations to this research, potential opportunities for further research, and a brief discussion of personal reflections on my leadership practice.

This study began by exploring two separate, but interrelated, aspects of leadership which are of concern to post-secondary leadership – 1) taking a top-down, hierarchical approach to decision-making (and avoiding a shared leadership approach) and 2) taking a problem-focused, deficit-based approach to addressing issues. There are a number of problems with taking a top-down, hierarchical approach to decision-making in community colleges. The primary problem is when making decisions in this manner, educational leaders do not effectively use the expertise or knowledge (the “brain-base”) of their faculty and staff. As a result, these decisions may not be the best decisions for students or for the community college. The main problem with taking a problem-focused, deficit-based approach to addressing issues include creating negative morale for faculty and staff, frustration trying to effect positive change, and a re-hashing or re-cycling of problems over and over within the institution. This study attempts to address these issues by focusing on a new and emerging area of leadership called Appreciative Leadership in education.

The overarching research question for my research was: From the perspective of educational leaders working within the BC community college system (using a social constructivist framework), how does their leadership practice reflect an approach to decision-making that is aligned with Appreciative Leadership and notions of shared leadership?

This research took a social constructivist approach to explore what Appreciative Leadership looks like from the perspective of community college educational leaders in BC. Social constructivism rejects universal qualities and essences of the world and believes social constructs such as leadership are developed by an individual’s experiences with the world and the manner in which they interpret those experiences. From this
perspective, leadership is seen as a social construct developed through interaction and people will differ in how they define leadership based on their background, values, experiences, and worldview.

The research methodology for this study used a three-stage inquiry approach to gather data. This three-stage approach was designed to allow (a) for the piloting of my questionnaire with three community college educational leaders (Stage 1), (b) a wider distribution of the questionnaire to explore how Appreciative Leadership is being used by educational leaders within their community colleges (Stage 2), and (c) a further and deeper analysis of Appreciative Leadership by interviewing questionnaire respondents (Stage 3). Below I summarize my findings with respect to my three research questions.

**Question #1: To What Extent is Appreciative Leadership Present within Community College Settings in British Columbia?**

Overall, my study indicates that Appreciative Leadership is a new and emerging form of leadership which can be readily identified within many community college leaders. The questionnaire data of my research shows Appreciative Leadership tendencies are strong within community college leaders in BC. While not all community college leaders demonstrate all components of Appreciative Leadership, many leaders exhibit a number of these tendencies. The strongest aspect of Appreciative Leadership shown through the questionnaires is the Genius of Inclusion (206 responses), which demonstrates educational leaders in BC have a strong tendency towards being inclusive, collaborative, and consultative. This demonstrated very strongly that shared leadership – and creating a leaderful organization – is a strong part of Appreciative Leadership in educational leaders (see Table 6).

The next strongest aspect of Appreciative Leadership as demonstrated through the questionnaires is Appreciating the Positive (73 responses), which shows that many educational leaders in BC take a very strong strength-based approach to their educational leadership. The next strongest responses are the Art of Illumination (54 responses), the Courage of Inspiration (51 responses), Reframing (51 responses), Persistence (49 responses), and the Wisdom of Inquiry (44 responses). These responses show
Appreciative Leadership tendencies are strong within educational leaders in BC community college system.

Table 6

*Shared Leadership Survey Question*

During a typical work week, how often do you make decisions using a shared leadership approach? (Choose the amount which most closely fits your approach on a weekly basis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never (1)</th>
<th>Rarely (2)</th>
<th>Occasionally (3)</th>
<th>Fairly Often (4)</th>
<th>Often (5)</th>
<th>Always (6)</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=0</td>
<td>N=0</td>
<td>N=2</td>
<td>N=6</td>
<td>N=13</td>
<td>N=1</td>
<td>N=4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Avg. = 4.59

All Appreciative Leaders in education interviewed highlight their need to incorporate shared leadership into their work and to actively seek the input of their faculty colleagues. As well, many of the questionnaire respondents to this research express a need and desire to incorporate shared leadership into their work (see Table 6 above). Since the research questionnaire used in the data collection for this study defined shared leadership as “a process whereby all members of an organization are involved in the substantive decision-making of that organization,” the data from the questionnaires and the interviews suggest shared leadership is an important part of Appreciative Leader’s educational leadership and this allow faculty to be more forthrightly involved in the substantive decision-making of their community college.

Appreciative Leaders in education tend to demonstrate shared leadership in a variety of ways. A number of Appreciative Leaders in education state they involve anyone affected in a decision to take part in that decision. Others focus on the collegial approach to working with their Department Chairs and their respective executive committees. Still other Appreciative Leaders in education speak about the need to reach out to a broad cross-section of the college community for strategic planning and the substantive decision-making that goes along with planning.
Many of the questionnaire respondents to this research demonstrate aspects of Appreciative Leadership as defined by the literature. These educational leaders are from throughout British Columbia and from a variety of positions (Presidents, Vice-Presidents, and Deans). This suggests there are pockets of Appreciative Leadership in community colleges throughout BC. While some of these educational leaders may not always take an Appreciative Leadership approach, they certainly exhibit the ability to do so if and when they chose.

Whereas many of the questionnaire respondents demonstrate aspects of Appreciative Leadership, nine individuals (eight of these were interviewed) show strong aspects of Appreciative Leadership to the extent that I referred to them as “Appreciative Leaders in education.” Once again, these leaders come from throughout the province, from north to south, and represent rural and urban colleges. However, seven of the nine individuals identified as “Appreciative Leaders” are women, leading me to propose that Appreciative Leadership in education is a gendered practice (Empirical Assertion #1 – Appreciative Leadership in education is a gendered practice that requires an exercise of power-with rather than power-over others). More about this will be discussed under the third research question – from the perspective of these participants, in what ways do gender and power influence or otherwise affect the practices of Appreciative Leadership?

As Appreciative Leadership – taking a power-with approach – allows others a fair chance to be heard and to contribute, listening becomes critically important. Therefore, Appreciative Leaders in education talk about the critical importance of listening, and refer to a process of “soulful listening,” where a person listens deeply for meaning and content, and is fully present (“in-the-moment”) to listen intently and with no distractions to gather vital information.

Appreciative Leaders in education also tend to be open to considering other people’s perspectives and points-of-view. This, in turn, allows Appreciative Leaders in education to be very collaborative and consultative with others, and ultimately, it allows Appreciative Leaders to incorporate the full perspectives and opinions of others.
As a result, I suggest Appreciative Leadership exists throughout the province, in most community colleges, and it likely exists to a greater extent within women than it does within men. To the extent that an Appreciative Leadership response was not received from a number of community colleges, I suggest this was a result of those persons declining to respond to the initial questionnaire response (and hence they were never identified as Appreciative Leaders).

