Operationalising Feminist Pedagogic E-leadership-as-practice in Enterprise Learning and Development: An Autoethnographic Bricolage

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Lancaster University, UK
October 2022

I declare that this thesis is 49559 words and does not exceed the maximum allowance.

This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

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Abstract

This thesis explores synergies between three theoretical pillars – feminist pedagogy, Leadership-as-practice (LAP), and e-Leadership – applied in an enterprise learning and development (L&D) setting. I argue that uniting these concepts in an intentional, sustained, and reflective leadership practice contributes to individual growth, higher performing teams, and improved organisational outcomes. The research aims to examine critically the experience of leading a global virtual team (GVT) as an L&D middle-manager commencing with the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic in protracted, real-time. As a complete member researcher (CMR), my objectives include depicting my lived experience and identifying discrete themes specific to the research context. This thesis addresses calls in literature for greater cross-disciplinary research in educational leadership, development, and praxis and empirical study of how the mechanics of leadership coalesce to produce meaningful human-centred results. It illuminates how L&D practitioners, both in business and educational settings, can apply theory and scholarship to reshape leadership as more inclusive, empowering, de-hierarchised, and collaborative. Autoethnographic narratives anchor the research, augmented by interviews and reflections contributed by ten participants. Bricolage, an emergent qualitative method, was employed to respond to participant reflections of the current zeitgeist vis-à-vis leadership practice. Findings support that feminist practices embedded in quotidian activities can profoundly impact individual, team, and organisational objectives. I offer a leadership framework representing the symbiotic relationship between the three pillars. The research also discusses challenges of adopting feminist pedagogic e-leadership-as-practice (eLAP). The outcomes are significant in that they contribute to the advancement of the L&D profession, including developing praxis and applying theory. They offer an insider view of educational leadership within a business context, a relatively unexplored subject. Finally, I demonstrate how to utilise and craft bricolage as a qualitative method of inquiry. I suggest recommendations for future research, including further study of LAP across other staff levels, feminist pedagogy as a counter to implicit leadership beliefs, and challenging the suggested framework in additional contextual settings.

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List of abbreviations

AIT – Advanced Information Technology

CMR – Complete Member Researcher

e-LAP – E-leadership-as-practice

ECT – Educational Communications and Technology

GVT – Global Virtual Team

HE – Higher Education

IC – Individual Contributor

ICT – Information & Computer Technology

KPI – Key Performance Indicator

LAP – Leadership-as-practice

L&D – Learning and Development function

MM – Middle Manager

QDAS – Qualitative Data Analysis Software

TEL – Technology Enhanced Learning

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Acknowledgements

First, I acknowledge and honour my parents with utmost gratitude for raising three unique and intellectually curious children. I feel lucky to have grown up in an atmosphere of educational excellence. Mom, you are *my* original feminist teacher; above all else, a role model, but also an advocate. Dad, your storytelling prowess and command of words inspired me to tell this story. Thank you for giving me the best of you both.

I offer profuse appreciation to my 'co-conspirators' featured in this research for lending their voices. I would not be able to delve into the depths of feminist e-leadership-as-practice without your insights, perspectives, emotions, and experiences. I am especially appreciative of Krishma and Michelle for helping me find much-needed 'white space' – your kindness and creativity in this way was a priceless gift.

Also, I want to thank my thesis supervisor, Dr Carolyn Jackson. Your thought-provoking questions and gentle nudges encouraged and propelled me forward. Thank you for the autonomy to navigate this process in a way that was meaningful to me. I also wish to acknowledge Dr Charles Xaioxue Wang of Florida Gulf Coast University, who sparked my love of the research process. Thank you for allowing me to learn and grow as your co-researcher during my Master's programme.

Finally, I am eternally grateful for the support of my husband, Keith. Thank you for ensuring that I continued to enjoy life throughout this journey. Our global adventures, weekend excursions, and even the baseball pilgrimages provided mental reprieves that I didn't even realise I needed. Thank you for continuing to support my (I know, seemingly never-ending) academic exploits and entertaining my incessant thought meanderings about 'what's next?'

Let us all remember the words of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who simply stated, 'We should all be feminists'.

Publications derived from work on Doctoral Programmes

Lefaiver, M. (2022). An invisible fork in the road: The autoethnography of a female social scientist. Studies in Technology Enhanced Learning. https://doi.org/10.21428/8c225f6e.6f3a736c

Part I: Introduction and context of the research

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Personal connection and motivation for this research

In May 2017, I submitted my application to the Lancaster University doctoral programme in e-Research and Technology Enhanced Learning. In my personal statement, I described my interest in how 'motivation, communication, relationship building, and general self-awareness' influence learning. I described my prior research into the effects of technology on people in virtual learning spaces, noting

> …the consistent theme of not only ‘connection’ but the importance of self-awareness and its role in the learning environment. [A theme that] is both vertical and horizontal in that it must be present in any participant in an educational relationship – students and instructors alike.

I continued,

> My goal as a student and learning professional has always been to supplement theory with application and vice versa.

To conclude my statement, I posed several self-directed questions, including,

> Might I be the subject of my own research? Am I self-aware, possessing enough emotional intelligence to succeed in this next endeavour?

Fast forward to February 2020, when I began to develop my thesis proposal. In the elapsed time, I gained knowledge and experience as a researcher and an appreciation for the research process. Nevertheless, some things remained close to my heart: the power of relationship-building, the symbiosis of theory and application, the value of self-reflection, and a desire to elevate others while embracing a teaching and learning mindset. With my new knowledge, I saw that I could place a research context around the intersection of these interests and define them as pillars of my paradigmatic persona. Thus, my curiosity was

reframed as the focus of my research. As a fully remote employee and student, I would explore the practice of leadership mediated by technology, or ‘e-leadership’, within a feminist pedagogic ethos.

Although well-researched in higher education, I saw e-leadership as an increasingly ubiquitous but ill-defined concept in the enterprise learning and development (L&D) space, overshadowed by the demand for developing material learning deliverables. I realised an opportunity to explore e-leadership empirically as a practical guide in my work as an L&D practitioner and leader of development teams tasked with supporting organisational strategic goals. Carrig and Wright (2006) summarised this need, noting:

> [Organizational] success cannot be achieved by just bringing in really good people but not equipping them with technology or processes [and] it is even truer that technology and processes without people are without value. It is people who design and execute processes. People provide skills and labor to organisations. It is people who design, work with, and leverage technology’. (p. 21)

In addition to this organisational symbiosis of people, processes, and technology, recent history tells us that we have much opportunity and need to improve leadership capabilities. I was inspired by Halla Tómasdóttir, former Icelandic presidential candidate, who called us to action concerning leadership practice towards more 'purpose-driven, gender-balanced, and principled leadership' (The B Team, 2018).

While inspired to contribute to this reformation, I could not have predicted how immersed and tested I would become as an embedded researcher examining the concept of e-leadership within my work. Concurrent with beginning my reflective journal as I awaited ethics approval of my research, two critical events occurred. First, the Covid-19 pandemic caused the world to reconfigure its ways of working. Secondly, I assumed leadership of a newly-assembled global virtual team (GVT) comprised of six core team members plus several ancillary members – none of whom I had ever met. Admittedly, in the face of adverse circumstances, I felt lost

and disoriented. I asked myself, 'What can I do to make this team successful? How can I enable cohesiveness, collegiality, and productivity?'

In hopes of answering these questions while defining and steering my leadership practice, I was grateful for having just undertaken a literature review that equipped me with a working knowledge of e-leadership, feminist pedagogy, and feminist leadership. I could envisage how these concepts might coalesce as foundations of organisational success as the workforce becomes more diverse, distributed, and automated, necessitating greater socio-emotional dexterity in day-to-day activities.

I looked to my research for both theoretical guidance and interventional support. I returned to my roots as a trained learning professional and my passion for teaching and learning. Shrewsbury's (1997) seminal work *'What is feminist pedagogy?'* inspired me to approach my practice in a way that aligned with my ontological, epistemological, and methodological beliefs. Due to a dearth of concrete interventions within my professional context – enterprise L&D – the opportunity presented to critically investigate the mechanisms and factors at work in real-time through qualitative inquiry. Therefore, despite the myriad obstacles and crises, I embraced the opportunity to fully engage in developing my e-leadership practice guided by feminist principles.

1.2 Subjectivity statement

Acknowledging subjectivity and identifying its sources at the outset of research is imperative to understanding how personal beliefs and professional experiences influence methodological strategies and subsequent data interpretation. In alignment with my paradigmatic position, explicated in Chapter 3, this research aims to offer a realistic view of feminist pedagogic e-leadership-as-practice (e-LAP) within a business context using an appropriate methodological approach. My role vis-à-vis the research was as a complete member researcher (CMR), a participant observer embedded with the individuals and activities which are the research focus. I approached the activities at the intersection of feminist pedagogy, e-leadership, and leadership-as-practice (LAP) as social phenomena and aimed to explore how these concepts united in my immediate context and

the meanings attributed by individuals in my surrounding ecosystem. As such, the reality of what happened in the research context is not absolute 'but rather derived from community consensus regarding what is “real," what is useful, and what has meaning' (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 167). While not generalisable to all contexts, the research nevertheless contributes a view of the internal mechanics of LAP, including how to operationalise leadership through seven distinct practice activities (described in section 2.5.3), which can be modified and applied in other contextual settings.

1.3 Research question

This research aimed to explore the intersection of feminist ideology, technology-mediated leadership, and leadership-as-practice in an enterprise L&D context. It sought to answer the primary research question:

How can feminist pedagogy, LAP, and e-leadership coalesce in practice to influence or impact individual growth, team culture, and organisational outcomes in a distributed virtual team?

I argue that there are discrete yet tangible synergies that exist between these concepts, which have the potential to elicit positive transformation for individuals and teams. Further, to realise such potential requires intention, agency, and accountability, which may be met through reflective practice. I aimed to explore how feminist pedagogy and ‘as-practice’ leadership activities manifested in everyday work contexts towards transformative outcomes.

1.4 Contextualising the problem

1.4.1 Global context: A crisis of [e-]leadership

The year 2020 abruptly, radically, and forever changed the nature of work and resulted in the largest experiment of virtual work in history (Cook, 2020; Denworth, n.d.). Employees tasked with day-to-day tactical work looked to senior leaders for direction, guidance, and steadiness in 'these uncertain times’. Senior leaders looked to their frontlines to persist, push forward, and continue to deliver results. And yet, many organisations which had previously relied on in-person

experiences to build relationships and establish culture faltered in the immediate transition to 100% virtual work, with little or no contingency plans for business continuity.

At the onset of the pandemic, many organisations experienced leadership crises as workplace relationships, communications, and ways of working came to be mediated solely by technology. For some, myself included, virtual work was already the norm. However, the challenges of leading virtual teams were magnified. In my work context, this crisis manifested in the cancellation of critical in-person design workshops and an exponential increase in synchronous video meetings, supplemented by the intensified use of direct messaging to ensure continuous communication. The necessity for middle managers (MMs) like me to foster healthy team cultures, exhibit relational dexterity, and sustain the organisational vision while demonstrating agility, resiliency, and (Brassey et al., 2019; Cotter et al., 2018; Lancaster, 2019) humanity in project teams was never more absolute than during 2020 (and beyond).

1.4.2 Organisational context: Redefining L&D leadership

In recent years, corporations and researchers alike have become more aware of the strategic role of the L&D function as essential to organisational success (Brassey et al., 2019; Cotter et al., 2018; Lancaster, 2019). Organisations have realised the essentiality of the L&D function as a critical contributor to a robust human capital base, which in turn has the potential to improve a competitive marketplace advantage (LinkedIn Learning, 2020, 2022). In a time when leadership transitioned abruptly from an in-person to a completely virtual experience, leadership in L&D called for practitioners skilled in the mechanisms required to champion business strategy effectively (Brassey et al., 2019; LinkedIn Learning, 2022) and in particular at the manager level (Gibb, 2003; Kempster & Gregory, 2017) where tactical execution of strategy occurs.

Over the last two years in my work context, I also realised that enterprise L&D must revisit leadership practice. In late 2019, I detected a kind of disillusionment or dispiritedness among my fellow mid-level managers and hoped to do something, to have some agency in lifting them. Along with another colleague, I

undertook an unofficial ‘listening tour’ to get a sense of what was going on – their feelings, challenges, goals, and motivations. As a result of these conversations and in line with human-centred design practice, we developed and presented two personas: one manager and one senior associate. From this exercise, we learned that while they enjoyed the collegiality of working and learning together, this cohort desired more autonomy in project assignments, clarity of role responsibilities, and greater commitment to and investment in their own learning, including project management and leadership skill development.

These informal discoveries were also reflected and corroborated in industry research. In its annual Workplace Learning surveys, LinkedIn Learning (2020, 2021, 2022), a key provider of L&D thought leadership, reported year-over-year insights which reflect leadership and management, creative problem-solving, and communication as primary focus areas for L&D people managers. In 2021, 80% of managers identified ‘leading through change’ as a key focus area, and 66% reported ‘managing virtual teams’ as a developmental priority. The 2022 survey reported that 54% of people managers’ time was spent on operational efforts. Further, year-over-year findings reported linkages between manager development in these areas to overall job satisfaction and retention rates. For example, of 3000 L&D managers surveyed in 2020, 94% of respondents said they would stay at a company longer if it invested in their growth and development. Thus, leadership and management development have been established as essential strategies for attracting and retaining talent in L&D.

These findings also suggest that the L&D function cannot rest solely on what it is typically known for – the production of material training deliverables and learning technologies supportive of organisational objectives (Brassey et al., 2019; LinkedIn Learning, 2022). L&D must also proactively seek innovative ways to navigate the increasingly complex issues associated with its leadership personnel while also contributing to organisational performance objectives (Cotter et al., 2018). This challenge is reinforced by Jameson (2013), asserting that 'professional development and research on educational technology leadership and management functions…should accompany effective implementation of learning technologies' (p. 890).

Despite these insights, MMs and ICs are frequently under-researched even as they lead quotidian activities that shepherd strategic vision to tangible material outcomes. Indeed, in its most recent report, LinkedIn Learning called on L&D (senior) leadership to 'activate the power of managers' whom they declare as a 'secret skill-building weapon' (p. 45) and the backbone of company culture. Further, despite this affirmation of the essentiality of L&D managers, only 29% of organisations report delivery of learning programmes that support managers to lead through change.

Balanced leadership is needed to address calls for L&D leaders to 'revolutionise their approach' towards 'identifying and enabling the capabilities needed to achieve success' (Brassey et al., 2019, p. 8). Insomuch as senior leaders provide the vision, execution often falls to middle managers and frontline staff. As such, there is not only a practical gap in L&D leadership development but a need to understand better the dynamics at play for individuals residing in this liminal space between strategic and tactical (Kempster & Gregory, 2017).

In summary, academic literature, informal insights, thought leaders, and industry research all point to a need to focus on leadership development, activities, and capabilities of ICs and MMs as contributors to organisational strategy and outcomes. To neglect this need risks reinforcing findings by Cotter, Gerber, and Schutte (2018) that L&D is merely 'a reactive, administrative function and not a proactive, strategic learning partner' (p. 148). Instead, this research seeks to offer an inside view, and framework for leadership within a virtual team setting, examining how navigating daily activities contributes to members' professional growth, team cohesion and performance, learning product development, and by extension renders them 'disruptors [who] in turn, exert an influence on the business environment' (p. 147).

1.4.3 Research context: Leading global virtual teams (GVTs)

In this research, global virtual teams (GVT) will follow the summative description provided by Powell et. al. (2004) as 'groups of geographically, organizationally and/or time dispersed workers brought together by information and telecommunication technologies to accomplish one or more organizational tasks'

(p. 7). Researchers generally agree that the characteristics defining virtual teams include three core elements:

- Distance: team members do not work in the same physical location and collaborate independent of time and space (Anawati & Craig, 2006; Zakaria, 2017)
- Virtuality: communications and operations are conducted primarily through technology-enabled platforms (Ferreira et al., 2012; Kramer et al., 2017)
- Task-orientation: groups are assembled to carry out organisational goals through communication, information sharing, and decision-making (Kramer et al., 2017; Li et al., 2017)

In recent years, many organisations have realised that developing robust GVTs is a way to increase flexibility, reduce costs, leverage global talent, improve creativity, increase speed, adapt, and keep pace with globalisation (Ferreira et al., 2012; Li et al., 2017; Powell et al., 2004). However, in the United States, the setting for this research, the added emphasis on external socio-cultural dynamics, including a global pandemic, a divisive presidential election, and widespread social unrest, shed new light on the skills needed to lead through crisis, circumstances further complicated by the precipitous rise of a remote workforce.

While the benefits of GVTs carry upside, distributed teams are inherently fraught with challenges as they continue to evolve practically as work structures. Besides issues of time and space, numerous challenges can be associated with managing projects in a globalised world, which extends to GVTs (Anawati & Craig, 2006; Ferreira et al., 2012). Left unattended, the implications of mismanaged GVTs render potentially devastating effects, including miscommunication and lack of trust (Anawati & Craig, 2006; Ferreira et al., 2012; Kramer et al., 2017; Li et al., 2017; Rutkowski et al., 2002); conflict and reduced team identity (Ferreira et al., 2012; Li et al., 2017; Rutkowski et al., 2002); barriers in information flow and knowledge transfer (Ferreira et al., 2012; Li et al., 2017); reduced coordination and goal alignment (Kramer et al., 2017; Rutkowski et al., 2002); and inability to make decisions and innovate (Ferreira et al., 2012; Zakaria, 2017). The middle manager's domain is attending to each of these challenges in day-to-day work.

Technological modalities (e.g., email and videoconferencing) have become ubiquitous in the workplace and are essential tools for virtual teaming. Rutkowski et al. (2002) indicate the significance of technology in virtual teams, noting that while the platform is important, it is 'subtle activities' (p. 229) within teams that contribute to the success or failure of virtual teams, including provisioning new kinds of leadership (Wood, 2005). When distributed between time and space, 'information technology is merely an enabler' and 'not a sufficient condition' for virtual teams' success (Ferreira et al., 2012, p. 419). I am interested in uncovering these 'subtle activities' and 'sufficient conditions' that occur during everyday work.

The 'Covid-19 years' may be considered the most far-reaching test of technology-mediated leadership. In totality, these concerns and opportunities trouble the narrative and reinforce the need for this research.

1.5 Theoretical and methodological pillars of my research

1.5.1 Theoretical pillars

Three theoretical pillars ground my research: feminist pedagogy, e-leadership, and leadership-as-practice (LAP).

Feminist pedagogy. Despite L&D's consistent focus on technologies and material outcomes, feminist pedagogy is not about tools (Chick & Hassel, 2019). Instead, it concerns the teaching and learning process, valuing equally the diverse experiences of its members while acknowledging the impacts of power and social relationships within groups. Feminist leadership discourse posits leadership 'as a means, not an end' (Clover et al., 2017, p. 26). When combined, feminist pedagogic leadership empowers a community of learners to act responsibly towards one another, and to support one another, towards accomplishing individual, mutual, and broader organisational goals (Shrewsbury, 1997). Six feminist principles ground my research: 1) Reformation of the leader-follower relationship; 2) Enabling individual voice; 3) Respect for diversity of personal experience; 4) Empowerment; 5) Challenging traditional views; and 6) Community. I will discuss these principles in detail in Chapter 2.

E-Leadership. At its most fundamental level, e-leadership focuses on the relationship between leadership and technology. It involves both inter- and intra-personal leadership. Therefore, it is characterised as a 'social influence process embedded in both proximal and distal contexts mediated by Advanced Information Technology (AIT) that can produce a change in attitudes, feelings, thinking, behavior, and performance' (Eberly et al., 2013, p. 434). E-leadership resides along the spectrum of strategic to tactical and has evolved to include collective, collaborative, and shared leadership approaches, challenging conventional connotations of *who* leaders are.

Leadership-as-practice. LAP originates in an ontology of shared practice within communities driving towards collective vision. In this context, the 'practice' stands in contrast to leadership competencies, behaviours, or traits. Instead, it is oriented to the dynamics of relational activities to achieve desired results (Kempster & Gregory, 2017). In essence, LAP 'detaches leadership from leaders' and asserts leadership as 'a consequence (an effect) of collective action, not as one of its causes' (Sergi, 2016, p. 111). LAP focuses on the quotidian activities which bind together to produce results. I provide further conceptual detail of LAP in Chapter 2.

1.5.2 Methodological pillars

I adopted qualitative methods to undertake the research in alignment with my participatory realist ontology and critical subjectivist epistemological position. I generated data from April 2020 through March 2021 through an autoethnographic and narrative inquiry methodology, ultimately weaving together an autoethnographic bricolage.

Autoethnography. Autoethnography encourages researchers to draw on personal experience through reflexivity to link the personal to the social and cultural (Ellis et al., 2011). My personal journal as a CMR served as the foundational source data. Critical events elicited from reflective journaling anchor six vignettes representing feminist pedagogic principles depicted in Part II.

Narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry embodies life experiences and how they are recounted (Chase, 2011). To enrich the autoethnography, I conducted

synchronous reflexive, interactive interviews with ten colleague-participants representing three staff levels – both individual contributors (IC) and middle managers (MM). Three asynchronous reflective exercises augmented the interviews. Narrative inquiry, when integrated into research in the form of story, can help us understand agency and influences of our experiences as we strive to transform our own lives as we also impact others (Rawlins, 2003b).

Autoethnographic bricolage. Autoethnographic bricolage melds two qualitative methodologies and is particularly valuable when the phenomenon of study resides in a liminal or emergent space. Bricolage seeks to extend the socially situated self-narratives of autoethnography by entreating researchers to explore 'the invisible artifacts of culture and power and documenting the nature of their influence not only on their own works, but on scholarship in general' (Kincheloe et al., 2011, p. 168). As complementary methodologies, autoethnography and bricolage situate researchers in their own realities to infuse moral meaning and improve life through knowledge acquisition (Kincheloe et. al., 2011).

1.6 Value proposition

1.6.1 Situating my research in the broader body of knowledge

Feminist pedagogy has a rich history in literature, primarily in primary, secondary, and higher education (HE). Within these contexts, critical feminist pedagogy seeks to address disparities and inequities inherent in the classroom experience and entreats students to become co-creators of their own knowledge. I elaborate on these extensions of the feminist project in Chapter 2.

Many scholars (Campbell, 2015; Knapp, 2017) have provided autoethnographic insights into feminist pedagogic practices in the HE classroom. Similarly, e-leadership in HE has been deeply explored, including Jameson's (2013) *'Fifth age'* of educational technology research which offers a framework for educational leadership success at the intersection of people, purposes, structures, and social systems. Jameson's framework was recently revisited in the extensive scholarship of Arnold and Sangrà (2018b, 2018c, 2019), building on Davis' (2012) concept of leadership literacies and resulting in a robust, empirically derived framework of e-leadership literacies for HE.

As an L&D professional, I believe passionately in the spirit and principles of teaching and learning, and I consider my workspace a dynamic virtual classroom. However, the dearth of scholarly insights into feminist pedagogy and e-leadership as a practice in the enterprise L&D context exposes a sizeable gap in a critical aspect of the Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) discipline. What does it mean to practice feminist pedagogic principles in an enterprise L&D setting? How can they be incorporated into everyday work? Through my experience leading a virtual L&D development team, this research endeavours to address these questions.

1.6.2 Gaps in literature

Several gaps in literature warrant the need for this research, including a lack of cross-disciplinary, empirical research into e-leadership, L&D leadership, and LAP. Further, a lack of cross-contextual unification between theory and practice reinforces its value proposition.

Cross-disciplinary e-leadership research. While the disciplines of E-Leadership and TEL in the higher education context are increasingly represented in academic research, each robust in the examination of theory and practice, a search of relevant literature readily reveals a cross-disciplinary gap. Although e-leadership has been well developed conceptually within the HE context, effective leadership of GVTs also has significant implications in enterprise L&D. The field of educational communications and technology (ECT), while diverse, remains fractured. Specifically, shared theories, methods, study instruments, and other best practices, including leadership, are siloed within context and practice (Oliver, 2014). This fissure inhibits the development of the field. Identifying points of unification between HE and enterprise L&D is a first step towards extending our understanding of TEL leadership.

L&D leadership skills and practice research. In addition to theoretical development, there is much consensus among e-leadership scholars that additional research is required to advance the body of knowledge in this field (Arnold & Sangrà, 2018a; Oh & Chua, 2018). This scholarship is encouraged through empirical study within business and educational settings. The

intersection of educational technology and leadership practice is often neglected (if acknowledged at all) within the L&D function, favouring discourse around 'pedagogy, learning environments, learning design or e-learning innovation in the curriculum' (Jameson, 2013, p. 892). These activities often fall to staff-level practitioners (MMs and ICs) – yet the leadership skills necessary to manage the complexities of such activities are underestimated and underdeveloped. The study of enterprise L&D, and leadership, has long been associated with and researched under the broader umbrella of Human Resources. Theory and practice in these disciplines have focused on individual actors or star performers and their extraordinary talents, qualities, and behaviours (Denyer & James, 2016). Leadership research within L&D has been remiss in addressing the processes by which operational staff develop leadership capabilities either formally through programming or informally through the nature of work. This research attends to the latter.

LAP research. There is consensus in extant literature that LAP bears a tangential relationship to traditional leadership theory (Kempster & Gregory, 2017; Raelin, 2016; Youngs, 2017), yet 'with little regard and value placed to systematic building of theory' (Raelin et al., 2018, p. 372). As such, traditional leadership theory is lacking in that the unit of analysis has neglected the process aspect of leadership (Crevani, 2018; Wood, 2005), instead emphasising individualistic skills and behaviours. This research will reconsider the unit of analysis from the individual to the collective, and from competencies to activities associated with leadership.

Cross-context unification. A review by Tintoré and Güell (2016) reinforces the need for unifying approaches between educational and business disciplines which ‘could contribute to breaching the gap between the fields’ (p. 22). While pedagogical and feminist research is often approached within an exploratory, qualitative lens to reveal the robustness of lived experience, the context of business, strategy, and economics leans heavily on what can be seen and quantified. I see this frequently manifest in my practice as quantitative 'key performance indicators' (KPI) – retention rates, end-of-course smile sheets, and employee survey data points – visualised on graphic dashboards. These metrics

provide only part of a story. Through this research, I hope to reconcile some of the contextual disparities between enterprise L&D and HE and illuminate points of unification within our discipline.

1.6.3 Contributions to the body of knowledge

This research contributes to existing knowledge in four ways. First, in response to the aforementioned gaps, I seek to develop the notion of e-leadership within a cross-disciplinary space, focussing on an enterprise L&D context. Secondly, I address calls from LAP scholars to engage with leadership practitioners in constructing knowledge about leadership, thus minimising the divide between theory and practice. Next, this research contributes a framework for ‘feminist pedagogic e-leadership-as-practice', unifying disparate concepts and examining the newly-defined framework in practice. Finally, this research contributes a roadmap for undertaking autoethnographic bricolage as method, as suggested by Curnett (2021, p. 189), who notes the need to explore approaches to such innovative methodologies, including guidance for how to ‘write the narratives of others' lived experiences and position those narratives…relative to one's own experience’.

1.7 Research focus and objectives

1.7.1 Research aim

To attend to calls for new ways of leading, including the 'activation' of L&D middle managers as operational agents of organisational strategy, I aim to shed light on the experience of leading tactical development teams in the enterprise L&D space, leveraging feminist pedagogy, e-leadership, and LAP as my theoretical guides. I assertC that feminist pedagogic e-leadership-as-practice contributes significantly to a GVT's culture, cohesion, and collective vision. I focus on how feminist practices, when embedded in day-to-day work, act as catalysts that can profoundly impact individual, team, and organisational objectives.

1.7.2 Research objectives

To this end, my research sought to identify points of mutuality (and dissonance) between the theoretical pillars as I address the gaps identified in extant literature.

As such, my objectives were to:

- Research in protracted real-time, my lived experience as project lead of a GVT, adopting feminist pedagogy as my 'North Star'
- Identify salient themes specific to feminist pedagogic leadership in enterprise L&D
- Identify synergies between feminist pedagogy, LAP and e-leadership, including operationalisation of feminist pedagogy, as identified in my findings
- Contribute to calls in literature for deeper exploration of leadership praxis

Finally, I hoped to mature as a researcher, practitioner, leader, and feminist.

1.8 Thesis outline and organisation

This thesis is organised into three parts.

Part I presents the research foundations. Chapter 1 has provided an overview of the research, the research pillars, value proposition, goals, and research question. Chapter 2 critically examines feminist ideology, e-leadership, and LAP literature. Chapter 3 presents my paradigmatic positioning, study design, participants, and ethical considerations. I introduce autoethnography, narrative inquiry, and bricolage and discuss why a blended approach suits my research.

Part II presents my core findings and analysis. Chapter 4 introduces the context of the anchor project at the centre of my autoethnographic bricolage and describes my experiences as the project lead beginning in 2020. Chapters 5-10 present autoethnographic vignettes augmented by participant data. Each chapter explores a distinct feminist pedagogic principle. Within each vignette, I critically discuss and analyse emergent themes.

Part III concludes the thesis. In this final component, I discuss and reconcile the theoretical pillars, review the research aims, discuss whether they have been met, and offer recommendations for future research. I also consider implications for theory, research, and application. Finally, I offer concluding thoughts about the research.

Chapter 2: Landscaping the research pillars: the feminist project, e-leadership, and leadership-as-practice

2.1 Introduction

This research centres on how feminist pedagogic principles manifest in the practice of leadership, mediated by technology, in an enterprise L&D environment. Before I can answer the research question, I need to landscape e-leadership as a concept in extant literature and understand the nature of LAP. Once this exploration is complete, I can then attend to the research, gaining perspective into the practices and processes that constitute the concept of 'e-leadership-as-practice'. As such, this chapter extends the previous overview of my theoretical pillars and engages more deeply with extant literature that helped inspire the research. Thus, this chapter is organised as follows:

Section 2.2 describes my literature review approach.

Section 2.3 introduces the first research pillar – the feminist project.

Section 2.4 landscapes the second research pillar – e-leadership.

Section 2.5 explains the third research pillar – LAP.

In each section, I discuss the rationale and applicability to my research.

2.2 Integrative literature reviews

Integrative reviews incorporate a range of methodologies, including empirical and non-empirical work and theoretical and conceptual literature (Aveyard et al., 2016). This approach was appropriate due to the cross-disciplinary and cross-theoretical foundations of this research, and respects the best practices and insights that may be gleaned irrespective of contextual origins. A hybrid sampling approach in conjunction with the 'multiplicity of purposes' rendered an integrative review appropriate due to its potential to yield a 'comprehensive portrayal of complex concepts, theories, and problems' (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005, p. 548) and to investigate implications on research and practice. The literature review provides background into the focus areas and offers an impartial exploration of

literature to define and identify concepts, review relevant theories, and investigate implications on practice (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005).

2.3 The first research pillar: The feminist project

2.3.1 Feminist ideology

It is generally accepted that feminist ideology aims to eliminate inequality and injustice in women's lives (Hirudayaraj & Shields, 2019). Feminism is a way for women to speak to, respond to, and act according to one's own beliefs vis-à-vis their lived experiences. And yet, Carmen Vasquez, as cited by hooks (2015b), conveys exasperation with the absence of a clear definition of feminism, commenting 'We can't even agree on what a "Feminist" is, never mind what she would believe in and how she defines the principles that constitute honor among us' (p. 18). Despite decades of inquiry, there remains no universally accepted definition of 'feminism' or 'feminist'. The feminist project continues to shapeshift, expanding and morphing as the position of women in our global community changes. What has remained consistent, however, is that ‘feminist projects entail critiquing and challenging established power relations, envisioning alternatives and possibilities in terms of theory and engaging in activism for change' (Bell et al., 2019, p. 11). As such, research in this domain and examination of theory research is essential to extending feminist ideology into all aspects of life.

I am inclined to a position that feminist ideology is dialectical – that no one view is entirely right or wrong; instead, it is a hermeneutic exercise. Hekman (1997), drawing on Hartsock (1983), succinctly notes that feminism 'is truth claims and how we justify them' (p. 341). Perhaps this is an oversimplification, but for me, the power of feminism lies in the ability of individuals to voice their realities – in the way they wish to do it. To force my beliefs into one representation of feminism directly contradicts what feminism, and by extension, feminist research, tries to accomplish; to equalise through empowerment, voice, representation, and consciousness-raising.

2.3.2 Critical feminist inquiry

The nature of feminist inquiry allows for, and dare I say, welcomes, the melding of multiple vantage points, which become the foundations of research and practice (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). However, as hooks (2015b) reminds us, as crucial as personal experience is to the feminist movement, it does not preclude the necessity of theory. Theory presents us with organising frameworks which help us understand and interpret systems, policies, and processes which support or suppress. In the seminal work *Money, Sex, and Power*, Hartsock (1983) cited the dominion of the feminist method as '[growing] out of the fact that it enables us to connect everyday life with the analysis of the social institutions that shape life' (as cited by Hekman, 1997, p. 343). And yet, qualitative feminist methods have been critiqued by the positivist institution for their characteristic embedded research narrative, reflexivity, and ethical dilemmas, among other concerns (Olesen, 2007).

To remove the veil of obscurity and bring justification to truth claims within feminist studies, Hartsock (1983) asserted the 'feminist standpoint theory', calling for researchers to bring methodological rigour to scholarly exploration of feminist issues. More specifically, she posed the question, 'How do we justify the truth of the feminist claim that women have been and are oppressed?' (Hekman, 1997, p. 342). In presenting this question, Hartsock positioned feminism as a method of analysis distinct from a strictly political stance. By placing 'method, truth and epistemology' (p. 343) central to feminist theory, Hartsock attempted to counter positivist critiques of the feminist project, particularly the post-positivist, heavily qualitative nature of feminist research.

Concerning my research, I see feminist inquiry as a way to bring scrutiny to practice by creating a professional environment that 'reflect[s] thought, equity, and merit that is meaningful and supportive to all workers' (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014, p. 446). As a method for critical inquiry, I subscribe to Holman Jones' elegant description, highlighting the need for methodological rigour while also recognising that

> critical qualitative inquiry is…invested in assembling a 'we'. While other research modes and practices are rightly and very capably interested in describing the world (a collective), our scholarship is – and should be – invested in gathering people together to create an us: one that brings about a plurality that is invested in one another. (Holman Jones, 2017, p. 131)

As I undertake this research with multiple goals under the umbrella of the feminist project, I see the feminist inquiry as political as a means for social transformation and intellectual as a mechanism for theoretical discourse and development (Bell et al., 2019). It provides a lens to examine the quotidian, often mundane experiences that all at once shape our worlds – both local and distal – and serve as a basis for transformation.

Feminist pedagogy and feminist leadership will allow me to examine and critique the nuances of my practice thoughtfully yet rigorously. It will allow for the exploration of diverse perspectives, meaning-making, and illumination of oppressive institutional practices and mechanisms that thwart a teaching and learning mindset, thus, knowledge acquisition as a form of empowerment (Kark et al., 2016). As a means for self-development of my multiple selves – feminist, researcher, and leader – there is much to learn through maintaining a tension between theory and practice, noted by Kark et al. (2016) as

> moving back and forth between theory and action, learning and doing, academia and practice, with awareness of the tensions, women can gain better insights into developing a mature leadership identity that is informed by both spheres, fostering novel ways of leading. (p. 311)

Indeed, 'fostering novel ways of leading' captures the essence of all aspects of my own 'lived feminism' (Pullen & Vachhani, 2021, p. 237).

2.3.3 What is feminist pedagogy?

Feminist pedagogy historically sought to extend principles of the feminist movement into teaching and learning. More specifically, it approached education as a way to gain power and, therefore, as social action (Fisher, 1981). As the

feminist pedagogic tradition developed, the need for women's self-expression and lived experiences was seen as a way to moderate patriarchal educational systems of oppression and 'provide the clue to both the theory and practice of liberation' (Fisher, 1981, p. 21). As an extension of the feminist project, feminist pedagogy is often characterised as collective (Chow et al., 2003); reflective (Chow et al., 2003; Dentith & Peterlin, 2011); critical (Freire, 2005; hooks, 2013); dialogic (Chow et al., 2003); de-hierarchised (Dentith & Peterlin, 2011), and action-oriented (Dentith & Peterlin, 2011; Freire, 2005).

Shrewsbury's (1997) seminal piece *'What is feminist pedagogy?'* serves as the definitive standard for our understanding of the concept, asserting feminist pedagogy as

> a theory about the teaching/learning process that guides our choice of classroom practices by providing criteria to evaluate specific educational strategies and techniques in terms of the desired course goals or outcomes. (p. 166)

Shrewsbury emphasised that feminist pedagogy embodies three critical components: community, empowerment, and leadership – concepts central to this research. Webb et al. (2002) expanded on Shrewsbury, asserting three additional characterisations extending from research in the feminist classroom: privileging the individual voice, respect for diversity of personal experience, and challenging traditional views.

Central to feminist pedagogical practice is the 'reformation' of the relationship between teacher/leader and student/learner; more specifically, the former assumes the role of advisor or consultant, and the latter takes a lead role in knowledge creation, offering a voice in decision making (Herman & Kirkup, 2017; Shrewsbury, 1997; Webb et al., 2004). Other scholars have supplemented feminist pedagogy with nuances such as the ethic of care and creation of safe spaces (Sykes & Gachago, 2018) and honesty, transparency, and vulnerability (Nqambaza, 2021).

Feminist pedagogy aims at more democratised participation between teachers and students, with students assuming an active role in knowledge construction, encouraging us to ‘challenge traditional views’ (Webb et al., 2002). It is a constantly evolving and elusive phenomenon because of its origins in classroom dynamics (Herman & Kirkup, 2017). In this research, I henceforth translate this principle into organisational parlance as ‘challenging hierarchal structures’.

