‘The Social Construction of Gender and Leadership and the Impact of these Paradoxical Constructs on the Lived Experience of Women CEOs’

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Thesis submitted to Maynooth University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Social Science in the Faculty of Social Sciences

Maynooth University

October 2023

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I, Catherine Kelly Mason, certify that the Thesis is my own work and I have not obtained a Degree in this University or elsewhere on the basis of this Doctoral Thesis

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore how the paradoxical concepts of gender and leadership impacted on the lived experience of six women chief executive officers (CEOs) working within intellectual disability, Section 39 organisations in Ireland. A scoping review was conducted to illicit the breadth of research relevant to this topic. The primary analysis of the scoping review was concentrated on the barriers that women experience in relation to advancing or sustaining senior leadership positions. Findings from this review highlighted that women remain underrepresented in senior leadership roles and that the classification of female and male gender as oppositional social constructs maintains this status quo with women assigned a lesser societal status and power value.

To facilitate a greater understanding of these findings a moderate form of social constructionism was applied throughout the research design. This position recognises that one's ability to perceive and represent social reality is understood in context and influenced by socio-historical experiences known to the individual. A feminist informed narrative inquiry methodology was applied to gain an understanding of how participants gender identities have been shaped and normalised through pervasive cultural ideologies, language, discourse, and everyday social interactions.

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2020) reflexive thematic analysis was operationalised in the analysis and coding of data. Findings illustrated that participants were subjected to a gendering process throughout their lives, which was underpinned by a prevailing patriarchal ideology that continues to sustain the oppression of women. Within this ideology positions of power such as the role of CEO is perceived as oppositional to the binary classification of female gender. Findings also highlight the discursive effects of neoliberal ideology on the sustainability of Section 39 organisations which is further compounded by a lack of clarity on appropriate leadership models.

By adopting a social constructionist approach this study offered a different way of exploring the significance of the paradoxical constructs of gender and leadership and presented alternative explanations for the gender disparity that exists at CEO level. Gender was recognised as a fluid and changing construct, suggesting that the co-creation of a model of leadership beyond gender is possible.

Acknowledgements

There are so many people that I wish to sincerely thank for their support and help throughout this research process. I am extremely grateful to the six women CEOs who took time out of their busy schedule to share their lived experience. Inspirational women who have created paths for generations of women to follow. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to tell your stories.

To my wonderful supervisors Dr Calvin Swords and Dr Brian Melaugh for all your support, advice, and guidance throughout this study. I will be forever grateful for your kindness and words of wisdom. Your constructive feedback was very much appreciated and supported my learning and personal development throughout this challenging journey. A thank you to all the lecturers in the Department of Applied Social Studies in Maynooth University and a special thank you to Dr Hilary Tierney who listened carefully and supported the early unravelling of my jumbled though processes.

To my family Joe, Seán, Lorcan and Eoin thank you so much for being part of my life. To my amazing son Seán who inspires me every day to keep going no matter how challenging life can be. He has been such a fantastic motivator throughout this research process. To Lorcan who has offered great advice and guidance and Eoin who brings the whole family back down to earth and keeps us all grounded. To my husband Joe for his words of encouragement, critical analysis, honesty, kindness, heated debates, and support. For always being there and having my back.

To my cousins and many friends whose reassurance boosted my spirits when I needed additional encouragement and who always provided an opportunity for a social escape when I needed a break. I would like to say a special thank you to my good friend and educational advisor Fran Simpson. You helped me find my path.

I would like to acknowledge the support of my employer WALK, a fantastic Section 39 organisation that strives to provide supports that empower people with intellectual disabilities to live self-determined lives within social inclusive societies. Also, to my work colleagues in WALK and TU Dublin who have been extremely encouraging and genuinely interested in this study.

A massive thank you to all of my fellow students that I met along this Doctoral journey. The sharing of ideas, concerns, emotions, and constructive feedback has been immensely helpful and is greatly appreciated.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother and my aunties Maura, Alice, Breda, and Margaret who have all been inspirational role models in my life. Strong, determined women who struggled against the confines of their bounded gendered identity. These women defied the norms and took up working positions outside the home. They questioned taken for granted assumptions and were critical of the status assigned to women in Irish society. They inspired me to continuously aspire for more.

List of Abbreviations

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CVS	Community and Voluntary Sector
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
Four Cs	Character, Competence, Context, and Communication
HSE	Health Service Executive
NFVSP	National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers
PITO	Personal, Interpersonal, Team, and Organisational
PRISMA-ScR	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Extension for Scoping Review
SLA	Service Level Agreement
VFMDS	Value for Money Disability Services

1. Introduction

"The long struggle for equality has also been a struggle for leadership. Implicit in that struggle has been the vision that women exercising leadership would make a difference. That is the core challenge to women leaders today. The courageous women who paved the way by surmounting so many daunting barriers challenge us now to fulfil that vision. We should begin by acknowledging our debt to them. In doing so we evoke images not just of the campaigns for women's suffrage, for equal pay and for reform of social laws, but also of the deeper struggle to have women's rights recognised as human rights against a trend of increased feminisation of poverty and the victimisation of so many women. The emphasis on recognising women's rights as human rights was not a recasting of the woman as victim, but it marked instead the starting point for the woman as leader" (Robinson, 1996).

1.1. Introduction

Chapter one provides a background to and rationale for this inquiry which sets out to explore how the concepts of gender and leadership are socially constructed and how these paradoxical constructs impact on the lived experience of six women CEOs working in Section 39[1] intellectual disability organisations in Ireland. It provides an overview of the socio-historical context that has resulted in women being disproportionately underrepresented in senior executive roles, as well as the socio-historical background of the provision of intellectual disability services in Ireland. It outlines the researcher's positionality; the research aims and objectives and the rationale for this study including its potential contribution to literature.

The Gender Balance in Business Survey (Central Statistics Office, 2023) revealed that only 19% of women in Ireland hold CEO positions and that only 30% of women are employed in senior executive roles. Within the Irish community and voluntary sector[2] women account for approximately three-quarters of employees, the ratio of female to male employees overall is almost 3:1 and while this is reflected within full-time and part-time work patterns, women also continue to remain underrepresented in senior executive positions (Wheel & Horwath, 2014).

[1] Section 39 are CVS organisations governed under the 2004 Health Act they provide services that are funded through the State and their employees are not considered public servants.

[2] The commonly used term "Community and Voluntary Sector conveys the strength of a broad sector, with community-based roots, one that is particularly well developed in Ireland, but that hides considerable variation in size, scale, and ethos present within such a large number of organisations. It also obscures the scale, size and professionalism of many organisations and a corresponding decline in voluntary input" McInerney, C. (2018).

These findings depict limited progress in gender equality in not-for-profit[3] leadership, and women CEOs continue to remain the exception rather than the norm (Hurley & Choudhary, 2016).

This underrepresentation of women at senior level is unexpected, as evidence in a number of studies highlight that women possess important competencies required to lead an organisations workforce and navigate complex working environments. For example, Barelka and Downes (2019) argue that women have excellent relationship building qualities and demonstrate more empathy then their male counterparts.

Similarly, D'Souza (2007) points out that the characteristics that are often seen as lacking in male leaders, such as kindness and concern for others, women have in abundance. While, Gentry et al. (2010) suggests that women encouraged participation and collaboration in decision making and were more inclusive than men. With women scoring higher on social and interpersonal measures of leadership. Terry et al. (2006) contests that women possess wide-ranging and multi-layered core competencies to navigate complex and turbulent working environments. While, Harris (2019a) finds that studies support the concept that an organisations performance benefits when women are included in leadership roles.

The research above highlights that women are not lacking in the competencies required to perform at CEO level. If women possess the attributes required for such a role, is the issue of gender disparity a socially constructed one? The prominence of this study therefore is concentrated on understanding how gender is socially constructed in society and how this construction results in gender disparity at CEO level. More specifically, there has been a lack of research conducted on how the socio-cultural context in Ireland has shaped and influenced the gender identity formation of women. The consequences of being bounded within a stereotype that is at odds with one's career aspirations is worthy of further consideration.

It is also worth thinking about gender and leadership collectively as constructs formed and normalised in everyday social interactions. In Ireland, there remains a disparity between women and men holding positions of power. This study attempts to understand the socio-cultural influences and dominant ideologies prevalent in Ireland and potentially responsible for perpetrating traditional discourses in which women are awarded a lesser status in society then

[3] A term used interchangeably with CVS to describe organisations whose primary goal is not to make a profit but to further a cause.

men. The next section offers insights into ‘gendering’ within an Irish context.

1.2. The Context and Background to Gendering in Ireland

After gaining independence from the United Kingdom in 1922, Ireland developed the present constitution (1937). The constitution is the “general law in Ireland, that sets out the principles of the social contract between the State and its citizens and was passed by a referendum in 1937, replacing the original 1922 constitution” (Bradley, 2014, p. 18). Within Irish law this ensures that laws cannot be approved if they are not congruent with the constitution.

The Catholic Church was fundamental in the development of a new constitution and utilised the opportunity to further their patriarchal agenda which was designed to exclude women from holding any positions of power within society (Fanning, 2004; O'Connor, 2000; O’Sullivan, 2012; Yeates, 1997). Thus the development of gendering in Ireland has been closely aligned to the importance of the family as an essential component in society and women’s primary role is to remain in the home and protect and nurture this entity (Byrne & Leonard, 1997).

This is significant because it facilitated the social subordination of women by inherently linking the conceptualisation of women as citizens confined to the home and dependents of the male breadwinner (Yeates, 1997). This was reinforced through Irish social policy in which the State favoured men and normalised patriarchal ideology by utilising a strategy of gender separation, oppositional categorisation, oppression and exclusion (O'Connor, 2000; Yeates, 1997).

There has been a reluctance to consider gender as a social division (O'Connor, 2000) possibly because this type of oppositional gender categorisation ignores and sustains gender inequalities. This is evident in Ireland where women and men’s involvement in the open labour market is distinctly different, in terms of salary, job types and positions of power (McGuinness et al., 2009; Teow et al., 2018). This inequality has resulted in the marginalisation and exclusion of women from Irish society (Fanning, 2004; O'Connor, 2000).

The emergence of postmodernist thinking with the work of Foucault in particular helped to focus attention on developing a greater understanding of the dynamics of power and knowledge. More specifically, it proffers that there is no absolute truth, but that knowledge is created and sustained through language and discourse (Fook, 2022). In other words our gender has been assigned socio-cultural meanings and women are moulded through social interactions to become an agent for these manifestations (Butler, 2009). Butler (1988) warns that the

gendering process is complex. Creating a space for reflecting on the influence of the grand narratives of patriarchal ideology that have trivialised the role of women to that of homemaker, wife, caregiver and mother; roles supported by the Irish constitution (Lynch et al., 2009; Murphy-Lawless, 2000) is an important part of this study.

Since the 1960s, social changes in Ireland have led to a number of positive changes in attitudes towards gender roles and behaviour with an incremental increase in women's participation within the labour force (Lunn et al., 2009; O'Sullivan, 2012). The emergence of strong feminist movements together with Ireland's incorporation into the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973, were part of a disassociation process from the strict patriarchal rule enacted since the 1937 Constitution (Da Col Richert, 2013). Ireland joining the EEC in 1973, resulted in policy changes in relation to women and equality in family, employment, and social welfare.

Another significant change was the lifting of the marriage ban in 1974 which had excluded married women from working in the civil service. Also, the introduction of the Anti-Discrimination **(**Pay**)** Bill, 1974 in which European Union (EU) countries must reject discrimination on grounds of sex in relation to equal renumeration for the same job or for labour of equal value. The Employment Equality Act, 1977 denotes that it is unlawful to discriminate on grounds of sex or marital status in relation to entry to employment, promotion and working conditions. This act resulted in the establishment of the Employment Equality Agency (1977) a State agency whose remit is gender equality.

Despite these new Government Acts, positive changes in relation to equality for women in the Irish workplace remain slow (Bradley, 2014). This suggests that legislation alone cannot disrupt the inherently ingrained social order created by men and sustained through everyday language and the cultural symbol of the Irish mother as the beating heart of the family. This is played out in the current Irish context where irrespective of economic and social changes, women are still prevented from taking on CEO positions because of long-standing, socially constructed, gendered norms that dictate that women prioritise family tasks over a career (Kalaitzi et al., 2019).

In 2014 the European Commission recommended strengthening the principle of equal pay between women and men. This was actioned through the provision of guidance to support EU countries in their implementation of this principle more efficiently and transparently. This is reinforced through the European Commission's 2017-2019 operational plan which sets out the Commission's intention to introduce amendments in support of this Directive.

Gender discourse has evolved to include gender rights which has supported the voice of women in their demands for better pay transparency (SG, 2021). Several countries, such as Ireland, have recently introduced new measures. The results of Irish organisations which published gender pay gap reports in December 2022 according to Cooper (2023) have a mean gender pay gap of 12.6%. Analysis conducted by Price Water and Cooper of up to 500 companies who have reported gender pay gap details found that a potential rationale for gender pay gaps appears to be the relatively high number of men in more senior (and so, more highly paid) roles than women. While analysis and policies are helpful it is evidenced by their lack of success in reducing employment disparities at CEO level that they are not in and of themselves the solution. Indeed, the social nature of human interaction and the discursive practices that are socially reproduced cannot be ignored in relation to their role in maintaining and legitimising gender inequality in the workplace.

1.3. The Irish Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS)

Following the War of Independence with Britain, Ireland gained political autonomy in 1922. This resulted in the Irish State assuming responsibility for providing supports for those in need, including people with intellectual disabilities (Linehan et al., 2014). The Irish Constitution (1937) recognised the distinctive positionality of the Catholic Church as representative of the majority of the population (Linehan et al., 2014). The Church sought to secure recognition for religious teachings, within all social sectors of Irish society. This agenda was supported by the new government, which was almost entirely Catholic and heavily influenced by powerful members of the Church Hierarchy (Barrington, 1987). Therefore, while not lawfully codified within the Constitution, elements of Catholic doctrine significantly influenced the configuration of State services, including those for people with intellectual disabilities (Day et al., 2018; McInerney, 2018).

This doctrine was prevalent within an Irish culture that was heavily influenced by the Catholic Church's preference for a minimalist role from the State in matters affecting the individual and the family (Barrington, 1987; Linehan et al., 2014). Their provision of a charity model of care that promoted a dependence on the church for the delivery of services was further aided by the limited financial resources and capacity of the new State to provide direct service provision.

The moral doctrine of the State and its position on the role of women in Irish society was greatly influenced by the Catholic Church whose dominant essentialist ideologies existed long

before the establishment of the State. Strategically aligning the State to the Catholic Church who already held responsibility for managing Irelands moralities further legitimatised and embedded its position. In this way, the Catholic Church and the State equally benefitted from the latter's domination of health and social care service provision in Ireland.

During the 1950s the level of growth of intellectual disability service provision surpassed available religious staff. Therefore, nurses, were employed to enhance the workforce. This was so successful that a nursing specialisation in intellectual disability was established and with it a medical model of support was instituted (Sweeney, 2010). In the 1960s, another component of CVS was established, namely 'parents and friends associations'. The role of these organisations was to meet the needs of families who refused institutional care. They rapidly developed and helped to foster considerable support and awareness about disability issues (Linehan et al., 2014).

A Commission of Inquiry conducted by the Department of Health, 1965 into Mental Handicap (former terminology used to describe an intellectual disability) heralded an important shift in delivering disability services in Ireland. The commission identified that better quality outcomes were experienced by those receiving community supports in comparison to those in institutional settings (Linehan et al., 2014). The Commission recommended the continuation of CVS in the delivery of services to people with intellectual disability and that the State take overall responsibility for directing the activities of these organisations (McInerney, 2018).

Section 65 of the 1953 Health Act officially recognised the role of non-statutory agencies to deliver services to people with intellectual disability and a structured provision for financial support was developed. This Act initiated the distinction between organisations providing services on behalf of the State, to those providing "similar or ancillary" services to those delivered by the State (McInerney, 2018). This distinction led to the establishment of two distinct types of organisations classified today as Section 38[4] and Section 39 organisations. A collective term used to describe Section 38 and 39 organisations is the CVS. Section 38 organisations were originally developed by religious orders and are depicted as being far more closely aligned to the State than Section 39 organisations. McInerney (2018, p. 64) cites the

[4] Section 38's are CVS organisations governed under the 2004 Health Act they provide services that are funded through the State and their employees are considered public servants.