**Question #2: How do Community College Leaders Discuss their Approach to Appreciative Leadership?**

This study suggests shared leadership is integral to Appreciative Leadership in education. Not only did Appreciative Leaders in education tend to be comfortable with letting go of control and decision-making, but they tend to embrace the need to reach out, to be consultative, and to gather the voices, opinions, and perspectives of their colleagues (consistent with a power-with approach).

Appreciative Leaders in education show a capacity to see situations from a strength-based perspective and to see potentials and opportunities in situations before them. Further, when issues or problems arise, Appreciative Leaders are adept at reframing these issues so they can view them as opportunities to be attained, rather than problems to be solved (Empirical Assertion #2 – Appreciative Leadership in education requires leaders take a strength-based approach to see potentials and opportunities and are adept at reframing issues in this way).

As part of their process of reframing, Appreciative Leaders in education tend to be very future-oriented and solutions-focused. That is, rather than looking to the past, finding what has gone wrong, and attempting to “fix” it, Appreciative Leaders in education typically look to the future, often in partnership with their colleagues, to determine what success will look like and move toward that vision of success. Thus, rather than looking to the mistakes of the past, Appreciative Leaders in education tend to look to the future of where they want to be.

In taking a future-oriented, solutions-focused approach, Appreciative Leaders in education often greatly value their colleagues coming to them with solutions. In doing
this, Appreciative Leaders in education tend to see their colleagues as valuable, contributing members of their organization.

Appreciative Leaders in education take a strength-based approach to working with their colleagues. In taking a strength-based approach, Appreciative Leaders are often able to harness the best in their faculty and staff, and thereby help to ensure they remained engaged, passionate, and committed to their work. When faculty and staff are happy with their work, they are much more likely to remain at their place of employment, thereby enhancing the retention of employees. Thus, focusing on the strengths of faculty and staff will help address the “skills shortage” within community colleges, which is one of the key reasons to research Appreciative Leadership in community colleges.

Question #3: From the Perspective of These Participants, In What Ways do Gender and Power Influence or Otherwise Affect the Practices of Appreciative Leadership?

The data of this study shows Appreciative Leadership in education is a gendered practice that takes a very collaborative, inclusive, consensus-building approach to leadership (Empirical Assertion #1 – Appreciative Leadership in education is a gendered practice that requires an exercise of power-with rather than power over others). Shared leadership is a prominent component of Appreciative Leadership in education. Appreciative Leaders in education tend to view leadership as a collaborative practice which supports power-with conceptions of power (consistent with shared leadership). Along with shared leadership (and shared decision-making) comes shared accountability – that is, individuals and groups are accountable for decisions they make, for better or for worse.

Appreciative Leadership is seen as a gendered form of leadership because it is consistent with conceptions of power-with, rather than power-over, others. So whereas men tend to view themselves as separate, hierarchical leaders above or in front of their colleagues (a power-over approach), women tend to see themselves as connected leaders who see themselves as the centre of a web (a power-with approach) rather than at the top of a hierarchy. Having said that, there are no absolutes here – whereas some women educational leaders take a power-over approach to their leadership, some men can also take a power-with approach. Nevertheless, a substantial number of women tend to take a
power-with approach to their work as educational leaders, and the majority of men take a power-over approach to their work as educational leaders.

This study indicates there is a high fidelity between one’s conception of power (either viewing power from a power-over perspective or a power-with perspective) and one’s enactment of power (the doing). Thus regardless of whether a person is a man or a woman, if one had a conception of power as power-over, one was likely to enact power in a power-over orientation.

While the data shows Appreciative Leadership in education is a gendered practice which generally takes a power-with perspective, in practice many Appreciative Leaders in education likely take a mixed approach to conceptions of power. That is, when the situation requires it, Appreciative Leaders in education may enact power using an authoritative, top-down, power-over approach. So rather than taking a power-with approach all the time, in reality, there are likely circumstances where Appreciative Leaders in education need to take a more direct, power-over approach.

Further, in suggesting Appreciative Leadership in education is a gendered practice, this dissertation does not explore feminist ontologies or approaches to the practice of educational leadership. Certainly, there is a wider literature within the field of feminist studies which can be incorporated into the exploration of Appreciative Leadership in education and which would be fruitful to explore in further research.

This power-with approach is very congruent with Appreciative Leadership. That is, Appreciative Leaders work alongside those they lead, they see themselves as members of a group, they are able to see issues from other’s points-of-view, and they solve problems in partnership with those around them who have expertise in that area. As they undertake their educational leadership, Appreciative Leaders tend to rely on influence rather than authority, they share power and responsibility, and they facilitate and empower others rather than seeking to control them.

Also related to power and one’s practice of Appreciative Leadership, Appreciative Leaders in education are often comfortable with conflict and tend to see it as potentially productive and beneficial (Empirical Assertion #3 – Appreciative Leadership in
education requires a productive, creative engagement with conflict). Rather than seeing conflict as something that should be feared or avoided, Appreciative Leaders in education tend to see it as an opportunity for learning and for re-evaluating current circumstances and perspectives. In addition, Appreciative Leaders in education believe conflict must be managed in skillful, deliberate ways – the group must be facilitated well to explore the conflict in an open, transparent, and respectful manner. Furthermore, many Appreciative Leaders in education believe that conflict must be addressed because there is an ethical dimension to conflict. That is, to many Appreciative Leaders in education, the conflict must be facilitated within the group – to not do so means that one is turning her back on someone and this could potentially do harm.

Through having a high comfort level with conflict, Appreciative Leaders in education are able to have “courageous conversations” about educational leadership and the work they do. These courageous conversations involve asking the “hard questions” about the work Appreciative Leaders do within the community college system – how to best serve students, how to best engage in their work, and whether they need to undertake things differently for better outcomes. These are often difficult questions to ask because they directly challenge the status quo of how community colleges currently operate and serve students. However, by challenging the status quo, and compelling themselves to think creatively and approach things differently, Appreciative Leaders in education may find ways to innovate (through “bumping themselves” outside of their comfort levels). Thus, Appreciative Leaders will take the opportunity to have these “courageous conversations” and ask the “hard questions” to lead their institutions to a greater sense of innovation.

**Appreciative Leadership and Issues of Power, Criticality, and Power Inequality**

The findings of this study and the literature suggest Appreciative Leadership generally addresses issues of power, criticality, and power inequality quite well. Appreciative Leaders in education tend to do this by feeling comfortable with conflict and with engaging discussions that may involve tension and conflict with their colleagues. As well, Appreciative Leaders generally do not “shy away” from asking the tough questions that result in challenging discussions. Appreciative Leaders in education typically encourage such discussion take place in an open, transparent, and respectful manner and
they ask that everyone’s opinion and perspective be valued. As Lucy explained, although Appreciative Leadership does allow leaders to focus on challenging issues (e.g., issues of power and inequality), one must be continually on guard that she is not avoiding the tough discussions. In dealing with these challenging discussions, Lucy explained that Appreciative Leaders are able to “bring the ugly out on the table, and see what we can do with it, to make it something you can build on” (RI#6, p. 23).