This research explores feminist pedagogic leadership unconventionally, engaging headfirst with 'the ambiguities, dilemmas and silences about its limits and shortcomings' (Batliwala, 2010, p. 3) in day-to-day work. Moreover, I hope to examine the challenges of feminist leadership while also heeding a call to action by Geetanjali Misra, Executive Director of Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (CREA), to 'lead differently, to transform the architecture of power within [my] own organization' (Batliwala, 2010, p. 3).

2.3.4 From 'feminine' to 'feminist': Leadership as agency, social influence, and transformation

Like its namesake, feminist leadership is a fluid social process (Clover et al., 2017). When deconstructed at face value, it embodies the complexities of the feminist project – diverse, disparate, and nuanced – and the elusive nature of leadership (Bass, 2008; Stogdill, 1974), often positioned in terms of individual skills, behaviours, or abilities (Kark et al., 2016).

Although frequently used interchangeably, I must address the distinction between *feminine* and *feminist* leadership. Whereas the former is attributional and focused on defining leadership traits, the latter shifts the focus to attributes as means of social change and transformation. A cursory exploration of 'feminine' leadership reveals common descriptive threads: collaborative, compassionate, tolerant, inclusive, relationship-focused, and empathetic, yet, as noted by Pullen and Vachhani (2021), 'almost exclusively defined in relation to the existing binary of masculine/feminine where the masculine dominates' (p. 237).

Feminist leadership, however, can be characterised using gerunds, implying agency and transformative potential: building trust through openness and transparency (Oh & Chua, 2018; Shaed, 2018); empowering individual voices in

decision-making (Garcia, 2014; Oh & Chua, 2018; Shaed, 2018); embracing diverse perspectives (Clover et al., 2017); facilitating collaboration and community (Garcia, 2014; Shaed, 2018); and acting with empathy and authenticity (Garcia, 2014; Gardner et al., 2011).

Due to its origins in the feminist project, feminist leadership in the public and private sectors has been approached mainly as a counter to women's exclusion from positions of power, pay disparities, oppressive patriarchal structures, and other inequities in the workplace (Batliwala, 2010; Batliwala & Friedman, 2014). Feminist leadership discourse challenges and encourages us to reconceptualise leadership in more 'socially purposeful and political' ways (Clover et al., 2017, p. 26); this begins with challenging what we think leadership looks like, for example, by moving away from descriptions of skills, behaviours, or attributes (Herman & Kirkup, 2017), and moving towards actions aimed at reform, empowerment, and equality.

Nevertheless, if we insist on ascribing attributes to the feminist leader, I aim for Clover et al.'s (2017) notion of a feminist leader who seeks to 'disrupt the idea of leadership identities, [is] at times (if not often) disobedient, and [makes] waves wherever they are situated' (p. 26). I believe this can be accomplished through praxis, focusing on embedded day-to-day activities that challenge and influence organisational structures from the bottom up.

2.3.5 Defining a new feminist leadership praxis

Both feminist leadership and pedagogy have a praxis orientation (Clover et al., 2017) and relevance to enterprise L&D. Let us envisage praxis as 'reflections and actions directed towards the transformation of oppressive mechanisms and behaviours' (p. 26). A feminist leadership ethos, therefore, seeks to challenge traditional hierarchal power imbalances by encouraging 'bottom up' (junior staff managing upwards) approaches to leading while emphasising a more human-centred focus on people and process. However, to achieve true transformation, we must first understand the limiting mechanisms which are inherent and manifest within the contexts within which we work. Indeed, the feminist project is

grounded in a desire to illuminate and mitigate systemic barriers towards increased equity through social action.

By revisiting leadership in this way, its focus is repositioned not as something that can be defined prescriptively or definitively; instead, I envision it as an energy that is alive and dynamic and makes change happen. Further, leadership can evolve into action orientation, answering questions such as 'What is it that leadership seeks to do?' or, in my case, 'What can my leadership praxis positively accomplish?' In asking questions that focus on outcomes versus individual attributes bolstered by empirical research, I hope to change the narrative of what leadership accomplishes.

2.3.6 Feminist pedagogy as an approach to leadership in this research

As mentioned, this research is anchored in six feminist principles, examined within an enterprise L&D context: (1) Reforming the leader-follower relationship; (2), Challenging hierarchal structures; (3) Privileging individual voice; (4) Building community; (5) Respect for diverse experiences; and (6) Empowerment.

Before I explore the feminist principle of empowerment, I must briefly acknowledge and address power as a stand-alone concept. The role of power is implicit in the notion of leadership, and yet, unlike some traditional leadership models, which seek to consolidate and retain the power of individual actors, feminist leadership seeks a different purpose. A key aim of feminist leadership is to reveal hidden power wherever or however it manifests, offer alternatives, and eliminate systemic, entrenched power. Further, feminist leadership recognizes that power will always exist and thus aims 'to make the practice of power visible, democratic, legitimate and accountable at all levels' (Batliwala, 2010, p. 18).

Although empowerment is foundational to the feminist project, I see it more discretely as a process, a dynamic undercurrent embedded in every action taken to challenge and mitigate oppressive beliefs and structures, whether overt or hidden. With its implied agency, the results of this process have clear and definitive outcomes where those deemed less powerful gain greater control as knowledge resources and knowledge creators. Freire (2005) asserted that the oppressed must be co-creators of their knowledge; in this way, knowledge gained

is power attained. Thus, knowledge becomes *the differentiating factor* between power and empowerment.

Further, Freire argued that to rise to the position of 'knowledge authority' requires aspiring feminist leaders to view their work critically, diligently, and intentionally. Dialogue with others, deep self-reflection, analysis of one's actions, and the ability and desire to help others develop are cornerstones of feminist leadership practice. Through intentional self-consciousness raising, feminist leaders help others navigate 'the messy, frightening, dangerous but exhilarating business of feminist social transformation' (Batliwala, 2010, p. 24). During this research, knowledge building took many forms: my praxis as an embedded researcher, participant reflections of their leadership beliefs, and my team working together to figure out work processes, ultimately becoming the priceless commodity of institutional knowledge.

Having established that issues of power and empowerment are central to feminist leadership (Clover et al., 2017), I turn to discuss feminist leadership as a way to recalibrate single-leader models characteristic of traditional leader-follower structures by redistributing power within local and broader hierarchal contexts. By eschewing individual power and challenging hierarchal norms, the feminist leader is concerned with the 'longer-term vision and mission for change that emerges from politics' (Batliwala, 2010, p. 27). In this vein, this research seeks transparency and aims to shed light on systems that oppress while engendering agency in my team towards collective dialogue, vision, and choice.

The relationship between community and collectivity is a longstanding principle of feminist leadership. Within feminist communities, authority 'resides in consensus of the group, rather than being held and exercised by an individual as a consequence of rank or expertise', and further, that

> consensus authority [is] based in shared substantive values and [is] treated as fluid and open to negotiation, with decisions about particular cases being reached through discussion. (Court, 2007, p. 616)

I argue that effective teams emerge out of consensus and collective voice; however, feminist leadership engages the community *while also* advancing individual voice. This balance is no easy feat and presents a paradox that the feminist leader must keep front of mind; that leadership by collective 'may at times prove to be oppressive, disabling, and ineffective if it discounts individuals' ability to take on an issue and run with it when required' (Clover et al., 2017, p. 28). As such, the feminist leader must also remain conscientious of individual voice, keeping a finger on the group's pulse, and balancing the collective's needs with the individual's needs, talents, and aspirations.

Feminist theory privileges not only individual voice but the individually lived experience (Webb et al., 2002). I see intrinsic beauty in feminist pedagogy in that diverse personal experiences can shape a truly vibrant community. As expressed by Parry (1996), 'feminist pedagogy makes explicit that how we experience and understand things is rooted in our social position' (p. 46), including intersectionality, the notion that a woman's holistic experience cannot be separated from her gender, race, culture, or class (Davis, 2008; hooks, 2015a). Concerning this research, the workplace has become a vital component of women's lives and represents a contextual point of confluence for categories of difference. I assert that a team enriched by different backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences elicits greater empathy, respect, and, least of all, a richer, more robust work product.

2.3.7 Developing a strategy for feminist pedagogic leadership development

Leadership development is particularly relevant to this research – for improving myself as a feminist leader and developing others around me. For me, feminist leadership and pedagogy are inexorably linked and yet underexplored in extant literature in a business context. Indeed, acknowledging our gaps in understanding the established frameworks, methods, and curricula while arguing the potential outcomes of the types of interventions needed to build inclusive, cohesive, high-performing teams renders the topic of development critical to feminist leadership discourse.

Seeking to explore 'the critical feminist pedagogy of paradoxes', Kark et al. (2016) analysed the conflicting values of individual, classroom, and organisational 'dilemmas' as 'fertile ground' for women's leadership development. They argued, in alignment with Jarvis et al. (2013) that

> tensions and apparent contradictions provoke change and transformation in ways that are often unpredictable. Consequently, learning comes from unexpected places, emerging in the messy complexity of our everyday experience. (p. 41)

Although a daunting prospect, as an instructional designer by training, I agree with the hypothesis that leadership development is enhanced when we can lean into the uncertainty and anxieties that tensions and challenges evoke, especially as embedded learning.

I undertook this research in part to inform scholarship and develop a leadership practice. Batliwala (2010) suggests that leadership development cannot exist in isolation, separate from the contexts of power, politics, values, and purpose within which leadership is practised. Feminist leadership also addresses the nuances of aspiration versus reality as the feminist leader seeks to navigate new paths – from how things are presently done to how they might be done, replete with challenges and failures. As such, I will explore the development of feminist principles as embedded in my work, borrowing elements of leadership development from the CREA framework *Achieving Transformative Leadership: A Toolkit for Organisations and Movements* (Batliwala & Friedman, 2014) to:

- Address issues of power: I will examine and elucidate 'deep structures' at play that inhibit transparency, accountability, and collective discourse.
- Lead with values and principles: I will approach my research and work through the lens of feminist values and guiding principles, commit to problem resolution, address disparate or conflicting principles diplomatically, and advocate based on these values.
- Reconcile politics and purpose: I will articulate my research and professional objectives as an embedded researcher with transparency,

acknowledging that feminist leadership is strategic – aimed at social transformation.

- Develop skill in context: I will recognise that leadership development is not isolated; there will be missteps, ideally followed by reflection and course correction.

Critical feminist pedagogies highlight an unconventional, multi-faceted, and iterative approach to thinking about leading, emphasizing the potential for innovation in leadership development theory and practice. At the same time, potential drawbacks may arise during the research and must be considered. Kark et al. (2016) suggest that undertaking multiple aspects of exploration concurrently, as this research does, may have a counterproductive effect on influence and action, both of which are central to feminist leadership. Further, reflection as part of the learning process, including deep exploration of the multiplicity of selves, and the resultant breadth of emotion, for example, vacillating between apprehension and the desire to forge ahead for change 'may be tempered by reflexive-paradoxical thinking' (p. 312). This tension harkens to Adams et al.'s (2015) guidance and encouragement for self-care during the autoethnographic research process, paying close attention to how we manage the dissonances that can arise from reflexive work. Indeed, we must weigh the potential benefits versus the consequences of action versus inaction. Nevertheless, I believe the ability to work through these conflicts builds resilience, adaptability, and character worthy of the designation 'feminist leader' (Batliwala, 2010).

2.3.8 Critiques of feminist leadership ideology

Having discussed the distinctions in attribution versus agency, we can see how easily the synonymising of 'feminine' and 'feminist' might occur, yet, characterising leadership as 'feminine' lends itself to many critiques both conceptually and ideologically. First, we risk essentialising women, reinforcing gender stereotypes (Batliwala, 2010; Due Billing & Alvesson, 2000), and minimising the transformational potential of feminist leadership. Due Billing and Alvesson suggest that subscribing to certain genres of leadership as feminine, while providing a contrast to traditional and even antiquated views of leadership,

may 'also create a misleading impression of women's orientation to leadership as well as reproducing stereotypes [of] the traditional gender division of labour' (Clover et al., 2017, p. 144). Finally, attributing certain characteristics, traits, or abilities as 'feminine' may unintentionally subvert women leaders who project outside of these behaviours, manifesting, for example, as microaggressions, unsubstantiated critical feedback, or career limitations. To counter these risks, I concur with Clover et al. (2017) that it is the 'political intentionality' (p. 21) of feminist leadership that not only illuminates how external factors influence our experiences but, more importantly, engenders the desire and resolve to affect positive change.

2.4 The second research pillar: E-leadership

2.4.1 The evolution of technology-mediated leadership

In recent years, many organisations have transitioned to leadership styles that embrace technology's ubiquity and are also perceived as more people-oriented (Garcia, 2014; Hamidizadeh et al., 2017; Shaed, 2018). This evolution was highlighted and accelerated as the world shifted to strictly online learning and working environments amidst the Coronavirus pandemic. I recall describing my research proposal submitted at the onset of the pandemic, succinctly explaining it as 'research into how leadership is mediated by technology within a feminist ethos' and being met with blank stares or empty silence; very few understood. While perhaps I did not fully explicate my research at the time, fast-forward two years, and the need for conceptual development and frameworks has emerged as an urgent concern in both academic institutions (Aziz et al., 2021; Chang et al., 2022) and business contexts (Torre & Sarti, 2020; Wolor et al., 2020).

In 2000, Avolio et al. established an emerging concept of leadership advanced by information technology (AIT) as

> a social influence process mediated by AIT to produce a change in attitudes, feelings, thinking, behaviour, and/or performance with individuals, groups, and/or organisations. (p. 617)

In this context, AIT served as 'tools, techniques and knowledge' that enable the mechanics and participation in organisational activities and facilitate leaders' ability to 'scan, plan, decide, disseminate and control information' (p. 616). In this initial foray into the building blocks of e-leadership, adaptive structuration theory helped explain the adoption of technology for leadership and the impacts of technology on leadership style.

Recognising the synergistic relationship of leadership and technology, each influencing the other, Avolio and Kahai (2003) amended the working definition of e-leadership to incorporate the reciprocal, transformational dynamic between these two mechanisms. The revised description asserted e-leadership as a 'fundamental change in the way leaders and followers related to each other within organizations and between organizations' (DasGupta, 2011, p. 5), a definition reflecting feminist undertones.

Expanding the concept of e-leadership in consideration of evolving AIT platforms, a framework devised by Eberly et al. (2013) suggested that the inter- and intra-personal dimensions of leadership are affected by the introduction of AIT vis-à-vis the loci of leadership. These relationships contribute to a 'total leadership system' wherein the sources of leadership may be peer-to-peer or managed up and proffered by either individuals or groups. Thus, e-leadership was now understood as

> a social influence process embedded in both proximal and distal contexts mediated by AIT that can produce a change in attitudes, feelings, thinking, behavior, and performance. (p. 107)

This updated characterisation emphasised the significance of context and reflected leadership's increasing collective and collaborative nature. In short, it incorporated the spirit of 'shared leadership' that began through mechanisms such as communities of practice, information crowdsourcing, and the influence of individually contributing members towards overarching goals. This representation of e-leadership, highlighting democratised leadership and community influence, firmly entrenches e-leadership within a feminist paradigm.

2.4.2 The problem with e-leadership as a phenomenon

The notion of e-leadership marks a paradigm shift in educational technology from an emphasis on traditional leadership to the ‘fostering of leaders who have the qualities to lead in a digital culture' (Brown et al., 2016, p. 8); and yet, despite the urgency for evolution, the notion of e-leadership, much like other leadership approaches, remains nebulous. In higher education, Jameson (2013) addressed the call by e-leadership scholars to advance the concept in educational technology as a 'named identifiable phenomena concept' (p. 892). This development of a defined framework, the *'Fifth age'* of effective e-leadership for educational technology, addressed the need for 'more critical, selective, strategic e-leadership approaches' (p. 889) in the field. At the junction of e-leadership, educational technology, and higher education, Jameson suggested that effective educational technology leadership is built on three pillars: people, purpose, and structures or social systems. Within these pillars, qualities such as culture, trust, emotional intelligence, and a pedagogic mindset have the potential to elicit effective outcomes.

I argue that the inability to name a concept, describe its core elements, and what it attempts to accomplish renders it impotent in real-world contexts. A deficiency in cross-disciplinary research between educational technology and management studies has emphasised the need for collaboration and synergising to improve the overall understanding of the discipline of educational technology leadership by analysing existing frameworks in practice through empirical research (Arnold & Sangrà, 2018c). Therefore, this research addresses the practical need to investigate leadership in enterprise L&D organisations.

Despite calls for deeper exploration, in a sense, research into solving the training problems of organisations has neglected the less glamorous yet equally important politics of leading effective enterprise L&D functions (Oliver, 2014). In fairness, the virtual omission of leadership as part of educational technology discourse within business in favour of instrumentalism, the object-based benefits and affordances of technology, have served the field well. The singular focus on innovation in learning through computer-mediated technologies has firmly established the field and profession of educational technology as essential to

teaching and learning research (Jameson, 2013) and within HE in particular (Hamidizadeh et al., 2017); I commend this scholarly effort. Indeed, while the integration of technology may remain the focal point of L&D efforts, according to Jameson (2013), secondary functions such as leadership, administration, and management serve as 'essential background conditions for success or failure in the first-order delivery of educational technologies for learning and teaching' (p. 894). This assessment further emphasises the need for additional scholarly exploration of how these functions are mediated by emergent technologies, a potent undercurrent of this research.

As an L&D practitioner, I concede that I am thoroughly indoctrinated with the notion that L&D plays a vital role in organisational success. Indeed, I believe that 'the employees of [an] organization have potential to affect the company's development capabilities and behaviours by using their common experiences as well as using the understanding of new information development' (Hamidizadeh et al., 2017, p. 61). Further, organisational learning is a critical vehicle driving competitive advantage and can establish a company as an industry leader (Bueno et al., 2010; Hamidizadeh et al., 2017). The rise of digitally disruptive technologies presents a pressing problem for corporate executives and L&D departments as the purveyors of training solutions to address 21st-century skill gaps. This need is reinforced by Hüsing et al. (2016), who report that

> there is an urgent need for workers with a portfolio of skills that includes but is not restricted to digital – in ICT (Information and Computer Technology) as well as in non-ICT occupations that evolve into digital jobs, and in leadership positions which more and more require e-leadership skilled experts who have a T-shaped portfolio of skills, expertise in new technologies and in the development of successful and efficient organisations. (p. 5)

Foshay, et al. (2014) reinforce this urgency, pointing to two critical reasons for the failure of training efforts within the workplace, including training that does not close skill gaps towards business goals and addressing 'non-skill sources of performance gaps and non-training solutions' (p. 46). Therefore, with oversight of training within dynamically changing organisations, it is prudent for L&D leaders

across the hierarchal spectrum to consider the impact of these innovations, in addition to being subject to fluid technological ecosystems ourselves.

2.4.3 Drilling into the role of e-leadership

With respect to this research, the complexity and nuance of these open issues beg the question, 'What is the role of e-leadership as relates to how I interact with my team, and how is it different from other leadership constructs?' My goal in addressing this question is twofold. First, I want to address the calls within the educational technology discipline to define e-leadership as a named concept. Secondly, and extending from the need to define e-leadership more discretely, I want to isolate and drill into the 'e-' of e-leadership. This insight is necessary due to the variability surrounding definitions of leadership and broad-ranging beliefs around what it means individually. In short, I do not want to dilute the 'e-' component of this concept.

Part of this research involves assessing the outcomes of leadership practice on team performance. Zaccaro and Bader (2003) provide a starting point for me to situate my e-leadership practice within the research context.

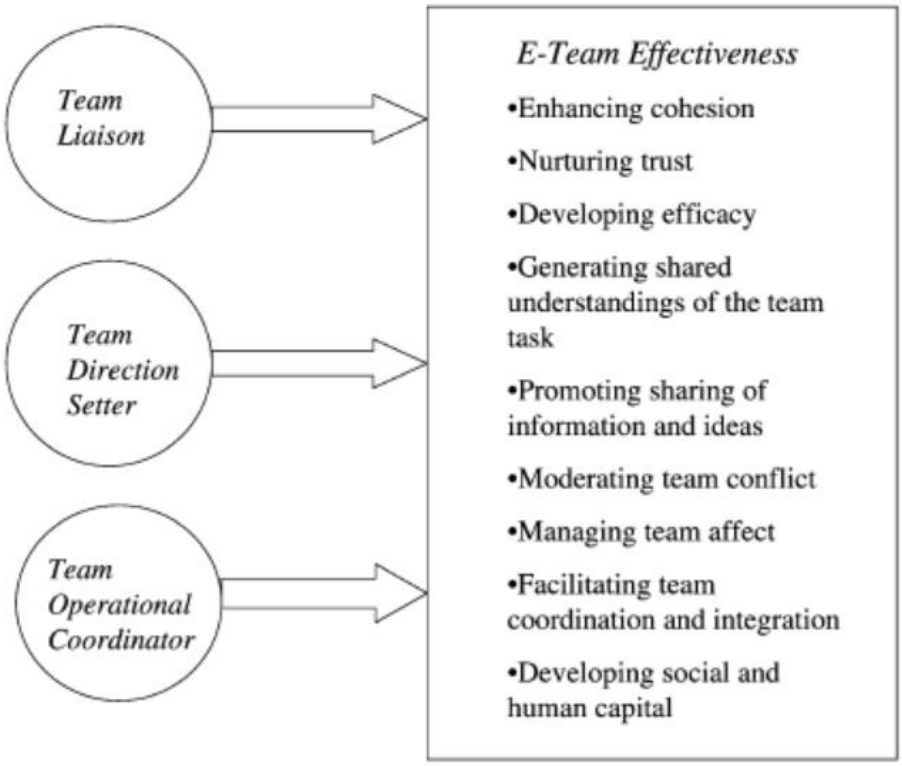

Figure 1. E-leader roles and e-team effectiveness (Zaccaro & Bader, 2003)

Leveraging this framework will help anchor me in my role as a team leader – as liaison, direction setter, and operational coordinator – towards answering the question of where e-leadership stands in the broader leadership ecosystem. It will also guide me in elucidating how these roles can produce positive outcomes within my team, thus, addressing the research question.

2.4.4 E-leadership: Feminist leadership's technological doppelganger?

As we consider e-leadership in the context of today's workplace, a compelling theme emerges. While there is a general lack of agreement regarding the effects of gender on leadership (Clover et al., 2017; Holmes & Marra, 2004), current theory in both general leadership and e-leadership theory appears to be grounded in feminist ideals. Consistent with feminist theory, e-leadership may occur at any hierarchal level, within or across functions, and within relationships that are one-to-one or one-to-many and focus on meeting employees' technical and socio-emotional needs.

Within the concept of e-leadership, we see reflections of other emergent leadership constructs, including transformational, servant, and shared leadership (Tahirkheli, 2022). Evidence suggests that elements from these models – for example, trust, transparency, collaboration, creativity, and diversity – can positively influence team performance and cohesion (Avolio et al., 2014). In an exploratory review conducted by Oh and Chua (2018), outcomes such as interpersonal skills conveyed through technology; virtual communication, collaboration, and socialisation; intercultural skills; trust-building; influencing; coaching and mentoring; leading by example; facilitating information sharing; and sensitivity to cultural norms were discussed as effective influences on group outcomes. Indeed, one can certainly detect a 'family resemblance' (Bass, 2008) across leadership constructs, and yet, interestingly, there is little or no mention of either 'feminine' attributions of leadership or the socially transformational potential of 'feminist' leadership.

Nevertheless, this research seeks to examine leadership practice beyond attributional labels. Technology's presence in our ways of working and as a supporting mechanism within GVTs is not likely to wane. Instead, it has become

an ancillary team member within many organisations, including mine. E-leadership, with its unique integration of human social systems, organisational purpose-driven ethos, and technological affordances offers promise in addressing many of the concerns associated with the pedagogical and human capital impacts of disruptive technologies of the 21st-century workplace (Eberly et al., 2013; Jameson, 2013), and as required by recent circumstances, leading through crisis (Chamakiotis et al., 2021).

2.5 The third research pillar: Leadership-as-practice

2.5.1 Operationalising a leadership practice

Feminist ideology, and in particular, feminist pedagogy and feminist leadership, echo a shift in the locus of power consistent with Avolio et al.'s (2014) e-leadership, wherein group members play an essential role in influencing group social dynamics and share in the leadership process. The intersection of these concepts empowers members individually and as a community, encourages through positive reinforcement, and drives towards a collective vision. The third pillar of my research focuses on how these concepts can be operationalised.

As a learning project manager, I am frequently tasked with executing others' visions to produce and deliver material outcomes. This vision is often an ambitious and ambiguous directive, and for me, almost always elicits a degree of anxiety for days or weeks as a project commences. Undertaking this research allows the opportunity to dissect and reframe this cycle, to see a project not as someone else's grand design, consigned to my teams and me under the guise of being a 'fun new project' or, worse, the latest 'shiny object'. Instead, I undertake this research to reframe the tactical activities of building something material into something that is, in my view, more substantial – a leadership practice.

2.5.2 What is leadership-as-practice (LAP)?

Leadership-as-practice is an emergent leadership construct. The overarching premise of LAP is that leadership occurs as a practice, a process, and activities rather than as behaviours or traits attributed to individual actors (Raelin, 2016; Youngs, 2017). As a concept, it embodies leadership practice as a 'social,

material, and jointly accomplished process' (Raelin, 2016, p. 1) with linkages to social movement theory, as well as other 'as-practice' approaches such as strategy-as-practice and coordination-as-practice (Carroll et al., 2008; Raelin et al., 2018). As work is performed through routine tasks and activities, practitioners

> engage in semiotic, often dialogical, exchange, and in some cases for those genuinely committed to one another, they display an interest in listening to one another, in reflecting on new perspectives, and in entertaining the prospect of changing direction based on what they learn. (Raelin, 2016, p. 4)

As with e-leadership, LAP is consistent with feminist ideology, emphasising a decentralised, collective, and relational approach to leadership, dialogic patterns among actors, and agency. Because of these characterisations, LAP appeals to me as a natural complement to this research.

2.5.3 What is the 'practice'; and how will I practice?

Within LAP, leadership occurs more organically as a practice between individuals instead of belonging to one designated individual. In establishing LAP as a concept, 'the practice' as defined by Raelin (2016) is a 'coordinative effort among participants who choose through their own rules to achieve a distinctive outcome' (p. 3). As noted by Youngs (2017), unlike other theories of leadership centred around 'dualistic positioning' (p. 146), LAP does not assume a binary relationship between members of an organising group. Instead, the ontology of LAP dispels the traditional leader-follower leadership study in favour of a practice-based approach focused on the actions and skills performed in situ (Nicolini, 2012; Youngs, 2017).

LAP occurs during day-to-day activities, often by MMs and ICs who come together with common goals. While organisational structures may designate specific individuals as 'in charge' or 'lead', the nature of LAP recognises that, in reality, roles may be ambiguous, provisional, or overlap. Avolio and Kahai (2003) reinforce the fluctuating role of MMs, recognising that 'leadership is migrating to lower and lower organizational levels and out through the boundaries of the organization' (p. 326). This evolution highlights the connection that MMs and ICs

play as leaders and pivotal actors who gather and disseminate information along the strategic to tactical plane, traversing all hierarchal levels (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Kempster & Gregory, 2017). Along this follower-leader spectrum, LAP calls on the collective experiences of individuals carrying out routine and developing work, facing challenges, problem-solving, and learning together. Through these activities, synergies that emerge within the group creating work products become the 'practice' of leadership and what I explore in my research.

As well as LAP's orientation as a collective leadership practice, it is also highly intentional. Within activities, as members come together to perform work, the practice 'becomes the engine of collaborative agency' (Raelin, 2016, p. 6). Work is distributed amongst members by members, focusing on just getting the work done. Members may be unsure how to proceed, working in an environment of high ambiguity and perhaps without specific knowledge of how to do the work. It is especially evident in these moments of uncertainty that the relationship between members propels LAP agency. The initiative to advance ideas may come from one individual or brainstorming among multiple members. It is also during times of doubt and hesitation when existing knowledge and prior experiences are pooled; diverse perspectives are solicited; and making sense of various inputs is conducted. In totality, this is the essence of leadership-as-practice.

Raelin (2016, p. 6) details seven LAP activities which are simultaneously task-oriented, socioemotional, reflective, and work symbiotically within groups performing work:

- Scanning—identifying resources (i.e., information or technologies) that can contribute to new or existing programs through simplification or sensemaking;
- Signalling—mobilizing and catalysing the attention of others to a program or project through imitating, building on, modifying, ordering, or synthesizing prior or existing elements;
- Weaving—creating webs of interaction across existing and new networks by building trust between individuals and units or creating shared meanings to particular views or cognitive frames;

- Stabilising—offering feedback and evaluating effectiveness, leading to structural and behavioural changes and learning;
- Inviting—encouraging those who have held back to participate and contribute their ideas, energy, and humanity;
- Unleashing—ensuring that everyone who wishes has a chance to contribute, without fear of reprisal, even if their contribution might create discrepancies or ambiguity in the face of decision-making; and
- Reflecting—triggering thoughtfulness within the self and others and pondering the meaning of past, current, and future experiences to learn how to meet mutual needs and interests.

Again, these LAP activities are part of co-constructed leadership and are shared by various members as the nature of work dictates. Throughout this research, I leaned on this framework to deconstruct what was happening daily, then reconstructed my learnings as purposefully designed feminist LAP.

Indeed, LAP is a thoughtful exercise, emphasising leadership development as embedded within the work at hand. It is sensemaking in the face of ambiguity, as practitioners immerse in learning through shared lived experiences (Raelin, 2016). LAP recognises the 'experiential and embodied nature' (p. 8) of leadership which is all at once dynamic, collective, situated, and dialectic.

Epistemologically and ontologically, LAP carries the foundational traditions (historical, philosophical, and ideological) of organisational and workforce development, including sensemaking, which renders it an appropriate lens through which to conduct this research (Carroll et al., 2008; Raelin, 2016).

2.6 Chapter conclusion

This chapter landscaped the three theoretical pillars of my research: the feminist project, e-leadership, and leadership-as-practice. Examined through a feminist pedagogic lens, I highlighted how culture, values, and community might impact practice. Research in digital educational leadership within HE provided a baseline for contextualising e-leadership in enterprise L&D. Therefore, this research attends to conceptualising feminist pedagogic e-leadership-as-practice as a

named individual concept within enterprise L&D and explores synergies towards a new leadership framework. I also recognise that I am undertaking the operationalisation of heretofore disparately researched phenomena. However, I believe this makes my research unique and, no doubt will require agility as I unpack the relationship between these complex concepts.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises nine sections detailing my research approach, design and analytic strategies, and rationale for my choices. The chapter is outlined as follows:

Section 3.2 establishes my qualitative research approach.

Section 3.3 describes my paradigmatic positioning and the relevance to my methodological approaches.

Section 3.4 addresses my study logistics, including participant engagement, ethical considerations, pilot, and participant selection.

Section 3.5 introduces autoethnography as part of my methodological approach.

Section 3.6 describes the complementary narrative inquiry methodological approach.

Section 3.7 presents bricolage as a way to reconcile autoethnography and narrative inquiry.

Section 3.8 explains my analytic approach.

Section 3.9 describes the writing and presentational strategies for the research findings.

I conclude the chapter by defining a qualitative argument arising from the analysis of findings.

3.2 Qualitative research approach

I had several goals for this research which suggested a qualitative methodological approach. First, I aimed to explore how the practice of e-leadership manifests when employing feminist pedagogic principles, contributing to the extant body of knowledge. My second aim was to critically examine and dynamically develop my

leadership practice over a protracted period. I responded to day-to-day activities and engaged with the instructive nature of my research, considering input from study participants. I also sought to present the research in a way that was relatable to readers and transferrable to various contextual settings, a need highlighted in extant literature. As exploratory, dynamic, and practice-based research, I sought a methodology that would complement and reconcile the research aims. Therefore, a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate, with autoethnographic bricolage and narrative inquiry mobilised as the core design methods.

Within this design, excerpts elicited from reflective journaling allowed me to capture my daily activities, critical incidents, and seminal experiences. Ten colleague-participants each contributed two live reflective, interactive interviews and three asynchronous self-narrative reflections to enhance the autoethnography. Data generation occurred over one year, from April 2020 through March 2021.

3.3 Paradigmatic Positioning

3.3.1 Constructivist and social constructionist

The nature of constructivist belief systems has been addressed and critiqued, expanded and remoulded extensively. Constructivism is often presented interchangeably with 'social constructivism' or even 'social constructionism'; however, there is nuance. While constructivism acknowledges our unique life experiences, social constructionism highlights the role of culture in shaping our feelings, beliefs, and actions (Crotty, 1998). Further distinction lies in the former's resistance to criticality. As a belief system, constructivist ideology is fraught with bias, as described by Crotty (1998):

> We tend to take ‘the sense we make of things’ to be "the way things are’. We blithely do that and, just as blithely, hand on our understandings as quite simply ‘the truth’. (p. 59)

Acknowledging this inherent bias and reconciling the critical spirit of this research, my approach 'necessitates a relationship with respondents in which they can cast

their stories in their teams' (Charmaz, 2000, p. 525). My design strategy was informed by the feminist principle that my voice as researcher does not stand as the only voice. Instead, it includes multiple perspectives and interpretations towards explicating lived experience (Charmaz, 2000).

3.3.2 Ontology: Participatory realism

Participatory realism resides along a continuum of 'subjective-objective' reality wherein the research context is 'co-created by the mind and the surrounding cosmos' (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 168). It is subjective from the perspective that it is my experience, yet objective in its invitation of active engagement with others' perspectives and experiences.

In this way, participatory realism enjoys objective independence as the researcher explores the relationship between self and others while also recognising that knowledge is subjectively held in check by others' perspectives, or as Heron and Reason (1997) note, 'knowers can only be knowers when known by other knowers: knowing presupposes mutual participative awareness' (p. 5). This acknowledgement is vital to the scholarly rigour of this research and in a practical sense. Hearing from others in my work context provided feedback on the leadership actions and activities that could influence and improve my practice.

Although Heron and Reason approach participatory realism as 'collaborative inquiry' between researchers, I chose to adopt and extend this description. Aligning with Lincoln and Guba (2000), I saw this research as collaborative and with 'individual reconstructions coalescing around consensus' (p. 166) to define the nature of feminist pedagogic e-leadership-as-practice.

3.3.3 Epistemology: Critical subjectivity

Critical subjectivity blurs distinctions between truth and interpretation and addresses the relationship between the researcher and the topic researched (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Critical subjectivity extends my ontological position of participatory realism in that research as truth and knowledge is co-created, with resultant findings emanating from 'participatory transaction with the cosmos' (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 102). I viewed my participants as co-collaborators in my

knowledge exploration, joined as investigators as we navigated this human experiment, not separated by labels of 'researcher' and 'participant' or 'leader' and 'follower', but as fellow human beings living in a shared, co-created space.

3.4 Participant engagement approach and considerations

3.4.1 Friendship as part of the autoethnographic cycle

Fundamentally, I believe that as we engage with our surroundings, we observe accepted social structures and may (or may not) choose to reconstruct and transform ourselves. I was fortunate to be surrounded by colleagues who engaged in this transformation with me. Thus, the data collected from participants in this research heavily relied on relationships formed in the work environment. Some relationships were established well before commencing this research, while others blossomed during the anchor project at the heart of this research. By the time the research concluded, I can firmly say that several relationships had evolved and continue to thrive. Although I would not typically portray friendship so prescriptively, for this research, I describe friendship as ‘somebody to talk to, to depend on and rely on for help, support, and caring, and to have fun and enjoy doing things with’ (Rawlins, 2003a p. 271).

3.4.1.1 Friendship as a method of inquiry

Friendship becomes method through the ebb and flow of the autoethnographic cycle. Just as autoethnography is a self-exploration, Tillmann-Healy (2003) suggests friendship as a way to learn about others and, when framed in a social research context, as a method of inquiry, noting that

> Friendship and fieldwork are similar endeavours. Both involve being in the world with others. To friendship and fieldwork communities, we must gain entrée. We negotiate roles (e.g., student, confidant, and advocate), shifting from one to another as the relational context warrants (p. 732).

In the course of these ‘negotiations’, the relationship between the researcher and participants might morph into friendships ‘that nurture our personal and political selves as much as deepen and enrich our collection of data’ (Cann & Demeulenaere, 2012, p. 149). Indeed, while conducting fieldwork, we may create

or expand existing connections into relationships that can supplement our research *and also* enrich our lives.

3.4.1.2 Friendship-as-method applied to my research

While emerging friendships foregrounded my research context, friendship-as-method permitted me to integrate my day-to-day activities and the theoretical frameworks surrounding my research. Simultaneously, I gathered participant data and related critical incidents from our work while also exploring the emotions and perspectives of our personal belief systems and professional selves. Friendship also embedded an ethos of care into my research. Deconstructing and reconstructing stories and anecdotes nurtured my commitment to and care for those in my professional ecosystem. When viewed as a methodological approach in this way, the lines between personal and professional became blurred, vacillating between weekend plans, updates on family life, dealing with Covid-life, and other work projects. Moreover, Maya always reminded us that we must pay attention to our humanity – 'we're not robots'. In other words, these conversations are sprinkled with individual threads that, when woven together, emerge as 'the informal and intimate friendship spaces that we create' (Cann & Demeulenaere, 2012, p. 150).

3.4.2 Ethics

Before initiating the research, I developed and submitted participant information sheets and informed consent forms with my IRB application to Lancaster University. As I embarked on the research design and strategy, several ethical considerations arose, which required thoughtful foresight. I was concerned with using close collegial relationships as source data, power optics, and individual and organisational anonymity. Would my colleagues feel I was taking advantage of our relationships? Would my immediate team members feel 'compelled' to participate? How could I protect individual privacy and sufficiently anonymise the contextual background? Throughout the research, I kept these questions front of mind and addressed them in the workplace as a CMR and in each interview and reflection activity.