1953 Health Act as "the root of at least some of the complexities facing disability CVS at the present time".

Under the 2004, Health Act a framework outlines the tiered approach to funding and the level of governance required from Section 38 and 39 organisations respectively. The Health Service Executive (HSE) is currently assigned the primary responsibility for the provision of intellectual disability services in Ireland. Primary responsibility for the delivery of supports is transferred to the CVS or private sector when the HSE are unable to deliver these at local level. According to the National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers [NFVSP][5] (2020) approximately 70% of disability support services in Ireland are provided on behalf of the State by CVS, with the Health Service Executive and private service providers mainly accounting for the remainder 30%.

Traditionally the relationship between the State and the CVS sector for the most part was productive and beneficiary. However, the introduction of the provision of services for people with intellectual disability through Section 65 of the 1970 Health Act, which was subsequently amended and redefined as Section 39 of the 2004 Act, points to a shift in the development of new funding and administration mechanisms that attempt to separate the delivery of social supports in Ireland (Donoghue, 1998; McInerney, 2010, 2018).

In effect this created a new trend in the delivery of services in which the States role was to administer grants to Section 39 organisations in exchange for the delivery of services. However, as Section 39 organisations were in the most part developed to meet unmet human and social needs, these grants often offered only partial financial subsidisation and organisations were therefore required to fundraise to meet the full costs of delivering services. The Irish 2008 economic crisis resulted in cuts to already underfunded service providers. Fundraising in Ireland became challenging against a backdrop of scandals linked to the Central Remedial Clinic, a Section 38 organisation and the Rehab Group, a Section 39 organisation (Breen, 2014).

In more recent years CEOs of Section 39 organisations have experienced the tensions and punitive consequences of a lack of State resourcing. A HSE control and command agenda is

[5] The NFVSP is the umbrella organisation representing 60 voluntary/non statutory service providers, who together support more than 26,000 people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

eroding the status of leadership within these organisations by exerting constant pressure for alignment to the State's neoliberal ideology of service delivery and regulation (Lynch, 2018). Section 39 organisations welcomed a stronger focus on accountability, compliance, regulation, and good governance as part of ensuring good quality outcomes (Dukelow & Murphy, 2016). However, the micromanagement, the significant shortfall of financial provision to meet regulatory requirements, and the existence of multiple, competing and often contradictory regulatory processes have been strongly criticised (Lynch, 2018; McInerney, 2018).

CEOs are legitimately concerned that the ever-expanding regulatory requirements which have reached unsustainable levels, are affecting the functional ability of organisations to deliver quality outcomes for people with intellectual disabilities (McInerney, 2018; Murphy & O'Sullivan, 2021). Funding remains a challenge, with an increasing requirement for charities to justify their value for money, and to show clear and measurable outputs (The Wheel & Crowe Horwath, 2014). In today's climate Section 39 organisations in the majority are completely reliant on the State for funding (McInerney, 2018). This creates a constant dependency and a vulnerability for leaders of these organisations as they try to navigate a dominant form of compliance driven accountability and balance this against the delivery of quality services (McInerney, 2018; Sabel, 2018). The neoliberal mantra calls on CEOs of Section 39 organisations "to do more with less" (Melaugh, 2016, p. 10). Lynch (2018) warns that the Ireland we currently operate in, now involves the institutionalising of market values, systems, and processes in the governance of the CVS.

The researcher argues that Section 39 organisations have provided a distinctive added value to Irish society. Many of which were formed initially as 'parents and friends associations' these organisations challenged the disability discourse and changed the socio-cultural context of service delivery to people by demonstrating the value of delivering person centred services within the community.

1.4. Positionality

The majority of social research is generated from the researchers own experiences (Agee, 2009). The idea from this study developed as a result of a process of reflexivity that the researcher engaged in throughout the Doctorate journey. Reflecting on how one is socially

constructed uncovered the researcher's complicity in their own oppression and gender enslavement. The destructive discourses of gender stereotyping, reinforced through a series of complex human relational experiences throughout the researcher's life has strongly influenced and shaped their identity.

The researcher is a white, middle class, heterosexual, able-bodied woman brought up in a strict roman catholic family. Socially constructed to be obedient, obliging and accepting of the status quo. Limited personal agency within the confines of 'being gendered', the researcher experienced a constant sense of injustice over the lack of control she had on her life, especially as a teenager. Freedom could only be achieved through financial independence and within a society in which women were paid less than men and were restricted within their career choices, nursing while a lowly paid job offered this opportunity. The choice to specialise in intellectual disability nursing was heavily influenced by the researcher's early childhood.

My particular interest in the development of person-centred, socially inclusive supports and in the provision of supports that are driven by an equality and human rights agenda began at a very young age, when I did not have the vocabulary to express the life events I witnessed. My dear friend, a boy who had a diagnosis of severe intellectual disability, could no longer remain in his family home. The only option available was life within an institution. After just weeks of the boy being admitted, the family were alarmed by a significant increase in his self-injurious behaviour and a significant regression in his social interactional skills.

A devastated family who could no longer care for their child at home, were left with no option but to develop their own alternative. Finding like-minded families in the same position prompted a fundraising campaign to provide housing and care for their disabled children within their local community. When the respective families removed their children from the institution, they were informed by a senior member of staff, that the penalty for removal was that their child could never be readmitted to any State funded support services. The latter is a typical example of an inequitable power imbalance between the state and recipients of state services.

The outcome for this boy, now residing in a community home was a dramatic increase in his quality of life and a significant reduction in his episodes of self-injurious behaviour. His family however bore the heavy burden of fundraising to keep this community home open. I spent my teenage years as a volunteer in this house. I experienced person centred supports focused on community presence, participation, and positive relationships. This was in direct contrast to

my life as a student nurse, which was spent working in a large Section 38 religious institution. While I worked with many competent, and caring people, I became extremely despondent by a society that incarcerates people for being different.

As an ambitious woman I became a director of services in a Section 39 organisation at twenty-eight years of age. However, once I reached this position I placed a glass ceiling above my head and never considered a role as a CEO, believing that it was beyond my capabilities as a woman. It was only after I was headhunted for such a position that I reflected on my positionality. I was bounded within my stereotyped gender identity formation and the concept of CEO was interwoven into a societal power status that I perceived as being beyond my personal agency.

This study is therefore influenced by a number of factors firstly, an awareness that I have been unconsciously accepting of the norms of society, and that of 'being gendered' and have curtailed my career advancement in line with societies expectations. Secondly, the ability of Section 39 organisations to continue to provide good quality responsive supports is under extreme threat. Lynch (2018) proffers that over regulation has mutated from organisations providing good supports based on human need and governed by human rights, to service-delivery operations with productivity targets. Thirdly, the culmination of the above two factors recognises that women CEOs not only contend with the barriers of being gendered but also carry the enormous burden of sustaining organisations that are constantly under threat of survival.

1.5. Rationale

This study aims to elicit potential new knowledge on how leadership and gender are experienced by six women CEOs working in intellectual disability organisations. The focus is on determining whether new insights can be gained from the perspectives of women leaders in a way that acknowledges the uniqueness of Section 39 organisations, while also approaching leadership not through the traditional male leadership lens but through the eyes of women practising leadership. It also attempts to understand the socio historical context that the research participants grew up in and the pervasive ideologies and discourses that shaped their earlier lives.

This study is seeking to understand the research participants career journeys to the higher echelons of leadership, the gender barriers experienced and an understanding of the challenges

that the role of CEO entails. Gender and leadership in the CVS have been studied from a myriad of different perspectives. However, there is limited literature available on women CEOs in this sector and no studies were identified, specific to women CEO's working in Section 39 intellectual disability organisations in Ireland.

1.6. Aims and Objectives

This research seeks to explore the concept of gender from a social constructionist viewpoint to determine its impact on the lived experiences of women who hold senior executive leadership roles within the context of Section 39 intellectual disability organisations. As knowledge is constructed through interactions between individuals and the world, understanding how women's experiences have been shaped through discourse, ideology, and historical and social contexts will be central to this study. The researcher will seek to explore the issue of personal identity for women that hold CEO positions, cognisant that leadership is a construct that exemplifies men and ignores issues associated with gender inequalities and power differentials. Not only this but understanding if the execution of agency within these executive roles are confined within the bounds of gender and/or leadership stereotypes.

The objectives of this research study are:

- To examine the significance of the historical and socio-cultural context, discourse, and ideology in shaping women's gender identity.
- To explore how women CEO's experience the interplay between the categorised oppositional social constructs of gender and leadership.
- To gain a greater understanding of the challenges that women experience within their role as CEO, that are unique to working within a Section 39 intellectual disability organisation.

1.7. Structure of this Study

This chapter has introduced the focus of this Doctorate study, titled, 'The social construction of gender and leadership and the impact of these paradoxical constructs on the lived experience of women CEOs,' viewpoints that are under-represented in literature.

Chapter Two presents a scoping review of literature in relation to women CEOs in not-for-profit organisations, this review is underpinned by a systematic approach, demonstrating the

study's significance and contribution to the evidence base. Chapter Three presents an overview of the theoretical framework adopted to sensitise each step of the research design. The studies aims and objectives, conjoined with the findings from the scoping review, resulted in social constructionism being selected as the overarching meta-theory. Chapter Four considers the researchers philosophical assumptions and outlines the justification for employing a feminist informed narrative inquiry approach.

Chapters Five and Six present the findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted with six women CEOs. Chapter Seven presents a discussion of the findings in relation to the research aims and objectives and a critical analysis of the findings of the research presented in Chapters Five and Six. In addition, this chapter ascertains how the findings relate to the existing literature explored in Chapter Two and the limitations of the study are highlighted. Finally, in Chapter Eight the researcher considers the significance and contribution of the study.

2. Scoping Review

2.1. Introduction

Despite a rise in the proportion of women in leadership roles in the not-for-profit sector, women continue to remain under-represented at senior executive level (Wheel & Horwath, 2014). The general aim of this scoping review is firstly, to provide an overview of literature that explores gender and senior executive leadership issues in the not-for-profit sector, secondly to ascertain if there are any gaps in the literature and thirdly, to appraise the barriers that cause gender disparity at senior executive level within the not-for-profit sector.

This chapter presents background information about women's position within the workplace. The importance of this review lies in trying to understand the basis for the persistent underrepresentation of women at CEO level within not-for-profit organisations. It also provides a rationale for the selection of a scoping review methodology and the methods employed. In addition, it also outlines the five stage process based on Arskey and O Malley's (2005) preferred reporting items for systematic and meta-analysis-compliant scoping reviews. This chapter will present the findings of the review and provide a discussion section which considers the relevance of the findings in relation to identifying a theoretical framework to inform this study.

2.2. Background: Women's Position in the Workplace

The advancement of women in the workplace has incrementally improved in the last 30 years with record-breaking increases being recorded by Fortune 500 companies of women holding chief executive officer (CEO) positions (Schwanke, 2013). The main attention regarding women in leadership has concentrated on business, with Fortune 500 ranking the most influential women in leadership in America globally since 2014 (Ming & Minghui, 2018).

However, based on the January 2022 Standard and Poors (S& P) 500 list only 33 women were employed as CEOs in S&P 500 companies (Catalyst, 2022). While celebrated as a recorded breaking number, it represents a meagre 6.6% of CEO positions being filled by women leaders. These statistics are even starker with one study highlighting that men are promoted to an executive role on average 15 years after working in their profession, while it takes women an

average of 23 years (Dillard & Lipschitz, 2014). A similar study highlighted that women are not hired or promoted into senior executive positions, as often as their male counterparts, even though they are equally or more qualified (Ellemers et al., 2012).

One study suggests that female leadership representation is more evident in not-for-profit organisations where women occupy mission-critical positions (Mastracci & Herring, 2010). In contrast a number of other studies recognise that the perception that women have better advancement outcomes in the not-for-profit sector than in corporate organisations is untrue, with men still holding a disproportionate number of senior executive positions (Lee, 2019; Ming & Minghui, 2018; Terry et al., 2020).

Several barriers have been cited as probable explanations of gender disparity. Soklaridis et al. (2017) suggest that gender stereotypes shape expectations about women's behaviour in society, and that the behavioural attributes assigned to women conflict with the stereotypical qualities assigned to leaders. With Ming and Minghui (2018) suggesting that there exists a negative stereotype of women in which women have a lower commitment to paid work because of family obligations.

In another study Barelka and Downes (2019) purport that invisible barriers while subtle, are so powerful that they prevent women from moving upwards into senior leadership executive roles. According to Eaves-Boykin (2021) women still face gender bias due to their failure to conform to the traditional masculine stereotyping of leadership. In addition, Alcaraz-Minnick (2020) recognises that women experience a myriad of obstacles in the workplace with gender stereotypes, lack of mentorship and network supports limiting women's opportunities for leadership advancement.

2.3. Rationale for Scoping Review Methodology

Current literature reviews fail to present a complete overview of what has been studied to date in relation to women working at CEO level in not-for-profit contexts such as Section 39 organisations. A scoping review approach was employed because of the complexity of the subject and the number of methodologies applied to this research area. A scoping review methodology was selected over a systematic review methodology, because it provides a better framework for answering the research question (Colquhoun et al., 2014; McGowan et al.,

2020). In addition, the scoping review focuses on the requirements for wide-ranging coverage (breadth) of the available literature, as opposed to systematic review whose focus is narrower.

It allows the reviewer to evaluate previous work on the research topic, to develop a better understanding of the breadth of literature relevant to the study and to establish the current state of knowledge in the field where the research is situated, including opposing perspectives of relevant theories and concepts (Bryman, 2016; Murray, 2017; Ridley, 2012; Swords, 2022b).

The review protocol has been recently used across different studies examining gender and/or women in leadership in various contexts. For example, Belingheri et al. (2021) adopted this approach to detect 20 years of research that has been published, on gender equality and associated issues. In another study, Bosco et al. (2020) applied a scoping review to explore leadership gender disparity in academia. In a similar study, Bucknor et al. (2018) used a scoping review to evaluate the extent of gender inequality globally in plastic surgery. While, Ferrari et al. (2022) used the approach to summarise the different forms of discrimination identified over a 20 year period towards female surgeons.

The extensive scope of this review means that it included various study styles rather than singly focusing on a particular study design, thereby, providing a more comprehensive overview of the prevalence of research on the concepts of gender and leadership in the not-for-profit sector (Grant & Booth, 2009).

2.4. Scoping Review Methods

A systematic scoping review of available published literature pertaining to women CEO's working in the not-for-profit sector was carried out. The overall aim of the review was to chart the breath of published studies in relation to women leaders in not-for-profit organisations. Also, more broadly, what these studies tell us about:

- The barriers women experience.
- The barriers leaders face in the not-for-profit sector.
- The models of leadership associated with women.
- The models of leadership associated with the not-for-profit sector.
- The competencies of women leaders.
- The competencies considered essential for being a leader in the not-for-profit sector.
- The work contexts described in the literature.

This scoping review was carried out to try and gain a greater understanding of gender and leadership within the not-for-profit context. Underpinning this scoping review is Arksey and O'Malley's five-stage process, and further refined by the Joanna Briggs Institute (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Page et al., 2021; Peters et al., 2015). The review was conducted by, ascertaining the relevant research questions; finding and selecting related studies; mapping the data; collating and summarising the findings, and outlining the results.
This protocol has not been registered.

To identify an appropriate checklist for the scoping process the reviewer appraised several publications which focused on PRISMA and PRISMA-ScR (Belingheri et al., 2021; McGowan et al., 2020; Moher et al., 2009; Norton & Swords, 2020; Page et al., 2021; Peters et al., 2015; Tricco et al., 2018). PRISMA-ScR, a recognised extension of PRISMA was developed to support the increased number of scoping reviews with distinct subject fields, such as women executive leaders in not-for-profit organisations. For transparency and reproducibility purposes the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) checklist [Appendix 1] was applied throughout the reporting process (Page et al., 2021; Peters et al., 2015; Pham et al., 2014).

This four-stage flow diagram (PRISMA-ScR) (Figure 1) depicts how information progresses through each phase of the scoping review process. The practical implementation of this process and the utilisation of EndNote's bibliographic software was underpinned by King et al. (2011) and Peters (2017), both papers present a similar process. In addition, NVivo 12, a qualitative analysis software package was used for analytical and coding purposes (Di Gregorio, 2000).

2.5. Search Methods

2.5.1. Stage 1: Identifying the Research Question

Arksey and O'Malley's five-stage process requires a general but well-defined research question, which identifies the conceptions, the target group of interest and the challenges (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Mahon, 2022). This was conceptualised as: P—Population: any person who self-identifies as a woman; C—Concept: women working in leadership roles; and C—Context: any working environment; inclusive of the consequences of stress and the relevance of context.