Furthermore, when an Appreciative Leader in education engages in Appreciative Inquiry as a process to direct and undertake change, the literature suggests the Appreciative Inquiry process also addresses power and inequality. While critics of Appreciative Inquiry suggest it focuses only on the positive and asks positive, future-oriented questions, others have suggested in dealing with the positive questions, AI also deals with the negative images of the past.

Having said that, there is a dearth of information in the literature about how Appreciative Leadership (or Appreciative Inquiry as a change process) addresses or directly engages with issues of race, class, or gender inequality. None of the questionnaire respondents spoke to these issues, and they were not directly brought up as a topic of conversation through the interview process. While it may be, in using a positive, strengths-based, future-oriented approach, Appreciative Leadership in education may be challenged to address these issues, it may also be that Appreciative Leadership does deal with these issues, but it does so in a discrete, subtle manner. Clearly more research is needed in this area to explore it more fully.

Much of how Appreciative Leaders in education address issues of power and criticality within the community college setting will depend, to a certain degree, on their comfort level in doing so, but also on the particular power perspectives (power-over versus power-with) they take to their educational leadership. As this paper has demonstrated, since Appreciative Leaders tend to use a power-with perspective, they are often able to address issues of power and inequality using the aspects of Appreciative Leadership which are part of this particular approach to leadership (listening soulfully, respectful and inclusive dialogue, etc.).
Chapter Summary

Appreciative Leadership, like Appreciative Inquiry, is not about completely focusing on the positive and it’s not about liking everyone. In fact, Bushe (2007) expresses concern that management consultants tend to focus on the positive aspects of Appreciative Inquiry (and Appreciative Leadership) without understanding its true generative potential. However, much more than focusing on the positive, Appreciative Leadership in education is about engaging colleagues to develop and explore new, unique, and innovative approaches to current issues. In this way, there is a strong generative capacity to Appreciative Leadership. Appreciative Leadership in education is not about liking everyone, and it’s not about agreeing with one another’s perspectives necessarily. Instead, Appreciative Leadership in education is about the ability to identify and harness the potential of colleagues and to allow that potential to come to fruition by encouraging everyone to contribute and engage in the discussion.

It must also be recognized that many of the ideas around Appreciative Leadership in education are not new ideas to leadership per se. Leadership ideas around being supportive, taking a strengths-based approach, and coaching and mentoring have been around for a long time. Having said that, this research on Appreciative Leadership in education does identify new aspects of leadership that have received very little (if any) discussion previously. Ideas such as the productive use of conflict and soulful listening are relatively new to the literature on leadership studies. Further, this research shows the strong importance of shared leadership to the practice of Appreciative Leadership.

Regardless, whether the ideas and practices around Appreciative Leadership in education are new or old, put together, these ideas begin to define and develop the emerging theory of Appreciative Leadership in education. As mentioned previously, the research questions and empirical assertions of this study are not meant to definitively prove or disprove the emerging theory of Appreciative Leadership. Rather this data is meant to generalize to the theory of Appreciative Leadership as it now stands, to further define and expand how it may apply to educational leadership. As Firestone (1993) explains, “to generalize to a theory is to provide evidence that supports (but does not definitively prove) that theory” (p. 17). Thus, the three empirical assertions put forward in this study...
are meant to provide evidence that supports Appreciative Leadership, and further defines the theory within the context of educational settings.

Like any research which purports to make empirical assertions about the subject matter it is studying, there are limitations to this particular research and this particular study. This paper will now discuss what may be some of those limitations.

**Limitations of Research**

There are a number of limitations to the current study:

- While eight interview participants were interviewed from a broad range of community colleges across the province, it would have been more useful to have more interview participants from more community colleges (or potentially all colleges) throughout the province.

- Interview participants were interviewed about their own personal perceptions of their Appreciative Leadership practices. The potential exists that participants responded in a manner in which they thought they “should” respond given the nature of the study. A step to further validate these self-perceptions on leadership would be to also interview close colleagues of these educational leaders to determine what other’s perceptions are of their leadership.

- This study researched Appreciative Leadership with educational leaders in British Columbia community colleges. It would be useful to undertake similar studies with a broader cross-section of educational leaders from a number of colleges across Canada.

- It is not the intent of this research to offer the definitive perspective on Appreciative Leadership. As Appreciative Leadership is a new and emerging field of leadership studies, this research offers and explores one particular perspective on it (and particularly how Appreciative Leadership manifests itself within post-secondary education). For example, this research did not explore structural inequalities, *per se*, and research participants were not asked questions about this particular dimension of leadership.
I also acknowledge that I have a bias for using Appreciative Inquiry as a change management process and I have a tendency toward Appreciative Leadership practices. Thus said, this particular bias and tendency could have coloured the particular approach and perspective I take on this subject matter.

Given these limitations to the study of Appreciative Leadership, and given that Appreciative Leadership is an emerging area of leadership studies, there are plenty of areas for further study and further research. This paper will next discuss what some of the areas for further research may be.

**Further Research**

Since Appreciative Leadership is an emerging area of leadership studies, the topic is ripe for further research. Potential research could be undertaken in the following areas:

**Power-with versus Power-over in Appreciative Leadership**

If Appreciative Leadership is presented as a power-with approach to leadership, is this always the case? Are there instances or circumstances in Appreciative Leadership where this is not the case? If so what are they?

**Appreciative Leadership and the Productive Use of Conflict**

In most cases, literature on conflict in educational leadership tends to focus on conflict management and conflict resolution (Hamlin and Jennings, 2007; Kane, 2004; Walton, 1987). Typically, little is discussed in educational leadership literature around the productive use of conflict. Nevertheless, this theme was a prominent one within my research. This raises questions as to why some educational leaders were comfortable with conflict and other were not? How is this useful to one’s Appreciative Leadership practice?

**International Differences in Appreciative Leadership?**

The present study examined Appreciative Leadership within one province in one country – Canada. However, one wonders if there are substantive differences between Appreciative Leaders in Canada versus Appreciative Leaders in the United States or Mexico or Europe, for example.
Appreciative Leadership and Discussions Around Race, Class, and Gender
There is a dearth of research around how Appreciative Leadership engages with issues of race, class, or gender. How are these important issues addressed through Appreciative Leadership? What mechanisms are used to explore these critical areas? More research needs to be undertaken in this area.

Personal Reflections on My Leadership Practice
This research into Appreciative Leadership in education has been very instructional for me. Over the seven years of being involved in the Ed.D. at UBC, I’ve come to view and see myself as an Appreciative Leader. I’ve long been interested in Appreciative Inquiry as a change management process, but it has only been through my doctoral studies at UBC that I’ve begun to see myself as an Appreciative Leader in education.