Although friendship may become method during the autoethnographic cycle, it raises ethical concerns. To address the potential ethical sensitivity of this research orientation, ‘friendship as method asks researchers to approach their relationships with participants as they would a friendship’ (Adams et al., 2015, p. 61) because there is ‘no leaving the field’ (Ellis, 2007, p. 13).

I explained to participants via the participant information sheets that they had been invited to elicit 'diverse perspectives, from all staff levels and functions' and 'because of our collegial relationship and [their] support of me as a researcher'. Informed consent forms detailed withdrawal timing and options; I reinforced these options in interviews and reflective activity emails. Throughout the study, I remained conscientious of my colleagues' roles in my research and my role as a CMR. I spoke (and was asked) regularly about the research and how the autoethnographic components were developing, including how I was piecing together my day-to-day experiences alongside my participant's perspectives. Finally, the work of Pelias inspired me to use empathy to 'shape the tale that would ring true to my character's experience' (2019, p. 131). After completing the first draft of my findings, including the autoethnographic vignettes and participant anecdotes, I shared drafts for review and feedback. Gratefully, I received positive reactions and encouragement.

While none of the participants was my direct, hierarchal report, I acknowledge that my role as project lead, as described in Chapter 4, may be problematic, specifically concerning perceptions of unequal power attributions. In the collaborative and reformative spirit of the feminist project and aligning with a participatory realist ontology, I looked to my participants’ input, to help me determine the ongoing directions of the research inquiry, recognising that neither my research nor my work could develop or succeed without my colleagues’ contributions. As discussed in Chapter 2, the notion of ‘consensus authority’ is based on systems of shared values which are fluid and open to negotiation, and where decision-making is approached through discussion to reach consensus. Although it was my sole responsibility to make decisions about the research, I assumed a consensus mindset, with participant perspectives guiding the ongoing lines of inquiry. In determining what was included or excluded in the research, I

considered what participants told me they struggled with and how they learned, for example, having difficult conversations, giving feedback, and sharing stories of failure as a pedagogic tool. In this way, I chose shared experiences and guided the research to reflect common, real-world challenges that might help others learn through the research.

During data-gathering, I introduced and discussed emergent themes with participants and asked if they were comfortable with others knowing they were participating. I envisaged a group discussion about the findings as part of future research and a desire to celebrate this journey with my colleagues. Bringing participant's voices to the fore as part of the 'bricolage' of co-constructed realities contributed to a 'democratic dialogue…as co-subjects' (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 282), demonstrated transparency and, I believe, assuaged concerns about the process. Since the research has concluded, I continue to meet and discuss the research informally with my participants, individually and as a group, during team 'reunions'. I have travelled across the country to meet each participant in person, trying to do justice to the friendships developed during this research.

Throughout the study, my responsibility was to protect participants' privacy, develop trust, uphold the integrity of the research and the research process, guard against any negative reflections of organisations discussed, and remain agile in addressing any challenges (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Therefore, I replaced all participant names with pseudonyms. I anonymised the anchor project (and thus the individuals involved), describing only essential details regarding the team makeup and complexity of the work, as the material product was not germane to the story. All participant data, including from the web-based survey tool (described below), was received and stored on secure Lancaster drives.

I took additional logistical measures to mitigate potential conflicts and inject a level of demarcation between work and personal choice to participate. I requested personal email addresses (outside of work) to provide study materials and communications from my Lancaster email. I utilised the video conferencing platform provided by Lancaster and, at my own cost, the transcription service Otter.ai. To the degree possible, I scheduled interviews outside of work hours or during participants' personal time.

Validity is also a challenge bricoleurs face vis-à-vis conventional conceptions of triangulation (Kincheloe et al., 2011). In addition to inter-researcher reliability, process-centric scholars may find discomfort in the fluidity of bricolage. By including multiple artefacts, Denzin & Lincoln (2011) assert triangulation not as a method of validation but as an alternative to questions of validation, noting that

> the combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives, and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that aids rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry. (p. 5)

The multiplicity of textual references included in this autoethnographic bricolage, alongside participant reviews, assuages validity concerns and conveys the inclusive spirit of feminist ideology.

3.4.3 Pilot

After receiving consent to participate, I conducted a two-participant pilot in August 2020. I selected colleagues I worked with closely and knew to be candid and thoughtful; I also felt they would want me to succeed. The goals of the pilot were twofold. The first goal was specific to the interview protocol. I wanted to gain feedback on my interview approach and style. Thus, I used an initial interview guide (Appendix 1) to conduct pilot interviews, after which I requested feedback. For example, I asked whether any questions were unclear or should be adjusted and enquired how I could help participants feel more comfortable. This process allowed me to gain comfort by interviewing colleagues and receiving feedback on the study's reflective elements. This exercise informed me that I would need to ensure participants that there were 'no right or wrong answers' and that I valued their raw, unfiltered interpretations and perspectives, but I would probe further if needed.

A second goal of the pilot was to ensure that the approach used to gather participant reflections was suitable for data-gathering. I selected the web-based survey platform Typeform (Appendix 2) to capture reflections. I first experienced Typeform as part of another Lancaster University student's data-gathering process and found it intuitive, visually appealing, and innovative. Further, its

interactive functionality offered participants multiple options for collecting information (e.g., within the platform, document upload, or scheduling a live discussion). I received positive feedback on the reflective approach, the platform's ease of use, and appreciation for submission options.

3.4.4 Sampling

Data gathered in this research relied heavily on relationships formed in the work environment; as such, I used purposive sampling to recruit participants. Purposive sampling elicits input that will 'yield the most relevant and plentiful data – in essence, information-rich – given [my] topic of study' (Creswell & Creswell, 2017, p. 93). Because my research focused on my practice and how leadership manifests in teams, the primary criterion for participation in this research was to be a current member of the L&D organisation in a non-senior leadership role (without fiduciary responsibility) – as either a middle manager or individual contributor. I also sought a breadth of experience in roles, rendered as contractors (n=2), senior associates (n=2), managers (n=2), and senior managers (n=4). As the eleventh participant and embedded researcher, I was a manager during this period. I approached individuals with whom I worked closely and who had expressed interest in my research; participant ‘Ellie’ referred one participant. Many colleagues already knew of my research intentions and expressed early interest in the topic and eagerness to participate.

3.4.5 Participants

Diverse perspectives, whether economic, social, political, educational, or professional, are core values of feminist pedagogy and leadership. Although I did not explicitly inquire, the established relationships with participants gave me confidence that the research represented a diverse cross-section of perspectives. Participants ranged in age from mid-twenties to mid-sixties and represented a variety of educational and professional backgrounds – both within and outside of educational disciplines. While I would have preferred broader representation across ethnicities (only two people of colour), sexes (only two males), and sexual orientations (only one LGBTQ), this highlights underlying opportunities to examine the profession and underscores the need for intention in incorporating diverse perspectives; it is also a limitation of my participant base. I created short

biographies (Appendix 3) based on initial interviews and data excerpts; these were shared with each participant before including in this thesis.

3.5 Data generation: Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a research method that employs personal experience to reflexively analyse social and cultural schemas to, hopefully, improve life (Adams et al., 2015). According to Campbell (2015), autoethnography allows researchers to '[illuminate] multiple layers of consciousness and understanding, explicitly linking the personal to the cultural' (p. 235) through the process of 'exploring experience as a means of insight about social life, and recognising and embracing the risks of presenting vulnerable selves in research' (Adams et al., 2015, p. 49). The link between the personal and cultural, with the intent to improve the human condition, highlights the critical nature of autoethnographic research.

Autoethnography is inherently personal, using the researcher's experiences as the primary data source. It is a method underscored by a desire for self-reflexive understanding, often depicting critical events shared with others. The triggering experiences may range from everyday mundane to existentially transformative. While at its most fundamental level, autoethnographic inquiry reflects a desire for understanding, it is through critical life moments, or 'epiphanies', where transformation occurs. These lasting impressions prompt us ‘to pause and reflect; they encourage us to explore aspects of ourselves and others that, before the incident, we might not have had the occasion or courage to explore' (Adams et al., 2015, p. 47).

By way of process, autoethnography is iterative and culturally collaborative, allowing researchers to work within and outside of their constructed story alongside the stories of others. It is all at once rhythmic and fractured, 'moving inward and outward and inward again, from epiphany, aesthetic moment, or intuition into an "interpretive community" of broader theoretical, social, and cultural discourses' (Adams et al., 2015, p. 49). It is precisely for these reasons that I chose this method and, in so doing, sought to weave a 'research literature story' (Goodall Jr, 2000, p. 51) that would attend to the gaps in theory and practice

discussed in Chapter 1 while also exploring the practice of feminist pedagogy in my leadership role and do so in a meaningful way.

3.5.1 Critical autoethnography

What is meant by 'critical' in 'critical autoethnography'? As described by Holman Jones (2016), critical autoethnography attends to the symbiotic relationship between story and theory in that ‘theory asks about and explains the nuances of an experience and the happenings of a culture; story is the mechanism for illustrating and embodying these nuances and happenings’ (p. 2). As such, story is not served merely with a side of theory. Theory acts as a facilitator as the researcher traverses the landscape of their experiences. It prompts us to not only ask questions about our experiences and events in our stories but to approach them with thoughtful and deliberate language, ultimately with the intention to act. In this research, I borrow three tenets of critical autoethnography from Holman Jones: to be cognizant of ethical praxis (discussed above), to honour the symbiotic relationship of story and theory (discussed in Chapter 11), and to advance change by adopting feminist ideology in my leadership practice (presented throughout Part II).

3.5.2 Evocative autoethnography

As a kind of storytelling, evocative autoethnography offers readers exposure to the depth of personal experience to connect emotionally with the researcher (Anderson, 2006). In this way, it blurs the lines between literature and social science research. Ellis and Bochner (2000) affirm these synergies, noting the inviolability of narrative displayed in evocative autoethnography as 'akin to the novel or biography [which] fractures the boundaries that normally separate social science from literature…the narrative text refuses to abstract and explain' (p. 744). I hope that the forthcoming personal narratives will resonate emotionally and that you, the reader, will sense the breadth of emotion and respond to the interpretation offered (Han & Henschke, 2013).

Despite evocative autoethnography's rejection of the inter-nested analytic characteristics of traditional qualitative inquiry, as a researcher, I concur with Anderson (2006) that there remains an opportunity to examine critically 'new

forms of inquiry and practice to assess their potential value for improving and expanding the ethnographic craft' (p. 378). As such, I turn to analytic autoethnography as a complementary approach to marrying textual vibrancy with systematic rigour.

3.5.3 Analytic autoethnography

Analytic autoethnography resituates the researcher beyond the role of external observer to an active self-observer of the social and cultural worlds of which they are a part. In this research, I assumed the role of 'complete member researcher' (CMR). As a CMR, the researcher 'acknowledges membership in a research community, reflects on research experience in the context of fieldwork, and describes the theoretical contributions of research in distinct and separate moments of the narrative' (Adams et al., 2015, p. 85). I fully committed to providing a rich account of my experience through analytic reflexivity, textual visibility, dialogue with informants, and analytic and theoretical rigour (Anderson, 2006).

3.5.4 Capturing my story: Reflective journaling

Critical events from my journal from April 2020 to March 2021 will anchor six vignettes representing the feminist pedagogic principles outlined in Chapter 2. Driscoll and Teh (2001) suggest reflective journaling as a 'powerful medium for facilitating reflection on practice' (p. 99) and a method of analysis for what transpires in practice. At the beginning of my doctoral journey, my Module 1 tutor suggested reflective journaling to record thoughts about developing my professional practice. I found the exercise of reflecting on my daily activities, meetings with colleagues, and project work insightful in helping me make sense of my experiences; it was also sometimes cathartic. My reflective practice involved both morning and evening weekday reflections during this period. I captured reflections using the productivity platform Evernote, and in the essence of time and simplicity (I was often quite tired in the evenings but remained committed to the exercise), I followed Driscoll's three elements of reflection:

WHAT? A description of the events

SO WHAT? An analysis of the events

NOW WHAT? Proposed actions following the events

After data-gathering concluded, I reviewed my journal and selected six seminal experiences reminiscent of Pelias' (2004) essays in *'A methodology of the heart: evoking academic and daily life'* that would also reflect the feminist pedagogic principles described by Shrewsbury and Webb, Walker, and Bollis. These experiences profoundly impacted my leadership and ultimately became the vignette anchors.

3.6 Data generation: Narrative inquiry

As previously expressed, a key rationale for adopting an autoethnographic approach was to examine and make sense of my practice as a feminist L&D practitioner and to use what I learned to improve myself and help others flourish. As a researcher, I concur with Kathryn Blee that 'we are more honest as scholars when we acknowledge the myriad ways in which our personal lives and emotions are intertwined with who, what, and how we study' (Adams et al., 2015, p. 11). I believe our stories can enrich our scholarship and engage our audiences as they serve as 'analytic demonstrations of how we come to know, name, and interpret personal and cultural experience' (Adams et al., 2015, p. 1). Thus, I chose narrative inquiry and storytelling to help me act on these goals.

Narrative inquiry is, by nature, an approach that welcomes multiple storytellers, conjoined methodological approaches, and unconventional presentational forms. In this research, I leverage excerpts from my journal, depict critical incidents from practice, consider common themes from participant data, and interpret responses to reflective prompts. To mitigate the fluidity of synthesising the human experience from disparate sources, Cann and Demeulenaere (2012) suggest that narrative inquiry allows researchers to present more accurate representations of 'tempo, intimacy, uncertainty, and complexity of relationships' (p. 147). Indeed, as a means of sensemaking, the result of narrative inquiry can profoundly impact self-identity, engagement with others, and how individuals live their lives.

Narrative inquiry often begins with story (Clandinin, 2006) and uses language to situate life events 'with a temporal and logical order, to demystify them and establish coherence' (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p. 2) about past, present, and future experiences. Inherent in this research is the feminist pedagogic principle of giving voice to a population whose value, I argue, is sometimes overlooked or underappreciated – not overtly but as the by-product of hierarchal conventions (another feminist principle examined in this research). Whereas theory provides frameworks for explaining 'the nuances of an experience and the happenings of a culture; story is the mechanism that illustrates these nuances and happenings' (Adams et al., 2015, p. 90). Telling stories infuses agency and impact on the narrator and the reader and serves the dual purpose of '[attempting] to change one's own life by affecting the lives of others' (Frank, 1995, as cited by Rawlins, 2003b, p. 122).

Narrative inquiry compliments autoethnography well, as both aspire to similar goals of 'meaning-making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one's own or others' actions, of organising events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions over time' (Chase, 2011, p. 421). Melding my narrative with the voices of my participant-colleagues via story allowed me to give voice and meaning to our shared experience. As a means of sensemaking, this collaboration elicited profound impacts on my self-identity, my engagement with others, and how we shared our work lives.

3.6.1 Capturing the story: Self-narrative reflective sprints

In addition to my autoethnographic detail, self-narrative data gathered from my participants through asynchronous reflective prompts helped elucidate nuance and highlighted the evocative nature of this research. They provided a compositional synthesis of voice, colour, and context towards understanding. According to Bochner (2000), self-narratives aim

> to extract meaning from experience rather than to depict experience exactly as it was lived. These narratives are not so much academic as they are existential, reflecting a desire to grasp or seize the possibilities of

> meaning, which is what gives life its imaginative and poetic qualities. We narrate to make sense of experience over the course of time. (p. 270)

Self-narratives in the form of reflective prompts function as both method and text and are compatible with feminist and postmodern sensibilities in social science research (Adams et al., 2013), rendering this approach a natural extension of my research.

After the pilot, the full study began in September 2020. Because my study and data gathering began at the height of the pandemic, I wanted to provide adequate time for participants to reflect and engage with the research. Therefore, I conducted two live interviews with each participant (white), bifurcated by three reflective sprints[1] (black), offered synchronously or asynchronously.

Figure 2. Data gathering reflective sprints

Each reflective sprint began with an email to participants providing a review of the ideas already covered, emergent themes, and an overview of the current sprint. Literature reviews informed each sprint but allowed space for participants to reflect and elaborate on their experiences and perspectives. Each email contained a hyperlink directing the participant to Typeform.

Sprint 1 (Appendix 4) focused on e-leader roles and responsibilities and participant reflections on extant definitions of e-leadership to inform an updated operational definition specific to enterprise L&D. Sprint 2 (Appendix 5) focused on participant's leadership development motivations and priorities, how leadership develops, and how it relates to practice. Sprint 3 (Appendix 6) focused

[1] In project management, 'sprints' are component periods within a project wherein a team completes tasks towards specific deliverables or milestones in order to iterate subsequent sprints. I used this terminology as it was a familiar, organising concept within the research context.

on the influence of e-leadership on performance and team outcomes. Appendix 7 provides a detailed data-gathering schedule.

Each sprint was iterative, building on the previous sprint to isolate discrete activities or emergent themes of the theoretical concepts. I asked participants to complete the exercise within two weeks so that I could continue to analyse the data, iterate the research direction, and develop the next sprint. I was pleasantly surprised at the depth of thought and reflection participants gave to each exercise, as well as trusting me with their challenges and vulnerabilities.

3.6.2 Reflexive, interactive interviews

Reflexive interviews follow conventional question-and-answer interview protocols; however, their objective is not to elicit a prescriptive set of responses across all participants. Instead, they are characterised by a conversational flow that allows researchers and participants to connect around shared experiences and discuss personal connections to the topic. Reflective interviewing felt natural to me and supported my goal to understand better the dynamics that shape leadership as viewed by those I share the space with and to integrate learnings into my practice as the research unfolded.

Interactive interviews invite participants to also engage as researchers through collaborative discussion of shared stories or experiences. Through the interactive interview process, 'understandings that emerge among all parties during interaction – what they learn together – are as compelling as the stories each brings to the session' (Ellis et al., 2019, p. 859). In this way, interviews were informative and pedagogic and allowed me and my 'researcher-participants' to share experiences, perspectives, and perceptions of leadership, and reflect on our behaviours and practices as leaders.

The goals of the initial interview were 1) to establish a researcher-participant relationship; 2) to learn about participants' personal histories, including their educational and professional backgrounds; and 3) set the stage for the research by discussing views of what leadership means vis-à-vis the participants' experiences. Although I developed and piloted an interview guide, I approached

initial interviews as reflexive and interactive in alignment with the narrative methodological approach.

To begin each initial interview, I asked participants to elaborate on their educational and professional backgrounds. In each case, participants shared aspects of their personal histories and seminal moments which influenced their trajectories into L&D. Despite my previous relationships with participants, I was surprised and heartened that participants felt comfortable sharing intimate details of their life journeys. From the influence of growing up the daughter of a strict Muslim father to the struggles of a single mother taking a shot at unfamiliar territory in corporate learning, each participant had a story that 'tugged at the heartstrings' (Participant ‘Josephine’). One participant asked whether their unconventional educational background disqualified them from the research, a revelation they admitted they do not typically share with others. Finally, I explained more about autoethnography, the research process, expectations for data gathering, and fielded any questions. These initial conversations helped me get a pulse of what was important to participants in their work settings and began the influence on my research and practice.

Final interviews (Appendix 8) followed the same conversational flow as initial interviews. They provided an opportunity to address gaps or clarifications, share initial insights, reflect on shared experiences, and for participants to ask questions. I appreciated that each participant responded enthusiastically and demonstrated engagement in the research progress, often expressing the need for this exploration, with some even asking if the research would be shared 'with leadership'. This feedback provided me with a comforting level of validation. The total audio captured, including the pilot, initial, and final interviews, was 12 hours, 45 minutes. Data gathering concluded in March 2021.

This combined methodology – reflexive, interactive interviews augmented with reflective sprints – was appropriate for my research of shared experiences and aligned with my paradigmatic positioning and research goals.

3.7 Bricolage as a methodological approach

One of my research goals was to critically examine and improve my leadership practice based on the evolving context of my environment versus maintaining a static design approach. As such, I needed to mobilise a strategy that would allow me to respond and adapt to a constant influx of feedback from multiple directions.

Yardley (2020b) describes bricolage as a kind of dance between the researcher and elements of the research process towards outcomes that are all at once tangible and ephemeral, a constant ebb and flow of material

> ‘reconfiguring itself, bringing new methodological tools into play as processes unfold, adding new forms of representation and interpretation, always responsive to the unforeseeable needs on an ever-changing research environment' (p. 4).

Bricolage embeds agility into the research strategy. The research practices unfold in real-time and depend on the questions asked, and the questions asked extend from how context morphs during the research process (Grossberg et al., 1992), thus rendering bricolage well-suited for my exploration.

3.7.1 Relevance of autoethnographic bricolage to my research

As the pandemic continued unabated, I found myself in an uncharted liminal space, presenting a different unknown daily. As the narrator of an unfolding story, I thought I might 'have something to tell, but the details and the perspective [were] relatively inchoate; [I was] still in the middle of sorting out an experience' (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p. 2).

Just as autoethnography allows researchers to traverse the landscape of their experience – the personal and cultural, assembling and disassembling, juxtaposing and distancing oneself from lived reality, bricolage is a way for researchers to express plurality and to emphasise the relationships between themselves and others through the use of various strategies, evidentiary materials, cultural artefacts, tools, or techniques (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011a; Yardley, 2020b). The strategy that the researcher employs may not be determined in advance, and in fact, ‘the choice of research practices depends

upon the questions that are asked, and the questions depend on their context' (Grossberg et al., 1992, p. 2) and how context materialises during the research process.

As such, employed in this research, bricolage refers to how I used multi-textual and multi-perspective artefacts as the research unfolded. The presence of these multiple sources of documentation, which I heretofore refer to as 'autoethnographic bricolage' will '[provide] a continual ground for self-critique not possible within a mono-textual, single-perspective approach' (Yardley, 2020b, p. 5), and which I offer as my endeavour towards a deep and incisive understanding of feminist pedagogic practice.

Although Lincoln and Guba (2000) assert abundant possibilities for interweaving various inputs in instances 'where borrowing seems useful, richness enhancing or theoretically heuristic' (p. 167), Kincheloe et al. (2011) acknowledge the challenges that bricoleurs face. In addition to inter-researcher reliability, process-centric scholars may find discomfort in the fluidity of 'methodological bricolage' as the researcher makes subjective decisions about the inclusion and exclusion of evidentiary materials. At the same time, others may disagree with the notion of 'paradigmatic bricolage' wherein the researcher may adopt one or several ontological and epistemological personas while developing their work.

Autoethnographic bricolage, as applied in this research, is approached neither as a means of triangulation or validation nor as a way to shift between paradigmatic personas, bucking the methodological traditions of autoethnography. Whereas triangulation attempts to arrive at a fixed point as a method of validation, I use multiple artefacts to add robustness to the research, make it more relatable, and help check my biases. Further, I see it as a way to achieve meaningful knowledge and depth of criticality through various perspectives (mine and my colleague-participants) and textual artefacts (a personal journal and participant interviews and self-reflections) with determinations made through a hermeneutic lens. I believe this approach is appropriate towards answering the research question, in line with Denzin and Lincoln's (2011) suggestion that the use of multiple artefacts as an *alternative* to questions of validation, noting that

> The combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives, and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that aids rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry (p. 5).

Therefore, as a matter of knowledge construction situated within the traditions of the feminist project as well as the invitation to engage with various strategies and materials, I see autoethnographic bricolage as a means to help me derive meaning by answering the question, 'What do these artefacts, taken together, become that is meaningful *to me*?' This renders autoethnographic bricolage not only a 'dialogue with the materials' (p. 50) but also a dialogue with the self and in line with what Grossberg et al.'s (1992) description of bricolage within cultural studies as 'ambiguous from the beginning…pragmatic, strategic, and self-reflexive' (p. 2).

Ideologically, I chose to marry these techniques and artefacts to describe the inner connectedness and complexity of workplace relationships 'between material reality and human perception' (Watt, 2012, p. 26).

Methodologically, I chose bricolage as a response to calls to evolve criticality in research, to 'push to a new conceptual terrain … to maintain theoretical coherence and epistemological innovation' (Kincheloe et al., 2011, p. 168), and to do so via new forms of pedagogic research (Watt, 2012).

Practically, bricolage helped me weave together a collage of experiences, feelings, ideas, and challenges towards solutions to day-to-day challenges.

3.7.2 Critiques of the methodological approach

Although Bochner (2000) asserts that 'there is no one right way to do social science research' (p. 268), many scholars critique autoethnography, questioning its position within academic research due to its individualistic nature, lack of generalisability, and perceived misalignment with traditional methods for assessing qualitative inquiry (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Despite the critique of being too individualistic, Adams et al. (2013) suggest that through 'our connections', I might narrate my truth and create a sense of accountability to others. With these aims, my autoethnography 'does not have as its goal the establishment of a definitive narrative but constitutes a linguistic and social occasion for self-transformation' (Butler, 2009, p. 130), a position that firmly decouples autoethnography from individualism.

Regarding generalisability, Poulos (2018) is explicit in emphasising the role of individual story and its coalescence into the ethnographic practice, noting that it

> does not seek to be work that generates data, tests predictions, controls outcomes, or leads to generalisations or explanations. Rather, it seeks to embrace, and possibly make storied sense of— or at least move through, into, or with —the mystery that animates human life. (p. 47)

Unlike positivist disciplines which seek to generalise, narrative inquiry through story favours working 'collaboratively with research participants to improve the quality of their everyday experiences' (Chase, 2011, p. 421). In this research, I do not attempt to generalise my experience vis-à-vis the experience of others. Instead, I augment my narrative with my participants' to examine a shared contextual experience.

Finally, some argue that first-person narratives erode the analytic intentions of 'scholarship' or its ability to cultivate social change' (Adams et al., 2015, p. 99) and contest the validity of methodologically joining evocative and analytic autoethnography (Spry, 2011). My use of bricolage sought to dismantle this construct. I argue that such methods can peacefully cohabitate, and further, using thick description (Adams et al., 2015) enables researchers to '[bring] together creative and critical aspects of inquiry' (Patton, 2004, p. 2) and package them in ways that resonate within multiple contexts.

3.8 Analysis

3.8.1 Initial approach and organisation of participant data

Although reflective journaling, intended to become the central autoethnographic component of my research, commenced shortly after submitting my research

proposal, my focus, after receiving ethical approval, quickly turned to gathering and analysing participant data.

Initially, I used Nvivo QDAS to help corral and organise raw participant data and distil it into more discrete themes for analysis. In alignment with evaluative qualitative text analysis, I began at the highest level with overarching themes related to my theoretical framework: feminist pedagogy.

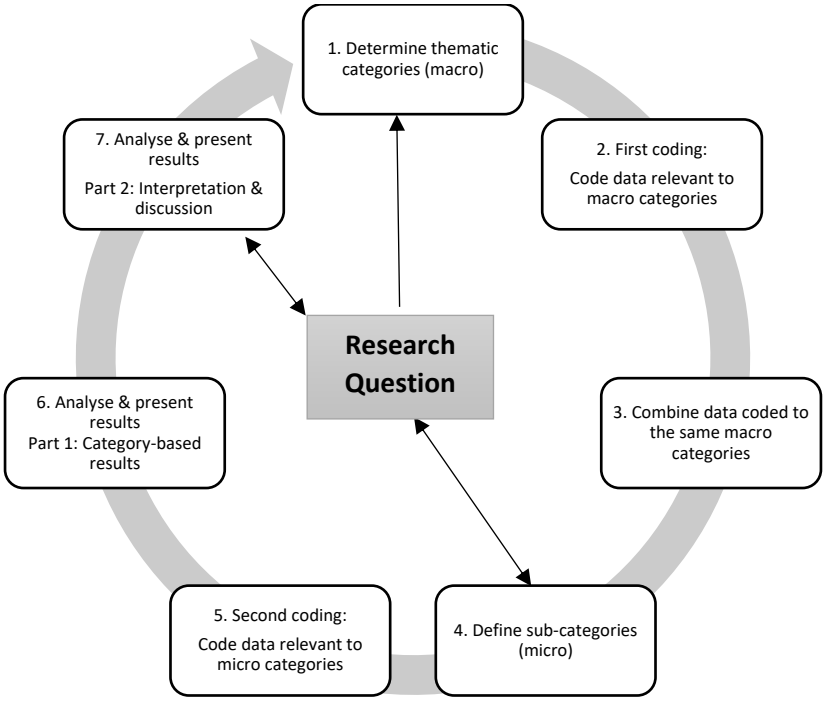

Figure 3. A process of evaluative qualitative text analysis adapted from Kuckartz (2014)

I transcribed interviews using Otter.ai, then listened to the interviews against the transcription, corrected any discrepancies, and uploaded the documents into NVivo. I began coding into macro-level categories (Phase 1) originating in extant literature and as defined in my working codebook.

As I began coding the interviews, I determined that my themes were too granular and would not direct me towards answering the research question. Returning to Phase 1, I revisited the foundational feminist pedagogic principles in literature (the '…within a feminist pedagogic ethos' of my research inquiry). I repeated Phase 2, where I found myself more grounded in a classification system that

would elucidate the nature of practice, aligned with my paradigmatic positioning, and thus, would enable me to address the research question.

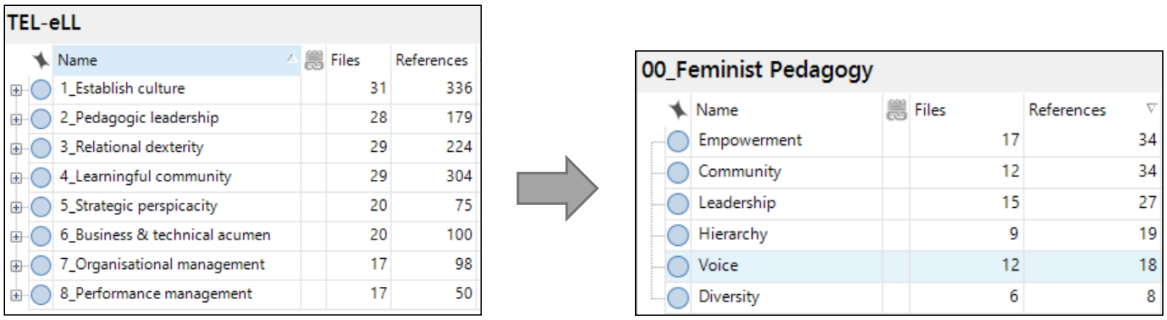

Figure 4. Evolution of Nvivo coding Phase 1 to Phase 2

As I completed initial interviews, I dispatched reflective sprints to participants. As participants completed each sprint, I downloaded responses from Typeform and uploaded them into Nvivo as individual cases (e.g., participants). Again, coding at a macro level, I made notes and observations that informed the next sprint and discussion topics for final interviews. As illustrated in Phase 3, I merged data from the case level to the code level, allowing me to see participant data as a whole and discern more discrete (micro) activities of 'e-leadership-as-practice' within the macro lens (feminist pedagogy).

After spending several months gathering and organising participant data this way, I felt unsatisfied that I was working towards a product that reflected L&D practitioners' day-to-day work. The process felt conventional, sterile, and inauthentic to the spirit of autoethnography. Further, the problem remained – how would I incorporate and interpret my experiences in the research? At this time, I had the serendipitous opportunity to submit for publication an autoethnographic piece written during Module 1 of my doctoral programme. After taking time away from this research to revise the earlier piece, I felt rejuvenated and inspired by the power of autoethnography. Thus, I set aside the analysis completed thus far and focused on discovering the core feminist principles in my reflective journal for what would ultimately become the anchor vignettes (described in Section 3.9). I adopted a new approach, transitioning from Nvivo to hermeneutics to identify personally meaningful experiences representative of feminist principles.

3.8.2 Hermeneutics applied to the autoethnographic bricolage

Giddens (1984) asserted that by nature, humans are self-reflective and that any study of human activity must be viewed 'based on people's situational self-interpretation' (Åsberg et al., 2011, p. 414) in response to a dynamic and dialogic world. As I approached Phases 4 and 5, I began to note how substantively the macro-feminist principles overlapped. I recognised that I needed to discern activities that characterised LAP in the L&D context more deeply. As such, I applied a hermeneutic lens to help me decipher and interpret the distinctions – to make sense of it all.

Hermeneutics can be envisaged as a spiral and emphasises that when attempting to analyse text as a whole, it must be interpreted relative to the sum of its parts, and to understand the parts, one must grasp the text in its entirety.

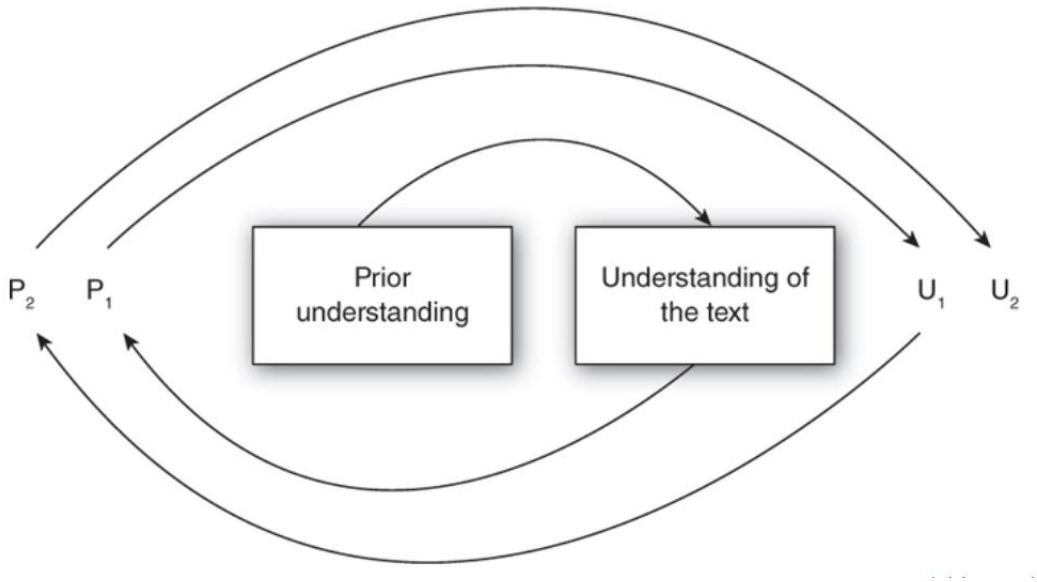

Figure 5. Hermeneutic cycle based on Danner (Kuckartz, 2014)

Within this cycle, there is continuous movement between the whole text and its component parts as the author looks to offer vivid 'thick description' of the phenomena of study (Mesaros & Balfour, 1993). Fluidity between the immediate text and distal concepts illuminates meaning and elucidates the narrative's relationship to a broader ecosystem of context and theory.

I mobilised hermeneutics as part of my interpretive strategy for several reasons. First, its cyclical approach is consistent with the reflective nature of feminist and autoethnographic methods. Secondly, it entreated me to distance myself from preconceptions or assumptions about what I thought I knew about the topic (Kuckartz, 2014). Embedded reasoning and accountability were accomplished via the iterative structure of the hermeneutic cycle and enabled me to get to the heart of the research question. Moreover, it helped me identify the nuances of feminist pedagogic leadership in the research context. Continuous interaction with the text allowed me to bring my initial interpretations to the reflective sprints, refining each subsequent sprint based on what I uncovered through iterative textual analysis. Thirdly, hermeneutics embodies a mindset of empirical discovery, deep engagement, and discernment between 'the logic of discovery and the logic of application' (Kuckartz, 2014, p. 21). This distinction was important to me as a researcher and practitioner. I saw clear alignment with praxis as I uncovered 'What can I know?' and 'What can I do in practice?' with my learnings. Indeed, as noted by Forster and Gjesdal (2019), hermeneutics is a practice in itself, concerned with teaching and learning where 'our philosophising about interpretation must recognise its dependency on what is going on at a practical and concrete level' (p. 355). Finally, the cyclical approach of hermeneutics compliments autoethnographic bricolage. I knew I needed to constantly revisit dynamics between the autoethnographic text, day-to-day work, and participant data and, ultimately, return to contextualising all of this within theory and literature.

3.8.3 Analytic rigour

Ricoeur (1976) suggests systematic and logical movements in interpretation to assuage concerns that hermeneutics is a single-voice guessing game. To facilitate this process, I again engaged with literature. Having conducted a cursory literature review using NVivo, I could relate essential literature sources to my macro- and micro-categories, a process I found helpful in identifying intersections between the literature and findings. Ultimately, I repeated the cycle twice before landing on the emergent dimensions I present in my findings.

Although NVivo offers many advanced analytic functions for conducting text analysis (e.g., visualisations, concept maps, word clouds), following phases 4 and 5, I found it prudent to move my analysis and presentation from NVivo. To maintain the narrative spirit of my research and further engage with bricolage, I wanted to experiment with how I would present the data effectively and compellingly, representing people as people, not as data. As such, phases 6 and 7 involved further hermeneutic analysis and presentation of results within the macro-categories, including interpretations I drew from the hermeneutic discovery cycles.

3.9 Presentational aesthetic

In self-narrative texts, while language is the conduit, ‘it is how we present the material that becomes our 'medium of expression' (Whorf, 2001, p. 363). In this research, my 'medium of expression' emerged in the form of six autoethnographic vignettes representing feminist pedagogic principles and corresponding practice-based activities. In the hermeneutic tradition, I sought to immerse more deeply with each principle before moving to how it more holistically integrated and synergised with the other principles. While autoethnography allowed me to critically examine and challenge deeply embedded beliefs and practices towards understanding and acting on lived experiences, narrative inquiry provided the medium to tell the stories.