Thus, the FourCe-PITO conceptual framework of leadership (Table 1) which was designed to support healthcare leadership development will be used to help construct the research questions. The four major elements of this leadership conceptual framework were identified by Callahan and Grunberg, (2019) and include various elements of leadership styles which were designed to increase an understanding of effective leadership. The four Cs – identified as character, competence, context, and communication fundamentally ask 'who, what, when, where, and how' questions (Callahan & Grunberg, 2019; Grunberg et al., 2019).

The Four Cs and the four personal, interpersonal, team, and organisational (PITO) psychosocial levels of PITO interact and function across all psychosocial levels (Barry et al., 2018; Callahan & Grunberg, 2019; Eklund et al., 2017; Grunberg et al., 2019; Grunberg et al., 2021; Wiseman et al., 2022). PITO was developed at the United States Air Force Academy and adapted as a leadership training model (Callahan & Grunberg, 2019; Wiseman et al., 2022).

In order to better understand women executives' leadership experiences in not-for-profits the FourCe-PITO conceptual framework of leadership combined the eight concepts to produce two primary research questions and six sub questions.

- **Primary Research Questions**

  RQ1. Context: What types of barriers do women experience in leadership positions?

  RQ2. Context: What barriers do senior executive leaders experience in the not-for-profit sector?

- **Sub Questions**

  RQ3. Characteristics: What models of leadership are associated with women?

  RQ4. Characteristics: What models of leadership are associated with the not-for-profit sector?

  RQ5. Competencies: What type of competencies are required to be a women leader working in a not-for-profit organisation and what competencies are considered ineffective?

  RQ6. Competencies: What type of competencies are required of leaders in not-for-profits and what competencies are considered ineffective?

This, an important first step as the research question and sub questions guide the development of the search strategy (Tricco et al., 2016).

2.5.2 Stage 2: Identify Relevant Studies

A scoping review is thorough and comprehensive, as all relevant literature is appraised in order to address the key research question. Each stage of the process is recorded and detailed sufficiently to enable replication of the study by others. In doing so the reviewer has adopted an explicit approach which increases the reliability of the findings through transparency and completeness of reporting (McGowan et al., 2020; Moher et al., 2009; Tricco et al., 2018).

A strategy for retrieving research evidence from various different sources was discussed and developed by the reviewer in consultation with the librarian and the reviewers' supervisors, this included: which databases to search; piloting the search strategy to accommodate modifications and developing and improving the reviewer's technical research skills. To ensure a clear, robust and reproducible approach to managing all aspects of data retrieval, Endnote a bibliographic software package was used (King et al., 2011; Peters, 2017).

The following search terms and synonyms were used to conduct a search of the five selected databases (in EBSCO, JSTOR, PubMed, Web of Science, and Scopus) and a grey literature search in Google Scholar:

- Gender* AND Executive Leadership* AND Not-for-Profits*
- Women CEO's* AND Third Sectors*
- Women Leaders* AND Community and Voluntary Sector*

In all databases the above terms were used with the exception of Google Scholar to compensate an 'exact phrase category' was included as depicted in the search terms below:

- Gender executive leadership Or
- Women CEO's & the third sector

The references for each identified study were imported into the bibliographic database programme EndNote. Endnote was configured to ensure the results from each source were filed into distinct folders to simplify the reporting process. For this purpose, a database group was created in Endnote and divided into six group sets, with each of the group sets representing a database or a grey literature source [Appendix 2].

Once this step was completed a duplicate reference group was created [Appendix 3], as the removal of duplicates without accounting for them interferes with the numbering of the groups

(King et al., 2011; Peters, 2017). Duplication was manually identified through the use of EndNote's functionality. By moving duplicates to their own group, references were assigned manually into "Duplicate References" or "Unique References" sets allowing accountability of these numbers in the final output. Once this was complete, a final group for this phase called "References Identified through Database Searching (including duplicates)" was used to store all of the studies collectively. The total number beside the folder "References Identified through Database Searching" is the quantity placed in the first square of the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1).

2.5.3. Stage 3: Study Selection

Table 2 depicts the inclusion and exclusion criteria that was established at the beginning of the protocol and developed through an iterative process after completion of initial searches (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Colquhoun et al., 2014). The criterion was chosen to provide the best opportunity for answering the research questions.

Literature between January 2005 to September 2022 was included. This was to incorporate literature on leadership in the not-for-profit sector prior to Irelands economic crash which began in 2008 and which is often cited as changing the landscape for not-for-profit organisations due to underfunding, increased marketisation of the social care sector, and increased governance and reformatory practices (Dukelow & Murphy, 2016; Lynch, 2012, 2014, 2018; Wheel & Horwath, 2014).

The inclusion/exclusion criteria are specific and set the boundaries for the scoping review. These criteria encompass the components of the research question (Colquhoun et al., 2014). A rationale for inclusion/exclusion criterion is the vast breadth of studies that exist in relation to the concept of leadership.

Table 1: FourCe-PITO conceptual framework of leadership used for constructing search statements (Callahan & Grunberg, 2019; Eklund et al., 2017).

Character	Who the leader is refers to all aspects of the individual, including demographics, attributes, personality, attitudes, outlook, values, attributes and physical characteristics e.g., gender, age profile, race and appearance.
Competence	What the leader knows and does includes role-specific and transcendent leadership knowledge and skills e.g., critical thinking, good decision making, high emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, problem-solving, motivating, and empowering others.
Context	When and where leadership includes physical, psychological, social, and cultural and organisational environments. It also includes the effects of stress and the importance of situational/context awareness.
Communication	How leaders interact with followers by sending and receiving information, verbally through the oral and written word and nonverbally through body language, and facial expressions.
Personal	Focuses on aspects of the individual leader, including perception of self and self-awareness.
Interpersonal	Focuses on interactions between the leader and others e.g., service users, board, colleagues, families, health service executive (HSE), Health information quality authority (HIQA).
Team	Focuses on operations of small groups of people aligned around a common purpose or goal for e.g., senior management team.

Table 2: Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
Qualitative/ Quantitative/ Mixed Methods Peer Reviewed Studies, Dissertations, Literature Reviews, Discussion Papers	Studies that are not Peer Reviewed Studies, dissertations, Literature Reviews, Discussion Papers
Studies from January 2005 to September 2022	Studies prior to 2005 Studies after September 2022
English Language	Studies published in a language other than English
Titles, abstracts, and keywords which refer to Gender and Executive Leadership and not-for-profits, (or alternative search terms as outlined in Table 3)	Titles and abstracts which do not include Gender and Executive Leadership and not-for-profits (or alternative search terms as outlined in Table 3)

Overall, 631 studies were obtained from the databases with 30 extra articles sourced throughout the process (N = 661). All references were transferred into Endnote for review [Appendix 4]. The reviewer screened for duplicates and (N=21) duplicates were removed. The author then screened 640 titles and abstracts in Endnote those that did not meet the inclusion criteria were excluded. A cut off point for the identification of new articles to be included in the review was set as 01 October 2022. In total 32 articles met the inclusion criteria.

Using Endnote to capture the screening process beginning with the titles and abstracts of the saved references, a new group set called "Screening Titles and Abstracts" was created. Four groups were created for this set: "References for Screening," "Include," "Exclude," and Uncertain" [Appendix 5]. The reviewer screened each title and abstract from every article that was progressed from the preceding phase into the "References for Screening" group selecting the relevant subset folders. The "References for Screening" group was used to identify references not yet screened.

References in the "Uncertain" group are held for further consideration with the reviewer's supervisors and then re-categorised into the inclusion or exclusion folder as appropriate. This stage of the process concluded with all the articles in the "Include" group being placed into a new folder titled "Eligibility of Full-Text Articles" and, within that set, to a group called "Full-

Text Articles Assessed for Eligibility" (King et al., 2011; Peters, 2017).This detail is inserted into the first square within the 'Eligibility' stage section in Figure 1. The reference total in the "Exclude" set must match the amount in the "Records Excluded" square in Figure 1 which presents the information flow throughout the various stages of the review.

2.5.4. Stage 4: Charting the Data

The aim of this scoping review is to explore the breadth of knowledge available on the concept of women executive leaders working within the not-for-profit sector. Therefore, it has incorporated a number of different study designs to broadly summarise the evidence with a view to informing this study. An important part of any scoping review is how the findings are visually presented (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Norton, 2022).

The next step involved retrieving the completed articles of all identified references for full text review and importing them into Endnote. Only one group is required for "References Included After Full-Text Review" and is indicated in the PRISMA flow diagram. The data from this group was then exported from Endnote to NVivo where coding was conducted using the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

After examining the full texts of all references, the excluded groups are exported from NVivo to a new group in Endnote titled "Full-Text References Excluded with Reasons" matching with a square in the PRISMA flow diagram. The total of references excluded are also documented. Therefore, the reviewer can clearly demonstrate which references have been excluded and provide supporting evidence. The final group is titled "Studies Included".

The reviewer used Microsoft excel to develop the data charting form. When the data charting was completed, the Microsoft excel spreadsheet was imported into NVivo 12, an analytical software package, for further analysis. As an additional step the charting form was piloted on five studies to determine if the approach to data charting was consistent with the concepts posed within the research question/s. This is an iterative process culminating in the updating of the data charting form.

The variables charted to answer the research question/s include:

- Authors.
- Publication Year.
- Country where the study was conducted or the first author's affiliation.

- Type of Article.
- Study design: qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method.
- Context: Setting: CVS, Non-profit, Charity, Health Care, Business Sector.
- Barriers for women in leadership and/or not-for-profit sector.
- Competencies of leadership for women and/or not-for-profit.
- Ineffective competencies of leadership for women and/or not-for-profit.
- Models of leadership.
- Findings of interest.

A brief description of all included articles is provided in Table 3, with a full description included in [Appendix 6].

2.6. Results

2.6.1 Stage 5: Collating, summarising, and reporting the results

All references for inclusion within the review were identified and then exported from Endnote to NVivo 12 for coding [Appendix 7]. Using NVivo software can support qualitative analysis by asking multiple questions of the texts to identify patterns and arrive at clear conclusions (Bryman, 2016). NVivo 12 was used as a record and coding system to provide clarity to the analytical and coding procedures [Appendix 8 & Appendix 9]. It must be highlighted that NVivo 12 software, is used for efficiency and cannot of itself carry out analysis or determine conclusions. Importantly, NVivo 12 produces an audit trail through the cataloguing of data actions, patterns of coding, and the charting of theoretical classifications and thought progression. This produces an analytical process that is traceable and transparent and on which the reliability and credibility of a review can be established.

The primary driver for coding were themes that emerge within the literature supported by the capability of the reviewer to use a reflexive lens throughout the analytical process (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021; Clarke et al., 2015; Terry et al., 2017).

Figure 1: PRISMA 2022 Flow Diagram

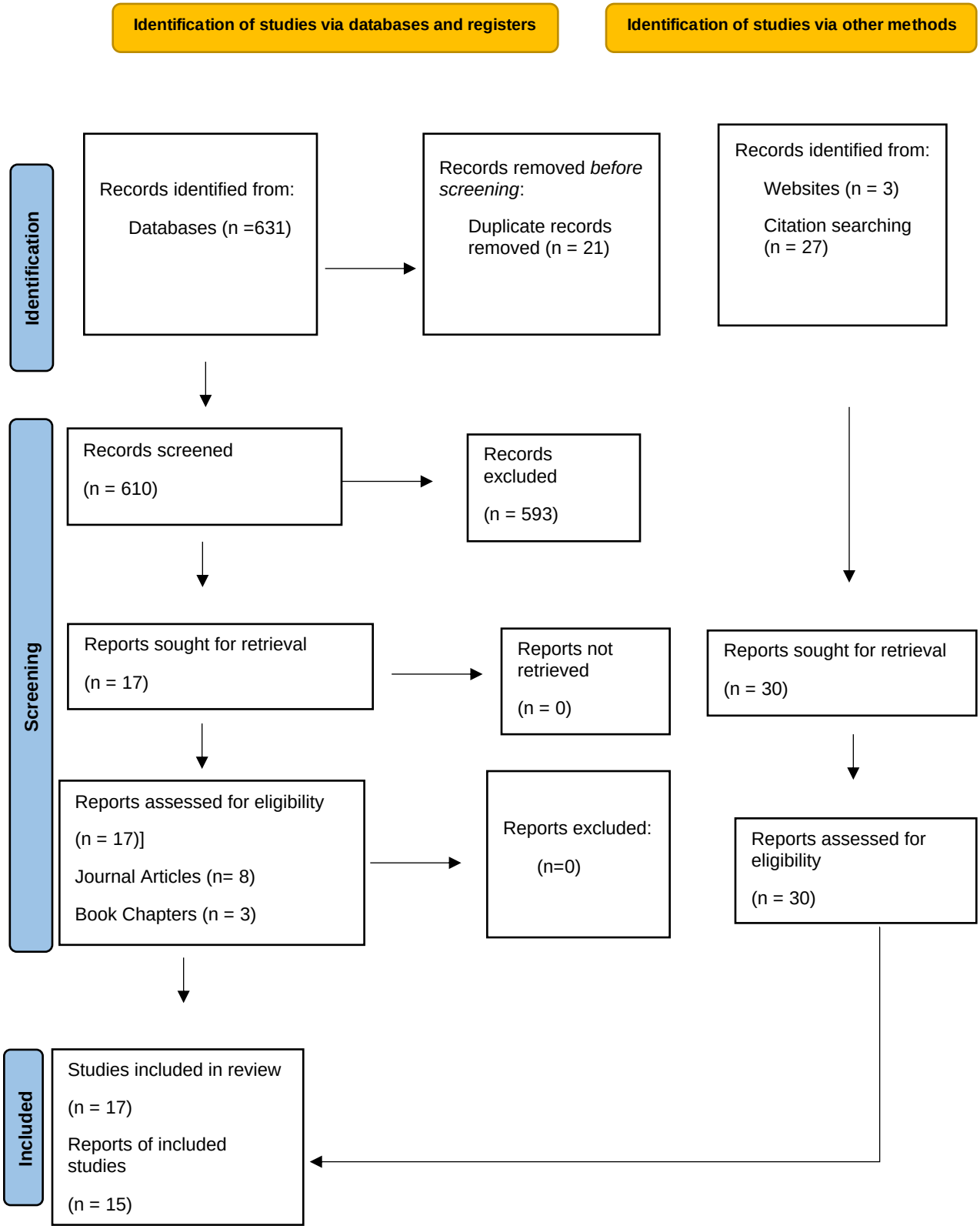


Table 3: Studies included in the review

No	Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting
1	Al-Alawi, A. I.	Status of Bahraini women in the banking and financial sector: Challenges and opportunities	2016	Bahrain	Journal	Mixed Methods	Banking and Financial Sector
2	Alcaraz-Minnick, Katya	The Non-profit Gender Leadership Gap: Data-Driven Systemic and Inclusive Solutions	2020	America	Thesis	Quantitative	Non-Profits
3	Barelka, Alex & Downes, Meredith	A career-stage approach to understanding glass ceiling perceptions	2019	America	Journal	Qualitative	Family Businesses
4	Brignoli, Tammy Lynn	Women leaders: The exploration of contributing factors advancing women to executive leadership positions	2020	America	Thesis	Qualitative	Department of Defence
5	Buckingham, Heather Paine, Angela Ellis Alcock, Pete KendallJeremy Macmillan, Rob	Who's speaking for whom? Exploring issues of third sector leadership, leverage and legitimacy	2014	America	Journal	Qualitative	Third Sector
6	Carli, Linda L. Eagly, Alice H.	Women face a labyrinth: an examination of metaphors for women leaders	2016	America	Journal	Literature Review	N/A
7	Clevenger, Leslie & Singh, Neha	Exploring barriers that lead to the glass ceiling effect for women in the US hospitality industry	2013	America	Journal	Qualitative	Hospitality
8	Cook, Alison & Glass, Christy	ABOVE THE GLASS CEILING: WHEN ARE WOMEN AND RACIAL/ETHNIC MINORITIES PROMOTED TO CEO?	2014	America	Journal	Quantitative	Fortune 500 Companies
9	D'Souza, Fahmida Zaman	Become the CEO your mom wanted you to marry: Women who shatter the glass (the social and cultural construction of gender stereotypes among a sample of women in business)	2007	America	Book	Mixed Methods	MBA Graduates Workplaces