My research has given me further insight into what it means to be an Appreciative Leader. I have long been interested in shared leadership. In fact, I was specifically hired to work with a community college in the US based on my servant leadership perspectives and my interest in working with faculty and staff in a shared leadership capacity. My research for this study has given me great insight into how power-with versus power-over perceptions can influence this approach to shared leadership. I now understand that I’ve long practiced power-with approaches to my educational leadership, and this is why I have such an affinity for a shared leadership approach. So for me to understand my approach as a power-with perspective has been very enlightening. Further, I can see and understand how this approach is consistent with a gendered practice, as I’ve outlined it in one of my empirical assertions.

As well, the understanding of Appreciative Leaders in education being very comfortable with conflict has been very enlightening for me. I have always found myself comfortable in dealing with conflict, tension, and challenging questions in a public forum (e.g., a faculty meeting). I have noticed that, in contrast to other educational leaders I’ve seen, I do not tend to get defensive or anxious when someone questions me in public (or in private) about my decisions or my educational practice. More often, I’m likely to listen attentively, acknowledge a person’s differing perspective, and either explain why I’ve done things as I have, or suggest the comment or question is a good one that I may not
have thought about, and I will definitely have to give it some solid consideration. In this manner, I acknowledge the critique, and either fit it into my way of thinking, or suggest I need to think about it further. But this area – dealing with conflict in a productive manner – is a very unique area to leadership studies. It is an area that deserves further study and research, as I believe there is much positive understanding to come from it.

So my learning and understanding from my Ed.D. program and more specifically from my research has been very significant for me. In particular, my research has allowed me to solidify my understanding of my own leadership practices and my approaches to dealing with colleagues in a productive manner. I look forward to more fully implementing what I’ve learned and applying it to my leadership practice as an Appreciative Leader in educational leadership.

**Concluding Statement**

The foregoing study offers a social constructivist perspective on Appreciative Leadership in community college education leaders that highlights the importance of taking a power-with approach to leadership and an approach which strongly uses shared leadership perspectives. The study presents Appreciative Leadership as an emerging field of leadership studies which has much room for further research and study.
REFERENCES


144


APPENDIX A – PRELIMINARY THEMES
FROM QUESTIONNAIRE RESEARCH
After analyzing the data from my initial questionnaire responses (sent out to 62 educational leaders throughout BC), I was able to identify 22 preliminary themes which initially seemed to be important to Appreciative Leadership as it is practiced within community colleges. The preliminary themes which emerged from my survey data were as follows:

- **Productive use of conflict** – respondents talk about being comfortable with conflict and valuing people to express their opinions.
- **Evidence-based decision-making** – respondents emphasize the importance that decisions are made based on a regular and comprehensive review of relevant data and information – both qualitative and quantitative.
- **Creating opportunities for creative thinking** – respondents value creativity and believe in the importance of creative thinking.
- **Listening soulfully** – respondents talk about the need to listen with a deep intensity to fully understand the issues and the intent of the message.
- **Shared leadership and creating a leaderful organization** – respondents believe leadership takes place at all levels throughout the organization. This also relates to shared leadership, which is another emerging aspect of Appreciative Leadership in education.
- **Appreciation of a diversity of perspectives** – respondents indicate there is great value in seeking diverse perspectives on various issues and projects.
- **Recognize shared values and the “delicate interplay of where values are in dissonance”** – respondents recognize that, in the post-secondary world, they continually need to bring together powerful personalities and strong opinions and perspectives that may not be readily compatible.
- **Debate and discourse** – respondents talk about how, as they work in the area of ideas and knowledge transfer, debate and discourse become very important. This too, relates to shared leadership.
- **Consultation** – respondents talk about the importance of consulting faculty and colleagues on a diverse range of issues and suggest this is central to the work they do as educational leaders.
- **Servant leadership** – respondents talk about Robert Greenleaf’s perspective on the leader serving as a servant for those being led.

- **Removing obstacles and barriers for faculty and support staff** – respondents talk about working in partnership with faculty and support staff, and assisting them in their work by removing obstacles and barriers and getting out of their way.

- **Positive person** – respondents talk about coming to work each day with enthusiasm and a positive attitude, and supporting colleagues in a variety of ways.

- **Student-centred** – respondents talk about the need to keep students foremost in mind when making decisions about them.

- **Collaborative and consensus decision-maker** – respondents talk about the collaborative nature of their work and the need to bring various perspectives (often strong perspectives!) together.

- **Support through mentorship and coaching** – respondents talk about the notion of helping others grow and encouraging personal growth and development. This relates to shared leadership and creating a leaderful organization.

- **Exhort faculty to connect professional development to their passions and interests** – respondents talk about how they encourage professional development and encourage faculty and staff to connect this development to their own passions and interests.

- **Facilitative style** – respondents talk about being more facilitative than directive in their work. This relates to a strong coaching and mentoring perspective.

- **Patience** – respondents talk about the importance of being a patient person in the work they do as educational leaders.

- **Use of power judicially and carefully** – respondents recognize the inherent power of their positions and the importance of power and how it can be potentially used for harm.

- **Use criticism very judiciously** – respondents talk about the need to reframe criticism in such a way that it is supportive and constructive. This relates to the caution of using power judicially and carefully.

- **View people from a strengths-based perspective** – respondents tend to focus on individual’s strengths and work to ensure they are able to use their strengths and
talents in their work. Respondents do not tend to view people as those who need to be “fixed” or changed.

- **Make sure people feel valued for their contributions** – respondents talk about the need to recognize people with intention and with purpose and to ensure good work is valued and praised.

These preliminary themes were grouped and consolidated, and from these themes, I developed a series of questions to interview those respondents who demonstrated strong aspects of Appreciative Leadership (see Appendix C).
APPENDIX B – SURVEY QUESTIONS
A. INTRODUCTION TO QUESTIONNAIRE

For many of you, college leadership may be an area of interest, and in particular, how leadership is exercised in a positive and influential way. I, too, am interested in college leadership, and in particular, with Appreciative Leadership. To this end, I am undertaking a questionnaire of college educational leaders about how Appreciative Leadership may be practiced within community college settings (Appreciative Leadership can be defined as “the relational capacity to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power – to set in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance – to make a positive difference in the world” [Whitney et al., 2010, p. 3]).

Please take 30-40 minutes of your time to complete the attached questionnaire on your personal practices around educational leadership. Your responses will be kept completely anonymous, and your feedback will help greatly with understanding Appreciative Leadership in BC community colleges.

Once I gather and analyze the data generated by my questionnaires, I will then contact participants who demonstrate particular aspects of Appreciative Leadership and interview them further. Should you be interested in being contacted for an interview, please indicated this at the end of the questionnaire.

Participation in the questionnaire is completely voluntary, and if you participate, it is assumed that you are giving your full and informed consent.

A summary of the final report will be made available to anyone who requests it.