Ellis (1997) offers practical guidance when using autoethnographic vignettes as a presentational strategy: 'Let the audience feel the emotion of autoethnography. Bring life to research. Bring research to life' (p. 2). To accomplish these aims, I begin each vignette by presenting a critical event taken from my journal as 'retrospective fieldnotes', reconstructed conversations that reflected dialogue around daily activities as they happened (Humphreys, 2005). Cann and Demeulenaere (2012) describe challenges that might accompany this exercise, noting that past conversations are often complete before the researcher understands the full extent to which they will be utilised in the research. To mitigate this challenge, I heeded several recommendations during the journaling process, which proved invaluable as I constructed the vignettes: include as many details as possible – location, sounds, colours, emotions and feelings; write daily,

rereading the previous days' account before filling in new memories; remember that 'you are creating the story; it is not there waiting to be found' (Ellis, 2004, p. 117).

3.10 Qualitative argument

The qualitative argument describes how the researcher critically analyses, interprets, and articulates the data as a form of expression (Broussine & Simpson, 2008). In alignment with my paradigmatic positioning, emphasising collaborative dialogue and recalibration of the leader-follower relationship, and extending to the researcher-participant relationship, I formed a qualitative argument that would allow me to 'focus on how social phenomena and processes operate or are constituted' in localised, often 'messy' contexts (Mason, 2002, p. 175). I also sought to instil authenticity, vulnerability, and reflexivity consistent with the spirit of feminist scholarship. A final consideration in determining the qualitative argument was that it must enable me to assemble a compelling narrative which adds 'rich complexity to the interpretive task' (Yardley, 2020b, p. 3) while also effectively linking the elements of 'story, self, theory, and culture' (Adams et al., 2015, p. 90).

As such, my qualitative argument is as follows:

Feminist pedagogic principles provide a real-world bridge between theory and practice. Feminist pedagogy is the **catalyst** that precipitates leadership behaviours that inspire people and lead to cohesive, high-performing teams. LAP offers an operational conduit to feminist pedagogy – through scanning, signalling, weaving, stabilising, inviting, unleashing, and reflecting – and is an **operant** of feminist pedagogic principles in day-to-day work. E-leadership is an **accelerator**, combining the elements of social influence and technology to engage all members, regardless of staff level, to develop as leaders towards achieving a collective vision. Feminist pedagogic e-leadership-as-practice, then, can be envisaged as transformative to individual growth, team culture, and strategic organisational outcomes.

Part II: Findings and analysis

Chapter 4: Introduction to my autoethnographic bricolage

4.1 Overview

To this point, I have presented the foundations and rationale for my autoethnographic bricolage. Part II presents my findings as vignettes focused on feminist pedagogic e-leadership-as-practice. Shove et al. (2012, p. 15) assert that practices exist as a 'recognizable conjunction of elements' as well as 'performances' undertaken by 'carriers or hosts' of a practice. As such, my research findings provide insight into the embeddedness and dynamism of my foundational frameworks as described in the literature review chapter – feminist pedagogy, leadership-as-practice, and e-leadership.

4.2 Organisation and flow

I begin my autoethnographic bricolage by providing background and context of the anchor project and my role as the project lead for a GVT established in early 2020. Following this introductory chapter, I present six (6) chapter vignettes depicting seminal moments in my leadership experience. More specifically, the vignettes illustrate my engagement with feminist pedagogic principles in practice as described by Shrewsbury (1997) and Webb et al. (2004).

Chapter #	Feminist pedagogic principle
Chapter 5	Reforming the leader-follower relationship
Chapter 6	Privileging individual voice
Chapter 7	Respecting diversity of personal experiences
Chapter 8	Empowerment
Chapter 9	Challenging hierarchal structures
Chapter 10	Building community

Figure 6. Overview of chapter vignettes

Each micro-ethnography (Humphreys, 2005) begins with a story to provide the reader context and details conversations or interactions that required my response. Following each story, I incorporate participant perspectives and insights as I analyse theoretical implications to help answer the overarching research inquiry, 'How can feminist pedagogy, LAP, and e-leadership coalesce

in practice to influence or impact individual growth, team culture, and organisational outcomes in a distributed virtual team?' To close each vignette, I provide concluding thoughts, offering emergent insights from the research and further relating them to extant literature.

4.3 Reading notes

As previously discussed, I present findings within a narrative storytelling aesthetic. Using this style was natural to me and helped me overcome the inauthenticity I felt as I initially embarked on my thesis write-up. This approach also allowed me to present my findings with an analytic lens that illuminates the nature of praxis and engages the reader to consider their own practice. Finally, I remind the reader that my narrative is not representative of a single truth; instead,

> 'the critical researcher-as-bricoleur abandons the quest for some naïve concept of realism, focusing instead on the clarification of [my] position in the web of reality towards elucidation of how and why knowledge is constructed and interpreted' (Kincheloe et al., 2011, p. 168).

As such, I filter the following realities through the lenses of my axiological beliefs, reflexivity, and time.

4.4 Introducing the feminist practitioner

I often wonder what it truly means to be a 'feminist' in my day-to-day work. How do I 'show up' in my work when guided by feminist ideology? How do I deal with problems as a 'feminist leader'? What does it truly mean to be reflective and reflexive? How do I approach my practice critically towards 'human flourishing' (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 112) for myself and others?

As a learning professional, I think about why I chose L&D – to teach. I wonder if, as a result of my work product, people perform their jobs more skilfully and efficiently. I wonder if I'm a good role model, which Shrewsbury describes as the supreme quality of a feminist teacher.

As a middle manager in a matrixed organisation, I wonder if I satisfactorily thread the needle of strategic partner to stakeholders while navigating the tactical work of planning, driving, and producing deliverables with my team.

As a colleague, I wonder if I am helping my team members towards individual goals and self-actualisation, supporting them in meaningful ways, and making workdays more fun.

As a qualitative researcher, I wonder how I can find answers if I do not dive deeply into understanding human experiences, both as a matter of theory and as a matter of practice.

I have many questions. To find answers, I resolve to undertake an in-depth appraisal of my work. I think of the feminist principles learned from Freire and Shrewsbury and Hartsock and bell and myriad other feminist scholars. I resolve to lean into their teachings to discern what it means to practice feminist pedagogic principles realistically in my day-to-day work.

4.5 Introducing the project: April 2020

> Here we go again. Assigned as the lead on a new and 'very exciting' project. I'm not sure how it can be described as exciting, considering I was not asked how I define 'exciting'. Perhaps this is the emergent PhD researcher in me. 'Could you please describe your operational definition of exciting so we can ensure alignment of terminology?' seems an unnecessarily defensive and petulant question. It wouldn't make a difference anyway. (Personal journal, 21 April 2020)

The 'exciting' project involved creating a series of immersive, virtual reality courses to improve learners' digital skills. For a qualitative researcher who came to L&D because of its people orientation, and specifically, the desire to help people be better at, well, being better people, the thought of spending my days as what amounts to project management was underwhelming at best and demotivating at worst. Certainly, I knew in my heart that this was not why I got into L&D. But alas, I had a job to do, and I started with the best intentions.

> Met with the development team to get a lay of the landscape. I think I understand what needs to happen. Maybe. I know that projects are confusing at first, but as time passes, I become more proficient. Hopefully, I will figure out the connection points and who's responsible for what soon. (Personal journal, 27 April 2020)

As I read through the first month of my journal over a year later, I am dazed, mainly because I had no idea what was yet to come. As a quick hindsight exercise, I am mildly impressed by my mental and emotional stamina. At that point, all I knew was that I had responsibility for delivering a large-scale programme or, as my stakeholder Ruth told me, 'I'm expecting you to play a big role'. The operational approach was in my hands, along with six colleagues and numerous ancillary members, to support the project work. The delivery timeline was already behind schedule, and I had never met my team members. I didn't know each person's skills, nor the skills they were interested in developing. I didn't know them as human beings, and assigning work to people without their input seemed despotic. This began my earnest attempt to practice feminist pedagogic principles as the team leader.

> Had the first real team meeting. Introductions all around. I introduced myself as a researcher and described my topic. As usual, no one knows what I'm talking about. I explained that even though we have two workstreams, much of the process work is similar. I hope to be as efficient as possible and work as one team. We established optional daily checkpoints (Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri) and decided to leverage SCRUM principles: tasks completed yesterday, tasks to work on today, challenges to mitigate. We also created a team time-off schedule.
>
> Everyone seems a bit tentative and uncertain. It doesn't help with all the fear about Covid and more and more people getting sick and dying every day. New York is completely out

> of control. It's really bad. Nobody knows what's going to happen; all US offices have shut down. (Personal journal, 29 April 2020)

In 'normal times', we'd kick off a project of this scale in person. We'd have working design sessions during the day, ideating the elements of the learning solution, discussing learner personas, and defining the contents of the curriculum. We'd lay out roles and timelines, discuss technical requirements for execution, and anticipate possible obstacles.

Evenings were the best part of the day: dinner at the Italian restaurant downstairs from the geographically central office, replete with multiple bottles of 'non-company-sanctioned' wine. Between passing fresh tomato bruschetta and calamari fritté, we'd share family photos, talk about upcoming travel, and trade project horror stories. We let our guards down, eat, drink, and laugh.

Unfortunately, as this project kicked off, I did not have this opportunity to help set the tone organically for our team culture and seed nascent relationships; I began my journey with this new team virtually. Borrowing from Jameson's (2013) framework, I reassured everyone that we had a solid foundation of people and that we had systems and structures in place to help us accomplish the collective vision. In hindsight, I probably lied to them a little (or a lot). I was not reassured or aware of any legacy systems or structures that would help guide us. I don't know why I offered these empty assurances. How could I say we had a 'solid foundation' of people when I didn't know them? I wanted to energise and reassure them; this was disingenuous. I knew my heart wasn't in creating 'shiny objects', and I, like everyone, was consumed with the escalating global health crisis. Internally, I felt no sense of purpose. How could I expect others to get excited when I wasn't?

> Still trying to get myself excited about this project, but honestly, I have very little interest, and I'm very nervous. I should be happy to have a job, considering what others are going through – losing their jobs. Losing their lives, for that matter. I should be glad to have this opportunity to continue

> my research, which is meaningful to me, and to make an effort to be the best leader I can be. (Personal journal, 22 May 2020)

And in that mental space, I forged ahead to try to bring the team together.

In the first few weeks of the project, I met with each team member individually to learn more about them personally in a sincere attempt to establish personal connections. I have always tried to make connections early when I'm part of a new team. Good working relationships make things more bearable even when the work isn't fun.

It's a precarious time, so I mostly hear about how people cope with their Covid situations, being locked down, and going crazy. Nevertheless, I also learn about their families and soon-to-be-expanding families. I ask their background, skills, and where they think they can best contribute. I hope to understand how they want to grow so I can look out for or create opportunities where they can develop through the work. I think I catch everyone off guard with this question because although I explain my rationale, the consistent response is the ubiquitous 'I'll help with whatever'.

On an average Tuesday morning three months into the project, I'm exhausted even though it's only eight hours into the work week. I turn on my monitor and make the regular scan: Chat, email, calendar. I missed a chat about a broken link within an online course. I'll have to look into it. I check email. A learner communications plan is needed; ironic since I never communicate with learners. Someone scheduled a hindsight meeting for this project (curious, as development is mid-point). The end-to-end learner experience must be re-visited (now alarming, as development is mid-point). E-learns housing various assets must be built before a system cutover. I must schedule a meeting to coordinate assessment development. I check my calendar. I have two slivers of time in my day, one total hour when I am not in meetings. It's a beautiful miracle.

I wonder when I will get anything done. Most importantly, when will I eat lunch? I think about the mundanity of my days, moving from list to list, task to task, meeting

to meeting, and wonder what I am accomplishing. I hate knowing I did not intend a career in pushing stuff around, cobbling things together into outcomes I know I will not be proud of. I know I will not be proud because I never tell anyone outside of work what I do all day.

I wonder, ‘What would make me proud?’ I want the people around me to recognise their worth. I want to teach. I want to advocate. I want to bring enjoyment to the otherwise mundane. I want to facilitate transformation in people. Yes, this is why I got into L&D – I believed it to be a ‘human flourishing’ discipline.

I sense sparks of Shrewsbury’s vision of feminist pedagogy reflected in my desire to create a community based on care, where everyone’s voice is valued. I recognise the complexity of e-leadership and the constant need to ‘scan, plan, decide, disseminate and control information’ (Avolio et al., 2000, p. 616).

But I also wonder what my team wants. Do they want the same things? Am I meeting their leadership expectations? Am I giving them what they need to flourish? Am I creating an environment they want to live in for a sizeable portion of their lives? Am I making their work easier or harder?

And so, I turned to my research to find out.

4.6 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has provided both personal and workplace context for the vignettes in chapters 5 through 10, which explore feminist pedagogic principles in practice.

Chapter 5: Reforming the leader-follower relationship

5.1 Introduction

Reforming the leader-follower relationship in the feminist pedagogic tradition is anti-hierarchal (Accardi, 2013), involves acting on our beliefs (Shrewsbury, 1997), decentralised decision-making (Webb et al., 2004), and views power as a way to facilitate others' abilities versus as a control mechanism (Dentith & Peterlin, 2011). A feminist leader 'has a vision of possibilities for other lives apart from her own' and 'who works to make that vision visible to others, without trampling on other persons, but engaging them, enabling them to work for that vision as well' (Howe, as cited by Shrewsbury, 1997, p. 171).

This vignette examines how these principles manifest in practice.

5.2 The story

I begin with 'Samuel'. Samuel came from 'the business' on an exploratory L&D rotation that allows people outside of L&D to learn about the function and 'see how the sausage is made' as they actively participate in project work. In the previous months, Samuel helped deliver an onsite programme and conducted preparatory work for this project. I guessed Samuel had the most institutional knowledge about the project of all the assembled team members, if that's possible, after only four months in L&D.

For this reason, I immediately envisioned Samuel as someone I could lean on for his experience working on the legacy project, his technical knowledge of the instructional topics, and his leadership as a senior manager. I realised this project would be a heavy lift and was relieved that I wouldn't fly solo as project lead.

After the kickoff, my first order of business was to schedule a meeting with Samuel. I wanted to get the background leading up to this project, and he was the only one on the newly assembled team who'd been involved. I also hoped we'd have a personal connection – some mutual love of sports or food or travel – something that would kindle a collegial relationship.

I enter our first Google Meet meeting to a black screen with the solitary headshot of Samuel in the centre, a white male with sandy, greyish hair of indiscriminate age in a white collared shirt. I mentally check myself at the assumption that he is 'white'; maybe he's not, and maybe he doesn't identify as male, for that matter. Samuel doesn't turn on his camera. I almost always turn on my camera, often with the caveat that 'I look like a hobo'. I flashback to my previous research into the concept of 'presence' in online learning, recalling that having the camera on helps create more authentic connections. I'm mildly unnerved because I specifically want to connect, but I accept that Samuel may not want to go on camera. Sidenote: I didn't realise at the time that it would be five months before we'd see Samuel on camera; when it happened, I could barely contain myself, let alone conduct a productive meeting; the full agenda became 'Samuel's on-camera today!' accompanied by an extemporaneous virtual party.

I exchange obligatory pleasantries with Samuel's disembodied voice. 'Where do you live?', 'How long have you been with the company?' and 'What did you do before coming to L&D?' I talk about where I live and my hockey team. I am genuinely enthusiastic to learn about Samuel, but my energy is extinguished as the conversation becomes one-sided and uncomfortably quiet. I move on to a 'safer' topic: Covid – how bad it is, what it's like being locked down, the impending toilet paper shortage, and the best way to get groceries. Although I went into the conversation well-intended, it's now an awkward, shallow attempt at connection. I decide to move on to business.

My questions begin innocently enough, 'Tell me about what you've been working on the last few months'. I don't know how to begin this project and need background and context. Samuel explains that he's been working on identifying content to include in the future curriculum.

I'm somewhat perplexed by this exercise. On the one hand, I'm pleasantly surprised and can't believe he's gotten so far along in the process; on the other hand, I'm keen to home in on specifics. I ask many probing questions, often the same questions I'll ask in different ways over several meetings.

Sometimes I ask questions to determine if the prerequisite analysis was completed. Have you engaged the representative SMEs and evaluated if there are gaps in the curriculum, new technologies, or skills we need to address?

Sometimes I ask questions to ensure that the learning outcomes can be met. *What analysis was done to validate alignment between content and objectives?*

Sometimes I ask questions to ensure that there has been cross-functional collaboration. *Did you engage the team whose expertise and sole responsibility is identifying content in these technologies?*

Sometimes I ask questions because I don't understand the completed process work. *How did you link metadata to objectives to content?*

Samuel does his best to explain, but I don't receive answers that make logical sense. I never see Samuel, so it's hard to know his thoughts or feelings. If I had to describe his demeanour, it would fall between glum and angry, tinged with confused and uninterested. With each iteration of the questions, the strain becomes more palpable, as if each inquiry is an implied indictment of his work. Perhaps it is.

I know my questions are increasingly accusatory and condescending. My tone reeks of insincere befuddlement, and my language conveys that anyone with a modicum of instructional design knowledge would have completed these foundational activities. With each conversation, I question Samuel's role on the team. I start to nit-pick every response, every action, every inaction. This dynamic continues for two months.

After over a month of this stalemate, I received ethics approval to proceed with my thesis. I re-read what I have proposed – to examine the practice of e-leadership in enterprise L&D within a feminist ethos. I revisit what those principles mean, and I feel ashamed. I'm not helping Samuel. I'm not fostering a productive working relationship. I'm not teaching. I'm not modelling. I'm not caring. I feel derelict as a leader and an L&D practitioner.

For many days I am embarrassed by my behaviour and hope it has been a secret only known to me. I begin attempts at reframing my attitude. Perhaps Samuel was not given the guidance he needed to be successful. Not that long ago, I was new and felt lost. In fact, I still feel lost. I vow to recalibrate my attitude, beginning with being more patient. I decide to be more deliberate in our conversations, provide more concrete agendas to guide our conversations, adopt a teaching mindset, find a way to incorporate his skills, and give him ownership of some small activity that can spark his leadership in the team.

> Talked to Samuel to understand where he is best suited within the team. The specific agenda included: Your background and interests for this project and your experience thus far in L&D; How we can maximize your talents and time; Ideas you have for integrating with the extended team; the upcoming workshop to learn about process; Any other questions or concerns. (Personal journal, 5 May 2020)

Despite my mental recalibration, I'm afraid I have allowed any potential for a collegial relationship to languish into a quagmire from which there is no return. My next few meetings with Samuel are much of the same; the disembodied voice and impenetrable headshot staring back at me. Samuel seems lost. I feel at a loss for how to move the needle, and I often wonder if I am speaking a different language. Nevertheless, I try different approaches.

The 'light-hearted connection' approach.

The 'passive-aggressive questioning' approach.

The 'how can we best leverage your skills' approach.

The 'defined company expectations of your staff level' approach.

The 'what do you want to learn here so I can help you' approach.

The 'pre-performance review' approach.

And finally, the ‘do you really want to be a part of this team’ approach.

Yes, I actually name these approaches as I reflect and plan daily for how I will go into the next conversation with Samuel. I imagine this is how Sisyphus must have felt pushing that boulder up the mountain, only to slide back down every time he approached the summit.

> I have a new strategy with Samuel, and I think this might work. I want to talk about what his performance review would look like several months from now. It seems pointless to think about performance after the fact when it’s too late for people to improve. I also hope to use it as an opportunity to give him feedback. It’s not just about (under-) performing or even about leading his workstream; it’s about making a fair contribution to the team. At this point, it’s becoming more of an effort and exhausting to keep pushing, pushing, pushing and trying new strategies with him, trying hard to figure out where he fits, but I’m optimistic this time.
>
> Update: the conversation with Samuel was still awkward. Talked about what a future performance review would look like and that I needed him to take a bigger role in leading the team. At one point, he asked me, ‘Is this some kind of passive-aggressive thing?’ No, that was a different day’s strategy, but touché. (Personal journal, 18 May 2020)

As always, Samuel listens and seems willing to contribute but is still not fully engaged. Once again, we agree on the next steps.

> I can’t put my finger on exactly what is amiss, but all I can do is try to engage differently and see what happens. We agreed that next would be connecting with the content team to review his work, determine what may be salvageable, and figure out a collaborative way forward.

> Update: The meeting with the content team was especially unproductive and borderline confrontational. I met with Samuel to get his thoughts. He is despondent. I share the sentiment. (Personal journal, 25 May 2020)

I have no choice. I have to go to Ruth, the programme stakeholder, to discuss the devolving situation.

> Talked to Ruth. She told me I need to 'figure it out' or let her know if we should 'cut him loose' from the team...Um, ok. (Personal journal, 25 May 2020)

'Cut him loose' means many things to me. It could simply mean being removed from the project, making my life exponentially easier. But then what for Samuel? He is on a rotation, not a permanent role. With the uncertainty of employment due to Covid, it could mean his rotation would be terminated, without a place for him to land. Despite the tribulations, I don't want this for Samuel; to be 'cut loose' without even knowing why. I recall stories of students who matriculate to middle school (Year 9 equivalent in the UK) not knowing how to read because teachers just passed them along. I don't want to be *that* teacher.

One last time, I initiate a 'hard reboot', hoping to reset our dynamic.

> Set up time with Samuel to apologize for not allowing him to fully lead project efforts by continuing to chime in with questions and my own voice, in effect, not actually letting him lead, despite my incessant cajoling. He seemed appreciative (he diminished the need for my apology; I insisted) and also inspired to learn, take ownership, and lead. For me, it takes a load off of me to do everything. I'm grateful… (Personal journal, 8 August 2020)

I recall a quote I read recently. I cannot remember the author, but it reads, 'An apology is the glue that fixes anything'.

5.3 Presentation of emergent themes and analysis of the feminist pedagogic principle: Reforming the leader-follower relationship

> ‘When you don't have trust, it makes it much more difficult’.
> (Participant ‘Yolanda’)

Six months have elapsed since I first interviewed Samuel for this research. After the pilot, Samuel was the first colleague I asked to participate in my research, an offer he excitedly accepted.

As I reflect on this vignette, I experience a series of emotions. First, I’m embarrassed and hope that I’m not the flawed antagonist, even though I know I am. Then, I’m assuaged by the timely role that my research played in helping me re-anchor; I think this is what feminist practice is meant to be; it is reflective, and it caused me to become acutely aware of the shortcomings in my interactions with Samuel. It provided a guiding framework to recalibrate and realign my values and practice.

As I talk with Samuel, it’s the kind of easy, flowing conversation I wish we’d had in that first meeting. Again, I’m mortified by my attitude and betrayal of living my values as an L&D practitioner, a feminist leader, and an empathetic human being. Pushing that aside, I ask Samuel (once again) why he came to L&D:

> So, my move over to L&D was a combination of taking the experiences that I had on the client side and really just trying to explore how that would work out for me in L&D because I always did enjoy that aspect of my career at the firm.

I asked him to tell me more about ‘that aspect’ and if he could elaborate on the coaching and mentoring he’d received.

> I was lucky enough to have had really good coaches myself formally, and those coaches always really pushed me … and also helped me become a leader in my own right. I’d take folks under my wing as new joiners coming in, really stepping up and putting myself out there to be a leader and someone

> to mentor those folks, even informally. So, from an informal perspective, I think I tried to establish myself and my team as someone that people can come to for help navigating both the hard skill and soft skill aspects of our careers, our day-to-day activities. And that coaching, I think, was one of my favourite parts of my role.

Again, I wince on the inside as I recall how I faltered in this relationship initially. Curious to understand Samuel's approach to leadership, I asked him to describe himself as a leader and how he's evolved.

> So, from a leadership perspective, I think I joined the company thinking, you know, I could at least help people get their technical understanding and get their heads wrapped around some of the more technical aspects of what we do. But I think over time, that really evolved to helping people with both. How do I navigate the politics of the organisation? You know, how to operate effectively and communicate effectively with the people we work with? So, it allowed me, I think, to help a lot more people out of the gate.

I give myself another mental thrashing. At the same time, I swell with gratitude at how far we've come – that we 'made it' as colleagues. I think about how things began to turn by just offering a sincere apology. I realise that the misery of the first few months made the realisation of where we are now so much sweeter.

5.3.1 The power of reflective practice

My goals for establishing a relationship with Samuel were well-intended, albeit awkward. I saw someone who could be a leadership partner, help mitigate my fear of an enormous project, and perhaps share responsibility. I saw Samuel as someone who could offer 'institutional knowledge'. And yet, it seems that I was living a double life where my words were misaligned with my actions. Participant 'Maya' helps elucidate the distinction between a partnership versus a leader-follower relationship:

> It's not always about looking up to someone else, but it's about that partnership where you're both getting something out of it. You're both learning, you're both growing, and it's also nice because you see that someone supports you, someone has faith in you, someone wants to see you do better, and they want more for you.

My interactions with Samuel initially fell short of a mutually beneficial partnership. I was looking for a support partner in Samuel but was negligent in identifying what I could offer him in return. He came to L&D to learn more about the function, and I did not provide a positive example of what that should look like; this is antithetical to role modelling (Shrewsbury, 1997). I reached this realisation through reflection congruent with the feminist practice of reflexivity (Olesen, 2007).

And while the feminist project is a reflective ideology, it is it also calls us to critical agency wherein the researcher must deeply examine 'the ethical awareness of representing ones' own reflection on the complex interaction and negotiation between selves and others in complex sociocultural power-laden contexts' (Spry, 2011, p. 505).

Once I recognised my behaviour and approach as inconsistent with the feminist principles I hoped to practice and model, I consciously decided to change. Reflection and critical reflexivity were followed by a cycle of modifying my communication style and creative solutioning, actions also consistent with LAP. To a degree, I question whether I was going to these lengths because I wanted to be a better feminist practitioner or whether I was afraid to fail as a leader. If I'm being honest at this moment, looking at the words on this screen, I can see how the two ideas are inseparable and also indicative of the signalling and reflecting aspects of LAP. I consider Yolanda's thoughts on what it means to be a leader; I note the order in which she presents thinking through complex problems of leadership:

> When I think 'leader', I think of an individual – we're all leaders. So, you know, what does that entail? It entails being self-aware, emotional intelligence, communication, adapting

> your communication style, you know, thinking through complex problems. You know, delivering. You know, working within a team.

Self-aware. Emotional intelligence. Communication. Adapting. I can see in this vignette the value of pausing to reflect on my own mindset and behaviour. Once I took on the reflective practice, I could see how I owned many of the issues with Samuel and was able to be more deliberate in working towards more productive, mutually beneficial solutions. We could identify the 'sweet spot' where Samuel's talents and interests could contribute to the team, and I could step back. In this way, Samuel was not only able to create a valuable tool that benefitted the team, but in doing so, 'a sense of self…as a way to accomplish ends' was enabled (Shrewsbury, 1997, p. 168). As such, we can see truth in Dentith and Peterlin's (2011) argument that 'reflective habits of mind lead to more humane and equity-focused leadership' (p. 36).

5.3.2 Role modelling

Shrewsbury's (1997) consistent refrain that the feminist teacher, or in my case, the feminist project lead, 'is above all a role model of a leader' (p. 172) is an area where I initially fell short. As the story continued, although I was seeking a relationship of shared responsibility with Samuel, I had an opportunity to model behaviours of care, teaching, and encouragement earlier. I could have demonstrated more agency in developing the relationship by demonstrating transparency about my own fears as the project leader. Ironically, Samuel describes what this kind of modelling leadership looks like:

> A good leader is someone that I think people look to as mentor as an example for someone to kind of follow in their footsteps seeing the success that they have and the type of person that they are. You have a lot of people who are leaders who are just bad people. But I think a good leader is someone who can inspire people to want to want to walk the same path that they do and encourages people to do so.

Indeed, several months later, I told the team, ‘I’m failing at my other project, and I need your help’. The feminist pedagogic practice helped me realise that I should set an example: I could not ask people to reach out for help without doing it myself. This display of transparency is not something I would have done prior to engaging with this research. Yet, extant research posits that ‘[leadership] transparency highly influences the psychological contract, as it fosters employee trust and openness’ towards greater understanding of ‘mutual roles’ (Subramanian, 2017, p. 64).

5.3.3 Collective vision

In the story, one of the ‘strategies’ I tried with Samuel was the ‘what do you want to learn here so I can help you’ approach. In hindsight, this was flawed because Samuel didn’t know what he didn’t know. That was the point of his rotation in L&D – to learn. For me to ask him what he wanted to learn was destined to result in more questions; the cycle of frustration illustrated in the vignette. Instead, I should have taken Maya’s instructive advice from the start:

> We're asking them, what do they care about? And then that actually helps them work harder because they care about something, and they're doing the work. And yeah, it's all for maybe a different goal or vision, and maybe it's not what they might have envisioned for themselves, but like it's a team thing that has to happen, we have to do it for the business, but like, first that little action of giving them the chance to pick what they want to get into it kind of helps get that project done and like people are a bit happier about things than if we just told them we're like okay you do this you do that kind of thing.

I realised we would have to get creative about how we could move towards shared leadership. We began to make strides when I got to the ‘how can we best leverage your skills’ approach and drilled in on Samuel’s skillset and what he was passionate about. Samuel demonstrated leadership by building a robust, quantitative method to weigh and prioritise SMEs’ subjective feedback, applying

his expertise to develop an approach that allowed the team to prioritise learning assets quickly.

The ability to align all members to a shared vision and mission, for individuals and organisations, has become an essential skill of e-leaders, especially in the Covid-19 era (Mustajab et al., 2020). By tapping into what Samuel cared about and had confidence in, he could transfer skills and contribute to the team's vision. Through this process, Samuel's knowledge of the L&D development process improved. He became the owner of this methodology, and the work was completed in a way that made life easier for the team. A bonus was that Samuel was able to begin to see that he could make a home in L&D.

5.3.4 Summary of findings: Reforming the leader-follower relationship

The outcomes of this vignette indicate that intentional **reflective practice** can lead to greater personal accountability, facilitate problem-solving, and enhance agility and resilience. Reflection and reflexivity can be seen as built-in feedback mechanisms that enrich and improve leadership practice.

Evident and extending from the reflective practice is the feminist principle of **role modelling**, or the intention to set an example in behaviours as well as a commitment to the 'psychological contract' (Subramanian, 2017, p. 64), which involves transparency and openness that inspires, motivates, and builds trust. One can see how role modelling might occur passively, yet it occurs more intentionally through feedback, coaching, and mentoring.

The feminist principle of achieving a **collective vision** appears to be a more elusive construct to achieve. While participants believe in the idea of collective vision and what it represents – teamwork, collegiality, agency – the matter of realising collective vision carries more tension to reconcile individual talents and prescribed organisational goals.

5.4 Chapter conclusion

Redefining leadership to a shared model was the subject of Chapter 5. Feminist pedagogy embraces a reformation and democratisation of the leader-follower relationship. While challenging, catalysts such as reflexivity, role modelling, and

working towards and within a mutually defined vision contribute to this reformation. To arrive at a collective vision requires enabling and listening to every voice and is the subject of Chapter 6.

Chapter 6: Privileging individual voice

6.1 Introduction

Privileging the individual voice is a feminist action, dialogic and respectful of all voices (Ellsworth, 1992), especially women's voices (Accardi, 2013). To amplify voice engenders confidence through feedback (Dentith & Peterlin, 2011; Webb et al., 2004), enables individual interests (Sprague, 2018), and belies the leader's voice as holding 'ultimate authority' (Accardi, 2013, p. 37). Privileging individual voice is symbiotic with empowerment and implies charting one's path 'toward self-determination and agency' (Ellsworth, 1992, p. 101).

This vignette presents privileging voice as a unique experience, exclusive to each individual towards 'human flourishing' (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 112).

6.2 The story

Within the team, 'How does that sound?' is a regular part of my lexicon. I use this phrase mostly because I don't know how to move forward at any given moment in this ill-defined project. Sometimes I am all tapped out of ideas, exhausted from incessant thinking, trying to connect endless dots, and making every decision. Hyper-alertness follows me to sleep at night, and troubleshooting yesterday's issues are my first waking thoughts in the morning. 'How does that sound?' is my way of throwing out the 'bat signal' to the rest of the team. It is meant to be a cue, but perhaps the call for help is sometimes too subtle.

In moments when no one really knows what to do, the team often sits in uncomfortable silence. Usually, I can bear it no longer than five seconds before I feel all eyes (metaphorically or actually) look to my onscreen square for answers, and I feel compelled to speak. I usually suggest something that seems a reasonable course of action, a 'glorified guess' with no guarantee of a successful outcome and high potential for mass confusion. By way of (self?) comfort, I sometimes modulate my tone to a cheerful, 'Does that sound good?' If I project cheerily enough, maybe I'll sound convincing. Fake it till you make it. My inquiry is usually followed by a choir of, 'Yep, sounds good'. This response often mystifies

me because, in my mind, whatever half-baked solution I've suggested does not, in fact, 'sound good'.

I know unilateral decision-making and cheerful articulation of next steps are not the best way to foster inclusion. Or fair distribution of work. Or creativity. Or development. Sometimes it's the easiest way to go from point A to point B, but this route is like taking the freeway versus the scenic country road. I may get there faster, but I will lose a lot of richness and beauty in the journey. Sometimes I wonder if I have inadvertently cultivated a sense of co-dependency where everyone looks to me because I'm the designated 'leader'. This shortcut to doing the work of actual leading makes me feel disingenuous as an aspiring feminist practitioner.

Take Ellie, for example. I think Ellie might be the quietest person I have ever worked with. Admittedly, I sometimes forget she's there, despite her ever-present, static headshot smiling back at me. Ellie never goes on camera and usually stays muted until spoken to directly.

During the first few weeks of the project, my curiosity ran amok, wondering about Ellie. Various scenarios spiralled through my imagination, from banal conjecture to full-blown critique of my ability to lead inclusively. Does she only wear pyjamas? Does she live on a construction site? Does she suffer from selfie dysmorphia? Does she just have nothing to say? Does she lack confidence to chime in? Does she not feel welcome or confident to speak up? Have I created an environment where people don't think they can contribute? Wait, do I talk too much?

All these things swirl through my mind as I try to unlock Ellie. I try to remember the value of including all voices, and I know, as a matter of feminist practice, I sometimes have to seek them out; that 'listening to' also includes 'listening for'.

Remaining off camera and muted, Ellie's silence in meetings starts to get to me, almost to the point of distraction. To me, to be muted has many meanings. It simply could mean there is noise in the background, but as a feminist researcher, I interpret it as a lack of voice; lack of voice means a lack of existence. I begin to

make an appoint in team meetings to ask, ‘Ellie, what do you think?’ not only to draw her out but because I believe she has good ideas and immense talent to share. I do not want Ellie to be muted.

It is several weeks into the project before I have an opportunity to connect one-on-one with Ellie. I’m conscious of this error in prioritization. In the initial weeks of the project, Ellie always raised her hand to assist once tasks were determined crudely through my glorified guessing cycles and the team’s deferential compliance. Her familiar refrain is, ‘Sure, I can help with that’.

When I ask Ellie about her goals and how she sees herself six months from now, she tells me, ‘I just love it here! I hope to get a full-time role eventually’. I sigh with relief that she loves it enough to want to commit fully; there’s one worry I can take off my list.

As a contractor, I know it may be difficult for Ellie to gain the visibility she needs to achieve this goal. I know the extreme risk-aversion of our organisation, one that sees hurdles and barriers to potential as protection of assets, like organisational spike strips put down to thwart criminals in runaway car chases (an image of OJ Simpson in a white Bronco on the Los Angeles freeway floats through my mind). How will anyone know who she is if even I forget she’s there sometimes?

Nevertheless, I’m a problem solver, so my mind’s hamster on the wheel starts spinning, ‘What can I do to help this happen’? Glorified guessing ensues, but I genuinely enjoy this kind of challenge. It is empowering someone to reach a goal. It is collaborating to manifest potential. It is an exercise in teaching and learning. It is a way to show I care. It’s about people, not things. It’s how I make creating things more palatable. It’s why I got into L&D.

I am genuinely delighted to help her in any way within my limited positional power. Selfishly, however, I also see this as a way to challenge the politics of the hierarchy. I think about the inside joke that to get promoted, one must apply for a role no fewer than three times before reasonably expecting success. Hierarchal politics and risk aversion – unholy organisational bedfellows, indeed.

As I have with everyone, I ask Ellie, ‘How do you see yourself contributing to this project’? As usual, ‘I’ll help with anything’. I press on, ‘What interests you? What do you want to learn?’ Her response jars and unsettles me, ‘Whatever you need me to do, I’m just a contractor’. My stomach knots and my breath catches. I don’t have children, but at the moment, I imagine this is what it is like to want to protect them. Immediately, I decided to do whatever was necessary to see her succeed. At the same time, I wonder if I’ve subconsciously instilled this belief with my maniacal task allocation. I wonder if I’ve implied she is there to take orders, that she has no voice. I muster the most even tone I can, ‘Ellie, please do not diminish your value with the words “I’m just”…Make no mistake, someone will always be willing to do it for you, so don’t do it to yourself, please and thank you’! I realise the countless times I’ve said this to my female friends or colleagues. I cannot recall when I had to say this to a man.

That settled, I push Ellie a bit. ‘How do you feel about leading the assessment development’? It’s going to be a lot, and I don’t know what’s involved, but I think it’s a great opportunity for you to own a significant component of the project’. I know Ellie will be tentative, but I also know this will be a way for her to gain expertise and become a voice of authority for assessment development within the team. I also understand that empowerment comes from recognition of accomplishments. I cite examples of her other exemplary work, hoping to bolster her confidence. I offer scaffolding, assuring her that the rest of the team will be there for support. I hear her nerves, but as usual, she agrees. I feel satisfied and delighted that she will have an opportunity to flex her voice and have a tangible work product to show for it. We finish, both giddy with the excitement of possibility.