No	Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting
10	Eaves-Boykin, Kelley Nichole	Navigating the double-bind dilemma: Understanding the leadership behaviour of women executives and the impact on organizational culture and effectiveness	2021	America	Thesis	Qualitative	For Profit Colleges
11	Erakovic, Ljiljana	Governance and leadership challenges for third sector organisations: Core purpose vs. end purpose	2015	New Zealand	Journal	Qualitative	Third Sector
12	Fernandez-Mateo, Isabel	Bending the Pipeline? Executive Search and Gender Inequality in Hiring for Top Management Jobs	2016	America	Journal	Mixed Methods	Executive Search Hiring Firms
13	Gentry, William A Booysen, Lize Hannum, Kelly M Weber, Todd J	Leadership responses to a conflict of gender-based tension: A comparison of responses between men and women in the US and South Africa	2010	America	Journal	Quantitative	Not-for-profits
14	Harding, Steve John	Values alignment in voluntary and community sector organizations	2015	England	Book	Qualitative	Community & Voluntary Organisations
15	HARRIS, BRYNN	WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP: A QUALITATIVE REVIEW OF CHALLENGES, EXPERIENCES, AND STRATEGIES IN ADDRESSING GENDER BIAS	2019	America	Journal	Qualitative	Across multiple industries
16	Kalaitzi, Stavroula	Women, healthcare leadership and societal culture: a qualitative study	2019	Netherlands	Journal	Qualitative	Healthcare
17	Katuna, Barret Mary	Breaking the glass ceiling? Gender and leadership in higher education	2014	America	Thesis	Qualitative	Education
18	Lahti, Elsi	Women and leadership: factors that influence women's career success: female leaders' reflections on their career development and leadership	2013	Finland	Thesis	Qualitative	Across multiple industries

No	Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting
19	Lee, Young-Joo	Scarce as Hen's Teeth: Women CEOs in Large Non-profit Organizations	2019	America	Journal	Quantitative	Large Non-profit Organisations
20	Leslie, Lisa M Manchester, Colleen Flaherty Dahm, Patricia C	Why and when does the gender gap reverse? Diversity goals and the pay premium for high potential women	2017	America	Journal	Quantitative	Fortune 500 Companies
21	Macmillan, Rob &McLaren, Vic	Third sector leadership: the power of narrative	2012	England	Book	N/A	Third Sector
22	Ming, Xie	A Cross-Cultural Examination of Chinese and American Female Leadership in Non-profit Organizations	2018	China	Journal	Mixed Methods	Non-Profits
23	Nelson, Danette	Hail to the chief: An exploration of female chief executives' successes	2021	America	Thesis	Quantitative	For Profit Corporates
24	Osula, Bramwell Ng, Eddie CW	Toward a collaborative, transformative model of non-profit leadership: Some conceptual building blocks	2014	America	Journal	Qualitative	Non-Profits
25	Percupchick, Harry	Women in leadership: Understanding potential drivers/restrainers of female progression in the workplace	2011	America	Thesis	Qualitative	Education, government, services, and non-profit organizations
26	Pillay, Pamela	The perception of the glass ceiling phenomenon	2012	South Africa	Book	Mixed Methods	Government
27	Saliba, Rosali	Women in the Boardroom: How Do Female Directors of Corporate Boards on Business Performance?	2016	Norway	Journal Article	Quantitative	Corporate Companies
28	Schwanke, Dee-Ann	Barriers for women to positions of power: How societal and corporate structures, perceptions of leadership and discrimination restrict women's advancement to authority	2013	Canada	Journal	Literature Review	Corporate Companies

No	Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting
29	Soklaridis, Sophie	Gender bias in hospital leadership: a qualitative study on the experiences of women CEOs	2017	Canada	Journal	Qualitative	Hospitals
30	Stanley, David	Congruent leadership: values in action	2008	Australia	Literature Review	N/A	Hospital Setting
31	Terry, Vita Rees, James & Jacklin-Jarvis, Carol	Briefing Paper academic debate on leadership in the voluntary sector	2006	Ireland	Journal	Qualitative	Voluntary Sector (Youth and Community Work
32	Terry, Vita	The difference leadership makes. Debating and conceptualising leadership in the UK voluntary sector	2020	United Kingdom	Journal	Literature Review	Voluntary Sector

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within studies (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). Terry et al. (2017) Braun and Clarke (2019) have developed this method further and now refer to this approach as 'reflexive thematic analysis'. In practice, this is because it is an approach in which the reviewer is actively and deliberately engaged with the research. It requires the reviewer to commit to an ongoing reflexive dialogue and engagement with theory, data and interpretation and it emphasises the importance of the reviewer's subjectivity as an analytic resource (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019, 2021; Clarke et al., 2015).

The results presented relate to the primary research questions and sub questions outlined in stage one of the scoping process. The scoping process is not linear but iterative, requiring the reviewer to participate with each stage in a reflexive way including, the repetition of steps to ensure that all relevant literature is comprehensively covered (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).The data from the charting form supported the development of themes relevant and relational to the research questions. Codes were named in NVivo 12 and then incorporated into more general themes. Three main themes reported on in the findings include: model of leadership; effective leadership competencies and ineffective leadership competencies. However, the main focus of analysis is located within the barriers that women in leadership and/or leadership in the not-for-profit sector experience. Gaps, within the literature were identified and documented and are presented at the end of this chapter.

2.6.2 Study Characteristics

Thirty-two articles published after January 2005 were categorised and examined. The majority of studies (N = 29) were conducted in first world Western societies, America (N=18), Canada (N = 2), England (N = 3), Ireland (N = 1), New Zealand (N = 1), Netherlands (N = 1), Finland (N = 1), Australia (N = 1), Norway (N = 1). One study (N = 1) was completed in the low-income country of Bahrain. Another study was conducted in China (N= 1), and another study was carried out in South Africa (N = 1). The articles employed a combination of methods, (N =15), used qualitative methods, (N = 5), used mixed methods, (N = 6), used quantitative methods, (N = 3), were literature reviews and the remaining (N = 3), were reports.

The types of settings included not-for-profit (N = 10), healthcare or hospital settings (N = 3), corporate companies (N = 5), government (N = 2), educational, government and not-for-profit (N = 1), education (N = 3), across multiple industries (N = 2), Fortune 500 companies (N = 2), hospitality (N = 1), family business (N = 1), banking and financial sector (N = 1), and for (N = 1), article which was a literature review the setting type was not relevant. The terminology for not-for-profit (N = 10), included third sector (N = 3), non-profits (N = 3), community and voluntary sector (N = 1), not-for-profits (N = 1), voluntary sector (N = 2).

2.6.3. Study characteristics of research questions

RQ1. What are some of the barriers facing women in leadership and/or leadership in the not-for-profit sector?

(N = 24), of the articles identified barriers that women experience as leaders in the working environment and (N = 8), of the articles identified barriers experienced by leaders regardless of gender in not-for-profit organisations.

RQ2. Characteristics: What models of leadership are associated with women and/or not-for-profit sector?

(N = 8), articles identified models of leadership associated with women, (N = 8), articles identified models of leadership associated with the not-for-profit sector and (N = 2) articles identified models of leadership associated with both not-for-profits and women. (N = 15), articles related to research on women did not cite any models of leadership and (N = 1), article related to research on not-for-profit organisations did not cite any models of leadership.

RQ3. Competencies: What type of competencies are required to be a women leader working in a not-for-profit organisation and/or a leader in a not-for-profit organisation and what competencies are considered ineffective?

(N = 18), articles identified competencies that women demonstrate that are perceived as positive, (N = 8), articles identify competencies required of leaders working in the not-for-profit sector irrespective of gender and (N = 6), articles related to research on women in leadership, but did not discuss any leadership competencies.

(N = 11), articles identified competencies that women demonstrate that are perceived as negative, (N =5), articles identify competencies that are considered negative if displayed by leaders working in the not-for-profit sector. (N = 13), articles related to research on women in leadership that did not explore negative leadership competencies and (N = 3), articles related to the not-for-profit sector, did not explore negative leadership competencies.

The findings of the articles that reported on barriers, models of leadership, perceived effective and ineffective leadership competencies associated with women and/or the non-profit sector, are discussed in the corresponding sections.

2.6.4. RQ1. What are some of the barriers facing women in leadership and/or leadership in the not-for-profit sector? (Figure 2)

Visible Barriers

Mentorship (10 articles)

The lack of sufficient networks along with an absence of women role models or mentors, forces women to become self-dependant (Brignoli, 2020). Cook and Glass (2014) suggest that women benefit from being part of social and professional networks. Mentorship from individuals who are already in positions of influence can support women in their professional growth (Katuna, 2014; Nelson, 2021).

D'Souza (2007) suggests that mentorship of women is more impactful when conducted by other women, as men often fail to identify the steps and time needed to be an effective coach. While Barelka and Downes (2019) contend that women are not as networked as men, and would benefit from access to a male network.

Nine articles cited lack of access to mentorship or support networks as a barrier to women in leadership. However, Eaves-Boykin (2021) contradicts this by contending that women use mentorship to prepare for a senior executive leadership role, but gender bias and discriminatory practices undermines their ability to succeed.

Women report that coaching, mentorship, and strategic networking are important factors in their professional development and career progression and/or sustainment (Barelka & Downes, 2019; Brignoli, 2020; Eaves-Boykin, 2021; Soklaridis et al., 2017). Closing the gap between men and women executive leaders requires more women reaching top levels of leadership, mentorship plays an important role in this narrative.

Organisation structure (22 articles)

Senior executive leadership is still a man's business (Fernandez-Mateo & Fernandez, 2016; Lee, 2019). Ming and Minghui (2018) posit that addressing how organisations support the advancement of women should be achieved from a broad perspective, and not simply viewed as a gender issue. Lahti (2013) suggests that having gender quotas in organisations can guarantee a number of positions for women, at CEO level. Brignoli (2020) purports that women holding CEO roles should seek opportunities for other women and promote policy changes that advocate for gender diversity and inclusion.

However, there are numerous articles which suggest that changing policy alone will not be enough to improve gender diversity. Women themselves have indicated that societal, organisational and self-imposed barriers have inhibited them from advancing to senior executive level, with lack of skills, education, risk taking, work experiences and mentorship being some of the obstacles cited (Al-Alawi, 2016; Barelka & Downes, 2019; D'Souza, 2007). Often the culture of an organisation is influenced by society at large (Al-Alawi, 2016; Ming & Minghui, 2018) therefore influencing organisational cultural beliefs and assumptions which advance an organisation's diversity and inclusive goals can be complex (Brignoli, 2020; Clevenger & Singh, 2013).

Pay (three articles)

According to Leslie et al. (2017) research is abundant in its documentation of a gender pay gap with women at the lower end of the pay scale. In addition, men are more likely to be

recruited and promoted into high-level positions. However, Clevenger and Singh (2013) propose that the current increase in equality at work legislation, together with a limited number of women in high powered positions, could be a turning point in creating a greater demand for women. This could place women in a position to demand pay premiums. This assumption is consistent with the principles of supply and demand. However in reality women remain underrepresented in Fortune 500 companies and more favourably represented in sectors such as the not-for-profit sector, that offer lower rates of pay (Carli & Eagly, 2016).

Invisible barriers

Patriarchal Culture (seven articles)

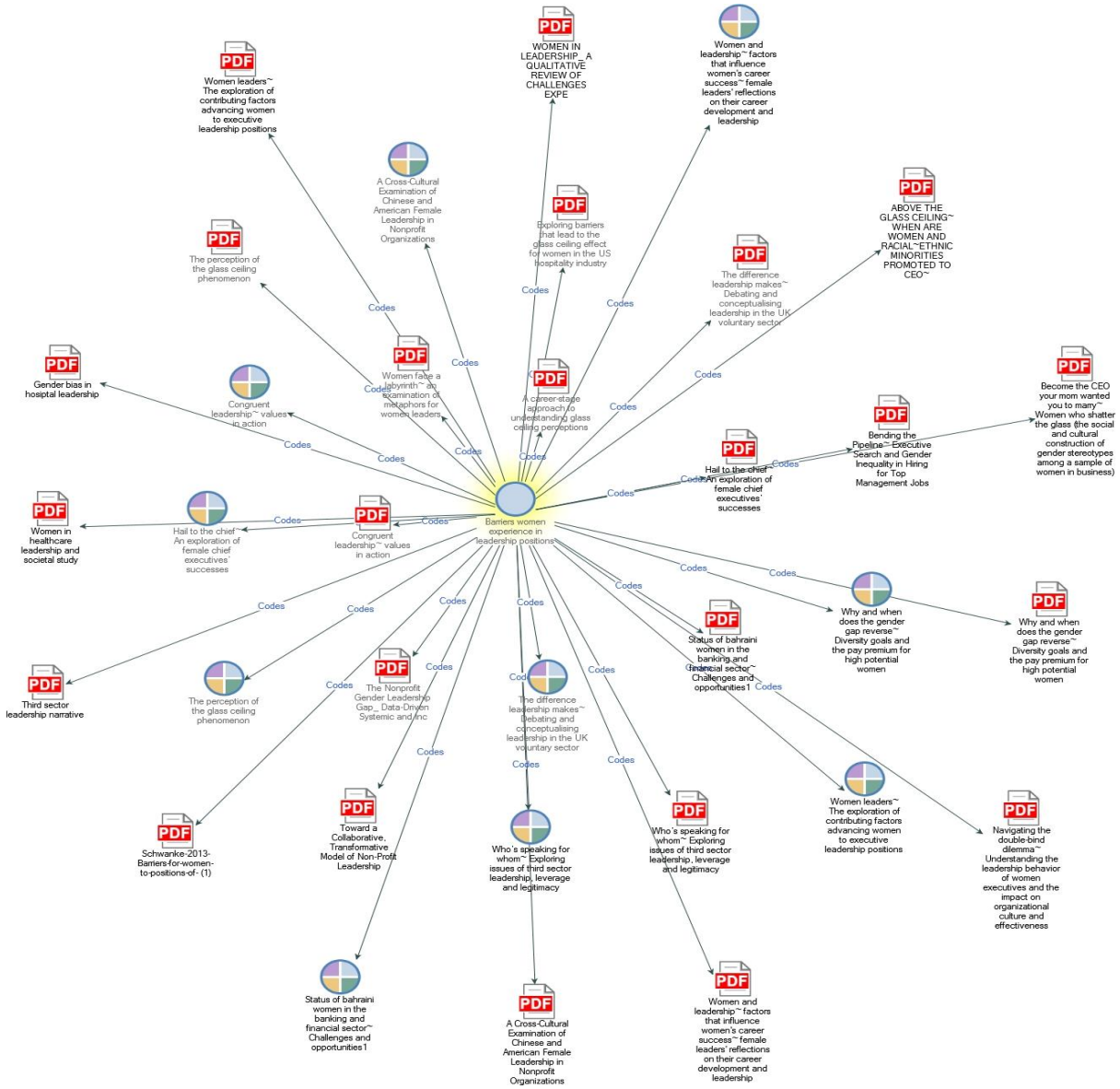
The complex effects of patriarchy, which contributes to the social, cultural, and economic hegemony of men, has the propensity to condition women to behave in a way that is consistent with this ideology (Fernandez-Mateo & Fernandez, 2016; Kalaitzi et al., 2019; Katuna, 2014).

The majority of findings suggest that women are typically disadvantaged with respect to their male counterparts (Al-Alawi, 2016; Alcaraz-Minnick, 2020; Barelka & Downes, 2019; Brignoli, 2020; Carli & Eagly, 2016; Clevenger & Singh, 2013; Cook & Glass, 2014; D'Souza, 2007; Eaves-Boykin, 2021; Fernandez-Mateo & Fernandez, 2016; Gentry et al., 2010).

According to Katuna (2014) it is important to understand and explore how gender has become an explanation of leadership styles, as this disproportionately impacts women. Leadership is a social construct developed from a patriarchal lens, that favours men and is a discursive construction that contributes to a woman's struggle for equality in positions of power (Katuna, 2014; Lahti, 2013; Pillay, 2012).

According to Alcaraz-Minnick (2020) the historical patriarchal foundations of our society, established the terms of gender disparity that are enacted in society. Therefore, women constantly confront subtle, socially constructed obstacles, while men profit from the deceptive normality of patriarchy.

Figure 2: Coding and analysis of the barriers that women experience in leadership



Fernandez-Mateo and Fernandez (2016) argue that the lack of women COE's, reflects, organisational demand-side barriers, positing that employers have definite preferences for male leaders. Women that brave the barriers to advance to executive leadership positions very often become isolated, resulting in high turnovers (Cook & Glass, 2014). Climbing the ladder to senior leadership positions according to Schwanke (2013) can come at a cost to women. As these women are often subjected to the emotional burdens of being stereotyped, sexually harassed, and isolated (Kalaitzi et al., 2019; Katuna, 2014; Lee, 2019).

Stereotyping, gender bias and internalised perceptions (27 articles)

Fear of failure and fear of success, which are by definition the opposite of each other, are cited by Ming and Minghui (2018) as emotions that women experience in the workplace. Barelka and Downes (2019) suggest that women often internalise negative evaluations and social stereotypes, which can cause them to accept the status quo and even turn down opportunities for advancement. Ming and Minghui (2018) suggest that this occurs because women are conflicted over their roles as family mother and working mother, with this sentiment reinforced by Gentry et al. (2010) who purports that women perform to a stereotype.