I’d like to thank you in advance for your time, and please feel free to call or e-mail me if you have any questions. Thanks so much.
A. BACKGROUND DATA

Please provide some background information about yourself:

1. Gender: Male _____ Female _____

2. What is your current position within the college at which you work? (Please simply state Dean; Vice-President, Academic [Education]; or President)
   _______________________________________________________________________

3. How long have you held this position? __________________________

4. Would you consider your college to be rural or urban?
   _______________________________________________________________________

B. LEADERSHIP STRENGTHS

5. Please comment on the key strengths, or positive aspects, of your educational leadership and why they are important. Please list as many as are applicable to your work as an educational leader.

C. LEADERSHIP PRACTICES THAT ENGAGE FACULTY AND STAFF

6. How do you recognize, access, and harness the strengths of your faculty and staff?

7. Who decides what gets valued within your educational unit or community college? How are these decisions made?

8. When you want to get your colleagues excited or motivated about a new initiative or a new project, how do you proceed to do so? Please describe.

D. DEALING WITH CHALLENGES

9. As an educational leader, how do you deal with issues of uncertainty and ambiguity in your leadership practice?

10. When faculty or support staff present you with a concern or an issue, how do you typically respond?

11. Within your college, are there any “habitual problems” which occur (“habitual problems” are those issues which are often discussed as problems over and over again within our organizations, often with the same vocabularies and metaphors)? If so, how do you deal with these habitual problems? Please describe.
12. What is it that compels you to ask questions about the performance of your division or educational area? How do you frame the inquiry to address these issues?

13. There are many times when educational leaders take action hoping it would resolve an issue, but the outcomes are not what they had hoped. What has been your experience of this? Please give an example, if you want, of how you have responded to outcomes that were not what you expected.

14. Assume within your division or educational area that you have a colleague who is continually cynical or critical about any new initiative. How do you respond to this continual cynicism or critical nature? Please explain.

15. When you encounter a challenge or a set-back to one of your projects (or something that you are working on), what is likely to be your response of course-of-action?

E. SHARED DECISION-MAKING/LEADERSHIP

16. There has been increasing interest in shared decision-making/shared leadership which can be loosely defined as a process whereby all members of an organization are involved in the substantive decision-making of that organization. What are your views on this approach?

17. How would you describe your leadership in relation to this definition or notion of shared leadership (described in question #16 above)?

18. What are your primary reasons for taking a shared decision-making/shared leadership approach in your daily work? (please rank in order of priority)

19. During a typical week at work, how often do you make decisions using a shared leadership approach? (Choose the amount which most closely fits your approach on a weekly basis)

   Never (1)  Rarely (2)  Occasionally (3)  Fairly Often (4)  Often (5)  Always (6)

20. What do you consider the primary drawbacks to using a shared leadership approach?

21. How do you create space within your institution for people “on the margins” who do not often take part in the decision-making process?
F. ADDRESSING POWER RELATIONS

22. If “power” can be loosely defined as “the capacity to act” (or “getting things done”), what thoughts do you have about power and privilege as it relates to your practices as an educational leader?

23. How do you deal with power relations between faculty and/or colleagues within your division/dept.? Please describe the process (or processes) you use.

24. How do you approach conflict in your work as an educational leader?
APPENDIX C – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND CODING SHEET
THEME AREA 1: CONFLICT AND DIVERSITY (OF PERSPECTIVES)

1. The productive use of conflict and the appreciation of a diversity of perspectives is emerging as a theme in Appreciative Leadership. That is, respondents talk about being comfortable with conflict, about viewing conflict as an opportunity and as being healthy to an organization, about valuing diverse perspectives on various issues and projects, and about how they like others to be able to express their opinions and perspectives, even if they differ from the norm. Can you please discuss this further as it relates to your work as an educational leader? Please share some stories or moments in your experience as an educational leader that speaks to this issue of conflict and diversity.

2. Related to the previous question, another emerging trend is around both the recognition of shared values and the “delicate interplay of where values are in dissonance.” This perspective recognizes that, in the post-secondary world, we continually need to bring together powerful personalities and strong opinions and perspectives that may not readily be compatible. Within your work, please comment/share some stories on how you do this?

3. Another theme which has emerged from my research is the judicious and careful use of power and criticism, and the need to use criticism very carefully and perhaps even to reframe it in such a way that it is supportive and constructive. In this sense, respondents recognize the inherent power and privilege of their positions, and they recognize the importance of power and how it can potentially do harm. I’m interested in hearing more about how you think about power and privilege in your work as an educational leader.

4. Most community colleges speak to the notion of “student-centred.” What does the term “student-centred” mean for you? Can you tell me how you incorporate it into your work as an educational leader?
THEME AREA 2: DECISION-MAKING

5. Another theme of Appreciative Leadership has to do with using evidence-based decision-making. How is evidence-based decision-making important to your work as an educational leader?

6. Listening is emerging as an important aspect of Appreciative Leadership. Can you please comment on this and how listening is important to your work as an educational leader?

7. Please comment on the degree to which consultation and collaboration (and debate and discourse) are important to your work as an educational leader. How and why?

THEME AREA 3: CREATIVITY

8. What role does creative thinking play in educational leadership? Do you have an example within your practice?

9. Can you say more about performance planning, or continuous quality improvement and its relevance to your work?

THEME AREA 4: SHARED LEADERSHIP

10. How does “shared leadership” factor into your work as an educational leader? What do you do to make this happen (that is, how do you implement this)? (“Shared leadership” can be loosely defined as a process whereby all members of an organization are involved in the substantive decision-making of that organization).
11. Another theme emerging from my research is to view people from a strengths-based perspective. What does this mean for you and your work?

12. As I’ve gone through the process of identifying interview candidates for my research (those survey respondents showing strong aspects of Appreciative Leadership), the majority of those I’ve identified (7 out of 9 interview candidates) are women. Can you comment on why this might be the case?

13. How is strategic planning and having a visionary perspective (or simply “having a vision”) important to your work as an educational leader? Why is this the case?

14. Many respondents talked about the need to be comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty. Can you tell me a story about why this is the case in your work?

**CONCLUDING QUESTIONS:**

15. Are you familiar with Appreciative Inquiry as part of a change process? If yes, what are your thoughts around the suggestion, or perhaps even the critique, that Appreciative Inquiry, and by extension, Appreciative Leadership, does not deal with issues of criticality (or critical theory) or power inequality?