6.3 Presentation of emergent themes and analysis of the feminist pedagogic principle: Privileging individual voice

> I really would like my legacy to be around being an inclusive leader. (Yolanda)

My initial interview with Ellie occurred after working together for about six months. When my time with the team ended after a year, Ellie was almost unrecognisable from the deferential person first assigned to the project. Looking back, I remember how I wouldn’t even know Ellie was present on some of the larger

calls. Perhaps it was my poor meeting management, which I am happy to say improved, but it reminds me of how important it is to make an appoint to listen for silence, especially in a world of camera-optional virtual meetings, as Ellie herself points out:

> You know, we're in this virtual world where people can disappear, and you wouldn't even know. And so, I think having that human element and making it very intentional and focused and, yeah, listening is important.

Without the element of conscientious human connectivity, it would stand to reason that members accept or become conditioned to silence as a way of work life. It becomes easy to disappear into the ether. To prevent this from happening in day-to-day work, I now elaborate on emergent themes which promote individual voice.

6.3.1 To nurture voice, meet people where they are comfortable

It was a different experience to meet Ellie in a group versus one-on-one. In the larger group, she often became lost in the shuffle; in the process, her voice was figuratively and sometimes literally muted.

Josephine, recalling her days as a former schoolteacher, calls attention to the discomfort that group settings can bring and, as a counter to my views on presence, suggests that remaining off-camera or posing ideas and questions in the Chat function may be a way to nurture voice; something I had not previously considered:

> It took away that intimidation and embarrassment. Because now I could just acknowledge the question versus having to make someone feel a certain way for asking the question. And I think a lot of times in projects and stuff like that, you know, even the difference between having someone onscreen versus turning your video off can help with that. Or, a lot of people will end up putting their questions in the Chat

> because they don't want to ask the question and feel dumb asking the question.

Josephine's suggestion sheds light on the question of presence and how being on-camera may diminish individual voice. Being on camera may further stifle ideas or perspectives if people feel intimidated, embarrassed, or uncomfortable. The feminist leader will enable people to assert their voice without fear to help members 'overcome pathologies of silence' (Shields, 2004, p. 117).

The feminist project is concerned with 'understanding the ways that people are marginalized and the experiences of alienation and silencing that emanate' (Dentith & Peterlin, 2011, p. 42). When we met one-on-one, Ellie was a different person. I wonder, in hindsight, if she felt daunted to share her ideas with the broader group. One-on-one, she became the focus of the conversation and eventually developed a depth of connection that perhaps had not fully matured in the early months of the project. In this setting, we were able to connect more personally. She could share what was meaningful to her as a new mother and in her career. One-on-one was Ellie's sweet spot; it was what she needed to build a relationship with me as the project lead, to gain confidence in her role, and eventually, to gain belief in herself as a leader in her own right, comfortable in expressing herself towards achieving her goals.

Gladys expands on the need to meet people where they are and how this cultivates a sense of safety to enable voice:

> Having these one-on-ones and having team meetings, one builds the relationship between the leader and the team members, but it also serves to build trust. Intention or uncovered authenticity, organic authenticity, by default, comes out. And so, I think that creates a safer playground for people to experiment and do things and share ideas. You know, where if you don't have that safety net and that safe playground and that relationship built, I may have a great idea, but I'm not going to bring it to my manager because, yeah, she's probably going to judge, or it's going to look

> stupid. I don't want my colleagues to think it's a stupid idea. And so, I think having that safety net, which is built by trust, which is built by the relationship, it's kind of the foundation of good creative work'.

This excerpt highlights the importance of cultivating trusting relationships and doing so in ways that are comfortable for the individual, meeting them on the 'safer playground' of their choosing and according to how they are 'situated within their own histories' (Dentith & Peterlin, 2011, p. 42).

6.3.2 Recognise who is not contributing their voice (and why)

Considering Ellie's quietness, I question my approach as a possible root cause. As part of praxis, theory caused me to be more intentional in my interactions with my team. As alluded to in this vignette, I became aware of the need to be more attuned to quieter individuals – to pause and take stock of who was contributing, voices I might be missing, and whom I might gently nudge into the conversation. Taking a cue from Maya, I was prompted to be more conscientious of indirectly steering discussions towards my perspective but also became more acutely aware of listening for quieter voices as part of inclusive leadership:

> I do take the time to pause. Ask people what's top of mind for them, like what's happening. So, [I] try to be very inclusive, like, I look out for the people who aren't saying much, and you know me, I used to be like the first person to say something all the time, so now I'm taking a step back and like okay, I want to hear what everyone that has to say because I don't want to steer the conversation in a certain direction because I have something to say or I want it to go this way. I have to balance it out; that's inclusive leadership.

As the project progressed and I yielded my voice to make space for others, I felt less pressure to carry the entirety of the project on my shoulders. Also, despite my 'official' role as lead, the team worked more cohesively and efficiently to produce a successful product. While working towards a mutual goal, although it is not required that all members participate equally, it is 'critical that all involved

entities work interdependently and contribute sufficiently towards reaching their joint aims'(Bedwell et al., 2012).

I also learned the importance of pausing to listen from Maya, who occasionally might say plainly, 'Ok, I'm going to stop talking now'. On encouraging voice in day-to-day activities, Maya shared:

> There's always a different side to something, so I'm like, let me see what's here and listen to them, and then see if I can act on it and if not, at least we try, and we talked about it. Sometimes we just have to get things done because there's a deadline. So, I'm like, let's work around this but we can still have a conversation about it. So yeah, a safe space, inclusive. I feel like they end up working better, and I see so many more options coming out of their brains which is really cool again because I give them the space to talk and especially the ones who are quiet; and like, let's see what you're thinking because they sometimes might have the best ideas, but they just haven't had a chance to speak up. That's why it's important for me to hear the quiet ones as well.

For quite a while into the project, I was consumed with just getting the tasks done that I'd haphazardly identify tasks and pass the baton. Ellie was adept at taking the baton and running, so it was easy for me to lean heavily into a 'create task/hand off' cadence at the expense of hearing everyone's input. This behaviour was possibly more detrimental to someone like Ellie, who was naturally quiet and never onscreen. Even though I have never believed myself to be controlling, I realised how important it is to reduce the inherent control implied in my role to enable individual voices.

6.3.3 Privileging the individual voice comes from knowledge and scaffolding; it is empowerment's foundation

In the second reflective journal exercise for this research, I posed the question, 'What skills do you most want to develop as an e-leader?' At this point, my colleague-participants had a good idea of what I was doing in the research

(through the participant information sheet and initial interview) and the behaviours I was attempting to model in practice. Ellie's response gave me insight into some of my initial questions about her tentativeness, where she wanted to develop, and how I could help. Ellie implied that part of privileging individual voice means teaching and learning, again, both central components of feminist pedagogy and leadership:

> I want to begin to develop my leadership skills as an e-leader. Though I am not an outspoken individual, I do have a difficult time speaking to the critical parts of projects. For instance, not meeting deadlines, low employee performance, and constructive criticism. It is not in my nature to speak to those things therefore, I want to develop those skills most as an e-leader. I am currently in a position to do just that and have been seeking the advice of e-leaders with those skills to help me navigate those waters.

I appreciate Ellie's self-awareness of her growth opportunities and that she felt comfortable sharing these with me as we established our working relationship and through the data-gathering process. Indeed, reflexivity will serve Ellie well in her goals of developing as an e-leader; as suggested by Mustajab et al. (2020), e-leaders must embody 'emotional intelligence as their control function' (p. 489). In sharing her goals, Ellie allowed me to find opportunities for her to develop these skills and provide meaningful feedback along the way. It also allowed me to serve as her advocate and champion. This experience with Ellie also caused me to realise my level of accountability for another person's growth and to become acutely aware of the example I should set as a model for Ellie.

Yolanda reaffirms what it means to be a feminist leader and learning practitioner, which recalls Shrewsbury's description of the feminist teacher as a role model:

> …being a leader, that is, the people learn and grow as I learn and grow too, so have a learning mindset. When I think about leading, I think about all of those things, but also, I think about giving people developmental opportunities, removing

> obstacles for them. Being able to give them a voice, you know, being an inclusive leader. It's more being able to facilitate those things when you're leading, [and] also leading by example, obviously.

Finally, privileging individual voice is deeply intertwined with other concepts of feminist practice, as Maya notes,

> Yeah, that they have a say, that they have a voice, and in control of their lives…

Throughout this vignette, I discussed how Ellie gained her voice and, by extension, her position as a knowledge leader within the team. I encouraged Ellie by commending her diligence and hard work and offering positive reinforcement, which Webb et al. (2004) suggest as contributors to empowered individuals and teams. How individuals see themselves also harkens to Webb et al.'s affirmation of voice as an essential contributor to confidence and, by extension, the control and agency needed to advance professional goals and well-being.

6.3.4 Summary of findings: Privileging individual voice

Chapter 6 illustrates the feminist pedagogic principle of privileging individual voice. If we consider voice as perspectives, opinions, interests, and feedback, both spoken and unspoken, then 'valuing women's voices goes beyond simply ensuring that they have a chance to speak' (Accardi, 2013, p. 39).

The inherently unique nature of privileging individual voice is evident in this vignette. We can see how this can be accomplished by taking stock of individual circumstances and **meeting people where they feel comfortable** versus expecting members to bend to the will of structures, protocols, or a leader's personal preferences. This means creating safe spaces for relationship-building, dialogue, idea-sharing, and goal-setting.

Also supported and consistent with the idea of privileging individual voice is the somewhat paradoxical yet critical need to **listen for silent voices**. Silence is often a choice that should be respected; nevertheless, we can imply through this

vignette that there are potential power dynamics when only one or a few speak. This reinforces the need to observe and listen intentionally to understand the nature of silence.

This vignette illustrates how privileging individual voice relates to gaining and **articulating knowledge**. In this way, knowledge and scaffolding are closely related to the feminist pedagogic principle of **empowerment**. Indeed, privileging individual voice can be envisaged as prerequisite knowledge from which empowerment ultimately emanates.

6.4 Chapter conclusion

Privileging individual voice was the subject of Chapter 6. As suggested in these findings, this principle can emerge by understanding individual comfort zones, prompting voice without domination, and building confidence through coaching and feedback, thus fostering a psychologically safe culture. Recognizing that power structures exist, overtly or implicitly, is central to privileging individual voice and related to the dialogic nature of empowerment, the subject of Chapter 7.

Chapter 7: Empowerment

7.1 Introduction

Empowerment is a cornerstone of feminist pedagogy and respects intellectual, personal, and professional growth. In a feminist learning space, 'the validity of experiential knowledge, or the knowledge produced through actual lived experience' (Accardi, 2013, p. 37) is only possible when empowerment is encouraged and enabled. An empowered team reflects a democratised, collaborative dynamic (Accardi, 2013; Chick & Hassel, 2019); and creates 'safe spaces to facilitate a dialogical exchange' (Nqambaza, 2021, p. 23) where individuality and mutuality of voice coalesce.

This vignette illustrates how empowerment emerges through 'creative community energy' to 'counteract unequal power arrangements' (Shrewsbury, 1997, p. 168).

7.2 The story

After several bumpy months together, there are still kinks to work out, and everything is not all rainbows and butterflies in our ways of working. I've muddled through my maiden voyage as the project lead, and we've managed to produce the first deliverable. Before kicking off another project component, I think it's a good idea to pause and take stock of where we are, hindsight, and look ahead.

What did we do well and want to keep doing? Where did we stumble? What do we need to do differently?

I ask Samuel and Maya to co-facilitate an activity with me. I ask Samuel because, after months of trial and error, now seems to be the moment of truth – have any of my strategies worked? Maya's meetings are always filled with fun and surprises. I hope that by co-facilitating, the team will realise that no one person is 'in charge'. I sometimes worry that I talk too much, which may create a kind of co-dependency or implied power. With Samuel and Maya facilitating, I want to restrain myself to only minimal remarks. I hope the team will recognise the shared leadership responsibility and that, despite my 'official' designation as project lead, I am not a tyrannical dictator or devious wizard behind a virtual curtain.

As I continue my research, I have become increasingly conscientious of this. In fact, I've changed my end-of-meeting summative inquiry from 'How does that sound?' to 'What do others think?' Indeed, the hierarchy has a way of embedding constructs of who is a leader that, in conjunction with feminist ideology, I simply do not subscribe to.

I see it as an opportunity for the team to continue to gel and build trust. I hope Maya's positivity and gentle reminders that 'we're not robots' will give us a moment to gauge how everyone feels and offer care where needed. I also hope that each member will contribute to refining how the team works in the future.

Before fully launching into the agenda (Appendix 9), I take a few minutes to explain why we're here and the meeting goals. Handing off to Maya, she asks the group, 'What are your goals for this gathering?' and 'How do you want to feel at the end?'

As Maya explains the exercise, I think about whether I have created an environment where everyone feels safe to share, and I mentally appraise my relationship with each individual. Some relationships have been strained at times, but most are positive and collegial. I've taken time with each person one-on-one, sometimes multiple times, to connect, listen, and share, and in so doing, hopefully, to build trust. After all, my research has taught me that voice and empowerment can only occur when psychological safety is present. Moreover, psychological safety is a factor of trust in relationships.

The group works individually for five minutes, adding sticky notes to the virtual whiteboard. I watch notes magically appear from the ether. In addition to individual reflections, someone also adds a picture of Baby Yoda. I laugh out loud on mute. I'm not sure exactly what he/it represents, but over time the team acquired a penchant for using memes and .gifs to express themselves. These little bursts of creative expression are an official part of the team culture and bring welcome levity to even the most dismal situations. Sometimes during particularly tense meetings, a team member will throw a wordless yet visually descriptive image into the group Chat. It's a show of solidarity and a reminder not to take ourselves too seriously – to have fun despite the crazy.

Time’s up. Each sentiment is acknowledged, and I facilitate the next activity. It is an opportunity for each team member to reflect on past positive and challenging experiences. As in the last activity, each member adds virtual sticky notes to the Google Jamboard.

As each sticky appears, I assess whether I’ve created the environment people want to live in for eight (or more) hours of their day. I feel a bizarre solace knowing others have felt lost, yet I recognise that I might be guilty of creating confusion and perpetuating unrealistic expectations.

I read the notes, absorbing each as personal, indirect feedback. For a moment, I want to go off camera as my eyes well at the specific reference to this team’s failures. But then again, presence is important. Realising that the team has seen the tumult as learning, solidarity, and resilience, I have never been so elated by the outcomes of failure.

Next, Maya leads an activity intended to get a pulse of how everyone on the team feels about the project, the state of the world, and life – whatever comes to people’s minds – issues that impact individuals or the team and keep us from working effectively.

Each team member adds sticky notes expressing anxieties, concerns, or whatever was bothering them personally or professionally. I read all the notes aloud to the group – no judgments, no solutions. I ask those who are comfortable to elaborate out loud.

During the discussion, I realise the breadth of what people are going through. I take stock of where everything stands.

Seven dreadful months into a global pandemic;

Six arduous months since the team formed;

Four heart-breaking and disquieting months since George Floyd’s murder and a new social justice movement; and

One anxiety-inducing month until a divisive Presidential election

I feel that this is some sort of countdown to Armageddon. The mood is now heavy, but getting feelings out in the open is important and will allow us to care for one another.

I notice how many people are affected by the political and social atmosphere. My team is tired, stressed, uncertain, and on edge. Everyone is in a different state of anxiety. I understand that these are not one-time events but a culmination of circumstances that erode the health and well-being of each member differently and how they show up at work. In fact, the work seems inconsequential in the whole scheme of things, yet, eventually, it must get done. But for now, it will wait.

I think there is no greater challenge to my emotional intelligence and relational dexterity than trying to reconcile fun with mass human adversity. I wonder how news anchors bring themselves to do this every day: ‘A grim milestone. Five hundred thousand people have now died. And now, let’s turn to sports’.

I also realise my responsibility for contributing to some of these struggles, and I’m disheartened. I know that isn’t the intention of the messages in the activity, but nevertheless, I ding myself again. At the same time, I realise that I work with people who feel they can be open about their struggles – even if I am part of the cause – another learning moment.

Next, to help the team move forward, Samuel leads us through creating team rules: Our team. Our rules. It is a way for the team to determine how we want to work going forward. In hindsight, I ding myself yet again for not having thought of this exercise six months ago.

I notice themes in the order of priority:

Enjoyment, fun, positivity

Ask for help if you don’t know the answer

Speak up with a solution/idea

I also notice themes in what doesn’t work for the team, which embody the opposite:

Don’t go it alone

Don’t keep things to yourself

Don’t be exclusionary

Don’t bring problems without solutions

The team is conversing as equals and determining their collective voice. I’m delighted that the team feels free to speak up, that there’s safety in sharing ideas, willingness to articulate opinions and openness to constructive debate.

I am relieved that the team prefers volunteerism over delegation. As a teacher at heart, it is a dream that people want to learn while doing the work and recognise that this is a safe place to say, ‘I don’t know how, but I’m willing to learn’. In fortuitous alignment with one of the sticky notes, the final activity will ‘encourage folks to raise their hands instead of me delegating tasks to them’.

I set up the ‘RACI[2]’ activity, ‘This project is not a dictatorship. Even though we have specific deliverables, there’s also an opportunity to contribute your skills and learn new ones’. I want people to feel a sense of self-determination to contribute skills they already possess and identify those they want to learn.

The team knows the drill. Sticky notes fly, and I’m heartened by the engagement, although sceptical that things will actually play out this nicely in application. Project tasks have a way of developing tentacles that pull people in different directions and challenge the intent of interactive, well-meaning activities like this. Nevertheless, each member has been afforded voice and agency in how they want to contribute. I hope this energises and empowers while galvanising a culture of collegiality.

I came out of the activity questioning my leadership. I was given valuable indirect feedback and, in the spirit of feminist ideology, will reflect and use it to improve my practice, which also improves our little community. I resolve to address one

[2] In project management, RACI stands for ‘responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed’ to designate and define levels of individual assignments in a project.

of the concerns identified: the nature of communication and collaboration with one of our cross-functional teams. Stay tuned for Chapter 9.

7.3 Presentation of emergent themes and analysis of the feminist pedagogic principle: Empowerment

> I think you need leaders to be able to put people in positions of being able to develop their own kind of self-empowerment. (Samuel)

Admittedly I was mildly terrified going into this team exercise. While I didn't have any justifiable reason to believe I would be attacked verbally or it would devolve into an unmitigated grievance forum (which has become much more common in the last two years than I thought humanly possible), I was nervous about what would be implied about me as the de facto team lead. The issues of the community are my issues, a reflection of the relationship I have with each member, and an indicator of team health, connection, and cohesion. As I write, I still marvel at the sheer level of synergy and engagement the team had in determining their ways of working and how democratisation of the work process emerged.

7.3.1 Empowerment aims at 'increasing the power of all actors'

Although conducted virtually, this exercise is reminiscent of Bell's (1993) suggestion 'to look at and speak to one another and not just the facilitator' (p. 111). Each of us working within our 2x2 inch onscreen virtual box had a subconscious equalising effect. Since we were all onscreen, it was impossible to look only at the facilitator or the 'leader'. In this way, each box represents a facilitator or a leader. As Samuel and Maya facilitated and invited individuals to speak about their contributions, a sense of co-responsibility developed as we moved through the activities.

This speaks to the reverential relationship between empowerment and leadership. The virtual platform can have the effect of levelling the playing field between actors and creating a more collaborative forum. Multiple voices blur the

lines of singular leadership and enable empowerment. Maya describes her approach to collaboration as a means of empowerment as

> [When] we are experimenting, I try and make it a collaborative approach like, we're all leaders. It's not just me again going the dictator route. I'm like, everyone has a different perspective, so let me hear what they have to say.

While I chimed in a couple of times during this exercise, my contribution was largely silent via sticky notes as I watched events unfold onscreen, sometimes with trepidation, sometimes amusedly, and always pensively. 'Because feminists value community and equality, building a trusting environment in which all members are respected and have an equal opportunity to participate is central' (Schniedewind, 1993, p. 18), I wanted the group to define their ways of working while listening and connecting meaningfully. I believe, like Shrewsbury (1997), that 'relationships are more than a set of interactions among people; they are the 'web of existence' (p. 170). In the case of our team, this 'web of existence' is essential and is called 'trust'; effectively working together and achieving productive outcomes meant 'increasing the power of all actors' and was built on layers of trust, also conveyed by Yolanda:

> When you have a level of trust with people, you have the ability to work better together. Feedback is more direct. People are willing to help more.

The idea of togetherness and community, core feminist pedagogic principles, are here expressed and call to our attention the mutuality of the individual and the group, bringing me to the following observation.

7.3.2 Empowerment is both individuality and mutuality of voice

Aside from simply being fun, in this exercise, I see how community, empowerment, and voice are woven together; they are inseparable. Activities like this allow individuals to express their perspectives in non-threatening ways (i.e., on virtual sticky notes while on mute while off camera, or some derivative thereof) and scaffold individuals who might not otherwise feel comfortable speaking up in

larger team settings. Maya affirms the importance of these types of small-group activities, noting that

> Some people are scared to say certain things, so, like, activities like that we can just be ourselves, I think, help strengthen people and helps them feel more comfortable about saying things in the broader group when it does come to the business stuff, but I think I'm bringing it back down to like the people, people first. That makes a difference.

'That makes a difference'. I interpret Maya's excerpt as one of the aforementioned 'layers of trust'. Intentional moments like the activities in this vignette allow space for individuals to connect and develop a sense of trust and psychological safety with one another. The seeds of individual and collective voice are fostered in this space, aligning with political philosopher Hanna Arendt's suggestion that 'power arises from the collective self-confidence in a people's capacity to act and effect their fate. Empowerment is only possible when there is a sense of mutuality' (as cited by Shrewsbury, 1987, p. 170).

'Kahina' describes the transition from individual to collective as a metacognitive process, reinforcing how activities like this empower individuals working in larger groups:

> I've realized that I need to be stepping up to what I want to do. I think I need to, like, get out there and express and voice, like, 'Hey, I'm good at this. Let me do it' … I need to, like, own what I'm doing and just continue voicing, like, 'This is what I'm good at. This is what I'm not. And this is but I want to improve at'. And bringing that up to people in leadership positions or whomever I'm working with.

After thinking privately for a few minutes during each activity, individual thoughts emerged into consensus about what was important to the group – their collective vision. As such, individual voices coalesced into community voice. Once

consensus was reached about ways of working, responsibility became mutual and embedded with compassion and care.

By approaching each activity with the understanding that each individual was an integral part of the team and, therefore, had a critical voice on how the team would work, single voices representing 'I' fused into the collective 'we', 'thus necessitating collective decision-making and constituting community' (Webb et al., 2004, p. 420).

As we moved through each activity, there was a repetitive synergy, with distinct voices melding into the community voice. Each individual was empowered to express their concerns, skills, goals, what they wanted to learn, and where they could pop in and help. From the individual, a future plan was jointly and organically constructed, with each member raising their hand to contribute. The open communication – both silently and aloud – engendered the sense of an empowered community.

7.3.3 Empowerment is energy and creativity, but also self-determination, agency, and balance

Shrewsbury eloquently describes empowerment as '[embodying] a concept of power as energy, capacity, and potential rather than as domination' and further depicts the concept as 'the glue holding a community together' (Shrewsbury, 1997, p. 168). While the word 'fun' may not be the most scholarly language, the exercise depicted in this vignette calls to mind Maya's suggestion that we quite literally infuse fun into the practice of empowerment:

> We have that faith, and that support and that freedom; we can give that to the rest of our teammates and, like, know that we're all leaders. We all help each other, so like, that collaborative approach, being ourselves. That helps, like, even if we don't love what we're doing, at least we know like, 'Hey, we're in this together. We're making the best of it. We're having fun'. Things like that, that's what makes them important.

I knew during the RACI activity that some tasks would be dreaded. We all knew there were things we would not enjoy as we added our stickies. But the fact that we were doing it together, each of our own volition, in this format, made the forthcoming execution of the tasks more mentally bearable.

I also shared with Maya a sense of unease of asking people to assume 'business as usual', especially in the early months of the pandemic and as the virus continued unabated. Looking back at my journal during this time, clearly, I needed the exercise as much as the rest of the team:

> I honestly don't think I've ever felt as alone and overwhelmed as I do now. I have three projects going on concurrently. I feel entirely responsible for each of them; all I do is have meetings. I mean, I'm working at least 12 hours a day. Ellie is having a baby. Samuel has to go to 3rd grade all over again with his son. Alex has three small kids at home, one with autism. Maya has a son in school and is still justifiably traumatised by all the social unrest. How am I supposed to put this work back on them??? (Personal journal, 27 June 2020)

As a team, we found a semblance of balance through our virtual social events – Scattergories and an online murder mystery. Exercises like the one depicted in this vignette acknowledged personal struggles while also allowing the team to figure out how they wanted to achieve balance. Maya, always the cheerleader of balance, makes the point directly:

> Try and make more fun in the work, like, work-life integration. It's a balance, honestly. People are dealing with family members getting sick and dying or like close to death, and it's really scary to have to ask them to still get their work done.

And that,

> It definitely helps, having not just one-on-ones, but getting a group to talk to each other and reminding ourselves that we're human. Like I always say, ‘We're not robots’.

I believe this activity demonstrates a successful attempt at finding balance. By the time I met with Maya for her final interview, four months after leaving the team, I was able to get a more concrete sense of the outcomes of empowering members to define their workplace destinies:

> This is a great team we work with – we've spent time together like, in the trenches, but again we can also be ourselves and have fun together…I feel like we all have a good support system; no one's on their own, everyone has a buddy, or everyone has someone they can look up to. So, they know, like, okay, there's this problem, but it's not the end of the world because I can go to so-and-so, or we can talk about it as a team.

These moments of intentional balance do affect team members. Absent points of human connection unrelated to work, interactions in virtual teams can become purely transactional, as Ellie advises:

> Check in on everyone, learn about their personal life, so it doesn't always feel like ‘I need this from you’, like a workhorse.

Indeed, camaraderie, collegiality, and community are not givens, as Gladys notes:

> Having that human element and making it very intentional and focused…listening is important.

In this vignette, I see a rich symbiosis of voice, empowerment, and community as a manifestation of ‘the personal is political’ – a community where the norms of a

hierarchal organisation are truncated in favour of ‘autonomy and individuality of members who share a sense of relationship and connectedness with each other’ (Shrewsbury, 1997, p. 171).

7.3.4 Summary of findings: Empowerment

If we consider that feminist idea of empowerment as increasing the power of all actors through knowledge, collaboration, and dialogic exchange, this concept was evident in this vignette.

Although the exercise highlighted in this vignette and perspectives offered demonstrate the feminist principle of **increasing the power of all actors**, it is not overtly apparent that this was a defined objective or named goal of participants. However, participants consistently described a construct where leadership is shared, multiplicity of voice is activated, and democratic dialogue is preferred to autocratic dictates.

The feminist principle of **individuality and mutuality of voice as foundational to community** was indicated throughout participant discussions and in my practice, as exhibited in the team exercise. Participants sought connections, authentic relationships, and light-hearted moments as they worked individually and collectively to build community.

Evident in the findings is Shrewsbury’s depiction of **empowerment as a kind of energy** that binds a team together and, as demonstrated in this vignette, how this energy contributes to getting the work done. The findings suggest that, perhaps more so than ever before, working in the Covid era drives a more profound desire for points of meaningful connection and freedom of expression to determine a community’s ways of working.

7.4 Chapter conclusion

Empowerment through collective agency was the subject of Chapter 7. Feminist pedagogy manifested as empowerment through a balance of individuality and mutuality, collective agency, and dialogue. Each member’s unique perspective sparked creative energy and ignited innovation. As such, respect for diversity of personal experience is the subject of Chapter 8.

Chapter 8: Respect for diversity of personal experience

8.1 Introduction

Diversity of personal experience values consciousness-raising about our unique experiences and how they impact our ways of knowing the world (Accardi, 2013). It also reflects the diversity of economic, social, political, educational, and professional experiences that, when engaged with the collective, have the potential to support a richer work product.

This vignette explores the feminist practice of ‘respect for diversity of personal experience’, described by Webb et al. (2004) as a collective vision that grows from each member’s unique life fingerprint.

8.2 The story

While meeting with Samuel, I receive a ping from Devin, a colleague I consider a friend, requesting to meet. I shoot back a quick ‘Ok’ and feel guilty for not having turned my Chat to ‘Do not disturb’. The fact that I responded tells me that I wasn’t giving full attention to Samuel, a violation on my part in trying to be present. It’s not a ‘rule’ to be available at all moments, but Google Chat has become a mindless proxy for organic human contact, which might otherwise occur in passing in an office break room. I believe Chat requires no commitment to emotion, or maybe it’s that it requires no emotional accountability. I’ve noted how easy it is, even in the most contentious moments of exasperation, how a simple 🙂 diffuses the situation (but does it, really?). I’m a regular of the somewhat more passive-aggressive 🙃, hoping for reasonable emotional intelligence on the other end of the ether to read between the lines. At any rate, I’m now subconsciously trained, like Pavlov’s dogs, to respond to the stimulus of incoming notifications.

Checking my email, I notice an invitation for 5 pm with ‘Connect’ as the meeting description and no agenda items outlined. I know the word ‘connect’ is code for conversation around Devin’s concerns about her bandwidth and personal difficulties.

From our time working together, I know Devin has a tenuous situation at home. For the last two years, I offered everything I could to Devin by way of support: researching symptoms, searching for doctors, checking in on weekends, and replacing Dr Google in favour of academic journals (yes, I read them and now believe I must qualify for some sort of medical certification).

In hindsight, I now realise that in those two years, I probably took on a disproportionate amount of the work so Devin could focus on home matters. Nevertheless, I requested Devin to the team for this project. As the team lead, I had hoped that Devin would help bridge some of the team's knowledge gaps by lending her voice and experience in tackling complex projects. I also saw it as a way to provide Devin with a shield from becoming too heavy-laden with other work. However, instead of speaking up, Devin seems to be retreating.

A couple of weeks ago, I spoke gently to Devin about her level of contribution, not as the project lead but as a friend. I asked Devin if I could speak to Ruth about her concerns, but she became upset, wanting to keep any issues quiet. Recognising that the present situation lacked resolution, I convey that it's my job to ensure that work is distributed appropriately within the team and that Ruth is entitled to know what's happening. I feel uncomfortable dangling this implied power carrot and wonder if I'm breaching Devin's trust. While I did not mean, 'Do what I say, or else I'll escalate', I can also understand how Devin might interpret this as a way to wield what little power I actually have. I remember Samuel asking, 'Is this some sort of passive-aggressive thing?' and I consider whether I am projecting a similar message to Devin.

This is a precarious position, so once again, I consider the feminist beliefs firmly guiding my practice – enabling different perspectives, fair distribution of tasks, care, and redistribution of power – and wonder if it's worth the angst. I seriously consider abandoning this conversation.

However, I've just come from a meeting which included a discussion of structural imbalances in providing meaningful feedback and coaching to women and people of colour. This discussion lingers with me as I talk with Devin. If I say nothing, I will continue to be part of a problem that adversely affects a group I am also part

of. If I say something, I believe I might lose a colleague and friend. Despite being empathetic to Devin's dire personal circumstances, I weigh the potential outcomes and decide that I must address the issue. Bracing myself, I can only hope Devin will realise that my feedback comes from a place of care – for her voice, team collaboration, and attending to broader societal inequalities that manifest in our workplace.

I join the meeting. Devin never goes onscreen. I've only seen her once on video, which was an accident. After a year of working together, I finally met Devin in person – I didn't recognise the person who rushed me with a warm hug.

I proceed with caution, 'How are things? Faring any better'?

'No, it's pretty much the same'. Devin's voice never smiles. I recall laughing hysterically when she first explained why she never smiles. In a most deadpan voice, she quipped, 'Because smiling causes wrinkles'. Despite Devin's characteristic restrained demeanour, she's different. There's a sense of resignation as Devin continues on with what has become our typical agenda:

Grim home situation;

No time to lead;

Needs flexibility;

I reinforce the value that Devin's experience brings to the team. I reiterate the role I hope she will take on, considering her staff level and expertise. I emphasise that she can flex meetings and tasks to take care of 'home stuff'. I feel I'm being reasonable, finding an acceptable middle ground between empathy and the need to do the work.

I want you to know that I'm concerned about you and feel we have a relationship where I can be honest. I hoped you'd take more of a lead in the team. Instead, we infrequently hear your voice, and we need your input'.

'Fine, I'll talk more'.

I try to explain that the point is not about talking more but how drawing on everyone's experiences helps the team get things done more effectively. I try to explain that it's about equal distribution of work and dialogue within the team. I try to explain in a way that is not accusatory.

'When one or two people do all the talking and solutioning, we lose the benefit of your experience; it's why I thought you'd be such a great addition to our team. It's also not fair to other people. Everyone is going through a lot right now, and it's hard. It's also my job to ensure that work is distributed fairly. I hope you understand'.

'No one has ever said anything like this to me before, not in any of my previous reviews'. I know this is not the case because, in more cordial times, Devin shared previous feedback with me, and I've also given this message to Devin before, although not as directly as today. I am upset by Devin's response, mostly because I believe our friendship will be irreparably damaged.

'Devin, this is really awkward for me, but I'm telling you because I care'.

Devin replies, 'It's fine'. Clearly, it's not.

I ask, 'Have you ever considered that it's easier for people not to tell you'? I continue, 'Do you know that women and people of colour, of which you are both, overwhelmingly do not receive meaningful coaching and constructive feedback and that the result is fewer promotions and representation in leadership roles'?

I can repeat this finding verbatim just coming from a meeting discussing the matter. How fortuitous.

'Perhaps the problem is not me telling you this; it's all the other people who have not, so now it's coming as a surprise'.

Awkward silence ensues.

'Ok, well, I have to go'.

'Yeah, me too. I hope you have a good night'.

8.3 Presentation of emergent themes and analysis of the feminist pedagogic principle: Respect for diversity of personal experience

Of all the events shared in this autoethnographic bricolage, this story is the most emotionally taxing and unsettling. As a feminist practitioner, I believe in the values of care, compassion, trust, and authenticity; I believe I demonstrated these values in my relationship with Devin and that we had a sense of connection, security, and safety. However, perhaps this is a naïve assessment. As this vignette demonstrates, we cannot blindly accept our efforts, beliefs, and interpretations as the singular, correct approach. This is the heart of diversity of personal experience.

Although the feminist principle 'diversity of personal experience' is situated in literature and widely discussed in organisations, as this vignette has demonstrated, it can be challenging and even painful in practice; yet complexity is not an excuse.

Beyond demonstrating these core values, feminist pedagogy calls us to action. Enabling potential from diverse perspectives requires intention, a theme threaded throughout this research. My intention was to address inequities arising from the diversity report and respond to Maya's plea to 'trust our [people of colour] skills' to mitigate some of the frustration and missed opportunities for underrepresented groups. I wanted to openly and audibly advocate to bring various voices and experiences to the fore. This was the rationale behind inviting Devin to the team, and yet I could not successfully bring Devin with me, nor should this have been my expectation. Indeed, with respect to individual lived experience, neither positive intent nor well-meaning actions can be assumed as currency to purchase the experience, perspectives, or thoughts of another.

Perhaps that is truly the nature of the lived experience – that what lies behind reactions, motivations, and perspectives is inherently elusive and esoteric, and willingness to offer these 'intellectual properties' lies solely at the discretion of the possessor.

8.3.1 Psychological safety enables diverse perspectives

In our interview, Yolanda spoke passionately about 'psychological safety'. From an academic perspective, Edmondson & Lei (2014) describe psychological safety as 'perceptions of the consequences of taking interpersonal risks in a particular context such as a workplace' (p. 22). Central to the idea of psychological safety is that it 'facilitates the willing contribution of ideas and actions to a shared enterprise' (p. 22).

In practice, Yolanda describes psychological safety as the sense of trust in relationships that enables growth through vulnerability. This concept is enabled by behaviours that engender voice, care, trust, and compassion, all tenets of feminist pedagogic practice. When challenges arise, or in my case, it became necessary to provide feedback to Devin, psychological safety might have allowed the difficult message to land through the lens of care versus one of critique. Explaining the relationship between trust and challenges, Yolanda comments,

> You don't have to think the same. You can think differently. You can work through things. But to perform really well, I need to have that psychological safety.

Moreover, actions may not elicit expected results without psychological safety, as I experienced talking to Devin. Yolanda describes a familiar reaction:

> I totally shut down. I wish I didn't, but I do. So, that's where I think it's like, trust and psychological safety – that comes from having relationships.

Although it did not manifest in this scenario as I'd hoped, what Gladys describes as 'organic authenticity' – listening, intention, a 'safe playground' – over time creates psychological safety, a sense of comfort and care that empowers people to express themselves.

Yolonda further explains her position on psychological safety, which extends beyond passive relationship building, noting intentional actions that enable trust:

> I think it's all in relationship building. I think it's being able to create relationships of trust. And I think that it's giving the coaching and the feedback, and the development. And so, like you, in a lot of my interactions, I try to do that. When I work with different people, right, I want to be their biggest cheerleader to help them. But it requires focus or concentration on building that relationship, building that trust in order to have, you know, some meaningful conversations with people.

Yolanda's emphasis on intention and agency affirms what Edmondson and Lei (2014) posit as proactive behaviours that work towards 'challenging the status quo or improving organizational functioning' (p. 27).

Growth and trust enjoy a symbiotic relationship, but they are not guaranteed. Trust facilitates meaningful conversations that enable personal and professional growth. Nevertheless, we cannot take for granted that positive outcomes will follow, as demonstrated in my conversation with Devin. This brings me to my next observation arising from the vignette.