Eaves-Boykin (2021) posits that women leaders often mask their authentic selves to conform to traditional masculine leadership traits, because traditionally, women who adopted male characteristics were promoted to leadership positions. As a result, they can present as stern, and unapproachable, which can impact negatively on women's self-confidence (; Lee, 2019; Leslie et al., 2017). Stereotypes are perpetuated by the old boys club, where the proverb "It's not what you know, it's who you know" still applies (Barelka & Downes, 2019).

2.6.5. RQ2. The barriers that senior executive leaders experience in the not-for-profit sector (8 articles)

According to Buckingham et al. (2014) leaders in not-for-profits have limited influence over important national policy debates and practice issues relating to 'the sector'. This centralised power erodes the voice of leaders on the ground who face complex practice issues and affords them little negotiation in a changing political and ideological climate (Macmillan & McLaren, 2012). The shift towards an emphasis on survival and sustainability, along with an intensified focus on demonstrating impact and value for money, threatens the congruence between leadership, values and mission (Harding, 2015). This is further impacted by lack of agreement

on what constitutes ‘good’ leadership in not-for-profits (Terry et al., 2020).

2.6.6. RQ3. Characteristics: What models of leadership are associated with women and/or not-for-profit sector?

Models of leadership associated with women (8 articles)

There were six models of leadership associated with women, with several articles identifying more than two models of leadership. These models included transformational, authentic, democratic, transactional, servant and female leadership. (N = 5), articles identified transformational leadership as being the model of leadership most associated with women.

Cook and Glass’s (2014) research found that women are viewed as less effective leaders as compared to white males. Katuna (2014) purports that leadership is a social construct borne from a traditionally masculine phenomenon which diminishes women. Several articles indicate that men and women are both effective leaders, while acknowledging the view that they lead differently (Al-Alawi, 2016; Brignoli, 2020).

Several articles suggest that women gravitate towards becoming leaders in organisations that have strong social justice values, such as not-for-profits. Interestingly, women are more likely to be promoted to leadership positions in organisations like not-for-profits that are struggling, in crisis, or at risk of failing (D'Souza, 2007; Soklaridis et al., 2017). Sadly, failure, high levels of stress, and burnout often result in women subsequently leaving these positions (Soklaridis et al., 2017).

2.6.7. RQ4. Models of leadership associated with the not-for-profit sector (8 articles)

Three models of leadership cited as being effective for the not-for-profit sector included congruence, values based and collaborative leadership. Terry et al. (2020) highlights, that traditional leadership is no longer fit for purpose in the not-for-profit sector and to survive the future, this sector must consider the conceptualisation of leadership as collective rather than as individual.

This sentiment is echoed by Macmillan and McLaren (2012) who identify that the not-for-profit sector is experiencing a radical shift in its political and economic environment. This

change is challenging organisational stability and survival and requires the sector to reconceptualise leadership. Macmillan and McLaren (2012) discuss collaborative leadership as a broad concept, in which CEOs collectively forge strategic alliances and develop a strong strategic narrative vision to increase bargaining power with the State.

Similarly, Buckingham et al. (2014) describes a diverse sector with ambiguous boundaries and a collection of leaders who do not always agree on what the fundamental concerns and issues are. As a result Buckingham et al. (2014) states that it is not always transparent, who is advocating for whom, on what terms, achieving what effect? This highlights the need for an agreed model of leadership that supports a new discourse underpinned by shared values. Harding (2015) depicts a similar view of a sector requiring realignment and restructuring to survive. However, in contrast to the previous studies, Harding (2015) argues that not-for-profits require values based leadership to counteract the negative impact of an ever changing working environment.

Harding (2015) also describes a bleak not-for-profit landscape characterised by changes in social and economic policies, challenging demands, collaboration and mergers and financial struggles. Erakovic (2015) purports that congruence leadership is required to navigate this new world and to achieve strategic goals aligned to the values and mission of an organisation. Stanley (2008) describes congruent leadership models that are underpinned by passion, compassion, and qualities of the heart. Both Erakovic (2015) and Stanley (2008) propose that congruent leadership offers the not-for-profit sector the best chance of survival, as it is based on leaders who respond purposefully to challenges that are incongruent with the organisations values, and beliefs and may result in mission drift.

Models of leadership associated with both not-for-profits and women (2 articles)

Minng and Minghui's (2018) article examined the lived experience of American and Chinese women leaders in not-for-profit organisations in America. The study identified transformational, collaborative, and participatory leadership as being effective for women leaders, recognising the not-for-profit sectors complexity in terms of behaviours, underfunding, service user needs, and mission objectives. Ming and Minghui (2018) suggest that not-for-profit organisations offer a brighter future than the corporate world for women leaders

regarding gender equality. However, they caution that the intersectionality of gender, culture, and race of women leaders in not-for-profit organisations requires further attention.

Alcaraz-Minnick (2020) identified five models of leadership associated with women leaders in the not-for-profit sector which include authentic, democratic, collaborative, people oriented and transformational. These models of leadership are associated with nurturing partnerships and humane leadership, congruent with the mission objectives of not-for-profits. Research participants of this study identified that the compassion and kindness attributed to women were at the core of authentic leadership. Some research participants identified that being authentic and being able to bring their authenticity to the professional self, motivated them to achieve high quality outcomes in leadership.

Similar to Ming and Minghui (2018) this study identified that the not-for-profit sector has made the most progress in minimising the gender leadership gap, however gender inequality still exists. Indeed, Alcaraz-Minnick (2020) also recognised that the intersectionality of gender, culture, and race are interlinked and worthy of further discussion.

2.6.8. RQ5. Competencies: What type of competencies are required to be a women leader working in a not-for-profit organisation and/or a leader in a not-for-profit organisation and what competencies are considered ineffective?

Effective competencies (18 articles) and ineffective competencies (11 articles) that are associated with women in leadership

Studies indicate that society holds a consistent gendered attitude towards leadership traits (D'Souza, 2007; Eaves-Boykin, 2021; Percupchick, 2011; Schwanke, 2013). According to Schwanke (2013) the different expectations of women and men are popularly described as "communal" versus "agentic." Women are stereotypically portrayed in leadership as having communal attributes, including being gentle, caring, emphatic, good communicators, person orientated, and relationship builders (Alcaraz-Minnick, 2020; Carli & Eagly, 2016; Cook & Glass, 2014; Katuna, 2014; Lahti, 2013; Nelson, 2021; Pillay, 2012).

This has the propensity to create tension, as research consistently demonstrates that agentic traits closely resemble those which are usually attributed to men, as compatible with leadership, such as assertion, command and control (Al-Alawi, 2016; Carli & Eagly, 2016; D'Souza, 2007; Pillay, 2012; Schwanke, 2013). Therefore, the communal gender stereotype is often perceived

as incompatible with leadership and women who are observed to display qualities that are more closely aligned to men, are resisted (Carli & Eagly, 2016; Saliba, 2016).

These generalised expectations have traditionally created a blueprint for leadership that is challenging for women. Women are criticised equally for being too masculine and too feminine and often experience attitudinal penalties for not conforming to the perceived role (Clevenger & Singh, 2013; Harris, 2019b; Schwanke, 2013). Indeed, being a woman has been cited in two of the studies as being a negative attribute for leadership (Carli & Eagly, 2016; Clevenger & Singh, 2013)

Interestingly, the female communal traits traditionally believed to disqualify women from leadership roles are currently perceived as being particularly appropriate for organisations in crisis (Alcaraz-Minnick, 2020; Ming & Minghui, 2018). According to Alcaraz-Minnick (2020) effective leaders must adopt mission critical positions and that a woman's inherent leadership traits make them an ideal candidate for this role. Similarly Cook and Glass (2014) suggest that women's presumed empathy, and interpersonal skills are becoming valuable attributes in struggling organisations. However, Schwanke (2013) warns that this approach to leadership is still based on communal and agentic descriptors and therefore perceived progress might result in just a different form of stereotyping.

2.6.9. RQ6. Effective competencies (8 articles) and ineffective competencies (5 articles) of leaders working in the not-for-profit sector irrespective of gender

Erakovic (2015) conducted 40 semi-structured interviews with board members and CEOs from the not-for-profit sector. One of the aims of the study was to explore skills and leadership values at CEO level. Respondents looked to senior executives as ambassadors and champions who had the skills to be able to 'walk and talk' the values of the organisation. Similarly Harding (2015) recognised the importance of senior executives having strong and authentic values. With Terry et al. (2020) also identifying leaders as requiring charismatic qualities, and strong personal skills, including the importance of being able to adopt a 'helicopter view' in order to see the bigger picture.

A number of articles argue that the exceptional challenges currently facing the not-for-profit sector highlight the need for a new perspectives in leadership (Buckingham et al., 2014; Erakovic, 2015; Harding, 2015; Macmillan & McLaren, 2012; Terry et al., 2020). Osula and

Ng (2014) discussed the significance of leaders being entrenched in transformational principles, that are values-orientated and rooted in principles of integrity, emotional awareness, collaboration, community engagement, cultural understanding, and future planning orientated.

However, a number of studies identified the challenges of sustaining good leaders within the sector and that high turnovers of senior executives has become a regular occurrence (Buckingham et al., 2014; Macmillan & McLaren, 2012; Osula & Ng, 2014; Terry et al., 2020). Macmillan and McLaren (2012) caution that this is a worrying loss to the sector at a time when it requires stability and leaders that are steeped in its values and culture. In contrast Harding (2015) argues that new skills and new leadership is required to tackle the challenges facing the sector. With Erakovic (2015) proffering that current leadership is not effective and that senior executives are too busy 'patch protecting' and therefore fail to work collectively.

2.7. Discussion

The aim of this review was to identify and examine the breadth of literature relevant to the research questions. The primary analysis of this discussion is concentrated on appraising the barriers that cause gender disparity at senior executive level in relation to advancing to CEO positions.

The findings suggest that the barriers that women experience are not just present within workplaces but that they exist within society at structural, institutional, and individual levels. Findings highlight that the exposure of woman to patriarchal ideology from early childhood results in the conditioning and gendering of women. Women as such are implicitly and explicitly habituated through everyday interactions to comply with gendered societal norms. Many of the studies highlighted the power of a pervasive patriarchal ideology that exists within cultures as a rationale for the lack of women in positions of authority.

A patriarchal ideology divides gender into two oppositional classifications, that of female and male, with women being assigned lesser societal status and power. Therefore, as white males thrive and dominate within this social order, women's influence on society is reduced and their station in life becomes confined to the domestic home. The difficulty for women is that gender conditioning from childhood supports the acceptance of patriarchy as a truism of reality.

The concept of leadership has been constructed and defined through language, discourse, and social interactions that support its alignment with a male gendered categorisation and therefore at odds with the female gender. This is further reinforced through theories of leadership such

as the great man theory and the patriarchal concept of the woman as the homemaker. Challenging the status quo by reaching senior leadership positions causes tension and conflict experienced internally by women as guilt for working outside the home and dissonance associated with stepping outside of the norms of social order. Externally women can experience negative social interactions as a result of their leadership status from both women and men.

Barelka and Downes (2019) describe the intense "push and pull" of family and work obligations as subtle and often invisible barriers that women face. Discursive practices such as women "take care" and men "take charge" continue to dominate current leadership and societal thinking (D'Souza, 2007; Pillay, 2012).A prevailing patriarchal culture is consistent with fewer women holding positions of power (Fernandez-Mateo & Fernandez, 2016; Katuna, 2014). Indeed, even when women are appointed to significant influential roles they are often disadvantaged as a patriarchal culture contributes to the preconceived belief that the traits that people attribute to leaders are those traditionally viewed as masculine (Alcaraz-Minnick, 2020; Cook & Glass, 2014). If gender of itself is perceived as a major determinant of successful leadership, then it becomes a dominant source of social identity.

In addition, findings illustrate that inequitable gendering can result in women developing a persona that is negatively at odds with their level of skill, qualifications and competencies and reinforced through an internalised perception in which women see themselves as less capable then men (Alcaraz-Minnick, 2020; Eaves-Boykin, 2021; Harris, 2019b). Findings clearly demonstrate that the actual competency level of women is not a factor in woman's career advancement. The 'perception' that women are less competent than men highlights that their level of competence is not denoted by ability but by gender. Organisations have failed to prevent harmful gender stereotypes from influencing decisions on the appointments of leaders to senior posts (Al-Alawi, 2016; Brignoli, 2020; Clevenger & Singh, 2013). The impact of gender on women occurs in the pretext of stereotyping, gender bias and discrimination (Lee, 2019; Nelson, 2021; Percupchick, 2011).

A number of women CEO's have suggested that the most significant factor to career advancement was their own fortitude (Lahti, 2013; Soklaridis et al., 2017). Meritocracy has become the default of women, where there is failure by an organisation to provide a proper egalitarian leadership culture. However, the concept of meritocracy, in which women depend on themselves to achieve career advancement will continue to support women in leadership as being the exception as opposed to the rule. The discourse of meritocracy fails to consider the

structural barriers that prevent the majority of women from reaching senior organisational positions (Cook & Glass, 2014; Nelson, 2021). Indeed, it pits women against women and problematises the underrepresentation of women CEOs as being the responsibility of each individual female (Clevenger & Singh, 2013; Fernandez-Mateo & Fernandez, 2016; Lahti, 2013).

This suggests that understanding the concepts of gender and leadership is complex and nuanced while also highlighting that the interaction of these two constructs adversely affect women. Limited transformation of social roles has maintained the underrepresentation of women in more senior positions. For real change to occur the constructs of gender and leadership require further exploration in relation to how they are developed, maintained, and can be freed from essentialist thinking. While also exploring a broader understanding of egalitarian leadership that supports women's career advancement and sustainment in CEO positions (D'Souza, 2007; Eaves-Boykin, 2021; Schwanke, 2013).

2.8. Research Gaps

Gender issues such as bias, stereotyping, discrimination, and the consequences of these factors for women in the workplace have been studied from a myriad of different perspectives. However, gender as a construct separate from its biological form remains under theorised. This is worthy of further consideration especially as gender barriers continue to limit the rise of women to senior executive roles. If gender can be explored through a social constructionist lens then it might offer valuable insights into the discourse, pervasive discursive practices, power dynamics and social interactions that are involved in the process of gendering and that continue to sustain gender inequalities in leadership.

This review also identified that there were limited studies conducted on the barriers facing women leaders in the not-for-profit sector (Alcaraz-Minnick, 2020; Lee, 2019). Stanley (2008) suggests that leadership in not-for-profits is rarely the subject of research because of its low status when compared with the corporate domain. This is consistent with the findings from this scoping review. The uniqueness of women at senior executive level in not-for-profit leadership has remained largely under theorised and is deserving of further consideration.

Finally, while this study was not designed to explore the intersectionality of gender, sexual

orientation, race, or cultural and ethnical background (as well as all other relevant social constructs) insights on intersectionality emerged in the literature in the context of not-for-profit sector (Alcaraz-Minnick, 2020; Eaves-Boykin, 2021; Gentry et al., 2010; Kalaitzi et al., 2019; Ming & Minghui, 2018; Saliba, 2016). Intersectionality remains under theorised in the not-for-profit sector and is a topic also worthy of further exploration.

2.9. Limitations

The following limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings.

- An acknowledgement that this review was conducted by one individual and while scoping review protocols and PRISMA ScR guidelines were adhered to, an extra person could have added value to the process.
- The scoping review model requires inclusion of studies irrespective of their research design, methodology, methods, analysis, or quality. The reviewer therefore also included 30 extra articles that were sourced throughout the process.
- The search strategy was limited to six databases, and the keywords may have narrowed the choice of literature. It is possible that women leaders working in not-for-profits were reported on as secondary outcomes in other studies. In addition, this was not an exhaustive search as only one database was used to search grey literature.
- Fourthly, the time frame and language of publication determined through the criteria, could have limited the retrieval of other relevant articles. Only literature between January 2005 to October 2022 was included, this was to incorporate literature on leadership in the not-for-profit sector prior to Irelands economic crash which began in 2008 and which is often cited as changing the landscape of not-for-profit organisations. Studies published in languages other than English were excluded based on the cost and time involved in the translation of material. These decision placed limits in which potentially significant studies could have been omitted as a consequence of this action.