16. Do you have any final comments to make about how you incorporate Appreciative Leadership into your work as an educational leader? How has this interview process...
been for you? Did it address the significant aspects of Appreciative Leadership as you might expect?
APPENDIX D – INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE LETTER
Invitation to Participate

Hello, my name is Tom Weegar and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Education Studies at the University of British Columbia. I am also the Regional Director, Port Alberni and Alberni-Cayoquot Region, North Island College. Because of your position as an educational leader of a publicly funded BC college, I am writing to invite you to participate in my doctoral research. This study involves completing an online questionnaire (which will take about 30 to 40 minutes to complete). This questionnaire asks you to describe your approach and experiences with educational leadership. I hope to also interview about 10 respondents following the completion of the questionnaire to gather more in-depth stories and understandings of your leadership practices. Those interviews, either in person or via phone, will take about 1 to 2 hours of time. Central to this research is an exploration of Appreciative Leadership (Appreciative Leadership can be defined as “the relational capacity to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power – to set in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance – to make a positive difference in the world” [Whitney et al., 2010, p. 3]). The main goal of my research is to explore how and whether BC College Deans, Associate Vice-Presidents (Academic or Education), Vice-Presidents (Academic or Education), and Presidents bring some dimension of Appreciate Leadership to their leadership practices. If you have questions about the study and are interested in participating and filling out this questionnaire, please contact me within a week’s time of receiving this message.

There are no anticipated risks associated with participating in this study. There are potential benefits to participation which could include an opportunity to reflect on your leadership practice (a rare event given the demands of your work). Engaging in this research could also offer an opportunity to develop a better understanding of how to deepen certain dimensions of your leadership practice that align with an appreciative approach. If you so wish, you will be sent a copy of my dissertation.

Confidentiality is of paramount concern to this research study. Hard copies of transactions will be stored under lock and key in a private filing cabinet of the Principal Investigator. Electronic copies will be password protected and stored on my desktop.
computer at home. No documents will be kept on the internet. Each transcription and tape will be given a numerical code. The codes and links to associated files will be kept in a separate password protected electronic file. No participants or their institutions will be identified in the study. Pseudonyms will be used in the interview data. At the end of the questionnaire I have asked respondents to give their name and contact information. This will help me keep track of who has participated. This information will be kept in a separate password protected file.

The data gathered through the online questionnaire will be stored in the United States through a company called Survey Monkey. At their server location, the data center is staffed and monitored continually and the servers are kept in a locked cage. Furthermore, the data center is secured by security guards, visitor logs, and entry requirements (e.g., pass-cards and biometric recognition).

Since the web-survey company located in the USA, it is subject to U.S. laws (in particular, the US Patriot Act, which allows authorities access to the records of internet service providers). The questionnaire does not ask for personal identifiers or any information that may be used to identify you. The web-survey company servers record incoming IP addresses of the computer that you use to access the questionnaire but no connection is made between your data and your computer’s IP address. If you choose to participate in the questionnaire, you understand that your responses to the questionnaire will be stored and accessed in the USA. The security and privacy policy for the web-survey company can be found at the following link: www.surveymonkey.com.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to your employment or standing at your community college. Consent will be assumed to be given if you choose to complete the questionnaire. If you agree to participate in the second stage of the study, individual interviews, you will be sent a separate consent form to be signed prior to the interviews.

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail to RSIL@ors.ubc.ca. You can also contact my doctoral research supervisor (Principal Investigator) for this research, Dr. Shauna Butterwick, Educational Studies, UBC.

Thank you for taking the time to read this invitation. I look forward to answering your questions and hopefully including you in my doctoral research.
APPENDIX E – CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERVIEW
Consent Form

Excellence in Educational Leadership:
Appreciative Leadership within BC Community Colleges

Principal Investigator:
Dr. Shauna Butterwick, Educational Studies, UBC.

Co-Investigator(s):
Tom Weegar, Graduate Student, Ed.D. in the Faculty of Educational Studies, UBC

The data being gathered for this research is part of an Ed.D. Degree and will be published as part of a doctoral dissertation.

Sponsor:
There are no sponsors of this research study.

Purpose:
You are being invited to take part in a qualitative research project which is an inquiry of BC community college educational leaders (Deans, Associate Vice-Presidents [Education and Academic], Vice-Presidents [Education and Academic], and Presidents about their practice of Appreciative Leadership. The study will explore how educational leaders practice Appreciative Leadership and how it intersects with shared decision-making/shared leadership.

Study Procedures:
Methodologically, this study involves three stages: 1) a pilot study of my survey instrument among 3 community college educational leaders; 2) a survey of BC community college leaders (Deans, Vice-Presidents, Education [or Academic], Associate Vice-Presidents, Education, and Presidents); and 3) follow-up interviews with a select number of survey respondents where further exploration about the practices of Appreciative Leadership and shared leadership will be discussed.

The survey will require approximately 30-40 minutes to complete. If you are invited to take part in a further interview in Stage Two, these interviews will take 1-2 hours to complete.

Potential Risks:
There are no anticipated risks associated with the study procedures used in this study, which involve participants telling their stories about Appreciative Leadership and shared decision-making/shared leadership.

Given the nature of the online survey, anonymity will be provided for all participants. As well, during the interview process, all participants' responses will remain anonymous.

**Potential Benefits:**
Benefits to participants are that they may become more self-aware of their leadership practices and may become aware of their Appreciative Leadership practices. They may also potentially have a better understanding of how to take a strengths-based approach to leadership.

All survey respondents will be asked if they wish to receive a copy of the dissertation written as a result of the final study. If participants wish to receive a final copy, they may include their e-mail at the end of the survey and they will be e-mailed a pdf version of the final dissertation.

**Confidentiality:**
Confidentiality is of paramount concern to this research study. Hard copies of transactions will be stored under lock and key in a private filing cabinet of the Principal Investigator. Electronic copies will be password protected and stored on the graduate student researcher's desktop computer at home. No documents will be kept on the internet. Each transcription and tape will be given a numerical code. The codes and links to associated files will be kept in a separate password protected electronic file.

The survey respondents and the interviewees will be identified only by Interviewee # and the places they name in their survey responses or interviews will be transcribed out so that no colleges are named or identifiable in any way.

Only the graduate student researcher and the Principal Investigator will have access to the data. If a transcriber is hired, he/she will be required to sign a confidentiality contract. No one else will have access to the data.

**Remuneration/Compensation:**
Due to a lack of research funds, there shall be no remuneration/compensation costs to participants involved in this research study.

**Contact for information about the study:**
If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Dr. Shauna Butterwick at UBC.
Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:
If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail to RSIL@ors.ubc.ca.