8.3.2 Sharing experiences of personal failure means being vulnerable but is also a way to help others

Although I was focused on Devin's sense of psychological safety, I had not previously considered my own. Edmondson and Lei (2014) call attention to personal exposure, noting that:

> Psychological safety takes time to build, through familiarity and positive responses to displays of vulnerability and other interpersonally risky actions, but can be destroyed in an instant through a negative response to an act of vulnerability. (p. 38)

Even though I was delivering the feedback, often a power position, I felt vulnerable, knowing that my friendship was in jeopardy, and indeed, the relationship was damaged irreparably. I share this experience of what I consider failure under the guidance of my research participants and to spotlight the upside

of vulnerability, and as Gladys suggests, as a way to role model leadership, even if it's painful:

> Inspire people [not] just to be better at [their] job, be better human beings, be nicer, be more compassionate, somehow like, get to the heartstrings.

Stepping back from the emotionality of this experience, I consider Webb et al.'s (2004) suggestion that a richer product ensues through the 'logical analysis of personal experience' (p. 420). I also see opportunities to help others learn and grow. Kahina and Maya both offer pragmatism, asserting vulnerability as a way to help colleagues overcome obstacles and improve the work product:

> Share with other people who might be going through the same things or are scared to, like, make a decision. Be open with your struggles so that others can learn from your story so that they can see it is possible to move forward, that it is not the end of the world, even though it feels like it now. That way, at some point…tomorrow will be a different day. It makes a difference. (Maya)

> Talk about the failure that happened, and openly talk about the failures that happened because I think that will help really evolve the [work product]. (Kahina)

Indeed, psychological safety and transparency can be powerful avenues for empowerment and growth.

8.3.3 Feminist pedagogy in a sceptical world

Bricker-Jenkins and Hooyman (1986) assert that feminist educators 'will not only strive to eliminate systems of oppression and exploitation, but will also affirm the need for diversity by actively reaching out to achieve it' (p. 38). A feminist practitioner must, therefore, be proactive, intentional, vocal, and often uncomfortable.

To have just come from a meeting where disparities in the organisation had just been discussed, only to ignore it in a real conversation, would leave me no better than those who find it easier or choose not to provide meaningful feedback, doing Devin a disservice. As I vacillated, I turned to Desmond Tutu's sage advice, 'If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor'.

Devin could not reconcile that the finding applied to her precisely for the reason that identified an issue in the first place. As a woman and person of colour, others had not provided her with concrete coaching or feedback. Parry (1996) notes that 'feminist pedagogy makes explicit that how we experience and understand things is rooted in our social position, based on various factors, including gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexual preference' (p. 46). Thus, having presented a case for why my feedback was a way to counter this type of oppression, Devin's response was incredulous disbelief, an unfortunate, vicious cycle.

When I think about how I miscalculated Devin's response to my calling our diversity report to her attention and why I was so vehement about amplifying her voice and visibility as a leader within the team, I remain at a loss today. Reflecting on her experience as an African American woman in the corporate environment, Maya ventures that

> we look at the corporate environment, and a lot of people who look like us or who act like us...Other people don't always trust our skills for some reason. So that's frustrating for me, and I feel like there's a space that's needed for other people like me [to] be in certain positions because when we talk and if we focus on like African Americans like people always have, they hold up celebrities; but then it's like, okay what about everyone else… people in the corporate standpoint? You don't see too many leaders there, and I feel like I want to make sure there's space for them to grow.

Devin may not have realised that she had been deprived of truthful, meaningful feedback. Nevertheless, standing up for those who might be overlooked is

consistent with the risk and vulnerability of psychological safety and also an act of solidarity, as described by Freire (2005):

> True solidarity with the oppressed means fighting at their side to transform the objective reality that have made them ‘beings for another’. The oppressor is [in] solidarity with the oppressed only when he stops regarding the oppressed as an abstract category and sees them as persons who have been unjustly dealt with, deprived of their voice, cheated in the sale of their labor – when he stops making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risks an act of love. (p. 50)

Evidently, Devin saw my feedback as an anomaly, an exception to her usual ‘feedback’. And so, this vignette demonstrates more bluntly the need to stand against a form of oppression identified in the report – the lack of feedback and coaching, found to affect the promotion of women and people of colour adversely. These stands of solidarity may be taken with personal risk to relationships, as asserted by Freire. Indeed, a few days after this conversation, I had not heard from Devin and sent a note that I'm glad we had a relationship where I could be candid, and I hoped it would strengthen our relationship. After a week, I’d received no response. A month after this exchange, Devin abruptly resigned.

Facilitating difficult conversations like the one depicted in this vignette challenges our courage. Nevertheless, only when feelings and emotions are on the table, shared with transparency in safe spaces for both individuals, can individuals and teams work productively. As Maya notes:

> Yes, we get the good feedback but [giving] the bad feedback, once they get comfortable, knowing that I listened to them, they feel so much better and empowered to do what they have to do, and know that I care.

Further, as a feminist leader, it calls to my attention that perhaps it is time to re-evaluate and approach trust and relationship building with more personal intent and authenticity than ever. After all, living in a world filled with scepticism around intentions requires change, as Maya suggests that one must,

> as a leader, show people that you care, you just have to do it in other ways.

8.3.4 Summary of findings: Respect for diversity of personal experience

While the language associated with respecting diverse experiences may not be direct, I focus on the word 'respect' and themes that emerged in creating collegial respect. Each participant described various elements of **'psychological safety'**, including mutual trust, care, and compassion, as foundational to one's ability to be authentic and vulnerable in workplace relationships. This notion is a common thread throughout all the feminist principles, which I will revisit in the Discussion chapter.

Extending from the idea of psychological safety is the somewhat surprising, albeit welcome, idea of **sharing experiences of personal and professional failure**. Shared lessons and demonstrating vulnerability can nurture relationships and help others grow. I stress the caveat that the upside of sharing failure implies an environment free of punitive outcomes and one where failure can be leveraged as a pedagogic tool.

Finally, in a world fraught with social injustice, hegemony, global conflict, and climate crises, findings suggest **scepticism of our world** has made its way into how diverse perspectives are enabled and interpreted in the professional setting, even in L&D. This finding is discouraging. It reaffirms the challenges ahead of L&D practitioners, the need for psychological safety in collegial relationships, and the value of championing the principles highlighted in this research.

8.4 Chapter conclusion

Respect for diversity of personal experience has been the focus of Chapter 8. We cannot diminish or dismiss the presence of structural and systemic inequities that erode trust, vulnerability, and psychological safety in marginalised groups. I believe that feminist leaders bear multiple responsibilities in this realm. First, we must recognise that the 'personal' in 'respect for personal experience' will differ with each person we encounter. 'Personal' also means respecting what is or is not shared. This necessitates listening to understand what is shared but without

expectations. I also believe we must educate ourselves about where and how inequalities reside in our contextual settings – as I cited to Devin the findings of imbalances in feedback – so we can be change agents. Therefore, it is the feminist leader's responsibility to advocate for diverse perspectives; otherwise, we risk losing the 'creative energy' that enriches our teams, ignites transformative agency, and promotes self-actualisation.

I now turn to another view of this risk inherent in hierarchal structures, the subject of Chapter 9.

Chapter 9: Challenging hierarchal structures

9.1 Introduction

Feminist environments are characterised by shared power (Chick & Hassel, 2019), democratic principles (Accardi, 2013), and co-constructed (Sprague, 2018) and de-hierarchised (Nqambaza, 2021) social systems. Attentiveness to the dynamics between all community members helps develop and foster safe spaces for healthy debate.

This vignette represents Webb et al.'s (2004) notion of 'challenging traditional views' through constructive debate, articulating a case for one's perspective, and openness to various viewpoints towards collaborative consensus. In this story, I share a conversation which conveys my attempt to challenge hierarchal structures in a meaningful way and representative of my team – through teaching, learning, and empowerment.

9.2 The story

One of the challenges coming out of the team exercise in Chapter 7 was the sense that the team felt like 'worker bees' by the governance team. Different directives, rules, and requests come with expectations to 'do what's told without question'. I'm not surprised that this issue has arisen in from the team because I've also felt this discomfort during interactions. It's not something I've been able to put my finger on; I just know something is 'off' about the team dynamics. I'm simultaneously relieved and put off by this validation from my team; I've been wondering if I was being too sensitive or misreading the situation.

The exercise not only provided me with validation but also activated a need to intercede on behalf of the team. Yes, we're all figuring it out together, replete with my glorified guessing leading to missteps and struggles. But to me, the fact that we're learning in the process is also kind of the point of 'learning and development'. Thus, it's my responsibility to work to help make the situation more equitable for the team.

I ping my colleague Henry, the point of contact for the group doling out perceived (actual?) directives to my team. ‘Hi, Henry 👌🏻. Do you have a few minutes to connect? I promise to be brief’.

I think about the relationship I don’t have with this Henry, which has been uncomfortable since the kickoff meeting. Henry is part of a coterie that my team is not a part of; we are not dialled in with ‘senior leadership’. Rules are decided by a select group under the guise of ‘governance’ and then disseminated for us to execute. The ubiquitous refrain, ‘It’s political,’ is frequently used to justify these rules. Yes, work has to get done, but I find the pretence of ‘governance’ restrictive and the crutch of ‘politics’ weak and inherently antithetical to learning and development. Or, maybe I take issue with what the hierarchy does – separates people into organisational caste systems — same thing.

Despite my firm belief that the current situation for dispensing work is unacceptable, the team’s confirmation, and my inherent responsibility as the project lead, I desperately want to avoid this conversation. It would be so easy.

I’m tempted to go back and delete the chat message before Henry sees it. Then I wonder: What kind of leader would that make me? What kind of feminist practitioner would that make me? What kind of person would that make me? Marcus Aurelius said, ‘just that you do the right thing, nothing else matters’.

My team told me they don’t feel free to bring their ideas to the table nor feel enabled to learn when given ‘orders’. To ignore this conversation would be a dereliction of my responsibility to the team. So, responsibility propels me; besides, I’m asking for something simple. Who doesn’t want to collaborate?

This will be a quick ask. Despite my strained relationship, Henry and I are learning professionals who presumably share the same value of learning through collaboration. I’m confident that Henry will embrace this opportunity to improve the partnership. The team will feel they’ve been listened to, and I’ll be doing my job. It will be a win for everyone.

I send a link to Google Meet and enter the meeting. After exchanging a few stiff pleasantries, my bright mood is reset. I recount the feedback from the team about the perceived lack of collaboration and the desire to have more say in how they carry out the work.

‘The team feels that they are somewhat order-takers, that the relationship between teams is a bit “autocratic”. I hope we can collaborate more between this team and the extended team. It will help them learn’.

Although I have approached the conversation with positive intent, I am immediately met with a vehement and visceral reaction, ‘Well, things have to be done a certain way to maintain the programme's integrity. It’s just the way things have to be done’.

I acknowledge my understanding of Henry’s position and the steep learning curve my team has been thrown into, which has, in fairness, resulted in mistakes. However, I also know failure is valuable to learning, especially when it is a road travelled in solidarity. I wonder when, along with collaboration, ‘we can learn from failure’ fell to the wayside in L&D?

‘Yes, a lot of pieces have to come together, and we all have a lot to learn. I’m simply asking if we can figure out a way for the team to have more input into how we move forward. It’s a learning process, of course, but if we can take time to understand why certain things have to be done a certain way, the team will be more receptive and not feel like they are just worker-bees’.

I feel that asking for more collaboration and explanation in the spirit of learning is fair, and I’m baffled by the iron wall of resistance I have encountered. I feel blindsided and unprepared by this reaction.

Henry remarks, ‘You are obviously upset’ (in fact, I’m not upset, I’m baffled), and asserts, ‘We don’t have time for collaboration’. I’m confident I’ve never heard this come out of anyone’s mouth, ever.

I push back, my voice now shaky with a mixture of trepidation, anger, annoyance, and disbelief that this conversation is really happening. ‘As the territory owning

this curriculum, I contend that we do have time, and it's my job to ensure this team is set up for success. If there are barriers to success, it's my job to ensure they're removed, and that people have an opportunity to learn and grow in the process'.

Henry switches to defence. 'No one has ever told me before that I am dictatorial. This is really unbelievable. And it would have been nice if you had included us in that activity'. I note that Henry has tried to turn this around on me as if I am being exclusionary.

'And I'm not saying that either. I'm simply conveying the perceptions of the team and asking if we can find greater balance so that they feel more like they can learn the process in a more collaborative way. And while this activity was meant to take a pulse and build the smaller team, I think it's a great idea to schedule a future activity with everyone'.

Somewhere deep down, the scab that has covered my feelings about the hierarchy has ruptured. I'm now full-blown angry. I wonder,

Who will do the work if the team is not motivated?

Who will do the work if the team feels alienated?

Whom does it serve to take this approach?

What if none of us worked here? There would be no hierarchy!

We are too far along to replace this team, and we've gained too much insight into the process. This team will do the work.

I realise in this moment that I have some power here, that my team has power. It kind of feels good.

The conversation, which I'd intended to last no more than five minutes, is now approaching an hour. I've gone around in circles, restating the same request for collaboration no less than ten different ways (I'm getting good at conjuring different strategies in the moment). I wish I'd packed a snack for this 'quick' chat.

I also wish I hadn't turned on my camera. I'm reminded of recent feedback that I am sometimes 'very animated', and my eyes 'speak loudly'. It was suggested that sometimes it would be best to keep the camera off. Again, I recall my research into presence and connection, but I no longer want to connect.

Henry is finally done. 'Ok, well, I have to go and get supper ready for my kids. I'll have to think about this'. I think this conversation will come to an end. But not before Henry throws one last dagger my way: 'By the way, I'm just curious, have you ever even led a large project before?'

I take a measured breath, 'Yes, I have, but this is a new learning experience for all of us. Thank you for asking. Have a good night'.

9.3 Presentation of emergent themes and analysis of the feminist pedagogic principle: Challenging hierarchal structures

> In order for the team to be able to succeed, it's been really important to be able to represent and protect the team'. (Participant 'Khadija')

After the team exercise, I was disheartened to realise my team felt they had so little input into how they went about getting the work done. Perhaps this was partly my fault, with my cycles of glorified guessing followed by their docile acquiescence. But I also felt what they felt. I also wanted to learn and knew that inevitable missteps would occur. I also felt the unspoken but implied power dynamic from cross-functional colleagues; the processes had to be followed, despite never having been executed or tested in practice.

I now present and discuss emergent dimensions related to the feminist pedagogic principle 'Challenging traditional views', translated in my mind as 'deconstructing the hierarchy'.

9.3.1 Micromanagement is knowledge control; it is a feature of the hierarchy

To be part of the hierarchy is embedded in us. Our entrenchment in the hierarchy starts in our youth: the kickball team captain or the bully on the playground. We start early to think of people in terms of title, status, and power:

> I think that hierarchy sets people back in the sense. Unless you're [up] on the hierarchy… a title might be project leader. When you think of leaders, back when you're in school, like, let's say you're in elementary school, this is the team captain, this is the team leader, they're in charge of picking who's leading the dodgeball team. And so, it's a very simple idea of just…we are taught [as] a kid that the person with the name of a leader is in charge. Sometimes, because they just don't want to overstep anyone that they shouldn't overstep. Or, for me, I don't know if this is [something] that I could take it and run. And so, I think it's like a cheerleader, and it almost takes you back to being a kid and being like, 'Okay, I have to get approval from the leader'. (Ellie)

Did the reader notice how Henry attempts to slam the door on the possibility of collaboration and that things must be done a certain way? This was a way to micromanage and exert control over the work product and, by extension, any autonomy that the team might exercise as we figured out how to get the work done collaboratively. Additionally, as a matter of learning by doing, to be told how to do the work, and to expect blind acceptance, takes away from the team's voice and their ability to learn. If I consider knowledge gained versus knowledge withheld, the meaning behind Sir Francis Bacon's pithy yet incisive, 'Knowledge is power,' becomes pointedly clear to me; the former is empowering, the latter oppressive. Two participants from my team called out the perils of micromanagement, noting:

> I think that an e-leader who does not adopt the roles of being a team direction setter, liaison, or operation coordinator will result in a lack of team cohesiveness. For instance, I have previously had leaders who monitored their teams too much. I have yet to see a team thrive on micromanagement. Yes, the projects will get done, but it may prevent the team members from feeling open and willing to present new ideas, thus hindering creativity. (Ellie)

Maya, in alignment with my own belief and approach in the vignette, discourages micromanagement in plain terms, and advocates for collaboration:

> Nobody likes to be micromanaged, but it's like they work with you and collaborate with you, and they appreciate your ideas. (Maya)

9.3.2 To challenge the hierarchy, ask 'why' and 'can we collaborate' and 'can we do it a different way'

Adopting and acting on principles that minimise all forms of oppression while enabling opportunities for constructive discourse and different viewpoints are pillars of feminist pedagogy (Dentith & Peterlin, 2011, p. 42).

In the exchange with Henry, I wanted to represent the team's voice while challenging the hierarchy's inherent power. I wanted to try to change an imposed belief system where growth and leadership potential might be stunted. This is why I pushed back, reminding Henry that we do, in fact, have agency in our process. Perhaps Henry and I had different ideas about ownership, but again, it reflects that the traditional hierarchy is inclusive to some but not all. It also reminds us that empowerment is the symbiosis of power and capability, with the goal 'to increase the power of all actors, not to limit the power of some' (Shrewsbury, 1997, p. 168). Indeed, limiting power and agency has broader implications for developing leadership capability, as discussed by 'Rosanya':

> ...that speaks back to culture. So, if you're in an organization where it literally is, 'Okay, here are the steps…' and if somebody has a 'higher title than you', they are your leader, and you are the more submissive one for the task to do [the] work. And, you know, wait to be told what it is to be done, and then you make do. So, if that is the culture, then we're not fostering, you know, the leader at every level mentality.

9.3.3 Giving people a voice challenges the hierarchy; be a buffer, a protector

I am embarrassed at my reluctance to have this conversation. I vacillated to the point of almost telling Henry, 'Never mind,' and moving past the clear message of the team exercise. I remembered that this was more important than my discomfort when I really wanted to just back out. What pushed me to continue was multi-faceted.

First, it was about representing the team's voice and including them in decisions about how they wanted to work. Secondly, it was about mitigating a construct they found challenging to work within – not having a voice. Finally, it was about being a role model, which Shrewsbury (1997) points to as the key attribute of a feminist leader; one who, above all, helps the group 'develop a community, a sense of shared purpose, a set of skills for accomplishing that purpose, and the leadership skills [to] jointly proceed on those tasks' (p. 172).

When I consider what I would have been saying 'Never mind' to, I think about taking away the team's power and voice. To deprive individuals of the opportunity to learn, I would become an oppressor. Further, the team entrusted me to act on their behalf. Again, the standard of the feminist teacher as a leader and a model comes to the fore:

> When I think about leading…I think about giving people developmental opportunities, removing obstacles for them. Being able to being able to give them a voice, you know, being an inclusive leader. It's more being able to facilitate those things when you're leading also leading by example'. (Yolanda)

I also wanted to be the buffer between the team and 'the politics' of the hierarchy. I wanted Henry to recognise the value the team brought to the table. When I realised that the team's knowledge, and by extension, work product, was a tangible asset, a commodity, I felt a level of power for myself and the team. Of course, it was important to get the work done with a high degree of quality. However, I also knew the work could be done with guidance and collaboration with cross-functional partners. I knew what this team had accomplished to date

and that we would not be replaced with another team. This knowledge emboldened me in the moment. Despite the fleeting temptation to abandon the conversation, ultimately, my job was to create a hospitable environment for the team as they carried out the work and ensured that the team's voice was respected and represented. After all, part of my role was to be ‘the active mechanism for achieving the empowered community and for that community to continue to be effective within the broader world’ through ‘the active exercise of agency, whether directed at ourselves or at structures’ (Shrewsbury, 1997, p. 172). To be in the liminal middle manager space means all at once being part of the team, protecting the team, and situating the team as an essential mechanism in the broader organisational landscape:

> I'm in the middle; I'm the communication link between the ‘worker-bees’ and upper management. I want upper management to know what an impact the team's making. At the same time, I want the team to understand where their impact fits in the bigger picture. In this middle zone, I'm giving exposure to each side, but at the same time, with that exposure comes a responsibility to protect the team, protect the team from being inundated with scope creep, from being pulled off the project, like, there's things that can happen as soon as this team over here recognizes what this team can do, they start pouring [on] them. (Khadija)

Khadija and I share alignment with Rosanya in understanding that ‘worker-bees’ scaffold each rung of the hierarchal ladder:

> …whether it's learning or anything else, to be able to articulate and provide the background of why they have that particular point of view or opinion, they're willing to share that with others. And [by] the same token, are willing to listen to any feedback that is provided, whether that's an agreement or not, that they're always thinking about the end goal during the process, raising their hand when something doesn't feel

> or seem right so that can at least be discussed within the team. (Rosanya)

My role is situated in a precarious middle, negotiating as the voice of the team to find cooperation between our teams and those in more senior positions. I felt that I made a reasonable request to Henry. For the sake of learning and out of respect for the feminist principle of constructive debate, I had to ask for collaboration.

9.3.4 Failure as knowledge confronts hierarchal power

During this conversation, I went on offence concerning the team's previous failures. Failure is sometimes heartbreaking, but as a learning professional, I know it can also be an effective way to learn. Challenging the hierarchy means that leaders must be willing to work with failure. In my interview with 'Marie', she said that 'Leadership is fear-based…and it's timid'. I interpret this to mean the hierarchy relies on the presence of fear; it is a lazy way to quell aspirations of co-equal power. Sadly, it is an often effective, even if unintentional, strategy. In this vignette, I needed to lean into fear. I needed to proactively acknowledge that missteps would occur and take Kahina's suggestion to 'Openly talk about the failures that happened' as a way to learn, develop problem-solving skills, and solve collaboratively.

> I think you need leaders to be able to put people in positions of being able to develop their own kind of self-empowerment. You can put people in leadership positions, and they might completely fail. But putting people in positions where they can kind of own something and grow it in the way that they kind of envisioned. I think there's a lot to be said for that. (Samuel)

Vocalising failure takes away its power. Done safely through coaching, mentoring, discussion, and collaboration, it leads to growth and empowerment:

> Let's coach through questions...let's mentor through opportunities, through asking questions. Instead of giving me the answer, [let] me figure out the answer. (Yolanda)

In this vignette, my goal was to clear the way for the team to have autonomy in moving forward, recognising that missteps might occur. This was a way for me to help them build cohesiveness as a team and to enable and grow their individual leadership capabilities towards collective goals.

> It's about being that person or people's champion. And doing whatever I can to lift them, to encourage them and to create an environment of collaboration. (Khadija)

9.3.5 Summary of findings: Challenging hierarchal structures

Participant contributions suggest that while **micromanagement within the hierarchy** is unwelcome, practitioners at the MM and IC levels still do not know what to do about it. Indeed, Ellie's comments demonstrate how we are conditioned to minimise ourselves within hierarchal systems, thus inhibiting growth and development. This belief directly affects voice, empowerment, knowledge, and self-actualisation.

Feminist pedagogy also urges us to **challenge oppressive conventions** by engaging members in critical dialogue and questioning processes and protocols. Evidence suggests that challenging conventions is linked to an organisation's culture and whether it is genuinely open and welcoming of dialogue towards a deconstructed hierarchy in favour of collaborative agency. We can also see the conundrum MMs and ICs are put in in the course of work when encouraged to be innovative, to speak up, and to contribute, but to do so within the confines of prescriptive (and often prohibitive) structures.

Shrewsbury calls on the feminist pedagogic leader to be 'the active mechanism for achieving the empowered community' (Shrewsbury, 1997, p. 172). The role of the feminist leader to serve as a **cheerleader, champion, and protector within hierarchal ecosystems** is strongly supported in this vignette.

A central tenet of critical feminist pedagogy is that the oppressed must be co-creators of their knowledge in their efforts against limiting structures (Freire, 2005). And while we have seen knowledge as central to empowerment as a common thread throughout the findings, in this vignette, a prohibitive hierarchal

mechanism sought to thwart and control knowledge acquisition. While suggested, the relationship between knowledge, empowerment, and hierarchal limitations is only as good as actions taken towards eliminating prohibitive structures. It is very possible that the story told in this vignette could have ended quickly or might never have happened. This demonstrates that there is still significant work to be done towards Freire's 'de-hierarchised classroom' as it exists within the context of enterprise L&D.

9.4 Chapter conclusion

Mitigating the constraints of traditional hierarchal systems was the subject of Chapter 9. It is only in first recognising, then understanding, the influence of seemingly innocuous yet nonetheless oppressive mechanisms in our work structures that we can confront them. Only then can we work towards sustained transformation and the culminating achievement of feminist pedagogic practice: cohesive communities.

Chapter 10: Building Community

10.1 Introduction

Feminist communities are built on trust, equality, and acknowledgement and validation of all members' inputs (Shrewsbury, 1997; Webb et al., 2004). They are grounded in connections and a sense of shared purpose (hooks, 2015a). Perhaps above all, feminist principles most tangibly culminate in community. And so, this vignette describes the conclusion of my time with my project team and represents the outcome of intentional feminist pedagogic practice – a cohesive feminist community.

10.2 The story

After the first team meeting in April 2020, Maya suggested a different member 'emcee' an icebreaker each week. The topics were varied and represented the unique personalities within the group:

- What's your lockdown beverage of choice?
- Charcuterie board or homemade chocolate chip cookies?
- Gratitude circle – recognise the person above your name in the attendance list
- Favourite quarantine activities
- How you're feeling in one word
- What are you doing for your mental/spiritual health?
- One thing you're looking forward to this summer (who knew there would be no 'summer'?)
- What's your aspirational superpower? What's your actual superpower?

Google Jamboard helped us get to know one another. It documented our lives as individuals and as a community week after week. I consider the Google portfolio of tools a legitimate team member. I am also certain an organisational ethnography is waiting to be conducted in our myriad Google Slides, Chats, Rooms, and Jamboards. Until then, this thesis will have to suffice as the history of our virtual community.

In March 2021, I told Maya and Samuel that I thought I was failing at my other project and needed to leave this team in their capable hands. It was bittersweet. I felt that I was leaving ‘my people’.

Sitting in my last ‘official’ meeting with the team, Samuel facilitates, handing the virtual baton to each workstream representative to speak to their project component. Everyone is responsible for something, as designated in the agenda. By now, the team knows the routine. I scroll through the pages of accumulated agendas. We had so many discrete tasks over the year with more questions and challenges than I can reasonably count. The running agenda, now over 100 pages, provides complete transparency into our struggles as a team. But it also shows growth, progress, and victories, so I take time to linger on some of the highlights. It takes me a while to get through, but it also makes me smile.

There were many milestones. We had three baby announcements, each newborn jokingly assigned to a workstream and tasked with an assignment. Maya, who had also been on a rotation in L&D, got a permanent role. We had several new members join, which was always followed by warm welcomes to the community. We had a few members leave, including Devin, followed by sad face emojis. No agenda for this team would be complete without clever memes, .jpegs and .gifs; Yoda was practically a team member and featured in one meme as Time Magazine’s ‘Man of the Year’. There were multiple calls for virtual game nights, with Scattergories as our game of choice, accompanied by everyone’s beverage of choice and charcuterie board. Scattergories always led to insider jokes, later injected into team meetings, group chats, or one-on-one conversations to provide levity. Henry and I could even stand one another for a couple of hours of fun.

What stands out for me more than anything is the ‘Team shoutouts!’ section. Despite our limited 30 minutes together at every meeting, the team acknowledged everyone’s contributions. In my journal, I itemised the messages to get the full impact of the team’s synergy, camaraderie, support, knowledge sharing, care for one another, and, least of all, the work. As I read through, the messages of gratitude tell a story about this team and what it means to build a community based on feminist pedagogy and e-leadership-as-a-practice.

Thanks for care. Thanks for taking ownership. Thanks for resolving issues and answering questions. Thanks for engaging cross-functional partners. Thanks to the team for everything. Thanks for unbelievable hard work. Thanks for collaboration, flexibility, and ‘willingness to do whatever it takes to get the job done’. Thanks for an ‘incredible design eye’. Thanks for putting together a deck (which was read). Thanks to everyone for smiling throughout. Thanks for thoughtful and thorough input. Thanks for taking point on getting files and continuing effort. Thanks for managing so many different requests and doing amazing work. Thanks for being a rockstar. Thanks for being an amazing ‘dot connector’; we learn so much from you. Thanks for your willingness to help with anything; amazed by your knowledge. Thanks for keeping us on track and making it fun. Thanks for getting the things over the finish line. Thanks for collaborating and working quickly. Thanks for organisation and perseverance. Thanks for taking charge. Thanks for bringing new ideas and considerations. Thanks for always saying ‘Yes, and’ and being open to new challenges. Thanks for always being flexible to help when the team needs anything. Thanks for livening things up. Thanks for bringing a keen mind and eye to the learner experience. Thanks for keeping me true and honest with details, interdependencies, and potential impacts. Thanks for your ‘staying on top of it-ness’. Thanks for being proactive. Thanks for always raising your hand to do anything the team needs. Thanks for timeline tracking. Thanks for being wonderful leaders. Thanks for amazing attention to detail. Thanks for showing values of care. Thanks for creating a new process efficiency. Thanks for stepping in while others are on vacation. Thanks for supporting us through progress and making time to pause and celebrate. Thanks for agility and quick turnaround.

> Thanks for showcasing leadership skills. Thanks for finally letting us see you. Thanks for organising our fun team event. Thanks for keeping us on track and escalating issues. Thanks for sending us the right people to help get issues resolved. Thanks for sharing insights and best practices. Thanks for helping with team surprises. Thanks for infinite coaching and support. Thanks for sharing post-vaccine tips and advice. Thanks for sponsoring the team virtual game activity. Thanks for cat herding and creating documentation on the new approach. Thanks for being a superwoman. Thanks for figuring out the best learner experience. Thanks for engaging with the team across the board. Thanks for being everywhere. Thanks for managing so much and helping us navigate. Thanks for amazing leadership. Thanks for the amazing content gathering skills. Thanks for helping with random stuff. Thanks for being amazingly creative and relentless. Thanks for all the work; what a leader!

10.3 Presentation of emergent themes and analysis of the feminist pedagogic principle: Building community

Community is the culminating product of the feminist pedagogic practice. Whether they realise it or not, I see many feminist e-leaders who have emerged in the group, supporting, caring, collaborating, welcoming different perspectives, and cheering for each other. I notice that only a few of these thanks are directed to me, and I feel that I accomplished something.

10.3.1 Community extends from the reformation of the leader-follower relationship

In this vignette, there is an evolution from vignette one: reformation of the leader-follower relationship. At the beginning of the project, I was the designated leader, and the reader will recall my multiple attempts to embed feminist pedagogic leadership into my practice in this final vignette and the previous five. However, as time elapsed, others began to take on shared leadership within workstreams and team meetings. Workstream leads contributed summaries of their work in

each team meeting and fielded any open questions during the meeting. In this way, each member assumed a leadership role contributing to the holistic project goals. On becoming a community of leaders:

> They are inspiring others to follow along with them. They're coaching them, they're training them, and they're willing to bring...I'll bring it back up...a lot of that I think has to do with empathy, because I feel like true leaders, they really empathize with whoever they're working with. I think that plays a big role in that. And they're looking at the end goal as a team, not just like as an individual. So, if they're trying to finish a project, they're looking for the team to work together to finish this project and, you know, whatever the project, whenever you're finishing, whatever that end goal is, they're willing to share that with the entire team not just themselves. (Kahina)

Kahina's description of the dynamic between leadership and community aligns with the modelling behaviours of the feminist teacher. In addition, Webb et al. (2004) point to such behaviours specifically, including 'listening attentively and providing validation for everyone's contributions' (p. 419). Although it took time, ultimately, the team adopted leadership as community building through their participation and, more importantly, through the recognition, validation, and support of their peers towards the achievement of collective goals.

10.3.2 Community extends from empowered members

Evident in the comments of appreciation is how the team recognises, in detail, one another's contributions, which, as Webb et al. (2004) note, triggers a sense of empowerment 'via positive reinforcement, i.e., praising one another for accomplishments, hard work and the quality of [the] collective work product' (p. 419). Also evident are core principles of community building – respect and equal opportunity for participation among all members – reflected in Josephine's comments and reinforcing the concept of empowerment:

> I think a leader empowers other people to be better. So, to me, leadership means empowerment. Empowering autonomy for the people that work for them. A belief that 'I know you've got this, and I trust you to get this done, so I need XYZ done', without micromanaging. And empowering in ways of showing them other ways that they could grow. You know, I like and appreciate feedback which allows me to grow because that means they [leaders] can see my growth potential versus being scared of my growth potential.

Further, an empowered community grows from a 'community of learners where there is both autonomy of self and mutuality with others' (Shrewsbury, 1997, p. 170). Almost everyone associated with the project engaged and contributed to the collective community accomplishments by navigating uncertainty, learning new processes, speaking up with new ideas, or taking the lead on some aspect of the deliverable. This was a marked contrast to the initial months of the project when I seemed to be the singular voice of the team. It is a distinction that was also noticeable to Maya:

> I see that they're not just the ideas of how they talk about things, but the way that they present things as well. Yeah, and then they feel empowered to do more than what they've always done. And you can see the growth of just like even starting from this one project. The first day, April 2020, to see where we were back then and to see where we are today, there's such a vast difference, and you can see the growth, the growth of everyone. And it's not just attributed to me; it's because you were here, and you started us off on the right path. So again, it's not a one-person job; it's a set of people working together.

10.3.3 An empowered community creates better work

Extending Maya's reflection, in its' simplest form, it can be reasonably argued that community '[is] not a one-person job; it's a set of people working together'. And

yet, assembled people working together does not necessarily constitute ‘community’.

Kramer et al. (2017) suggest that organisations focus on establishing a culture of shared social and community values and welcome various perspectives to ‘increase creativity and productivity’ (p. 615). I concur and extend this belief as a result findings in this vignette. Within feminist pedagogic principles, empowerment embodies a creative element or acts as the ‘glue holding a community together’ (Shrewsbury, 1997, p. 168), bolstered by positive reinforcement from a community of shared peer-leadership:

> …that it’s not necessarily all up to one person, that we are all leaders. Different people step up in various ways at one time or another. (Maya)

Congruent with feminist pedagogy, to work *together* implies ‘as equals’, and following Bedwell et al.’s (2012) collective performance framework concerning GVTs, arriving at a successful product requires a concerted effort to establish a community culture and provide sustained care, love, and feeding. Indeed, Shrewsbury’s image of ‘glue’ is especially essential when it comes to GVTs, lest we risk alienation as described by Gladys:

> With remote teams, individual members often feel disconnected, alone, and isolated. However, a skilled e-leader will ensure individual team members feel connected, valued, and heard.

Having established an empowered community, we can then see how positive outcomes might follow:

> If you have a strong relationship, you're able to have, I think, a higher performing team. You're able to get things done… you know, people are happier working together if you have a relationship. They're enjoying themselves because they have a relationship. I think that people feel when you have a relationship, they feel much freer to bring their ideas, their

> thoughts to the team; I think you get a better work product, you get a better teaming environment'. (Yolanda)

10.3.4 *Summary of findings: Building community*

The most salient theme in my research culminates in this vignette – the feminist pedagogic principle of community. With respect to building community, three overarching themes emerged.

First, to build a community, feminist pedagogy calls for us to **reform the leader-follower relationship**. If we consider that the feminist community encourages and acknowledges all members' inputs, as well as recognises feedback, coaching, and teaching as foundational to leadership practice, evidence in this vignette demonstrates the activation of each member to participate as a leader in forming the community.

A by-product of the reformation of the leader-follower relationship, and thus a foundational component of community, is the notion that **empowered members build community**. The feminist community works towards helping individuals, and women, in particular, see themselves as knowledge creators (Tisdell, 1998). Evidence in the vignette demonstrates and reinforces a sense of mutuality between self and others and offers a space where one has 'lots of people to ask for help' (Kahina). Thus, members are enabled to learn constantly, developing themselves and their colleagues.

Finally, evidence suggests that an empowered community may **create better work products**. As asserted, members helping one another accomplish individual and mutual goals is a firmly rooted feminist principle. Thus, this claim is not unexpected. Indeed, at its most fundamental level, the feminist pedagogic community is seeded by shared socio-emotional values such as trust, care, purpose, inclusiveness, equality, empathy, and collaboration, which, engaged collectively, suggest the ideal conditions for positive outcomes for both the work product and the community.

10.4 Chapter conclusion

Building community has been the subject of Chapter 10 and concludes my exploration of feminist pedagogic principles in everyday practice. This chapter has demonstrated how collegial environments foster authentic relationships and where interactions go beyond the scope of simply getting work done. Indeed, there is much upside in the solidarity of community. I now move to Part III to revisit and reconcile the theoretical pillars – feminist pedagogy, LAP, and e-leadership – as one conjoined concept.

Part III: Discussion and conclusion

Chapter 11: Discussion of findings

11.1 Overview

Part I of my thesis laid the foundations of my research, including the theoretical pillars, the design, and the rationale for the methods mobilised in my research. In Part II, I presented six vignettes exploring feminist pedagogic principles, discussing and analysing emergent themes arising from professional practice in an enterprise L&D setting. Now, in Part III, I will reconcile the operational mechanisms that enable the practice of feminist pedagogy before concluding the thesis.

In Chapter 11, I critically discuss the intersecting theoretical and conceptual pillars of my research. I will also reflect on autoethnographic bricolage as method. This chapter is outlined as follows:

Section 11.2 discusses the theoretical pillars – feminist pedagogy, e-leadership, and LAP – applied to my findings.

Section 11.3 discusses the methodological approaches – autoethnographic bricolage and reflective practice – applied to my findings.

Section 11.4 considers future research opportunities.