2.10. Summary

This scoping review was selected to explore the type and range of research published over the last 17 years in relation to gender and senior executive leadership issues, gaps in the literature and identifying barriers that cause gender disparity at senior executive level within the not-for-

profit sector. The reviewer searched six databases and carried out a citation search from 2005 – 2022 to provide a synthesis of (N = 661) articles with (n = 32) studies identified for further review. (N =15) of the reports used qualitative methods, (N = 5) used mixed methods, (N = 6) used quantitative methods, (N = 3) were literature reviews and the remaining (N = 3) were reports.

Research on women rising to senior executive roles has advanced in the past decades, with a steady rise in publications, especially in relation to women that succeed in the corporate sector. A predominant finding was the underrepresentation of women at senior executive level across multiple industries, including education, hospitality, Fortune 500 companies, and various government departments.

Perceptions that women are as equally represented as men at senior executive level in the not-for-profit sector was not consistent with findings. As the not-for-profit sector continues to walk the fine line between hope and despair, many studies suggest that the time is right for the re-conceptualisation of a larger understanding of not-for-profit leadership. A style of leadership that is beyond the influence of patriarchy.

3. Theory

3.1. Introduction

This chapter justifies the rational for choosing social constructionism as the theoretical orientation adopted by the researcher. It presents an overview of the role of social theory in relation to gender classification and sets out the positionality of the researcher, while also acknowledging the researcher's subjectivities. While the ontological and epistemological positions adopted for this research are discussed in detail in Chapter Four, the researcher briefly introduces them within this chapter to provide the context for selecting social constructionism as the overall theoretical framework. This chapter explores the concepts of gender and leadership through the lens of social constructionism.

A theory is an evidence-based explanation of a particular phenomenon that has been established through research. It is a statement that explains how and why things happen in a particular way, and what it means for other phenomena of a similar nature (Raqib, 2019, p. 101). Theory is intricately related to research questions, whether the theory is defining them initially or proposing different questions as the study unfolds. This occurs as theory moves beyond the descriptive, the 'what' question and delves deeper into the critical reflexive 'why' question of phenomena (Swords et al., 2022).

According to Kaplan and Maxwell (2005), the purpose of the research question is to account for the researchers provisional theories about phenomena. These tentative theories can change to accommodate new knowledge and understandings. The findings from the scoping review supported the refinement of the primary research questions to accommodate a more focused data collection as detailed in Chapter Four.

Conducting the scoping review, reflecting on the researcher's positionality, and their theoretical standpoint, as well as discussions that take place throughout thesis supervision helped to shape a clearer understanding of the most appropriate theoretical framework to inform this study. The theoretical framework, has been described as the 'blueprint' (Osanloo & Grant, 2016), the 'building block' (Grix, 2002) and the 'foundation' (Crotty & Crotty, 1998) of the dissertation. It provides the structure for the rationale of the study, the problem statement, the purpose, the significance, and the research questions (Bryman, 2016; Osanloo & Grant, 2016). The researchers choice of theoretical framework is significant, it not only connects and guides the research from start to finish but reflects the researchers "personal beliefs and

understandings about the nature of knowledge, how it exists (in the metaphysical sense) in relation to the observer, and the possible roles to be adopted" (Osanloo & Grant, 2016, pp. 12-13).

Social constructionism was identified as the underpinning theoretical framework because it recognises the role of human action in the social construction of concepts such as gender and leadership (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014; Snyder, 2019; Winchester & Salji, 2016). These constructs can remain unquestioned and invisible because they are "conventions, habits and agreements" (Hjelm, 2014, p. 2) that have seeped into society overtime, perpetuated through a patriarchal ideology (Fernandez-Mateo & Fernandez, 2016; Kalaitzi et al., 2019; Katuna, 2014). Therefore, according to Hjelm (2014, p. 3) an individual's "destiny can be affected but not defined by the way society is structured". Social constructionism draws attention to the social reality we experience and the possibilities that this reality, can also be changed by human action (Burr, 2015; Hjelm, 2014).

Berger and Luckmann (1967, p. 3) who studied the sociology of knowledge explained that they "understood knowledge to be whatever society deemed it to be". Their work was later critiqued by Hjelm (2019, p. 227), who proffered that the placing of 'knowledge' with another construct such as 'leadership,' "would get to the core of a constructionist sociology of leadership". In other words 'the sociology of leadership must concern itself with whatever passes for "leadership" in society' (Hjelm, 2019). Consequently, if we replace 'leadership' for 'gender' then we can begin to develop a greater understanding of gender as a social construct.

A critical element of social constructionism is understanding that what counts in society as 'true' is the outcome of "contending accounts of reality" (Grint, 2005, p. 1471). This infers that 'reality' is constructed through language and discourse. A subtle realist orientation, discussed in more detail in this chapter and Chapter Four recognises that there are multiple perspectives of reality and the explanation of reality which triumphs at a given time, can therefore be both a temporary and a collective phenomenon (Grint, 2005). In other words the constructs of gender and leadership which were socially constructed from patriarchal ideology and which continue to contribute to the social, cultural, and economic hegemony of men (Fernandez-Mateo & Fernandez, 2016; Kalaitzi et al., 2019; Katuna, 2014), are a result of human actions.

3.2. The Role of Social Theory in Gender Classification

Social theories developed by Weber, Durkheim and Marx, and functional theorists, such as Parsons, share a number of differences but also share a common focus "upon the determining nature of the structure of society, upon progress, whether evolutionary or revolutionary, and upon society as a totality" (Parton, 1996, p. 63). Parton (1996) suggests that what is central to such theories is the pursuit of a universal truth. Traditionally the attainment of this truth is pursued through analysing oppositional categories such as woman/man. Parsons (1942, p. 605) describes a complex social structure in which there are opposites, one such opposite pertains to "important sex differences' with Parson proclaiming, "that it is possible from an early age to initiate girls directly into many important aspects of the adult feminine homemaking role".

While Parsons limits his analysis to why women conform better than men to social norms? Merton (1968) a contemporary of Parsons, recognises that a fundamental flaw of functionalist sociology is the "unrecognised consequences of social patterns in which privileges are conferred on men while simultaneously limiting opportunities for women" (Macionis & Plummer, 2008, p. 38). Parton (1996, p. 62) acknowledges that functionalist sociology has strongly influenced "the struggle for women to be equal to men—to be allowed into the public world of social, political and economic progress, to be seen as reasoning and powerful subjects, to play more than a bit-part in the grand scheme".

Post-structuralist theory influenced by Foucault and postmodernist thinking, "challenges the emphasis traditional social theory places upon universalism by highlighting both the relativity and the constructedness of knowledge" (Parton, 1996, p. 63). It supports the shift from the ordering of society into oppositional categories, towards a greater understanding of the multi-faceted nature of phenomena.

The prominence is not about disparities but rather understanding how those disparities are constructed and how the classification of woman/man are instituted through difference. With Ritzer (2004, p. 2) highlighting that "through social theory, gender has been used to represent a distinction between the biological classifications of female and male and the socially constructed classification of woman and man". Therefore constructs are understood as "fluid, and unstable, changing with the shifting power relations of time and place" (Parton, 1996, p. 63).

Ritzer (2004) suggests that socially constructed gender categorisations vary dramatically across societies and throughout human history. This thinking supports the researcher's rejection of the oppositional categorisation of woman and man that perpetuates gender inequality in society recognising that these divisions were constructed through social theories that favoured men (Brignoli, 2020; Cook & Glass, 2014; Ritzer, 2004).

3.3. Positionality

The researcher's positionality is shaped by theory and informed by their contextualised worldview constructed through their lived experience. It is influenced by education and training and layered by professional experiences within the Irish disability sector.

3.3.1. Acknowledging Subjectivity

The theorisation of the subjective according to Letherby et al. (2012, p. 3) "includes the researcher's motivation and the respondent's expectations and behaviour and its significance to knowledge production". However Burr (1998) warns that the researchers subjectivity and sense of self can be problematic for social constructionist theory. As such the researcher acknowledges the positive and negative values of the subjective and the relevance of experience, while understanding the importance of being critical, rigorous, and accurate.

This is essential in this study as the researcher is engaged in research within their own sector, where Costley et al. (2010) suggests an insider maybe criticised for impartiality. While many argue that subjectivity can bias the researcher, Ratner (2002) acknowledges that the engagement of the researcher in sophisticated subjective processes including analytical reasoning, synthetic reasoning, logical deduction, and the distinction of essences from appearances increase the rigour and validity of the research.

3.3.2. Insider outsider debate continued

Research questions usually "originate with the researcher's personal stories and their social contexts" (Flick, 2004, p. 106). It is becoming increasingly important for social researchers using qualitative methodologies to provide clarity on their personal motivation for their research (Breen, 2007; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Crotty & Crotty, 1998; Grix, 2002).

The distinction between insider and outsider positions correspond to contrasting ontological positions concerning the theory of knowledge (Breen, 2007; Crotty & Crotty, 1998). Subtle realism ontology in this study is positioned in an interpretivist paradigm and according to Breen (2007, p. 164) "insider research is considered especially appropriate to a constructionist epistemology and a feminist perspective based on the likelihood of the researcher:

- Viewing the research process as 'co-constructions' that occur between the researcher and the research participants.
- Regarding the research participants as active 'informants' to the research".
- Attempting to give 'voice' to the research participants (Crotty & Crotty, 1998; Patton, 2014)

As such, these perspectives allow the researcher to conduct research 'with' rather than 'on' the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Patton, 2014). McHugh (2014) observes that rather than trying to remove life experience from the research process, we should align with the position that acknowledges our connection to the research topic being investigated as an asset. The researcher in this study is positioned as an insider in relation to their professional alliance with the research participants, however as the initiator and conductor of the research it could be argued that they also hold an outsider positionality. It is essential that the researcher recognises the duality of the roles and relationships that must be navigated.

Throne et al. (2016) claim that the doctoral student must often shift perception and negotiate the coexisting identities of workplace practitioner, doctoral student, and independent researcher. In addition, the researcher must have the capacity to examine their own roles, relationships, and the balance of power, especially how the researcher's role is positioned in relation to the participants.

Ravitch (2014) suggests that it is possible to achieve this by being clear and transparent about the lens or the perspective being applied throughout the research. This process requires introspection, self-questioning, vulnerability, and self- awareness (M. Fox et al., 2007; Hogan et al., 2009) with Bourke (2014) acknowledging that awareness of one's positionality can be both challenging and advantageous. The researcher's ability to self-reflect is significant for positionality, as it prompts the researcher to identify and question accepted or taken-for-granted forms of knowledge and social practices (Throne et al., 2016). Through reflection the researcher examines their level of influence in the researcher process to ensure that they do not

unduly influence positively or negatively and consequently hinder advancing the research objectives (Throne et. al., 2016).

> "This study is of a personal interest to me for a number of reasons, but the two primary ones are: firstly, I have a particular interest in the career development of other women's senior executive's perspectives in Section 39 organisations and the role that gender has played in these narratives. Secondly, I am morally challenged and strongly opposed to the current drive to align community and voluntary organisations with State delivery of services ideology. I believe this control and compliance agenda being forced by the State is an underhand way of reducing budgets and will impact negatively on the quality of service to people with intellectual disabilities.
>
> In relation to my first primary concern, I am curious and interested in the participants perspectives on the role of gender in relation to their career progression. However, I am confident about my ability to recognise my positionality on the subject matter and to maintain an equal power balance.
>
> I am more challenged and incensed by the second topic and I recognise that it raises strong feelings of anger, anxiousness, and sadness. I therefore have embarked on a process of free-flowing writing on this subject matter, to begin to unpack my emotions. I am conscious that while I am positioned as an insider in relation to my professional alliance with the perspective participants, as the initiator and conductor of the research my positionality will be as an outsider."
>
> (Excerpt from the researcher's reflexive journal, 20th of December 2022)

Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) outlined three benefits of being positioned as an insider:

- A greater understanding of the culture of the participants.
- The ability to interact innately with the participants.
- A previously established relationship, and therefore the researcher can interact on a deeper level with the participant.

In addition, Costley et al. (2010, p. 7) suggests that the success of research projects in which the researcher is positioned as an insider maybe due to their ability to negotiate around systems, processes and practices with an insiders 'creativity and ingenuity'.

However, for each benefit there is also a corresponding disadvantage. For example, Breen (2007, p. 164) proffers that established relationships and greater proximity to research participants can lead to a loss of 'objectivity'. In another study Voloder and Kirpitchenko (2014) point out that knowledge created by insider researchers may differ from knowledge created by outsider researchers because insiders tend to have intrinsic knowledge about a particular group. With DeLyser et al. (2009) purporting that prior knowledge, uncontested assumptions, biases, beliefs and expectations can cause the researcher to struggle to balance their insider role.

However, the researcher for this study has positioned themselves as neither an insider nor an outsider to maximise the advantages of both positions while through critical reflection limiting the potential for disadvantages (Breen, 2007; DeLyser et al., 2009). In concurrence with other social researchers, the researcher contests that the role of the researcher is better conceptualised on a continuum, as opposed to an either/or dichotomy, and that this provides the best positionality to explore the experiences of women senior executives working in Section 39 organisations (Breen, 2007; Costley et al., 2010).

3.4. Social Constructionist Worldview

While ontology and epistemology are explored in greater detail in Chapter Four, they are briefly discussed in this Chapter; as to explore the claim that reality is socially constructed, it is necessary to first consider the relevance of philosophical debates over notions such as 'truths', 'knowledge', and 'reality'. According to Anderson (2015, p. 17) in establishing our ontological position, the question 'What is real?' in broad terms can have three potential answers: firstly, if reality is experienced as independent from the person, then the researcher has adopted an objective world-view and takes on a positivist stance (Bryman, 2016; M. Fox et al., 2007). Secondly, if the researcher experiences reality as 'In here' or as an 'individually constructed world view' (Anderson, 2015, p. 17) then the researcher takes on an ontological position which adopts a constructivist epistemology. A constructivist viewpoint asserts that knowledge is not 'found' or 'discovered' from existing facts but constructed as the invention

of an active, inquiring mind (Rudestam & Newton, 2014, p. 35). Thirdly, if the researcher experiences reality as 'In here' but influenced by 'Out there' then the researcher adopts a socially constructed worldview (Anderson, 2015, p. 17). 'A focus on the isolated knower is replaced by an emphasis on the social context in which the linguistics and relationships create reality'(Rudestam & Newton, 2014, p. 35).

The latter identifies the ontological philosophical position taken by the researcher in this study, which is subtle realism, a social science term credited to Martyn Hammersley (MacDonald & Marsh, 2005; Mays & Pope, 2000; Miller & Brewer, 2003). This ontological position is consistent with a constructionist epistemology. Constructionists view truth and knowledge as produced and not created by the mind (Schwandt, 2003), with Andrews (2012, p. 379) purporting the view that being a realist is not inconsistent with being a constructionist. Andrews (2012, p. 39) also argues that social constructionism is concerned with the nature of knowledge and its creation and as such, is 'unconcerned with ontological issues'.

However, in this study knowledge is constructed through interaction with research participants and subjectivities are accepted as part of the interaction. Therefore Bruner (2004) argues that narrative is not only a methodology; but also a means of constructing reality, 'therefore that methodology is based on an ontology" (Bolívar Botía, 2002, p. 4).

Indeed, Angen (2000, p. 379) recognises that qualitative researchers can represent the two extremes, with some researchers adopting quantitative criteria for validity, while others completely disregard validity as an issue in qualitative approaches to research (Silverman, 2015). These extremes can be examined through ontology as they represent differing underlying assumptions. Similar to this research study there exists advocates that 'adopt positivist criteria and hold to (at least a subtle form of) the realist ontology' (Angen, 2000, p. 379). This study sits within a constructionist foundational epistemology. The researcher recognises that fundamentally the researcher cannot lay claim to uncontested certainty of knowledge. This is acknowledged through recognition that life is not static, but fluid, contextual and relational and therefore cannot allow for certainties (Angen, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

However in this study the researcher adopts a subtle realism ontology to address the validity problem in qualitative research (Angen, 2000; Hammersley, 1995). Subtle realism accepts the realist's position, that there is a reality independent of our knowledge of it, however subtle realism also acknowledges along with the interpretivists, that we can only know reality from

our own perspective in it (Angen, 2000, p. 382). This study seeks to gather narratives from women CEO's working in Section 39 organisations whose lived experiences have the potential to offer the researcher varying perspectives on the phenomenon under study. Therefore, this suggests that reality can be viewed by examining these varying perspectives. Validity is defined as confidence in the research rather than certainty.