Consent:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to your employment or standing at your community college.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

____________________________________________________  
Subject Signature          Date

____________________________________________________
Printed Name of the Subject signing above
Pseudonyms of Research Participants Cited in this Study

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<th>Questionnaire Respondents (N=25)</th>
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A. BACKGROUND DATA

1. Gender: [Deleted]
2. Position: [Deleted]
3. Years in Position: [Deleted]
4. Rural/Urb: [Deleted]

B. LEADERSHIP STRENGTHS

5. Please comment on the key strengths, or positive aspects, of your educational leadership and why they are important. Please list as many as are applicable to your work as an educational leader.

| Having recently completed an Ed D in Higher Ed Leadership focusing on employee engagement my strengths as a leader are: | TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO LISTEN |
| - I take every opportunity to listen and am attentive to signalling behaviour, silence, non-verbals and the words people choose. Signalling behaviour gives you cues to follow up with people and get at what is really at the heart of what they say, think or believe. | BE ATTENTIVE TO SIGNALLING BEHAVIOUR |
| - View people from a strengths perspective and work to ensure that they are able to use their strengths and talents in their work – I will work with individuals to find the right fit in the organization. | FOLLOW UP WITH PEOPLE AND GET AT WHAT IS REALLY AT THE HEART OF WHAT THEY SAY, THINK, OR BELIEVE |
| - Encourage personal growth and development and provide opportunities for change. This is essential for ongoing engagement. | VIEW PEOPLE FROM A STRENGTHS PERSPECTIVE |
| - Work with individuals to find the right fit in the organization. In a Union environment, seniority often gives people the opportunity for advancement. A strengths based approach gives people the opportunity to craft the job to their best fit which increases self-efficacy. | STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH GIVES PEOPLE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CRAFT THE JOB TO THEIR BEST FIT |
| - Make sure that people feel valued for their contributions and with intention and purpose ensure that good work is recognized and praised. It is easy to overlook individual contributions if you don’t live this with intention. | WORK WITH INDIVIDUALS TO FIND THE RIGHT FIT IN THE ORGANIZATION |
| - Encourage personal growth and development and provide opportunities for change. This is essential for ongoing engagement. | ENHANCE PERSONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT |
| - Work with individuals to find the right fit in the organization. In a Union environment, seniority often gives people the opportunity for advancement. A strengths based approach gives people the opportunity to craft the job to their best fit which increases self-efficacy. | PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE |
| - Make sure that people feel valued for their contributions and with intention and purpose ensure that good work is recognized and praised. It is easy to overlook individual contributions if you don’t live this with intention. | MAKE SURE PEOPLE FEEL VALUED FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS |
| - Encourage personal growth and development and provide opportunities for change. This is essential for ongoing engagement. | ART OF ILLUMINATION |
| - Work with individuals to find the right fit in the organization. In a Union environment, seniority often gives people the opportunity for advancement. A strengths based approach gives people the opportunity to craft the job to their best fit which increases self-efficacy. | COURAGE OF INSPIRATION |
| - Make sure that people feel valued for their contributions and with intention and purpose ensure that good work is recognized and praised. It is easy to overlook individual contributions if you don’t live this with intention. | PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE |
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down in problems and deficits than to keep sight of a compelling vision and work towards it. 19 If you lose sight of the compelling vision, you lose hope and optimism. 20 Use inspirational language whenever possible and 21 take time to ensure that even my email messages are carefully crafted. A flippant message can damage trust in an instant – a message that is respectful and acknowledges expertise helps to build trusting relationships. 22 I challenge myself and my colleagues to do better and be better.

**D. LEADERSHIP PRACTICES THAT ENGAGE FACULTY AND STAFF**

6. How do you recognize, access, and harness the strengths of your faculty and staff?

24 Create the right fit – the courses they teach, the roles they undertake (coordinator, committee chair, PD activities) the

**24 CREATE THE RIGHT FIT**
### 7. Who decides what gets valued within your educational unit or community college? How are these decisions made?

| Board, with consultation, drafted the vision and mission statement. | THE BOARD, WITH CONSULTATION |
| President certainly has the most say in what gets valued – i.e. fiscal responsibility, the production. However, Deans, Directors and middle managers can certainly buffer faculty from these top down values and do what they can to connect faculty and staff more closely with meaningful work – i.e. changing lives, helping people. At the Executive Level we have a decision making model that we can point to when decisions being made are not student centered. (NAME) | PRESIDENT CERTAINLY HAS A SAY IN WHAT GETS VALUED |

### 8. When you want to get your colleagues excited or motivated about a new initiative or a new project, how do you proceed to do so? Please describe.

| First, do my research – make sure I have an idea and am well grounded in information. Then I will present it to several of my colleagues who are change oriented and committed to making the college better. I endeavour to make sure that I am not looked into a direction but identify possibilities and allow the process to evolve through the contributions of others. (NAME) | DO MY RESEARCH |

### E. DEALING WITH CHALLENGES

### 9. As an educational leader, how do you deal with issues of uncertainty and ambiguity in your leadership practice?

| I expect them. I accept them. I learn my way through them. (NAME) |

| EXPECT THEM | ACCEPT THEM | LEARN MY WAY THROUGH THEM |

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173
10. When faculty or support staff present you with a concern or an issue, how do you typically respond?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>40 Listen to make sure I understand the concern or issue fully.</th>
<th>41 Ask how they would like to see it resolved.</th>
<th>42 Brainstorm ideas together. Then I will consult with others as appropriate. I will work through a decision making model (on my bulletin board) and follow up with those concerned. My one rule is “those affected by a decision need to be involved in the decision making process”. (NAME)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11. Within your college, are there any “habitual problems” which occur (“habitual problems” are those issues which are often discussed as problems over and over again within our organizations, often with the same vocabularies and metaphors)? If so, how do you deal with these habitual problems? Please describe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>46 Union angst.</th>
<th>47 Communication challenges. I deal with them in different ways. If you keep doing what you’re doing, you’ll keep getting what you’re getting so I try to come up with different perspectives or innovative ways of approaching challenges. (Not always successfully when there is a force of been there, done that, at the executive level). It doesn’t always make for calm meetings when you are imploring people to do things differently. (NAME)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12. What is it that compels you to ask questions about the performance of your division or educational area? How do you frame the inquiry to address these issues?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>43 Seem to come from within – I ask questions about my own performance and seek to do better. I would say that I focus more on improving the relationships within my educational area so that I can better support individuals in their work than focus on ‘performance’. Performance is likely an output of people who love what they do and feel connected and valued. (NAME)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
13. There are many times when educational leaders take action hoping it would resolve an issue, but the outcomes are not what they had hoped. What has been your experience of this? Please give an example, if you want, of how you have responded to outcomes that were not what you expected.

I once supported a student who was consistently late for class by developing a learning contract with her (outlining strategies for getting her and her son organized the day before so she could get to class on time). The Department Head had followed college policy and had written a letter to withdraw the student (without as much as a single conversation with her) from the early morning classes which were problematic which would mean she would be unable to complete the program. I responded that if she was being withdrawn because her tardiness impacted her learning, then a learning plan was in order before the student would be withdrawn. I took a lot of heat for my decision from the department head, the coordinator and the faculty members. They were very angry at me for quite some time. I believe our purpose was to support students in all areas of their growth and development and supporting a single mom to gain better time management and organizational skills to foster her success seemed like the right thing to do. The anger and resentment dissipated only when the student demonstrated observable efforts to meet the terms of her learning plan. I got beat up over that one. I kept the words “do what you know in your heart to be right, for you’ll be criticized if you do, and criticized if you don’t” by my desk. (NAME)

14. Assume within your division or educational area that you have a colleague who is continually cynical or critical about any new initiative. How do you respond to this continual cynicism or critical nature? Please explain.