11.2 Discussion of theoretical concepts applied to my findings

11.2.1 Feminist pedagogy applied to my findings

Several salient themes in the analysis support the transformative potential of feminist pedagogic leadership. From my perspective as a feminist leader, I was consistently aware that I was a role model (Shrewsbury, 1997) and that role modelling can be a positive or negative influence. Reflective practice held me accountable to strive for the former and minimise the latter. I also discovered the complexity of the relationship between voice and empowerment, often asking myself, ‘Which comes first?’ Ultimately recognising that to cultivate either, a

leader is first and foremost someone – any member of the team – who demonstrates care, authenticity, transparency, and trust, creating a sense of psychological safety within the group – to empower and enable voice. Also evident in this research is the precarious relationship between empowerment as either a 'force for good' where shared, co-constructed knowledge increases the power of all actors or, if curtailed by conventional hierarchal structures, subdues the potential for energy, creativity, and self-determination.

Despite the upside of employing feminist pedagogy as my North Star, several challenges presented in practice. The first was the operational challenge of recalibrating leadership to a shared model. Perhaps I should have anticipated this tension, given our conditioning to conventional beliefs about leadership, hierarchy, and power in the workplace, mirrored in traditional leadership theory (Allen et al., 2022; Denyer & James, 2016). The test of changing mindsets was evident in my interactions with Samuel and how the team initially looked to me to serve as the primary work allocator and decision-maker. Participants articulated the types of environments in which they wished to work, consistent with a reformation of the leader-follower dichotomy. Nevertheless, beliefs of traditional leadership models – pyramids versus constellations – remain a formidable mindset to change (Denyer & James, 2016).

As with attempting to recalibrate the leader-follower relationship, privileging individual voice poses challenges. In the context of their research in a Master's research group, Webb et al. (2004, p. 420) assert that 'the simple task of having each group member speak at each meeting' provides a 'relatively simple solution to the challenging goal of privileging individual voice'. Evidence from this research suggests that this is an oversimplification. I would argue that the feminist leader is often more in a position to 'prompt' or 'nudge' individual voice.

It is unfortunate that within some leadership models, as well as within hierarchal systems, individuals are not always empowered to voice their thoughts or to act without overt encouragement. Advancing individual voice required greater agency and intention on my part to imbue within the team. Indeed, recognising that power structures exist, either overtly or implicitly, and that they are foundationally and conceptually based on the idea of domination (Giddens, 1986)

is a first step towards advancing empowerment and individual voice as we work together to recalibrate leader-follower conventions and deconstruct the hierarchy.

Diversity of personal experience (Chapter 8) was the most elusive feminist pedagogic principle to explore. It is a highly nuanced principle and, as with privileging individual voice, highly individualised. In their collaborative performance framework, Kramer et al. (2017) stressed that the unique qualities of each individual create ‘a more adaptable team that can leverage differences to increase creativity and productivity’ (p. 615). While this assertion may be compatible at face value with Webb et al.’s (2004) position that diversity of personal experience elicits a richer product because of the ‘benefit of numerous perspectives on each idea’ and that ‘collective vision [grows] from a diversity of ideas’ (p. 420), its abstraction can be an ambitious concept to apply in practice.

I wondered why this might be the case and returned to a compelling consideration posited by Gladys during our interview: that we live in a ‘more sceptical world, in a more judgemental world,’ which could damage trust. When she first mentioned scepticism, I didn’t know what Gladys meant and its relevance to this research. However, if we consider diversity of personal experience as related to privileging individual voice (Chapter 6), perhaps we can better understand how individual assumptions and interpretations have the potential to shape our realities and relationships.

The notion of voice as an outward and physically vocal manifestation is a mainstay of feminist positionality (Parpart, 2010) . Nevertheless, it is a complex and often misunderstood concept, particularly when juxtaposed against silence as a binary construct, as is often the case in literature and reality. Women who do not speak up may be seen as disempowered, weak, oppressed, or unable to affect change. This construct extends to and pervades corporate environments, historically built by and still largely male-dominated and characterised by masculine communication styles (Fivush, 2010; Kissack, 2010). In such contexts, silence is often misconstrued as ‘lacking’; for example, lacking in engagement, knowledge, leadership, collaboration, or drive. Further, in organisational project teams, silence is often positioned as

> ‘In direct contrast to the type of presence, known as psychological presence, defined as the experiential state that enables organisational members to develop personally engaging behaviours in role performances (Panteli & Fineman, 2005, p. 347).

Thus, in the enterprise context, silence is often perceived as antithetical to high performance – both individual and organisational. When viewed as duality, silence is implicitly marginalising; those who do not demonstrate ‘psychological presence’ through verbal exchange or, to a lesser degree, body language (Panteli & Fineman, 2005) may be perceived as ‘lacking’. As such, silence in organisational settings may result in fewer high-profile assignments, developmental opportunities, or career advancement.

My experience with Ellie and Devin’s silence may be partly explained by Panteli and Fineman’s (2005) examination of silence in virtual team organising. Their work found two primary influences that impacted virtual teaming vis-à-vis the notion of silence. The first involved *manifestations* of silence related to availability and responsiveness. The second, and relevant to this research, involves *interpretations* of silence. In particular, the research found that in initial interactions, collaborating members often felt uncertainty about silence, and this uncertainty, when perceived as a lack of communication, might have the effect of eroding trust.

Concerning Ellie, I first approached her silence based on speculation, not knowing her, not having established a relationship, and not understanding her goals, aspirations, or talents. In distinguishing ‘being silent’ versus ‘being silenced’, Fivush (2010, p. 89) calls attention to the role that culture plays in establishing ‘canonical narratives that are both normative and prescriptive’ and asserts that ‘local conversational interactions must be understood within cultural frameworks that define the shape of a life’. As we got to know one another and I understood her professional goals, I interpreted Ellie’s silence through this complicated lens and, thus, saw her silence as a potential obstacle to her success within our organisational culture. In response, I offered ‘gentle nudges’ and leadership opportunities to her within the team.

The notions of psychological presence, scepticism, and eroding trust resonate with my relationship with Devin. Reflecting on my interactions with Devin and our devolving communication over time, I return to Fivush's (2010) guidance to consider organisational context and social norms. However, I also consider Freire's (2018) assertion that trust is established through dialogue, is contingent on one party providing evidence of intent, and that actions must coincide with intent. Further, he posited that behavioural dissonance between intent and actions has the effect of eroding trust, a notion I had not taken into account until undertaking this research.

My three-year relationship with Devin shows how dissonance between dialogue, intent, and behaviour might create scepticism, as inferred by Gladys. For two years of our relationship, I spoke and acted one way, admittedly somewhat disingenuously. As a peer- leader, I could have encouraged greater accountability earlier versus taking on so much of the work. When I changed roles, although I tried to maintain the same relationship, my words and actions became misaligned with prior behaviour. This misalignment also jeopardises the sense of psychological safety Yolanda described as essential to meaningful coaching and feedback conversations. As mentioned in Section 8.3, I should have moderated my assumptions and expectations about how I thought Devin *should* respond. To have expected her unquestioning alignment with my desired outcome, despite my positive intentions, is an indication of a privileged position – something that leaders at all levels must be conscientious of.

To enable the potential arising out of diverse perspectives requires intention and agency, a theme threaded throughout this research and implied in literature as a significant contributing factor to performance and organisational outcomes. As suggested in a study of cross-cultural GVTs, the 'organizational structure required to support human e-interactions and cultural differences can become a springboard for innovative collaboration central to efficient e-collaboration' (Rutkowski et al., 2002, p. 225). I assert that passive or absent consideration of diverse perspectives when assembling and engaging GVTs subverts feminist ideology as well as adaptability, creativity, and productivity (Kramer et al., 2017).

I must also acknowledge that diversity of personal experience, as described in Chapter 8, is not all-inclusive; 'diversity' includes many other characteristics of the human experience. Consistent with the feminist principle of intersectionality, described by Davis (2008) as 'the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power' (p. 68). Although not the focus of this research, Maya's appeal to 'trust our [people of colour] skills' warrants further exploration of how intersectionality and cross-cultural norms and belief systems, in the spirit of feminist pedagogy, can enhance workplace dynamics, outcomes, and self-actualisation. In the same vein, we must also consider the alternative adverse implications of ignoring systemic and structural inequities, including the 'why' behind silence.

Finally, while the feminist stance is one of overt voice, I acknowledge that my position reflects western, neo-liberal assumptions of voice and agency as privileges of democracy, free speech, and human rights (Parpart, 2009), as well as with organisational norms and precepts. As demonstrated through my actions as the project lead, I acknowledge being a product of this flawed belief system regarding silence. I have been conditioned to, yes, listen, but more often to 'contribute', 'ask questions', and 'develop a point of view'. I now also recognise that these actions *can* be accomplished non-verbally and serve other strategic purposes. Silence *can* be understood in many ways, including as voice and agency in the form of active resistance and empowerment (Brear, 2018), a strategic survival tool (Parpart, 2009; Brear, 2018), or even as hopelessness (Freire, 2018).

The relationship between silence, voice, and diversity of individual experience reflects the complexity of social, organisational, and cultural systems. While the constraints of this research do not permit the full depth and breadth of exploration these dynamics warrant, it is prudent for all leaders – feminist or otherwise – to be aware of and consider alternative interpretations of silence. A modest first step in this effort, suggested by Kissack (2010), is to 'acknowledge and recognise that

muteness exists' in organisational life, critically examine the origins, and analyse implicit assumptions that undermine individual and organisational performance.

Nevertheless, complexity is not an excuse to shy away from potentially transformative outcomes that feminist pedagogic practice offers. Despite the challenges, I only believe change was possible for me as a leader by committing to feminist principles and mobilising two additional concepts that helped me operationalise the principles in my day-to-day work: leadership-as-practice and e-leadership.

11.2.2 Leadership-as-practice as applied to my findings

This research aimed to engage actively with pedagogic principles as a constituent of my leadership practice. To accomplish this, I employed the discrete practice activities associated with LAP described in Chapter 2 – scanning, signalling, weaving, stabilising, inviting, unleashing, and reflecting. Such nuance and detail characterise the 'practice' of leadership – the ebb and flow of processes 'where material-discursive engagements produce meaning that is emergent and mutual' (Raelin, 2016, p. 3). As such, the 'practice' cannot be extracted or isolated but is embedded as part of a more 'perpetually unfolding dynamic' (p. 3).

According to Lévi-Strauss (as cited in Yardley, 2020a), bricoleurs begin with a series of events which are moulded

> towards creating a structure (a cosmology), juxtaposing these events in an intuitive way to create order and dynamic equilibrium, a coherent position from which a community could go about its day-to-day affairs with a degree of confidence. (p. 3)

My goal as both CMR and project lead was to reconstitute the elements of feminist pedagogy in my day-to-day affairs to inspire confidence in our work. The core processes of LAP – scanning, signalling, weaving, stabilising, inviting, unleashing, and reflecting – were mobilised and evident throughout my findings. Raelin et al. (2018) assert that leadership occurs when 'social and material-discursive processes and activities begin to reorient the flow of practice towards new meanings and directions' (p. 372). As such, the discrete activities that

embody LAP evolved and became more pronounced as my story unfolded. Despite my understanding of LAP from the literature, systematically enacting the activities proved challenging. Initially, there was disorientation and dissonance in operationalising this nebulous concept. Ultimately, I realised that LAP was the enabling operant and that these symbiotic activities required sustained and intentional practice to refine and embed.

Scanning. Scanning is the foundational activity of LAP. It is the leader 'getting her feet wet' and was evident as I tentatively took stock of and ventured into uncertain waters in the story introduction (Chapter 4). I remember how I oversimplified what was to come in the first few meetings of the anchor project. This evolved into trying to make sense of the people, processes, and mechanisms (Jameson, 2013) in play and how they coalesce to create something materially significant. Part of scanning is to tap into new or exigent resources to mitigate turbulence 'through simplification or sensemaking' (Raelin, 2016, p.6). Scanning is visible in Chapter 5 as I looked to Samuel as a co-leader, leaning on his prior knowledge to help facilitate the development process. It is important to recognise that scanning does not end at the beginning of a project but is a constant and iterative activity. While I scanned daily as the project lead, I iterated and extended scanning by inviting others to also scan the broader project landscape. Eventually, as depicted in Chapter 7, this became an entire team activity, for example, through the team RACI activity designed to align program development needs to skills and opportunities for learning and growth.

Signalling. Raelin (2016) describes signalling as 'mobilizing and catalysing the attention of others to a program or project through such means as imitating, building on, modifying, ordering, or synthesizing prior or existing elements' (p. 6), and yet, I found this description somewhat abstract vis-à-vis my research context. Instead, within the research context, mobilising and catalysing emerged as facilitating a co-constructed vision of what was possible in an optimal future state. From that perspective, I can then see signalling in my research exemplified in Chapter 8 (Empowerment) more aligned to Sergi's (2016, p. 124) leadership effects as:

- Directing: negotiating project targets, defining the work to be done, and communicating to developers
- Shaping: creating development foundations, considering options and limitations, checks, and controls for development
- Ordering: sequencing development order development, retaining a holistic vantage point, engaging external resources, and consulting as needed

Seen in this way, the 'materiality' of LAP is evident throughout the research and addresses Sergi's question, 'How does leadership happen in situ?' (p. 110). I can now see signalling activities – project planning, risk mitigation, and resourcing – as the launchpad of the day-to-day tactical work, including the activity in Chapter 7. Further, I see activities associated with Arnold's (2021) framework for Digital Education Leadership Literacies. Specifically, the 'Worldly' dimension concerns articulating organisational vision, strategy, and values and how they may react with a leader's personal values, attitudes, and beliefs. This friction was exemplified in Chapter 5 when my stakeholder said Samuel might need to be 'cut loose', my pedagogic ethos was rekindled, driving my desire to find an alternative solution.

Weaving. Gladys described weaving as the 'glue' that holds the team together; language also used to describe the feminist teacher (Shrewsbury, 1997). Weaving was demonstrated through the development of relationships – individually through one-on-one meetings (Chapters 5 and 6) and through team activities, both project work and social activities. The practice of weaving meant defining a shared vision of how to work together (Chapter 7), and as relationships developed while doing the work, it culminated in a community of mutual respect (Chapter 10). While each of the LAP activities resonated throughout the findings, the activities associated with weaving – developing trust and creating a sense of psychological safety – were the singular activity directly verbalised in all participant interviews and reflections. As such, weaving may be inferred as *the most critical* LAP activity.

Stabilising. Stabilising can be seen as an intervention to elicit a behaviour change, a course correction, or a learning opportunity (Raelin, 2016). Stabilising was demonstrated in the findings in my myriad 'strategy' discussions with Samuel

(Chapter 5), my encouragement of Ellie's untapped leadership capabilities (Chapter 6), the challenging feedback discussion with Devin (Chapter 8), and the contentious conversation with Henry (Chapter 9).

Stabilising is an activity of discomfort because it requires agency. It is where leaders might be tempted to abandon the challenges confronting them; we saw this as I vacillated in having direct conversations about uncomfortable situations and topics. On the other hand, stabilising can also be viewed as an activity of courage. While I often agonised over these conversations, planning and rehearsing in advance, seeking advice and support, once complete, I found that I slept better knowing I tried my best to model leadership behaviours and, more importantly, had done the right thing.

Inviting. Inviting was prominent both as a mindset and an activity throughout the vignettes. One can see how inviting naturally follows weaving and stabilising by entreating team members to contribute their knowledge, skills, and interests to the broader effort. Inviting is directly related to the feminist pedagogic principles 'privilege individual voice' (Chapter 6) and 'empowerment' (Chapter 7) in that it encourages those who may be quiet to speak up, engage with others, and enhance the work product by injecting their ideas. Inviting also breaks down barriers of the hierarchy and repurposes power as 'energy, capacity, and potential rather than as domination' (Shrewsbury, 1997, p. 168). While attempts at inviting are often reflected in the workplace in phrases such as 'We want to know what you think' or 'All ideas are welcome,' actions (or inactions) that follow can be dissonant or disingenuous – projects are too high profile, timelines are too tight, or outcomes are too high stakes to allow experimentation in the spirit of learning. Inviting requires acknowledgement that people may need 'to go down paths and sometimes fail' (Yolanda) and is indicative of the delicate relationship between pedagogy, trust, and material outcomes. As such, inviting in itself is high stakes, and yet, if tasks can be positioned as learning opportunities, replete with the 'joy and difficulty of intense intellectual activity' (Shrewsbury, 1997, p. 169), success, on the other side, renders priceless rewards. Indeed, feedback resulting from inviting activities can bolster self-esteem, enhance critical thinking, refine project management skills, and illuminate members' roles as 'change agents' (LinkedIn

Learning, 2020, 2022). Without inviting, we lose foundational learning opportunities and creative momentum that diverse perspectives bring to work products.

Unleashing. Unleashing is related to psychological safety, ensuring that all members who wish to contribute can, without fear of reprisal or that their ideas might be minimised. I argue that this can only be accomplished once the tenets of feminist pedagogy have been established, which takes time to develop. Indeed, unleashing evolved in my practice in due course. Initially, as I assumed the project lead role, I felt that decision-making fell exclusively to me (Chapters 5 and 6). This belief was exacerbated by the unfolding adverse social, political, and pandemic circumstances. My position was not so much of power but one of releasing others from external stressors by providing directional guidance on project development.

As time passed and relationships strengthened, unleashing became more prominent in my practice – going from asking, 'Sound good?' to 'What do others think?', a subtle yet significant change. This evolution also reflects how a change in language – from implying to inviting – underscores the inner-connectedness of 'power, knowledge, language, and subjectivity' (Ford, 2016, p. 233). It further illustrates the complexity of recalibrating the leader-follower relationship and challenging power dynamics inherent in hierarchal organisations. Ultimately, as the team coalesced, unleashing was adopted by all members first as a conscious activity (Chapter 7) to a naturally occurring, embedded practice.

Reflecting. Reflection was foundational to my research design and became a crucial component of my leadership practice. As discussed, reflecting emerged as a form of self-imposed yet welcome accountability. And while the reflective process was built into my autoethnography, bringing others to reflective practice required more stamina and discomfort. Chapter 5 exemplifies the cyclical reflective practice between colleagues and the tenacity required to 'learn how to meet mutual needs and interests' (Raelin, 2016, p. 6). In the business world, we might call this exercise 'feedback'. While I concur in principle on the mutuality of a feedback loop, in reality, it is often a one-way street met with scepticism and resistance.

Feedback, especially constructive or critical feedback, tends to have a more punitive connotation designed to elicit behaviour change. This distinction was demonstrated in Chapter 8 with Devin. While I was at once delivering feedback on performance, it was also an attempt to encourage Devin to reflect on past experiences. I hoped she would reflect on her prior feedback and that it may have been incomplete or disingenuous (e.g., 'Have you ever considered that it's just easier for people not to tell you?'). This conversation demonstrates that constant feedback, mentoring, coaching, and career development must be normalised in day-to-day practice. This need is reinforced in findings by Harvard Business Review in a survey of 2000 millennials (Meister & Willyerd, 2010) who appealed for this embedded dialogue. I argue that this desire extends beyond the millennial demographic. In fact, all participants in this research echoed a similar yearning for professional growth through continuous learning opportunities.

Inasmuch as feminist pedagogy served as my North Star in this research, leadership-as-practice can be visualised as the overlay, an enabler, which afforded me operational mechanisms, intention, and agency to bring the feminist principles to life as a leader.

11.2.3 E-leadership as applied to my findings

I began my research with the understanding of e-leadership in its most foundational sense as 'a social influence process embedded in both proximal and distal contexts mediated by AIT that can produce a change in attitudes, feelings, thinking, behavior, and performance' (Eberly et al., 2013, p. 107).

The final element of my qualitative statement asserted e-leadership as an accelerator, underscoring the mediating aspect of technology. Although the notion of e-leadership, as depicted in literature, resonated throughout my findings, I found that it is not simply the presence of technology that induces affective and behavioural changes to produce results. Despite technology's position as a transformative driver in the age of digital disruption, its ubiquity now allows us to shift our focus back to the socio-emotional activities of leadership. Although extant definitions of e-leadership may resonate in this research, they now seem oversimplified and open to revision.

As a result of this research, I offer a recalibrated definition of e-leadership influenced by feminist pedagogy and LAP for enterprise L&D:

> E-leadership is a co-constructed, social influence process, mediated by technology, that accelerates in-situ development of knowledge, skills, and relationships towards achieving collective goals with agency.

A co-constructed social influence process. A salient theme throughout this research was the need to first attend to the affective domains through relationship building to complete work and accomplish performance outcomes. A deep dive into the 'attitudes, feelings, thinking, behavior, and performance' (Eberly et al., 2013, p. 107) embedded within the practice of e-leadership was explored and analysed through a feminist pedagogic lens. Navigating the complexities of new relationships, moderating conversations around the pandemic and social unrest, and addressing performance concerns with sensitivity are just a few of the circumstances I encountered as an e-leader. In hindsight and with the benefit of this research under my belt, I cannot fathom addressing the actual work – project plans, resource assignments, development processes – without first seeding relationships with each member and establishing the foundations of a collegial community.

However, in reality, it is impossible to postpone work while waiting to establish culture and mature relationships, as evidenced with Samuel in Chapter 5. Nevertheless, technology as a support mechanism certainly has an influential role in the development of relationships, particularly in GVTs, or as described by Ellie, 'it is as if technology has become a foundational member of our team'; an idea that reinforces the embeddedness of technology as part of the co-leadership structure.

Although I purported to want a co-leadership model, I continued to make the bulk of task and process decisions more consistent with earlier definitions of e-leadership. Yes, putting theory into practice was a different ballgame and meant being more intentional in creating an environment that reflected shared leadership. For example, Samuel and Maya both led a workstream. However, shared leadership also meant enabling leaders at any hierarchal level and

emphasising the importance of discrete task contributions, including Ellie (a contractor), who assumed ownership of the vital assessment workstream. Tensions between my epistemological position on leadership – a democratised, co-equal model – and hierarchal systems will likely continue until we can achieve open dialogue on the value of shared leadership in conjunction with earnest efforts to dismantle restrictive organizational structures and beliefs. Alas, 'leaders' who conventionally hold power and positions of authority within hierarchies are not likely to relinquish either very readily.

Mediated by technology. Although not overt, the mediating influence of technology nevertheless was present in my participant data. I realised there was little distinction between 'leadership' and 'e-leadership', despite having introduced the latter concept in the pre-study participant information materials. Khadija noted of established e-leadership definitions, 'No need to distinguish technology anymore – it is embedded'. This speaks to not only the omnipresence of technology but its role as an auxiliary 'team member' (Zaccaro & Bader, 2003). It was not until I provided definitions from literature and directly asked participants to react that a more explicit association between leadership and technology emerged.

Interestingly, viewing technology as a team member elicited numerous reactions that diverged from Zaccaro and Bader's (2003) depiction of technology as direction setter, liaison, and operational coordinator. Instead, participants viewed technology from a socio-emotional lens; as a means for building trust (Kahina), fostering collegiality (Yolanda) and enabling collaboration with colleagues worldwide (Ellie), which begets diverse perspectives (Khadija). Humanising the concept of e-leadership allowed participants to articulate better how technology mediates leadership and perhaps appreciate it more.

That accelerates in-situ development of knowledge, skills, and relationships. Part of e-leadership also concerns knowledge dissemination and transmission. During the first few months as the project lead, consistent with the earliest definition of e-leadership set by Avolio et al. (2001), I continued to 'scan, plan, decide, disseminate, and control information' (p. 617). In reviewing this earlier definition, I would now be hard-pressed to use words like 'decide, disseminate, and control'

unilaterally and without input from my team. In practice, I found my ability to undertake these procedural responsibilities challenging in the 'lone leader model'.

Truly, my consistent 'glorified guessing' reflects the need to employ multiple sources of knowledge in leadership processes and aligns with LAP, wherein 'skilled improvisations' (Denyer & James, 2016, p. 266) are considered part of the learning process. Answers were not in my immediate periphery, and the processes necessary to undertake the project were not established, requiring greater information sharing from cross-functional resources. I can now see why the early depictions of e-leadership required re-evaluation and extension to acknowledge updated approaches to leader-follower relationships (Avolio & Kahai, 2003), an idea aligned with feminist pedagogy.

Towards achieving collective goals. Zaccaro and Bader's (2003) assertion that 'truly effective teams are able to maintain high performance, even as team circumstances become decidedly adverse' (p. 379) resonates with my findings. Despite the 'decidedly adverse' circumstances at the onset and well into the anchor project, the team ultimately thrived, albeit not always effortlessly, in developing multiple deliverables, as evidenced in the final vignette. This begs the question, 'What *is* the end-game of leadership?' Arising from this research, I can see the focus of leadership became less about material or even performance outcomes and more about achieving a unified team with the realisation that we were inherently 'high performance' in having established a cohesive working community; that we delivered learning materials became simply a by-product.

My participant's reflections also suggested that improved performance outcomes could stem from unified members in psychologically safe environments. A safe, virtual space was created, which again underscores the role of technology not simply as a collaboration tool but as a relationship enabler in GVTs. This is in line with Avolio and Kahai's (2003) contention that technology has the potential to 'take group members' attention away from individual differences, enabling greater unity' (p. 331) and their need to find ways to achieve even in adverse circumstances.

With agency. Although implied, agency and intention are not discussed extensively in the e-leadership literature but, in tandem with this exploration of leadership 'as practice', must be included as an additional element of the concept. Having explored synergies between e-leadership, feminist pedagogy, and LAP, it would stand to reason that agency must ensue. Augmenting the notion of e-leadership 'with agency' also addresses Jameson's (2013) call for e-leadership to be defined as a 'named concept' in literature and practice. After all, what is the use of naming a concept without follow-on action? Said another way, what use is theory without application?

As mentioned, the concept of e-leadership, while familiar to me as a researcher, was a nebulous concept to my colleagues. For quite some time, as evidenced in my accounts, they looked to me for answers and to determine the direction the team would take. This made activating a shared leadership model more challenging. It also speaks to e-leadership as a 'social influence process' requiring the e-leader to guide members in their 'attitudes, feelings, thinking, behavior, and performance (Eberly et al., 2013, p. 107)'.

As part of a social influence process, agency in e-leadership is iterative. It involves the cycle of observing and intuiting, steering and driving, and doing it all again, for as long as necessary to reach the finish line, a process consistent with LAP. As Maya suggested, it's pushing and empowering people to take ownership of something; it doesn't matter what it is per se, as long as it's collectively driving towards the goal. In a sense, agency *is* the end goal of leadership; it reinforces and validates the need to 'put a face to the name' to define e-leadership as an action-oriented concept in both HE and enterprise L&D.

11.2.4 A framework to reconcile the research pillars

To explain and reconcile the relationship of the three theoretical pillars explored in this research, I offer the following framework to approach the question: How can feminist pedagogy, LAP, and e-leadership coalesce in practice to influence or impact individual growth, team culture, and organisational outcomes in a distributed virtual team?

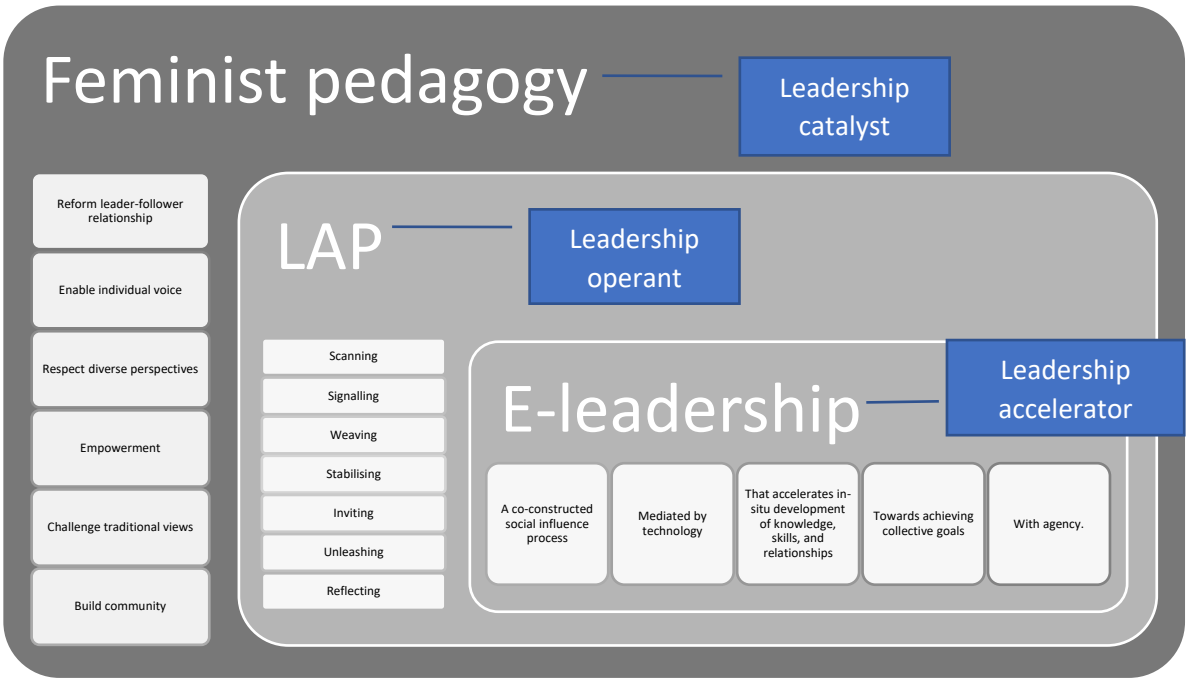

Figure 7. Relationship of theoretical concepts as a framework of feminist pedagogic e-leadership-as-practice

Within this framework:

Feminist pedagogy is the leadership catalyst and represents core principles.

LAP is the leadership operant and brings action to core principles.

E-leadership is the leadership accelerator and acts as a mechanism for influence and momentum.

The leadership catalyst and operant influence and drive the discipline and practice of leadership.

11.3 Discussion of methodology applied to my findings

11.3.1 Autoethnographic bricolage

Autoethnographic narrative is the language of life experience. Through this research, I hope that my subjective emotional experiences (Anderson, 2006) have resonated emotionally with the reader and that you have been able to sense and appreciate vicariously what feminist pedagogic e-leadership-as-practice means.

I chose to work with bricolage for several reasons. As an L&D practitioner, it was important for me to reconcile theory and practice, utilising the former to guide the latter. Bricolage afforded flexibility and 'interpretive agility' (Yardley, 2020b, p. 5) to explore the hidden dynamics of feminist pedagogy, LAP, and e-leadership as the concepts exposed and illuminated the nuances of my practice in situ. Together, autoethnography and bricolage propelled me as a researcher from observer to participant as I worked to translate theory into action.

Despite offering the researcher a unifying approach for interpreting their personal history vis-à-vis their social and cultural landscape, I agree with Kincheloe et al. (2011) on the challenges of engaging with bricolage. To undertake bricolage required a 'new level of research self-consciousness and awareness of the numerous contexts' (p. 168) simultaneously in play and a deep understanding of my ontological and epistemological stance. Indeed, the essence of bricolage lies in the researcher's relationship to the context within which they operate. Further, it influences how they approach the development and construction of their work. This is no small feat due to the complexity of human interaction (with self and others) and from a practical standpoint. Bricolage may be constructed from many initially incongruent or even unknown components. It evolves from something fluid and amorphous into something tangible that makes sense to the researcher, contributes something substantiative to the topic under scrutiny, and relies on the researcher's ability to articulate reconciliation.

It is precisely for these reasons that, despite the challenging choreography of this 'dance,' I wish I had engaged with bricolage sooner in my research career. This is antithetical to approaches I have used as an instructional designer and have

experienced as a graduate student – scaffold learners, incrementally introducing concepts to allow cognitive tethers to bind. Yet, bricoleurs see beyond the strict constructs of their disciplines, looking to other spheres of knowledge, including disparate methodologies and complementary or contradictory paradigms, to explore their research and use them as the research unfolds in development (Kincheloe et al., 2011; Yardley, 2020a). There was something exhilarating and liberating about learning and researching in this way.

11.3.2 Reflective practice

Part of feminist pedagogy involves reflective practice to 'interpret and change the world' (Fisher, 1981, p. 21). As a central component of my autoethnographic bricolage, reflection was the catalyst to re-evaluate my mindset and practice consistently. More importantly, it prompted intention and agency when working with my team. In the frenzy of our daily task orientation towards producing things, reflective practice is an activity to be heralded for its potential change agency (Raelin, 2016), and yet, as evidenced in the findings, perhaps it should be a more prominent part of our growth and development playbook. Indeed, the difficulty of growing mindsets and changing behaviours was evident in my interactions with Samuel (Chapter 5), Devin (Chapter 8), and Henry (Chapter 9).

From a research perspective, reflexivity also contributes to narrative robustness and methodological rigour, as called for in critiques of qualitative methods (Olesen, 2007; Spry, 2011). Consistent with bricolage, the melding of artefacts, including self-narratives, participant interviews, and reflective exercises, as well as the narrative presentational aesthetic allowed me 'to craft more "accurate" interpretations of data and to practice research in ways that [sought] to minimize researcher authority and power and be more empowering for participants' (Burdick & Sandlin, 2010, p. 118).

The commitment to a reflective practice embedded accountability, enabled critical thinking, fostered problem-solving, and, most importantly, inspired action. Ultimately, through this practice, I could better align my leadership ethos with the feminist pedagogic archetype, one where 'it's about that partnership where…you're both learning, you're both growing' (Maya).

11.4 Future research directions

11.4.1 Scaling LAP: Is it a 'frontline staff only' approach?

In one of our interviews, 'Alexandre' and I talked about how leaders change as they rise through organisations. Thinking about a current MM he works with, he mused, 'As she continues to progress, assuming she wants to move into higher leadership roles…If she stays true to who she is, even though the pressures from above, will you know, kind of impact her day-to-day...I think there's a balance there.' The implication of this perspective begs many questions for LAP: Is LAP a 'frontline' only phenomenon? Does it wane as one rises through the ranks of leadership? How and why does the nature of LAP change? How can the benefits of LAP, exhibited in this research, scale to the benefit all levels of organisational leadership?

This research focused on LAP at the MM and IC levels. While this highlights a limitation of the research, it also presents an opportunity for further exploration of LAP beyond these staff levels and would further contribute to our understanding of this emergent aspect of leadership.

Suggested research inquiry: How can LAP extend outside frontline staff to scale throughout organisational hierarchies?

11.4.2 Redefining the leader-follower relationship by revisiting 'Who are leaders'?

This research was partially inspired by the call to define e-leadership as a named concept. First, it required me to revisit questions like 'What is leadership?' which then begged the question, 'Who are leaders?' Posing these questions to my participants illuminated a vast divide in how we define the notion of leadership, what it means to be a leader, and *who* is a leader. And yet, the possibility of defining a prescriptive, singular, and universally agreed upon view of leadership seems idealistic and naïve. Instead, both LAP and e-leadership, as exhibited in this research, suggest leadership as a dynamism between people, processes, and organisational systems and structures (Jameson, 2013) – a microclimate that bends and morphs of its own accord, influenced and yet distinct from surrounding weather systems.

Findings in this research indicate the challenge of redefining or recalibrating leader-follower relationships and the need to explore more deeply implicit leadership theory (Lord et al., 2020; Shondrick et al., 2010). Future research can help us deconstruct embedded beliefs and models about leadership, for example, Ellie's ah-ha moment when, after discussing the impacts that she had driven, she quipped, 'I guess *I am* a leader!' In this way, people across organisational structures might begin to recognise leadership as the synthesis of energy, knowledge, trust, agency, and mutuality, thus promoting scores of unassuming, essential contributors to the full rank of 'leader'.

Suggested research inquiry: How can feminist pedagogy contribute to recalibrating leader-follower relationships by challenging implicit leadership theory towards redefining 'Who are leaders?'

11.4.3 Revisiting feminist pedagogic e-leadership-as-practice

In this research, I offered a framework linking the concepts of feminist pedagogy, e-leadership, and leadership-as-practice, the first such nuanced view. Due to the context-specific nature of my subjective research, I welcome other researchers and practitioners to continue theoretical development and discourse in defining the concept, situating it in the broader body of TEL and leadership literature, and challenging the outcomes of this research in day-to-day practice in cross-disciplinary, cross-contextual settings.

Suggested research inquiry: What is feminist pedagogic e-leadership-as-practice in, for example, non-profit, governmental, or cross-cultural L&D contexts?

11.4.3 Bricolage as method

I also chose to work with bricolage in response to calls for greater interdisciplinarity in research, pedagogy, and organisational practices; it was a methodology suitable for my research goals. Yet, beyond methodological suitability, bricolage emerged as a surprisingly robust learning mechanism, with caveats. Therefore, I offer two suggestions concerning bricolage as method.

My first recommendation is to introduce this methodology to doctoral students. At the outset of my doctoral programme, I had many questions as a novice

researcher: How do I integrate theory into research? What is the difference between method and methodology? What is the role of ontology and epistemology? How can I apply theory in practice? I vividly recall my abject panic reading the first Module 1 reading assignment, Chapters 1 and 2 of Cohen's (2010) *'Research Methods in Education'* (I even practised saying 'ontological' and 'epistemological' five times quickly). By engaging with bricolage, I found answers to these myriad questions and a vehicle (albeit a finicky, high-maintenance vehicle) to bring theory into practice. While the fluidity of bricolage may seem counterintuitive to pedagogic scaffolding, for a novice researcher, bricolage was welcoming in the freedom it afforded to build and raze, succeed and fail. My 'constant questioning and active reflexivity at every stage of the developing process' (Yardley, 2020b, p. 6) addressed my goal to learn and improve as a researcher during my thesis development. I'm no longer afraid of these questions or concepts. Further, as a learning professional, I appreciate the pedagogic, experiential nature of bricolage and encourage doctoral programmes to consider introducing elements of bricolage into programme design where appropriate.