3.5. Relativism Versus Realism

As opposed to relativism, subtle realism claims that there is a single reality, but multiple different perspectives of this reality; and that it is possible to gain understanding of the phenomena that comprise this reality (Hammersley, 1995). Hammersley (2002, p. 1) contends that the 'researcher is part of this reality, not separate from or above it'. Subtle realism contends that phenomena is independent but that knowledge and understanding of phenomena is always constructed by the researcher. Knowledge therefore is not 'logically derived from sense impressions' (Hammersley, 2002, p. 2) and inquiry cannot replicate, or embody its essences, but can only construct answers to questions in relation to phenomena.

Subtle realism stands against such relativistic or sceptical positions, while also avoiding naïve realism (Hammersley, 1995, 2002). This implies that knowledge is a direct product of interaction between an individual and a reality that exists independent of it. A consequence of naïve realism is that no knowledge is considered possible without immediate contact (Genone, 2016). Broadly two questions arise in the argument of realist versus relativist; firstly, is the phenomena being studied independent within the inquiry process?, or secondly, is what is explored determined, regulated, or influenced by the research? Burr (2015) argues that the challenge facing social constructionism is recognising that human behaviour and experience cannot be properly appraised when disassociated from its social context.

According to Hammersley (1995) reality is socially defined but this reality refers to the subjective experience of daily life and how the world comes to be understood rather than to the objective reality of the natural world. Subtle realism is underpinned by the belief that concepts are constructed rather than discovered, yet maintain that they correspond to something real in the world (Andrews, 2012, p. 39). This is relevant to this study as the concepts of gender and leadership have been constructed through a patriarchal lens with women experiencing the consequences of this construction (Katuna, 2014; Lahti, 2013).

Hammersley (1995, 2002, 2018) assert that subtle realism has the following components:

1. ***The nature of knowledge.*** In relation to knowledge and beliefs there, is a rejection of the opinion that what is true must be beyond all reasonable doubt. A clear distinction is made between what is true and what one is justified in believing at any point in time. This implies accepting that beliefs are imperfect. However also implied here is that they are all not equally likely to be false. Important is the threshold appropriate for determining what is reasonable.
2. ***The process of gaining knowledge***. To consider what is beyond reasonable uncertainty involves investigating, the association between a knowledge assertion and what is already well-established knowledge. If the knowledge claim appears implausible, then determining its truth is dependent upon the supporting evidence or finding more evidence to reinforce the basis for reaching a conclusion.
3. ***The relationship between inquiry and reality.*** All knowledge is constructed and is never just strictly logically interpreted from data. Subtle realists caution that while prior assumptions and commitments can lead to insights, they may also lead to error. There is only one reality, and that reality is simply 'what is there' – it is not an object in the world, nor is it separate from the researcher. However, the phenomena being investigated is independent of the researcher and the inquiry process. As in making a knowledge claim about phenomena, does not in itself change those phenomena. Subtle realism was used in this study because the knowledge produced comprises answers asked through the primary research questions. This may produce multiple perspectives, about gender and leadership even though there is in fact a single reality.

This study recognises that gender and leadership have an independent reality beyond social constructionism. However, the social construction of gender and leadership has been shaped, routinised and habituated by people – and socially constructed (Andrews, 2012; O'Reilly & Lester, 2017). Steedman (2000) posits, that the majority of what we know and what we want to know is concerned with trying to understand what being human is, as opposed to scientific knowledge. Therefore, it follows that individuals or groups of people define this reality. The central tenet of subtle realism is the relationship between the researcher and the phenomena under study (Burr, 2015). Therefore, establishing a good rapport with participants that is underpinned by trust, honesty, and integrity during the gathering of data is extremely important.

‘I grew up in the 1970’s and was raised in a traditional catholic Irish home. I assumed the role of caregiver to my wonderful grandparents who lived next door at a very young age. A position I loved but as I got older the burden of responsibility and the guilt that such a position brought when I was constantly being pulled in other directions lay heavy on my shoulders.

I carried a legacy shaped and influenced by two generations of women, my grandmother and mother both of whom had suffered institutionalised abuse. The large grey walls of the psychiatric hospital which housed my grandmother for far too many years can be seen from the top of our road. My grandad said she was treated as an inmate and not a patient and he fought continually for the release of his wife, often succeeding in taking her home for short periods of time. He recalls a new young psychiatrist agreeing that he could take her home for the weekend but warning that if she wasn’t returned (as if she was a possession) they would call to the house and remove her. A psychiatric nurse kicked my granny down the stairs as my grandad stood in horror watching, he had no power, no right to complain, as to do so meant a worse faith awaited his wife when she was confined unprotected to the walls of this prison.

Years of electro convulsive therapy and chemical restraint sucked the life from this woman. Visiting her as a child I recall smells of disinfectant and urine as I sat on her bed with my eyes averted as women screamed shrilly or laughed hysterically, please I begged silently let me take her home.

Described as one of the most fearsome institutions of its day, my mother, and her sisters, (there was only one brother and because he was male he got to stay at home) were intermittently admitted to the local orphanage each time their mother was committed to the 'mental' as it was known back in the day. My mother does not consider this a loss of childhood and has never openly reflected on the damaging effects it has had on her life, instead she accepts it as her reality and counts herself lucky that she had somewhere to go. The hidden horrors of her life there are glimpsed at through stories she has shared over the years. Her tools for survival were obedience, silence, fighting to hold onto her chastity and faith in God.

As a teenager I had the honour of becoming friends with two males that lived in this orphanage. They never spoke of the horrors they endured but hid their pain behind smiles and adolescent awkwardness. They no longer walk this earth; they both took their own lives while in their early twenties. May they rest in peace.

I grew up shaped but not defined by the brave, compassionate and courageous women in my life. I was sent to an all-girls catholic primary school where attending mass daily and being able to recite the sermon delivered from the pulpit made you a star pupil. While, waxing and shining the convent floor every Friday and learning how to sew so you could darn your future husband's socks were deemed an important part of your stereotyped education.

> Secondary school unlike primary was predominately made up of lay teachers. One day my English first-year teacher asked the class if we believed men and women were equal and when no one answered she pointed to me and asked me the question directly. 'I think women are nearly equal to men' I replied hesitantly, not sure if this was the right answer. The remainder of the class was dedicated to berating and belittling me for such a stupid reply, 'of course women were the equal of men' my English teacher admonished very loudly. I tried to comprehend this, I also badly wanted to believe it, but it didn't match with my lived experience. It is hard to break free from the shackles of my mind; conditioned, shaped, and stereotyped within a catholic Irish culture where children should be seen and not heard and where a woman's place was confined to the home.'
>
> (Excerpt from researcher's reflective journal, 12th October 2022)

Hammersley (1995) argues that there is an independent reality that exits outside of our own opinions. However, this reality is not easily accessible, and it is through the process of reflexivity that the researcher can begin to identify and understand its presence. Therefore, subtle realism allows for social constructionism to combine components of realism and relativism (Andrew, 2012).

3.6. Rationale for not Using Critical Realism

Critical realism in research has developed from the thinking of Bhaskar (1975). According to M. Fox et al. (2007, p. 70) "critical realism takes a radically different view on research to those of social constructionism," with Gunnarsson et al. (2016, p. 433) acknowledging that critical realism has remained decidedly 'masculine in nature'. The focus of this study is to gain a greater understanding of gender disparity at senior executive level by exploring the lived experience of women CEOs and gaining insight into their perspectives of how gender and leadership interrelate within their work context. As the central tenet of critical realism is a concern with causality and the unearthing of causal mechanisms in social phenomena (Carlsson, 2003; Houston, 2001) the former is best explored using social constructionism rather than critical realism.

Furthermore, critical realism is viewed as essentialist; in relation to gender, it supports the 'belief that members of a category share deep-seated properties that determine their identity' (Haslam & Whelan, 2008, p. 1297). According to Haslam and Whelan (2008, pp. 1302 - 1303) there is plenty of evidence that gender categories are commonly essentialised, compounding expected gender-stereotypical behaviour which does not bode well, as hierarchical gender ideology traditionally assigns lesser status to women.

A social constructionist approach refutes the concept of essentialism (Houston, 2001; Swords, 2022a) which is at odds with the anti-essentialist positionality of the researcher. Finally, as this study is also concerned with exploring the reconstruction of egalitarian leadership, free from patriarchal ideology, essentialism which is seen as perpetuating gender stereotyping is identified as a barrier and not as an enabler within this process.

3.7. Social Constructionism

According to Gergen (2018) the roots of social constructionism can be traced back to Vico, Nietzsche, and Dewey, however he cites Berger and Luckmann's 1966 volume, *The Social Construction of Reality*, as ground-breaking work on this subject. At the core of the constructionist epistemology is an understanding and perception that the world and the objects and events within it, do not necessarily mirror the nature of that world ''but rather are a product of how the world is represented or produced through language'' (Bryman, 2016; Burr, 2015, p. 2).

This research study adopts a constructionist epistemology. This is an appropriate approach because the researcher considers the importance of recognising that human beings are responsible for socially constructing our reality to include constructs such as women and leadership. As such Burr (1998, pp. 13-14) suggest that it is '(at least in principle) possible to reconstruct ourselves in ways which might be more facilitating for us'.

However, this is complex and nuanced as the social construction of leadership, is immersed in traditional dominant white male truths (Rusch, 1991, p. 1). In addition, Chapter Two highlights how invisible barriers, bias, and stereotyping, have been socially constructed through patriarchal ideology and act as a type of social control which subtly prevents women from moving into senior executive roles (Barelka & Downes, 2019).

Social constructionism provides an opportunity to make visible the invisible barriers that have traditionally limited opportunities for woman to challenge the social realities and the status quo

that foster marginalisation and gender disparity within the workforce. Constructionism offers the researcher and the research participants a lens to understand how their experiences have been shaped through discourse, ideology, and historical and social contexts. Traditionally the defining group for conceptualising leadership and leadership constructs have typically been 'white middle-class men' (Parker, 2004, p. 6).

Women have been excluded from the dialogue on leadership (Parker, 2004). Orientating the research within a social constructionist approach helps to 'conceptualise gendered identity as a partial, unstable discursive effect that is (re)produced in the dynamic tension between everyday interaction and normative expectations about gender behaviour' (Parker, 2004, p. 13). When perspectives shift to reveal the 'societal influences of discourses and practices that constitute the dominant cultural ideals of leadership' (Parker, 2004, p. 14) the process of deconstruction is possible.

Deconstruction attempts to understand how social problems are framed within the narrative. This is achieved by attempting to uncover embedded (often unconscious) assumptions about key social phenomena including gender and stereotyping and a sense of our identity and purpose (Fook, 2022). It also highlights the presence and limitations of oppositional categorisations such as woman/man and exposes dominant discourses, that perpetuate gender inequalities (Morley & O'Bree, 2021). Deconstruction seeks to examine multiple experiences and perspectives of the same phenomena, and suggest new and more egalitarian ways to think and act for the greater good (Fook, 2022; Morley & O'Bree, 2021).

The reconstruction of leadership as a construct that eradicates the silence and invisibility of women remains a challenge, in a society where silences and invisibilities have become the norm. How to begin the process of outing 'visibility' and 'voice' can be complex. According to Flax (1990) this begins by recognising silences or that which is not said and questioning taken for granted social constructs that are considered 'right' and 'acceptable'. The dilemma for the researcher becomes how to expose and recognise narratives which are shrouded in patriarchal socially constructed influences, passed on to us through generations of cultural and institutional norms (Morley & O'Bree, 2021). In simplistic terms, how do we make the familiar seem abnormal and in need of justification? (Flax, 1990).

"For constructionists, human action largely emerges from social negotiation. As we come to agree on what is real, we fashion our patterns of acceptable activity. In this context, the potential for change is as close at hand as the next conversation''(Gergen, 2018, p. 265)

3.7.1 Moderate Social Constructionism

There is a diversity of positions within social constructionism (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999; Stam, 2001; Wong, 2006). Wong (2006, p. 134) proffers that social constructionism can be 'classified into two categories: strong and moderate social constructionism.' The researcher rejects a strong social constructionist position because it, integrates relativism as well as socially and linguistically fixed views of selfhood that are opposed to the concept of personal agency (Gergen, 2018; Neimeyer, 1998; Wong, 2006). It takes an 'absolutistic stance in its objection to modernist assumptions about human functioning' (Wong, 2006, p. 136). It also, places too strong an emphasis on the role of language in the constitution of both world and person, while 'ignoring the significant elements of human life' (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999, p. 3).

The researcher adopts a moderate social constructionist approach because in contrast to a strong constructionist position it acknowledges the role of language in social construction but also the influences of the research participants 'personal-social histories upon social situations and individual activity' (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999, p. 3). Moderate social constructionists believe that experience can have an extralinguistic form (Burr & Strickland, 1992; Burr, 1998; Gergen, 2018).

It also adopts a non-relativist stance, and supports a subtle realism position in which an individual's perceptions can reference the real world in some way, even if they are partially generated through social and linguistic structures (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999; Gergen, 2018; Wong, 2006). In summary, moderate social constructionism adopts a less absolutistic stance in its objection to modernist assumptions about human functioning (Gergen, 2018).

This position acknowledges that the ideologies that exist within society already shape and inform the social constructions we live through. The inequalities that arise for women are produced within structural features of society perpetuated through a patriarchy ideology. The aim of the research is to unravel the concepts of leadership and gender from strong and pervasive parochial ideology which strongly influenced the Irish social context in which the participants were raised and continue to live and work. This therefore requires a moderate social constructionist position which is compatible with a subtle realist ontology.

If, as suggested by Butler (2009) we are performing to gender categories, then constraints on agency must be 'outed' and understood in terms of pre-existing institutional forms (social and economic structures) and material conditions (technology, space, the body, and so on) (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010).

3.8. The Social construction of leadership

Manning and Curtis (2002) identify in excess of 65 classification systems used to define the dimensions of leadership; with Stogdill (1974) proffering that the number of definitions in existence is evidenced by the number of academics that have attempted to define it. There is no agreed consensus on any one definition of leadership or a particular leadership approach that is considered universal. However, efforts to identify what makes an effective leader continue, with most academics acknowledging that leadership is a complex and multidimensional phenomena (Avolio et al., 1999; Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Greenleaf, 1970; Stogdill, 1974; Ulrich et al., 2009; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010).

Early conceptual and empirical approaches to research into leadership were conducted from a positivist ontological and epistemological position (Harding, 2007). It must also be acknowledged that this scientific research was dominated by male values, experiences, and beliefs (Haslett et al., 1992; Smyth, 1989). Gender expectations and the expression of power were cast within this predominant culture and evaluated within these cultural values (Haslett et al., 1992, p. 6). This supported the earlier dominance of men in leadership positions and was reinforced through the development of the trait theory, which was based on the assumption that leaders were born, not made (Evans, 2001).

The initial emphasis was on distinguishing certain 'leadership traits' in the individual's personality or physical make-up (Smyth, 1989). Leadership traits such as strong, arrogant, controlling, intelligent, ego-driven, powerful, dominant, and assertive were identified (Stogdill, 1974; Yukl, 2008). The fact that all of thes**e** traits coexist with male gender stereotyping helped to secure a man's place in positions of power.

Despite the devastating critiques of the trait approach it has persisted in various forms (Stogdill, 1974) perpetuated by myths created by men and those ideologically committed to a particular construction of social reality (Smyth, 1989). A criticism of modern leadership approaches such as situational and transformational is that they often fail to consider the notion of male dominance in leadership ideology and ignore issues associated with gender inequalities in

organisational life and power differentials (Ford, 2006, p. 241). Throughout history, studies have failed to identify women's gain in gender stereotyping (Yousafzai et al., 2015). Women therefore continue to suffer from an incompatibility between the leader role and their gender role. Culturally, expectations triggered by this perceived misalliance can have far-reaching consequences for women in leadership contexts (Butler, 2009).

The application of social constructionist theory to leadership evidenced in the work of Grint (2005), and Sjöstrand (2001) recognises the fluidity of leadership as a concept, and "its evolution from a predominantly essentialist approach which focused on traits and behaviours depicting the male leader as the exemplar of success" Tlaiss and Kauser (2019, p. 518). Social constructionism allows for consideration of things that are not immediately visible such as gender bias and invisible societal barriers that hinder women's career progression. It incorporates theory and research to arrive at a more accurate understanding of the social causes and consequences of human behaviour, the dynamics of human social interaction, and the culture that surrounds everyday life.

Social constructionist approaches to leadership phenomena are becoming more commonplace (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010, p. 174). A study conducted by Carroll and Levy (2010, p. 211) explored how the social construction of leadership literature informs and shapes leadership development. Central to social constructionism is that aspects of life such as gender and leadership can be socially defined through "ongoing actions, negotiations and agreements" (Sandberg, 2001, p. 105). Leadership is perceived as a social process, suggesting that leadership is best understood by attending to the experiences, interpretations, interactions, and sense making of those involved (Badaracco, 2001).