I don’t need to assume this! How I approach this depends on the person. I typically respond by focusing on the positive — or trying to raise an alternate viewpoint. For example, the comment was made “Our college is vanilla” which was meant in a derogatory way, insinuating that
there was nothing that differentiated it from any other, that it was bland and uninspiring. I responded that vanilla was the flavouring I used the most in my cupboard – I had the largest bottle of it. It was useful and practical. It provided the basis for some of my favourite flavours with just a little embellishment. It appeals to the widest audience. °2° I don’t try to recruit the atheists (the cynical or critical). °I focus my energies on the choir (already committed), the congregation (they are there and willing) and the heathen (with a little information, they may be persuaded). °Begin your journey and you will find companions along the way. (NAME)

TW: Nice story!

°2° I DON’T TRY TO RECRUIT THE ATHEISTS (THE CYNICAL OR CRITICAL)°
°I FOCUS MY ENERGIES ON THE CHOIR (ALREADY COMMITTED), THE CONGREGATION (THEY ARE THERE AND WILLING) AND THE HEATHEN (WITH A LITTLE INFORMATION, THEY MAY BE PERSUADED)”°
°Begin your journey and you will find companions along the way” (COURAGE OF INSPIRATION)

15. When you encounter a challenge or a set-back to one of your projects (or something that you are working on), what is likely to be your response or course-of-action?

First, °frustration. I may give in to that for a short time. Then I °begin problem solving in order to learn my way out of it and move forward. °I °expect set back and curveballs. °I °expect the unexpected so am not too dismayed when it happens. (NAME)

°FRUSTRATION°
°BEGIN PROBLEM SOLVING TO LEARN MY WAY OUT OF [THE CHALLENGE] AND MOVE FORWARD” [IRREPRESSIBLE RESILIENCE]”
°EXPECT SET BACKS AND CURVE BALLS”
°EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED”

F. SHARED DECISION-MAKING/LEADERSHIP

16. There has been increasing interest in shared decision-making/shared leadership which can be loosely defined as a process whereby all members of an organization are involved in the substantive decision-making of that organization. What are your views on this approach?

I am °supportive of a mixed approach. Definitely °those affected by decisions need to be involved in the decision. However, there are many decisions in organizations that °require quick and efficient processes – °not everyone wants to be involved. °Shared decision making to me is different from shared leadership. °I am °fully supportive of leaderful organizations. (NAME)

°SUPPORTIVE OF A MIXED APPROACH”
°THOSE AFFECTED BY THE DECISIONS NEED TO BE INVOLVED IN THEM (DEFINITELY) [SHARED LEADERSHIP] (GENIUS OF INCLUSION)”
°SOME DECISIONS REQUIRE QUICK AND EFFICIENT PROCESSES”
°NOT EVERYONE WANTS TO BE INVOLVED”
°SHARED DECISION MAKING
17. How would you describe your leadership in relationship to this definition or notion of shared leadership (described in question #16 above)?

I believe my job as Dean is to support the work of others so the more distributed the leadership is in our organization, the better we will be at delivering our mission to change lives and engage communities through the power of education. I approach leadership from the position of service rather than power. (NAME)

18. What are your primary reasons for taking a shared decision-making/shared leadership approach in your daily work? (please rank in order of priority)

- Deferring to and acknowledging the expertise of others. (NAME)

19. During a typical week at work, how often do you make decisions using a shared leadership approach? (Choose the amount which most closely fits your approach on a weekly basis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never (1)</th>
<th>Rarely (2)</th>
<th>Occasionally (3)</th>
<th>Fairly Often (4)</th>
<th>Often (5)</th>
<th>Always (6)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Often (5) (NAME)

20. What do you consider the primary drawbacks to using a shared leadership approach?

- Time. (NAME)

21. How do you create space within your institution for people "on the margins" who do not often take part in the decision-making process?

- I work on developing trust. I honour their decision to participate/not participate. I continue to provide

I develop trust

Honour decision to participate/not
opportunities. I acknowledge the contributions they make in other ways. (NAME)

```
PARTICIPATE
CONTINUE TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES (COURAGE OF INSPIRATION: ART OF ILLUMINATION)
ACKNOWLEDGE THE CONTRIBUTIONS THEY MAKE IN OTHER WAYS (APPRECIATING THE POSITIVE)
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## G. ADDRESSING POWER RELATIONS

### 22. If "power" can be loosely defined as "the capacity to act" (or "getting things done"), what thoughts do you have about power and privilege as it relates to your practice as an educational leader?

```
86 People want leaders who make things happen. I believe I use my sense of agency to facilitate making things happen however, and whenever I can. (NAME)

87 "PEOPLE WANT LEADERS WHO MAKE THINGS HAPPEN" (COURAGE OF INSPIRATION)
87 USE MY SENSE OF AGENCY TO FACILITATE MAKING THINGS HAPPEN" (COURAGE OF INSPIRATION)
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### 23. How do you deal with power relations between faculty and/or colleagues within your division/dept.? Please describe the process (or processes) you use.

```
I am fairly uncomfortable with the hierarchical structure of our senior management. I am attentive to issues of privilege – white privilege, financial privilege, access to resources, etc. I am attentive to language (I don't like to be called 'boss' as I consider myself a colleague with a specific role). (NAME)

88 "UNCOMFORTABLE WITH HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT"
89 ATTENTIVE TO ISSUES OF PRIVILEGE:
90 WHITE PRIVILEGE
91 FINANCIAL PRIVILEGE
92 ACCESS TO RESOURCES
93 ATTENTIVE TO LANGUAGE
```

### 24. How do you approach conflict in your work as an educational leader?

```
Typically, head on. I view conflict as healthy for organizations. Personal conflict has its unique challenges but I typically bring the players together in the room and we develop strategies for ensuring processes remain respectful and that there are mechanisms and resources for supporting people in conflict. I ask people to have face to face conversations rather than sending long email missives. I will mediate (listen and coach) conversations between faculty in conflict. (NAME)

94 HEAD ON
95 CONFLICT AS HEALTHY
96 PERSONAL CONFLICT HAS UNIQUE CHALLENGES
97 BRING PLAYERS TOGETHER (GENIUS OF INCLUSION)
96 DEVELOP STRATEGIES FOR ENSURING PROCESSES REMAIN RESPECTFUL
98 MECHANISMS AND RESOURCES SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN CONFLICT* (TOLERANCE FOR UNCERTAINTY)
99 ASK PEOPLE TO HAVE FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATIONS
100 WILL MEDIATE (LISTEN AND COACH)
```

178