Another recommendation addresses the aforementioned 'caveat' to bricolage. I concur with Curnett (2021), who suggests further development of 'braided autoethnographic methodological theory' (p. 189) and the need for a guiding framework for mobilising these methods as part of the design strategy. As a research method, bricolage has incurred questions of rigour, structural integrity, and doubt as 'serious' research (Yardley, 2020b, 2020a). Continued use of bricolage as method will enable the development of guiding principles and work towards legitimising innovation in conventional research methods, including using multiple, sometimes conflicting theoretical ideologies (Yardley, 2020b).

Suggested research inquiry: How can the fluidity of bricolage be embraced as a pedagogical methodology for nascent researchers?

11.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have critically discussed the pillars of my research, viewing each individually while also considering synergies towards answering the research question. In Chapter 12, I conclude the thesis and answer the research question.

I will revisit the research aims and objectives, provide implications for research, theory, and practice, and offer final remarks.

Chapter 12: Conclusion

12.1 Overview

This chapter concludes my thesis and is organized as follows:

Section 12.2 revisits the research aims and objectives and how they have been met.

Section 12.3 returns to the qualitative argument and answers the research question.

Section 12.4 discusses contributions to knowledge.

Section 12.5 addresses implications on research, theory, and practice.

Section 12.6 considers limitations and delimitations of this research.

Section 12.7 reflects on how I have changed as a researcher, practitioner, and leader.

12.2 Research aim and objectives

12.2.1 Research aim and how it was met

This research aimed to explore the experience of leading a GVT as an L&D middle manager, adopting feminist pedagogy as my guiding framework. I accomplished this aim in several ways. First, I employed a qualitative methodological approach that was critical, reflexive, and practice-based. Secondly, I mobilised autoethnographic bricolage to augment my personal narrative with the input of my participants, colleagues I worked with daily, and other L&D practitioners. Bricolage exists 'out of respect for the complexity of the lived world' (Kincheloe et al., 2011, p. 168) and offered a unifying approach to interpreting my personal history as a CMR vis-à-vis the social and cultural landscape around me. Adopting bricolage as part of my methodology with a protracted data generation timeline, in conjunction with the unanticipated adversity of the zeitgeist, invited a robust test of each of the research pillars and elicited thoughtful contributions by research participants. Finally, feminist

pedagogy, LAP, and e-leadership all carry strong undercurrents of agency. Translating these concepts from my research into the workplace invoked accountability, intention, and social action, thus fulfilling the ne plus ultra of feminist pedagogic practice.

12.2.2 Meeting the research objectives

Objective #1: Conduct critical research in feminist pedagogy, identifying emergent themes specific to enterprise L&D

The idea behind this thesis was prompted by several nagging questions, including a return to the intent of my original professional goal: to teach. This research required an approach that would elicit a deep understanding of life experiences, employ a critical lens to decipher discrete nuances, acknowledge personal subjectivity, and evoke a connection with the reader. Autoethnography encouraged me to critically examine and challenge my beliefs and practices towards understanding and action. Narrative inquiry provided the mechanism to tell the stories. Autoethnographic bricolage enabled me to self-reflect and react to learnings from my journal and massage the lines of participant inquiry based on emerging social contexts, team dynamics, and the workplace environment.

Objective #2: Define and implement a personal leadership practice, adopting feminist pedagogy as my 'North Star'

On day one of my doctoral programme residential, my tutor posed a question about theory: 'What is the point of it?' In my view, ultimately, the point is to be able to do something practical with it. To define my leadership practice as a middle manager leading a GVT, I returned to my roots as a learning professional and feminist pedagogic principles. I leaned on a highly reflexive and interpretive methodology, an approach that helped me become 'more effectively, skilfully, [and] humanely engaged in practice' (Benner, 1994, p. xv), thus gleaning a greater appreciation for the nuance of day-to-day activities as a people manager. Social, political, and global health crises contributed to real-life challenges I was required to navigate as I researched and defined my leadership practice in real-time. As evidenced in the six autoethnographic vignettes, through trial and error,

I have been able to fashion a viable feminist pedagogic leadership approach practicable and germane to a business context.

Objective #3: Identify synergies between feminist pedagogy, LAP, and e-leadership

Scholars in higher education and business have called for research and theoretical and conceptual unification in cross-disciplinary spaces to advance our knowledge and understanding of these complex social processes. Indeed, feminist theory, leadership theory, and practice theory are broad, extensively researched subjects, and reconciliation remains elusive. This thesis sought to 'knit a cohesive piece that intersects with theory and prior literature, makes transparent theoretical frameworks, makes an argument, and uses narratives (and other research) to buttress that argument' (Cann & Demeulenaere, 2012, p. 150) while also examining these synergies in practice. Using autoethnographic narratives supplemented by participant insights and perspectives, I danced between theory and practice, between critical reflection and dialogic exchange, to arrive at twenty symbiotic themes that embody a distinct conceptual nexus.

12.3 Answering the research question

This thesis sought to answer the question: How can feminist pedagogy, LAP, and e-leadership coalesce in practice to influence or impact individual growth, team culture, and organisational outcomes in distributed virtual teams? After critical analysis of the findings, I offered a qualitative argument:

Feminist pedagogic principles provide a real-world bridge between theory and practice. Feminist pedagogy is the **catalyst** that precipitates leadership behaviours that inspire people and lead to cohesive, high-performing teams. LAP offers a tactical conduit to feminist pedagogy – through scanning, signalling, weaving, stabilising, inviting, unleashing, and reflecting – and is an **operant** of feminist pedagogic principles in day-to-day work. E-Leadership, as a social influence process **accelerated** by technology, engages all members, regardless of staff level, to develop as leaders towards achieving a collective vision. Feminist pedagogic e-leadership-as-practice, then, can be envisaged as transformative to individual growth, team culture, and strategic organisational outcomes.

Evidence derived via qualitative inquiry supported the concepts' symbiotic relationship, thus upholding the qualitative argument. Further, the research offered several contributions to knowledge and revealed multiple implications for theory, research, and practice.

12.4 Contributions to knowledge

Feminist pedagogy. This research has contributed to feminist scholarship through deep exploration and application of feminist pedagogy within an enterprise L&D context. It elucidated the nuances of feminist pedagogy, illuminated new meaning, and contributed to how complex social systems are influenced through praxis. And while feminist pedagogy nor leadership are new theories, this research contributes to calls for the exploration of 'asymmetrical power relationships based on different categories' in organisations (Hirudayaraj & Shields, 2019, p. 323). In other words, through this research, we can now clearly visualise the mechanics of feminist pedagogy, including how redefining leader-follower relationships, empowerment, and deconstructing hierarchal conventions manifest in practice.

E-Leadership. Multiple scholars have articulated a need to define e-leadership as a named concept and develop theory within a cross-disciplinary space (Jones et al., 2017; Tintoré & Güell, 2016). More importantly, in light of the precipitous increase in virtual work, an urgent need to operationalise e-leadership has arisen (Mustajab et al., 2020; Roman & Wang, 2019; van Wart et al., 2019). This research addressed these recommendations and offered an updated definition of e-leadership based on extant theoretical underpinnings and augmented by my position as a CMR.

Leadership-as-practice. This research presented the first protracted examination of e-leadership-as-practice, uniting the concepts within a feminist pedagogic lens and portraying them from the perspective of a middle manager. This research addressed concerns by some leadership scholars who see their work as removed from practice by 'barely [engaging] those practicing leadership in the process of constructing knowledge about its practice' (Allen et al., 2022, p. 5). I have further contributed to our understanding of LAP by exploring the ordinary realities and

processes of everyday leadership by ‘connecting with practitioners in their worlds and building insights that draw from rigorous research and are relevant to their practical endeavours’ (Kempster & Gregory, 2017, p. 512), leveraging self-reflection, thick description, and narrative to extend our knowledge of LAP.

L&D leadership praxis and application. While e-leadership and LAP research is helpful to the continued development of theory, it is not enough to rest with theoretical supposition. Leadership is one of the mechanisms central to carrying out and advancing L&D professional practice and contributing to organisational strategy. As Oliver (2014) noted, without building conceptual links to previous research and systematic procedures, we risk irrelevancy in research and practice instead of moving the body of knowledge forward. More specifically, although the focus on the object-centric nature of learning technologies in enterprise L&D is not likely to wane any time soon, researchers must also begin to explore the ‘mechanisms that will encourage connections between new research areas and established, longer-term concerns’ (Oliver, 2014, p. 916). This research has provided inroads into how theory and scholarship can be integrated into L&D leadership practice.

Unification of research, theory, and practice. This research has lessened a gap in the field of Educational Technology leadership, addressing calls to identify points of unification in theory, methodology, and practice across disciplines (Oliver, 2014). As a CMR, I shed light on the researcher’s perpetual quandary of reconciling theory and practice. Employing autoethnographic bricolage as my methodological approach, I engaged in transdisciplinary knowledge production in context and application (Gold et al., 2011) through ‘a constant flow back and forth between the fundamental and the applied, between the theoretical and the practical’ (Gibbons, 1994, p. 24). Cross-pollinating has added a new dimension to educational research, evolved conceptual meanings, suggested a new theoretical structure, and advanced an emergent methodological approach.

12.5 Implications for research, theory, and application of feminist pedagogic e-leadership-as-practice

As a result of this research, I believe we are now firmly situated to extend the notion of feminist pedagogic e-leadership-as-practice. As such, findings indicate several implications for research, theory, and application of this unified concept.

12.5.1 Expanding research horizons

Dugan (Allen et al., 2022) poses a profoundly simple question regarding leadership scholarship, inquiring, 'Who are we as scholars to presume to know more about an experience than those experiencing it directly?' (p. 6). If we are to understand how middle managers go about the work of leadership, it is prudent to involve the individuals who carry out the work. As an embedded researcher who also utilised collegial input to inform my research, this can be done in two ways.

First, we can 'deputise' more CMRs as practitioner-researchers to undertake frontline leadership research. Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) encourage researchers to work closely with participants, stressing that their insights not only 'improve the quality of research and ensure face validity, [but] their involvement has important implications for the sustainability and appropriateness of interventions' (p. 1674). Secondly, I believe critical co-constructed ethnography would complement embedded leadership research as a design approach. I see great instructional, developmental, and research value in this method as CMRs challenge, push, and analyse various aspects of leadership practice, with a 'sincere opportunity for solidarity' towards illuminating 'narrative truths' of their shared, lived realities (Cann & Demeulenaere, 2012, p. 151).

With respect to the future of narrative inquiry as a qualitative method, Chase (2011) calls attention to 'the limits of interviews as a source of narrative data' (p. 423) and the potential for advancement of novel presentational forms and methodological approaches. At issue is the nature of the interviewee-interviewer relationship and the need to transform research into a mutually beneficial relationship, such as narrator-listener. Further, conventional methods used by some qualitative researchers tend to steer participants to generalise their

experiences, confining narrative creativity through structured or semi-structured interviews. What is lost in conventional approaches is the relevance and integration of the narrator's history and experience, as well as the ability of the researcher to achieve contextual nuance, which renders compelling narrative accounts. I believe autoethnographic bricolage offers much value towards advancing innovation in qualitative research.

Each of these opportunities speaks to greater democratisation of knowledge construction and reinforces the potential benefit of embedded, co-constructed ethnography as a way to advance qualitative research methods.

12.5.2 Theoretical development

There remains a lack of consensus around feminist leadership 'style', in addition to the belief that feminist pedagogy is a fluid and evolving concept and not a 'fixed set of attributes' (Herman & Kirkup, 2017, p. 375). Indeed, at the risk of diminishing those (especially female) leaders whose actions depart from conventional beliefs of 'effective leadership', we should acknowledge the full spectrum of leadership capabilities – both masculine and feminine – which contributes to personal feelings of self-actualisation.

The risk in subscribing to leadership as 'feminist', while providing a contrast to traditional or even antiquated views of leadership, may 'also create a misleading impression of women's orientation to leadership as well as reproducing stereotypes and the traditional gender division of labour' (Due Billing & Alvesson, 2000, p. 144). And so, we must exercise caution when generalising behaviours or characteristics to avoid the continuity of hegemonic patriarchal structures (Clover et al., 2017), thus undoing the progress towards adopting more modern leadership paradigms such as LAP.

However, I want to be clear that I am firm in the relevance of feminist pedagogic leadership as vital to leading L&D leadership in the workplace. It would be interesting to study why we employ instructional design principles in the work we produce but not in our pedagogic practice within our function, a notion that informs my following recommendation.

12.5.3 Leadership-as-practice development

As an L&D function, we have an opportunity to improve the LAP development of our members and to leverage our unique, pedagogically-informed knowledge and experiences to craft impactful learning. I believe we can do this in several ways:

- **Focus on early-career leadership development.** We should not wait until our members' beliefs about leadership have hardened, requiring 'unlearning' behaviours. By adopting feminist pedagogic principles as part of our development approach, we can orient leadership earlier and counteract stubborn implicit leadership beliefs.
- **Advance in-situ leadership development.** We can employ LAP activities to build frontline staff leadership through low-stakes opportunities that facilitate knowledge construction, enable psychologically-safe feedback, and improve confidence.
- **Intention.** At the heart of this research has been relentless intention. By identifying needs, putting in place support mechanisms such as coaching and mentoring, and 'providing as much learning and support to our folks as we are to everyone else' (Khadija), we can define meaningful, bespoke leadership development experiences.
- **Apply theory in practice.** A surprise finding of my research was how, as I incorporated theoretical elements into everyday conversation, others began to adopt and apply feminist principles and demonstrate leadership activities. Translating theory into consumable, contextual vernacular, supplemented by opportunity, is essential to bridging theory and practice.
- **Adopt paradigmatic 'mission statements'.** Having a defined, paradigmatic 'mission statement' has enabled me to hold myself accountable and guides how I lead. I believe others can benefit from exploring their beliefs through reflection; developing one's North Star is foundational to leadership development.

12.6 Assumptions, limitations, and delimitations

12.6.1 Assumptions

I made several assumptions in the study design that should be noted as inherent to qualitative research. First, I presumed that my colleagues' responses in the live interviews and the reflective prompts were honest and truthful. I had no hierarchal authority over the individuals and relied on the established, collegial relationships as a 'safe space' to disclose their thoughts, perspectives, and feelings. To facilitate as much honesty as possible in the responses, I provided participants with an information sheet and informed consent form advising of the voluntary and confidential nature of the study, including options for withdrawal from the data-gathering process.

A second assumption was that a qualitative methodological approach was appropriate to answer the research question, including linking disparate concepts. As part of my analytic approach, I described my rationale for mobilising qualitative text analysis and hermeneutics to address the research question. Given the contextual circumstances, I assumed this would allow me to resolve the classic Meno learning paradox, 'How can I know anything about X if I do not know what X is?' (Gold et al., 2011, p. 236). In this way, I was able to deconstruct and reconstruct the discrete concepts to address current issues, uncover emergent themes, and offer a new framework to explain the theoretical relationships.

12.6.2 Limitations

This study was undertaken in a very specific context – a US-based L&D organisation. Due to the challenges and difficulties of grappling with the ongoing pandemic, I wanted to keep the participant group small, leaning on those with whom I had established relationships and familiarity with my research journey. My autoethnographic bricolage required that I make choices about inclusion, presentation, and juxtaposition of the materials in a way that gave meaning but was not 'divorced from philosophical content' (Yardley, 2020b, p. 6). Including cross-territory colleagues may elicit additional cultural perspectives and nuance to the topic. Nevertheless, the multiplicity of textual references included

demonstrates my goal to provide a deep and incisive understanding of feminist pedagogic practice.

Further, my dual role as project lead and CMR may elicit concern. I acknowledge this as a possible limitation, yet one that also follows beliefs of power and conventional hierarchal systems. It is these conventions that I attempted to address and transform in the course of my work in favour of a more democratised, empowered workspace in alignment with the spirit of feminist pedagogic principles. In the future, I believe it would be valuable to undertake co-constructed autoethnography with multiple colleagues as CMRs.

Finally, this study was limited in its ability to draw clear lines to organizational success metrics as this is proprietary information; nevertheless, it would be worthwhile to undertake this study using quantitative or mixed methods to identify linkages between the principles explored and organisational performance indicators.

12.6.3 Delimitations

The first delimitation of this research is inherent in the research question, as a study of learning practitioners in enterprise L&D. As such, the participant scope was limited to individuals only in this professional segment. Findings indicate that there is opportunity to explore and apply feminist pedagogic e-leadership-as-practice in other disciplines and contextual settings, which I recommend as future research.

Additionally, the nature of leadership exists along a spectrum of tactical to strategic. I opted to explore the former, in alignment with the theoretical underpinnings of LAP as described in Chapter 2, to examine leadership as it occurs through the lens of frontline staff. This reinforces my recommendation to include senior, executive, and C-suite leaders in future e-leadership and LAP research.

12.7 My evolution as a researcher and practitioner

The last objective of my research was to mature as a researcher, practitioner, leader, and feminist. I began this research with the same mindset I held when I

began my Master's coursework which largely aligned with positivist research beliefs: that autoethnographic research is questionable at best and illegitimate scholarship at worst.

And yet, autoethnography reflects the kind of writing that I believe helps us connect to one another through evocative feelings and experiences. Bricolage taught me, 'where there's a will, there's a way'. By connecting my participant's excerpts to my own experience, I could see a way forward for my practice in a way that challenged me, yes, but also allowed me to represent my own beliefs about leading, teaching, research, and life authentically. Further, I now understand better what my tutors meant when describing the satisfactory confluence of research elements – that 'things just hang together'; it is indeed an amorphous concept to verbalise!

Through this experience, I have become more attuned to matters associated with the feminist project. I am more aware of the need to employ diverse perspectives, enable silent voices, and advocate for others. I don't profess to be the perfect feminist, but I have become more reflective, vocal, purposeful, and intentional in my actions towards empowering those around me, scaffolding them through my pedagogic leadership practice. In casual workplace conversations, I can more explicitly articulate my research endeavours and leadership 'philosophy' along with corresponding action and impact.

Ford (2016) encourages managers' critical reflexivity, noting that it 'can lead to resistance to organizational control' (p. 238). This research has been not only liberating, but it has also helped others realise their power to impart change in their 'microclimates'. Yesterday, Samuel and I reconnected after not speaking for a few months. He mused, 'if only we could get around the hierarchy'. I responded, 'do whatever you can – find a way for your team to have a voice, advocate for them, and don't blindly accept what you're told to do'. Yes, it's taken two years, but I think we've *finally* arrived!

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Initial interview guide

Q1. Please describe your personal, professional, and educational background, including your role and staff level, other roles or professional experiences, your educational background.

Q2. Tell me about how you came to L&D. As a professional discipline, what drew you to L&D?

Q3. How would you describe yourself as a leader? Has this view evolved over time? How?

Q4. What does learning leadership mean to you? How is it different than in other areas of an organisation?

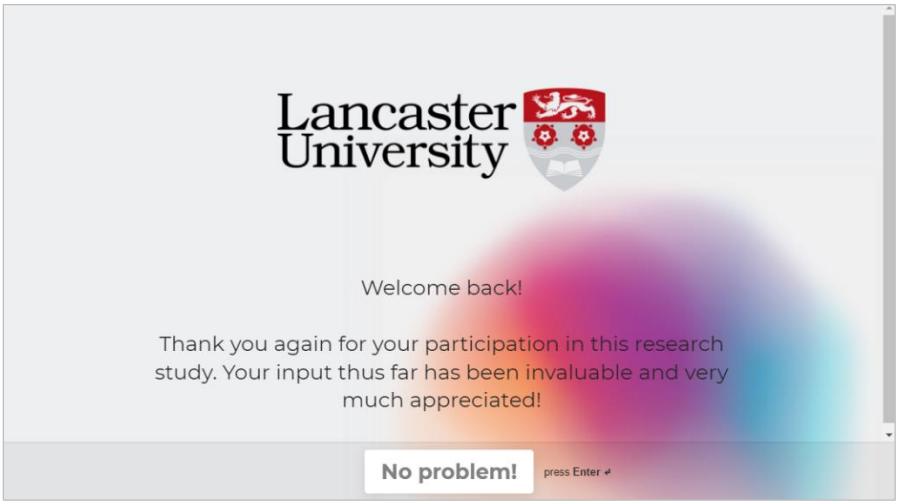
Q5. Thinking about L&D leaders and leadership, what is most important to you and why?

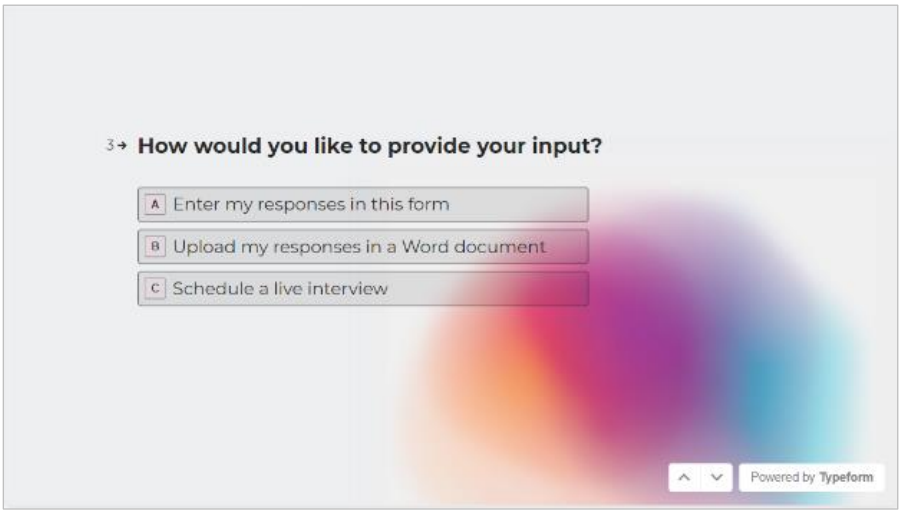
Additional question arising: How do you distinguish ‘leader’, ‘leading’, and ‘leadership’?

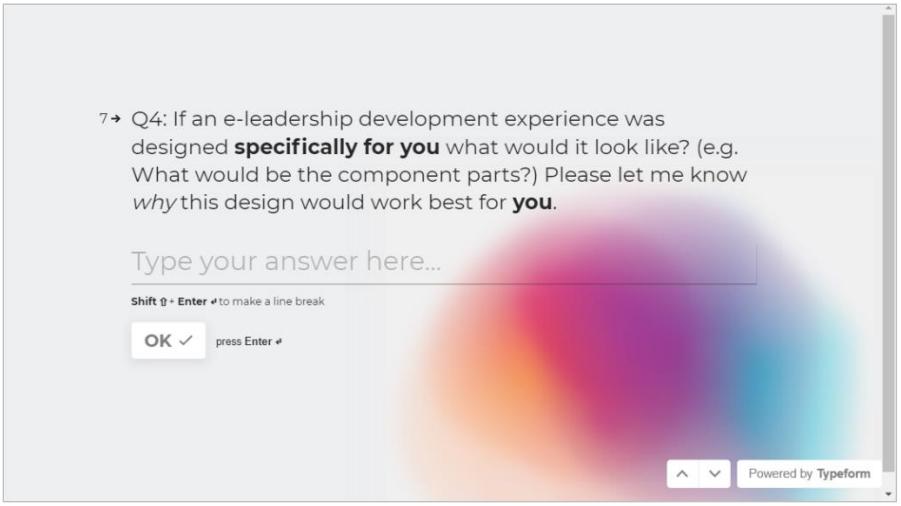
Q6. Thinking about working in teams virtually, what, if anything has changed over the last several months in how your teams work?

Q7. What upside – any silver linings, ah-ha moments or unexpected benefits – have you experienced in this intensified virtual environment?

Appendix 2: Typeform survey platform examples







Appendix 3: Participant* biographies

*Pseudonyms as represented in findings and discussion

Participant Kahina. Kahina has been with the organisation for five years in the roles of contractor, senior associate, content strategist, and manager. She has a bachelor's degree in Management, Information Systems, and Marketing. Kahina describes herself as someone who 'Likes to develop just like not myself, but anybody that I'm working with'. She recalled finding joy in working with autistic children in an after-school programme as 'such a good experience [that] it made me realize that I really wanted to do something with helping others continuously'.

Participant Rosanya. Rosanya was with the organisation for 20 years as a manager in health industries consulting and as a senior learning solutions designer. She holds a bachelor's degree in Pre-Medicine and a master's degree in Adult Education and Instructional Design. Rosanya noted that, 'It's my passion for being able to support and assist and help others; that makes me happy'. In April 2022 she retired to enjoy other aspects of life.

Participant Maya. Maya has been with the organisation for seven years as a senior associate in financial operations and L&D. She holds a bachelor's degree in Marketing with a minor in Finance. She emphasises her upbringing as a key influence on her mindset and resiliency. On leadership and life, Maya always looks for balance, explaining, 'Culture is really important for me; I enjoy being around [people who] support me not just at work, they support me in real life; I can be myself…you don't always feel that in a corporate setting, and I feel like I want to make sure other people feel the same way'.

Participant Ellie. Ellie has been with the organisation for two and a half years. She began as an instructional design contractor and was promoted to manager in 2022. She holds a bachelor's degree in Communication and a master's degree in Education (Instructional Design for Online Learning). She shares a passion for learning with her mother, Josephine, whom she credits with 'broadening my horizons in terms of L&D; as motivation'. Ellie seeks to be 'someone on the team that can be relied on to get something done, like if someone needs help, I'm willing to help'.

Participant Samuel. Samuel has been with the organisation for eleven years as a consultant, senior consultant, manager, and senior manager. Samuel holds a bachelor's degree in Management Information Systems. Before transitioning to L&D to pursue his interest in people development, his focus was on data management and analytics and performance measurement. Samuel credits his interest in helping others to being 'lucky enough to have had really good coaches, and those coaches always really pushed me to explore'.

Participant Alexandre. Alexandre has been with the organisation for eleven years as an instructional design manager and senior learning solutions designer. Previously, he served as Director of Instructional Design and Chief Learning Officer before returning to his roots and passion for instructional design and adult learning theory, which has allowed him to be 'creative and innovative'. Alexandre holds a bachelor's degree in Psychology and a master's degree in Organisational Development. Alexandre describes himself as 'a compassionate leader' and 'one who is keenly focused on the needs of my people'.

Participant Yolanda. Yolanda has been with the organisation for ten years. She is a manager with many experiences as a learning professional, but her true passion is diversity and inclusion. Yolanda credits her success to having a long-standing, invested, trusted mentor and sponsor; a model she tries to integrate into her own work, noting that in teams she leads, 'I try to make sure that the light shines on them for their accomplishments; I'm being their advocate'.

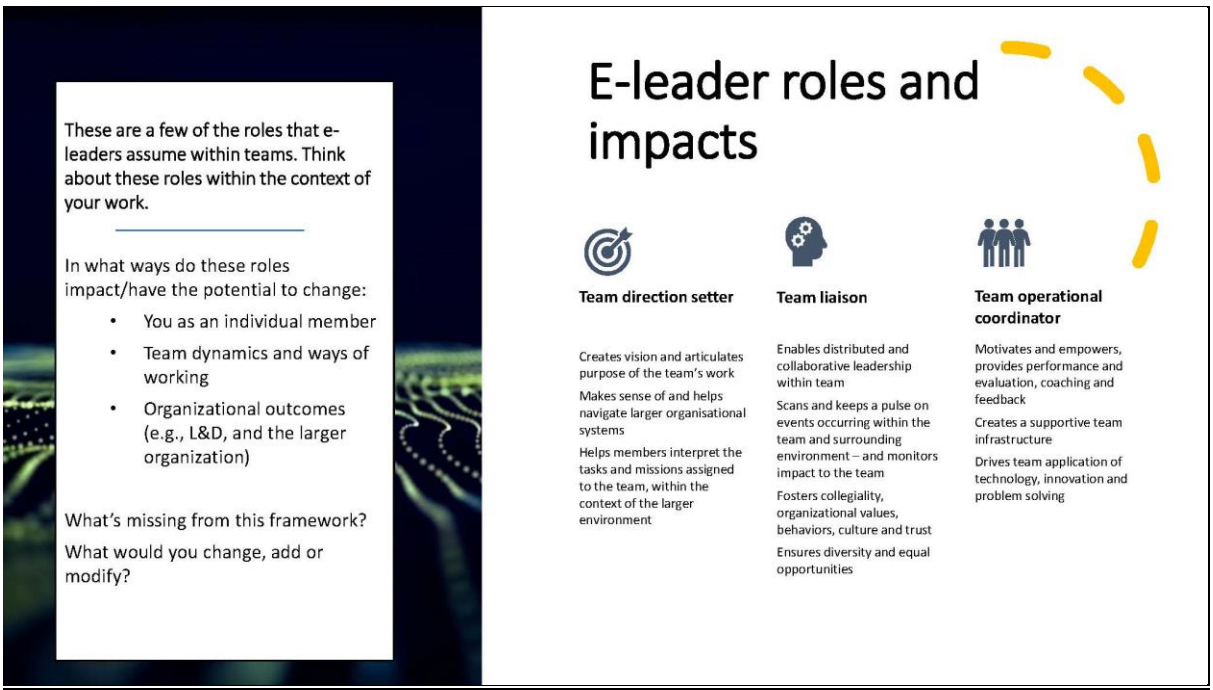
Participant Khadija. Khadija has been with the organisation for seven years as an L&D manager and senior manager. She holds a bachelor's degree in Education. Although she imagined a career in elementary education, fate steered her to corporate training and the epiphany that, 'Wait, I don't have to just teach kids; I could teach adults'. Khadija describes her leadership style as one where she can 'empower people to lead, to be critical thinkers, to be idea generators, and to think outside the box…Because that's what makes us human; otherwise, our job can be done by machines'.

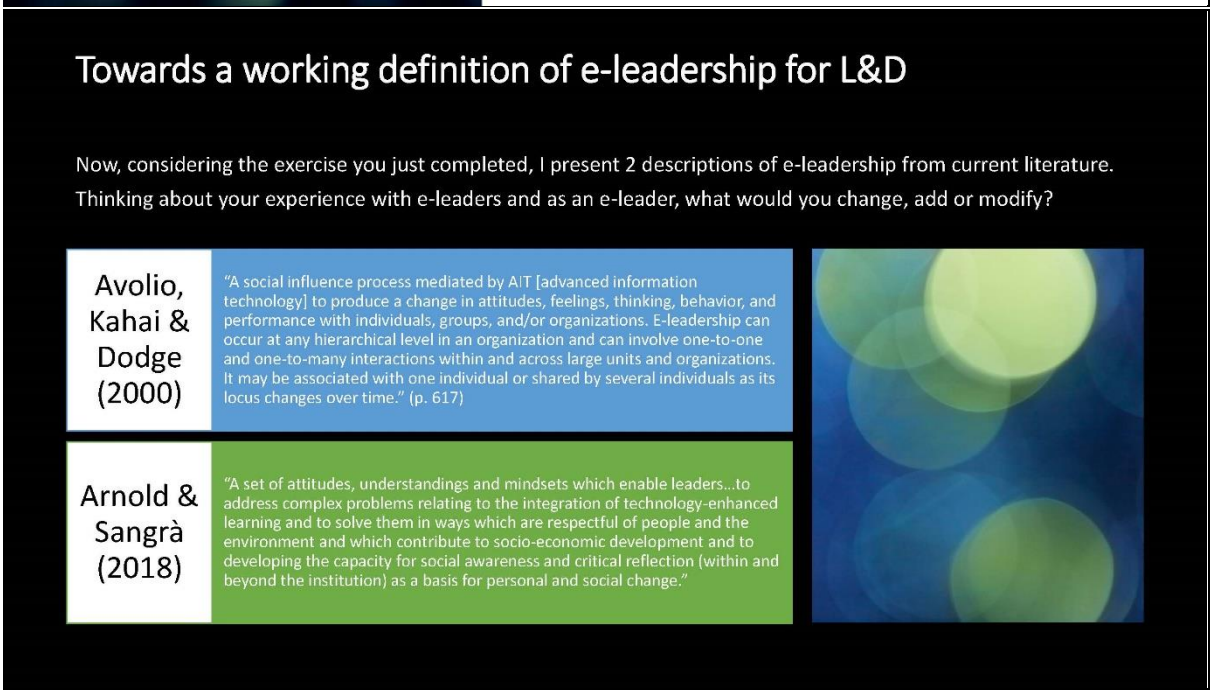
Participant Marie. Marie has been with the organisation for four years, progressing from contractor to senior associate to manager. Previously, she

spent fifteen years as a middle-school teacher. She holds a bachelor's degree in Management Information Systems and a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction. Marie now applies similar leadership approaches she utilised in the classroom and reflected that 'I try to build really strong relationships with people; I feel like you have to do that in order to get the best out of people'.

Participant Josephine. Josephine has been with the organisation for fourteen years as a senior learning consultant. She holds a bachelor's degree in Communication, a master's degree in Communications and Organisational Development, and completed coursework towards a PhD in Instructional Technology/Organisational Development. Josephine is laser-focussed on convincing clients of the value of training and the potential return on investment. Nevertheless, she described herself as 'someone who listens', and who is 'experienced, knowledgeable, passionate, creative, supportive, helpful, [and] fun'.

Appendix 4: Reflection 1: e-Leadership and e-Leader roles in L&D





Appendix 5: Reflection 2: Developing an e-Leadership practice

Q1. What motivates (or would motivate) you to develop as an e-leader?

Q2. What skills do you most want to develop as an e-leader?

Q3. In what ways will improving your skill as an e-leader make YOU a better L&D practitioner?

Q4. If an e-leadership development experience was designed specifically for you, what would it look like? (e.g., What would be the component parts?) Please let me know why this design would work best for **you**.

Appendix 6: Reflection 3: Impacts of e-Leadership on individual and group performance

Q1. How does having an **established culture** impact your individual performance and that of the teams around you?

Q2. How does the presence of **pedagogic leadership** impact your individual performance and that of the teams around you?

Q3. How does the concept of **relational dexterity** impact your individual performance and that of the teams around you?

Q4. How does being surrounded by a **learningful community** impact your individual performance and that of the teams around you?

Q5. How does having a sense of **strategic perspective** impact your individual performance and that of the teams around you?

Q6. How does having **business and technical acumen** impact your individual performance and that of the teams around you?

Appendix 7: Data gathering schedule, topics, and rationales

Sprint	Topics addressed	To inform or establish
Initial interview	Nature of the research, process, participant's role	Establish a researcher-participant relationship and comfort level
	Participant's professional background and personal histories	Breadth and diversity of participant pool
	What 'leadership' is, who are leaders, and characteristics of L&D leadership	Participant perspectives on leadership and leaders
	Virtual leadership and teaming (e-leadership)	Foundation for Sprint 1 focus on e-leadership
Sprint 1: Roles	e-Leader roles (as team direction setter, liaison, and operational coordinator based on Zaccaro & Bader, 2003)	Identify the tactical roles of e-leaders, how responsibilities are carried out, social and affective dimensions engaged
	Extant definitions of e-leadership (based on Avolio, Kahai, & Dodge, 2000 and Arnold & Sangrà, 2018)	Inform an operational definition of e-leadership specific to an enterprise L&D organisation
Sprint 2: Development	Leadership development motivations and priorities	Actions, behaviours, skills, needs, etc. and why they are important
	How people develop leadership and what may be effective	How development might occur to build leadership capability (e.g., How do participants think they can best develop?)
	Leadership as relates to practice	Bridge between concepts/theory and practical application
Sprint 3: Performance	Influence of e-leadership behaviours and actions on outcomes (team dynamics, ways of working, motivations, etc.)	Identify linkages (perceived or actual) between e-leadership and individual and team performance
Final interview	Personal stories to be told	Establish a tone to represent the participant's lived experiences and perspectives; what is important to be told
	Learnings about the leaderful self	Reflect on the value/impact of reflection and reflexivity by participating in this research
	Looking forward – how can we improve?	Inform future research directions and implications for practice and development
	Individual follow-up discussions of themes arising from data collected	Discuss open or interesting insights arising from individual anecdotes or stories

Appendix 8: Final interview guide: Learnings and looking forward

Q1. What is the story you'd like me to tell about YOU in my research?

Q2. What have you learned about e-leadership in practice?

Q3. What do you want your legacy to be as an e-leader practitioner?

What do you need to support this goal?

What have you learned about yourself, specifically, as a leader?

How do you envision that e-leadership, as an intentional practice, might help you achieve your maximum impact?

Q4. How have you seen e-leadership manifest throughout the organisation?

Q5. What would you like to see more of/less of in terms of leadership?

What ways do you think it's impacted team, functional, and organisational performance?

Q6. What are your curious about having participated in this research?

Q7. Any follow-up questions specific to the individual arising out of their reflection responses

Appendix 9: Group activity agenda

Topic	Notes
Goals (3 mins)	The overall goals of this meeting are to: • Identify and effectively leverage individual team talents • Streamline meetings and who needs to attend • Build cross-team knowledge of processes so that we can support one another in the event life outside of work happens (as it does!)
Vibrant meetings – Part 1 (5 mins)	The goal of this part is to set expectations and understand what everyone needs to feel set up for success on this project.
Name your elephant (15 mins)	The goal of this part is to acknowledge there may be thought barriers, anxieties, or unspoken issues that may impact individuals or the team and inhibit us from working effectively. We don't want anyone to feel trampled, so let's call out elephants into the open and acknowledge their existence.
Let's flourish (15 mins)	The goal of this part is to identify individual team member skills that will help us approach the project work through the lens that if we align everyone's talent with the work that needs to be done, we will inherently create efficiencies, and (hopefully!) ease the burden for the entire team.
Vibrant meetings – Part 2 (10 mins)	Did we succeed? Facilitator: 1. Return to the original goals 2. Ask: Have we accomplished what we set out to do? 3. Ask: How is everyone feeling? 4. Ask: What's next? 5. Ask: What did you think of this gathering?