Therefore, capturing the lived experience of women CEOs will help to gain a better understanding and a more informed perspective of how they have been shaped and influenced and how in turn this affects their leadership journey. This study will therefore focus on the complex, dynamic interactions between leaders and their social environments and the processes that unfold amidst these interactions (Beirne & Wilson, 2016; Butler, 2009; Ford, 1996).

3.9. The Social Construction of Gender

Gender is engrained in every aspect of life and it is so pervasion within our society that "we assume it is bred into our genes" (Lorber & Farrell, 1991, p. 111). Therefore, the concept that gender is constantly created and re-created out of relational interaction, out of social life, and an emergent feature of social situations is often rejected (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

However, gender is an ever-persistent dominant force in our everyday activities and practices and remains a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society. Gender is not seen as an 'achievement' in the context of the division of labour, the formation of gender identities, and the social subordination of women by men (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 126). Yet gender, is a human construction that is dependent on everyone constantly committed to 'doing gender' and in which women continue to play an active part (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

The 'doing' of gender is undertaken by women who are often oblivious that their competence within society is hostage to a socially constructed production. A gendered division perceived to be natural and rooted in biology, consequently, produces significant negative social consequences for women (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Doing gender involves a complex set of socially guided interpretive, interactional, and influential micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits such as leadership as expressions of masculinity.

Leadership based on oppositional categorisation within gender becomes anti-feministic. These instituted, structural arrangements of society have promoted other gender categories such as 'gender roles'. Stacey and Thorne (1985) argue that gender is not a set of traits, nor a variable, nor a role, but the product of continuous social 'doing' and that gender itself is constituted through interaction (Biddle, 1986).

Gender within social institutions is a process which creates unique gendered social statuses. Within this process, gender ranks men above women of the same race and class and is a major building block in the social structures built on these unequal statuses (Lorber & Farrell, 1991). As a structure, gender divides work in the home and in the workplace and legitimates those in authority, and thus men dominate positions of power, authority and leadership (Lorber & Farrell, 1991). Gender inequality is not the result of genetic predispositions but a production maintained by identifiable social processes that are ingrained in our social structures and systems and constructed deliberately and purposefully (Lorber & Farrell, 1991; Parsons, 1942).

3.10. Symbolic Interactionism

George Herbert Mead's posthumous, text Mind, Self and Society (1934) is often seen as the key source of the identification of the idea of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1986; Plummer, 2000). This theory suggests that natural interactions occur between individuals and society,

and vice versa and that social interactions transpire due to the use of symbols that have meaning (Andrews, 2012; Blumer, 1986; DePutter, 2008; Plummer, 2000).

Symbolic interactionism supports the analysis of experience located firmly within society; identifies the significance of language, symbols, and communication within social group situations; examines the ways in which our words and gestures initiate responses in others; and explores the reflective and reflexive nature of the self (Denzin, 2004; Plummer, 2000). 'Interactions' are the principal point of analysis for constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Burr, 2015).

This is important as reality is viewed as both subjective and objective (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Symbolic interactionism recognises that the construction of reality through interactions that occur between people, help to shape, and influence individuals. The repetition in everyday life of these actions and practices becoming routinised (Andrews, 2012; Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Swords, 2022a).

This in turn perpetuates the continued, everyday acceptance of gendered systems (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). This system of inequality requires that the majority of individuals continue to justify that men and women are sufficiently different in ways that approve men's greater power and privilege (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Gender interaction is complex, in that, it must be sustained in the context of continuous interaction, often on acquainted terms, between those privileged and disadvantaged by the system (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). As interactional events enact gender relations within various contexts such as leadership, they confirm or undermine gender beliefs. However symbolic interaction and social constructionism posit that meanings can change, and it is at the interactional level that interaction has the power to either sustain or modify the gender system as a whole.

3.11. Human Agency

According to Varpio et al. (2020, p. 6) agency can be defined 'as the extent to which individuals are able to exert control in their personal and social lives'. Burr (2003) cautions that a strong absolutist stance in social constructionism results in an alleged denial of personal agency, that is, one's free will and ability to act and make choices voluntarily. In contrast moderate social constructionism acknowledges the role of personal agency in conjunction with the social construction of personhood (Burr, 1998; Gergen, 2018).

However, Butler (2009, p. 1) asserts that 'gender is performative and that the "appearance" of gender is often mistaken as a sign of its internal or inherent truth; gender is prompted by obligatory norms to be one gender or the other (usually within a strictly binary frame)'. Thus suggesting that agency is exerted but only within the bounds of gender stereotypes (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). This is prevalent in the tradition-bound gender categories enacted through leadership in which theories such as the great man theory were constructed. This raises urgent questions about the defensibility of deeply held cultural assumptions and beliefs concerning individuals as independent and rational moral agents.

3.12. The Relevance of Discourse

Poststructuralism rejects the possibility that knowledge production is objective or value neutral, where knowing appreciates the power of language in constituting the world, in the sense that language/discourse is linked to 'human interpretation' taken as the means by which human actors engage, make sense of, and construct the world (Fairclough, 2010; Ford, 2006; Gergen, 2018; Wetherell et al., 2001). Poststructuralist approaches recognise the significance of context and the role and power of discourse in shaping constructs such as gender and leadership (Fairclough, 2010; Ford, 2006).

In the main social constructionists adhere to the belief that language does not mirror reality; rather it constitutes it (Burr, 1998; Fairclough, 2010). Central to the social constructionist approach is that our view and understanding of the world and the objects, including people contained within this perception are not necessarily reflective of the nature of that world but instead a product of how the world is represented through language (Burr, 2015). Meanings are articulated through discourses (Parton, 1996). Individuals lives are "mediated by discourses which construct concepts such as leadership and gender (femininity and masculinity) in particular ways" (Fairclough, 2010, p. 165).

The collective study of symbolic interactionism, narratives and systems of discourse support our understanding of and give coherence and meaning to everyday life (Denzin, 2004). Systems of discourse equally summarise and produce knowledge about the world (Foucault, 2007). These discursive systems are rarely simplistic but complex and nuanced. The gender categorisation in society of woman/man gives rise to competing discourses on issues such as, who holds the power to determine what is true and what is not true (Denzin, 2004).

Subtle realism asserts that there is a single reality but multiple perspectives corresponding to this reality (Hammersley, 1995). The researcher as a social actor within this reality plays a significant role in understanding the phenomena that comprises it (Hammersley, 2002). Subtle realism contends that phenomena is independent but that knowledge and understanding of phenomena is constructed through language and interpretation. Knowledge therefore is constructed through meaning making that is anchored in particular contexts and shaped by historical and cultural factors.

Accordingly, what can be known, is considered partial, fluid and continually changing. Therefore, concepts such as leadership and gender represent social constructions that can be altered. Traditionally the constructs of women and leadership have been depicted as oppositional. Rigid gender constructions of femininity that are perceived as incompatible with the patriarchal construction of leadership can therefore be challenged through postmodernist/ post structuralist feminist stance on the discursive nature of "social reality" and "subjectivity" (Brignoli, 2020; Cook & Glass, 2014; Parker, 2004; Ritzer, 2004). Through discourse the social world is constantly remade (Denzin, 2004).

3.13. Human Identity

Foucault (1985) contests that prior to history there existed no individual or collective identity; however, he clarifies that history, does not determine our identity, but rather maps it. Foucault explores social structures and institutions through a broad lens, examining their role in shaping the individual (the self), and the establishment of institutions from discourses of power (Radtke et al., 1994). He suggests that they must mutually unfold as neither the subjective nor the objective can work independent of each other. This proposes that identity, is socially constructed on an individual and collective level but bounded within the parameters of societies regulated freedoms (Radtke et al., 1994).

The work of Burr (2003) builds on Foucault's theories, also suggesting that identity originates from the social realm and not from inside the person. With Andrews (2012) asserting that this process occurs through the medium of language. Burr (2015) proffers that within social constructionism language is used to support the construction of concepts. Therefore, it stands to reason that language predates concepts and provides a means of structuring the way the world is experienced (Andrews, 2012).

This does not bode well for women, whom according to Radtke et al. (1994, pp. 41-42) have been "seen by male knowledges to be constituted by nature as an essentially subjective species, appropriate to the processes of subjection and subjectivity, but without the individual voice of an active human subject." According to Andrews (2012) the subjective reality is achieved through primary, and to a lesser extent, secondary socialisation. Primary socialisation involves being given an identity and a place in society.

For women in Irish society this place is inequitably gendered and the social constructions of such are influenced by patriarchal ideologies used to socially dominate and control women. Primary socialisation occurs at an early age and is significantly influenced by prevailing social and cultural discourses; therefore, it is rendered meaningful and in this way it is internalised by individuals (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). It becomes a stereotyped identity that subtly influences a women's pathway in life. This pathway is reinforced and reaffirmed by those in society who are already socialised by the routine and habituated practices of social institutions (Andrews, 2012).

Therefore, as Foucault suggests we must promote new forms of subjectivity and reject the kind of passive individuality which has been imposed on us for centuries (Foucault, 2007). However within this new paradigm, women struggle to locate themselves in the world as individuals and strive to distinguish themselves apart from the collectively of women (Radtke et al., 1994). The process of secondary socialisation involves individuals learning the 'appropriate behaviour' required to be part of a group within society (Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

Within this context secondary socialisation for women occurs predominantly within the female collect. As identified in Chapter Two, the individual woman who searches for identity through senior executive positions in what is traditionally a man's world, as distinct from identifying with women at lower level positions, remain isolated and unprotected (Cook & Glass, 2014; Katuna, 2014).

Poststructuralist theory, provides insight into the problems associated with the construction of identity and cultural differences, such as the oppositional categorisation of women and men, notably the significance of power in the construction of identity through difference (Ford, 2006). Subject positions can be long term, or momentary and temporary, therefore our identities are in constant flux, depending on the changing positions we take up or resist (Ford, 2006). Poststructuralist approaches recognise the significance of context and the role and power

of discourse in shaping stereotypes that disempower women. Identities can be regarded as the connection point in discourses and practices in which we locate ourselves as the social subjects of specific discourses. Thus, discourses and related discursive practices form the basis through which individuals' identities are created.

3.14. Stance on Power

"Power and gender are terms so commonly conjoined that their combined invocation has almost ceased to be indexical" (Radtke et al., 1994, p. 1).

Theorists of power often concern themselves with identifying and analysing its consequences. Radtke et al. (1994, p. 3) suggests that this is best achieved through questioning; What practices flow from these conceptions? How one opposes unjust power? How to exercise power when marginalised and oppressed? What is the personal/social/political basis of power? What are the limits of power? These questions seek to uncover power relationships, unspoken rules, and the subterranean forces that hinder gender career equity (Valenziano, 2008).

The latter recognises the relevance of these matters for questions of human agency and justice within the complexity of social structures created to serve human needs and interests (Radtke et al., 1994; Smith, 2002). Social problems such as gender inequality that exist at societal, organisational and local levels are outcomes of representation, symbols and discourse that become part of a complex form of social control (Gallagher, 2008; Parton, 1996). Radtke et al. (1994, p. 2) posits that gender inequality is not natural, but "a cultural incarnation".

Resistance to invisibility and silencing was considered by Foucault (1985) to be a form of power that could be utilised by the oppressed (Radtke et al., 1994). As suggested by Burr (2015) the experience of society as a subjective reality is achieved through socialisation. Therefore it stands to reason that one's primary socialisation informs their identity and position in society (Andrews, 2012; Burr, 1998).

The language and discourse used throughout the socialisation process is internalised by individuals, continuing the perpetration of conditioned inequalities (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). This can result in the social control of women in society without any questions being asked of the victims of such production of knowledges (Burr, 2003; Swords, 2022a). Gender disparity is a universal but 'unnatural' power reality, a structural process (Radtke et al., 1994, p. 93).

An example of the latter is cast in the language of roles such as 'the female role' and emphasise the process of gender role socialisation (Stacey & Thorne, 1985). According to Collinson (2006) sociologists have identified that within occupational gender role socialisation, women and men have occupations that favour different traits and abilities, with men concentrated in occupations that yield greater status and power.

Traditionally, the analysis of gender occurred within a functionalist approach, in which the concept of 'role' focused attention on individuals rather than on the social structure. In doing so, Collinson (2006) argues that power inequality becomes de-politicalised as it fails to consider historical experiences and political and social contexts and neglects to address questions of power and conflict. In contrast postmodernism is concerned with how social problems come to be defined and constructed. With post-structuralist theorists such as Foucault, concerned with gaining a greater understanding of the power dynamics that perpetuate social problems and the policies that institutionalise them.

Taking gender as an analytical category Amigot and Pujal (2009, p. 647) identify two levels of power: firstly, the production of the sex/gender oppositional categorisation and the historical subjectivities located within this dichotomy; and, secondly, the construction and regulation of power relations between men and women. Although there may be different positions in the execution of power, every subject is subjected in its historical context. It is this dimension of power that Foucault's work concentrated on. This description recognises that, although power is ever present and exists in all relationships, the 'dispositif 'of gender specifically functions to subordinate women. The sexual division of labour and male dominance discourse produce fundamental differences in the lives and experiences of women and men (Smith, 2002).

3.15. Balancing Theory Diversification and Theory Triangulation

The identification of the theoretical framework for this study was dependent on a comprehensive, and thorough review of literature. A social constructionist theoretical framework, espoused through a subtle realism ontological position was chosen. The theoretical framework guides the researcher, with theory identified as one of the major pillars of research (Ngulube, 2020; Thurmond, 2001). Theories help to explain reality, which is the subject of any research process.

The theory of social constructionism is concerned with language forms that pervade society, the means by which they are negotiated, and their implications for other ranges of social activity

(Andrews, 2012; Burr, 2015; Gergen, 2018). Therefore, social constructionism works across a broad spectrum of phenomena such as gender, aggression, mind, causality, person, self, child, motivation, emotion, morality, and much more (Gergen, 2018). It has been influenced by many theorists such as Foucault, Mead, Berger and Luckmann and Burr and has been adapted by multiple interpretive disciplines (Ngulube, 2020).

Theoretical triangulation is defined as the use of multiple theories in the same study for the purpose of examining a phenomenon (Denzin, 1970; Olsen, 2004; Thurmond, 2001). Ngulube (2020) cautions that the use of multiple theories without clearly linking the theories to the researcher's study constitutes theory diversification and consequently, the relevance of the theories to the study may become diluted and unclear. As previously outlined social constructionism is a broad term that has been interpreted and reinterpreted and applied to multiple theories that emphasise the socially created nature of social life (Gergen, 2018).

Therefore, to avoid dilution and ensure congruence and a balance between theoretical triangulation and theoretical diversity the researcher has chosen to adopt social constructionism as the theoretical framework to guide this research (Ngulube, 2020). Within this framework there are several relevant key sensitising concepts that the researcher will employ throughout this study (See Appendix 10 for an overview, and Appendix 11 for a more comprehensive depiction of the employment of the strategic framework and its relevance at each stage of the research process).

3.15. Sensitising Concepts

The term sensitising concepts is credited to Blumer (1954) and first appeared in his paper; What is Wrong with Social Theory? The objective of this paper was to distinguish the difference between a definitive and a sensitising concept (Blumer, 1954). ''Whereas definite concepts provide prescription of what to see, sensitising concepts merely suggest direction along which to look" (Blumer, 1954, p. 7). Sensitising concepts are often considered a good starting point within a qualitative research study as it supports the researcher to focus on significant analytical aspects of social interaction and supports strategies for engaging in research within specific settings (Bowen, 2009; Charmaz, 2008; Moula & Moula, 2017). With Gilgun (2002) (as cited in Bowen, 2006, p. 4) acknowledging that "research usually begins with such concepts, whether researchers state this or not and whether they are aware of them or not". In addition, sensitising concepts have been credited with:

> "Sensitizing concepts provide starting points for building analysis, not ending points for evading it. We may use sensitizing concepts only as points of departure from which to study the data" (Charmaz, 2003, p. 259).

The following appendices (Appendix 10, 11 &12), provide illustrations of the integration and relevance of sensitising constructs utilised within this research study. The theoretical framework of social constructionism informed the initial selection of synthesising concepts. The longevity of a sensitising concept according to Padgett (2004, p. 301) "depends on where the data take us; emergent concepts may supplement or displace them altogether". The use of sensitising concepts was appropriate for a study with a subtle realist ontology and a constructionist epistemology.

3.16. Summary

This chapter presents social constructionism as the theoretical orientation adopted by the researcher. Social constructionism acknowledges that all individuals are in effect social agents. Human agents are constrained by cultural and structural rules, by resources, and by structural processes such as gendering. Gender is a complex system of social practices within society that constitutes women and men as different in socially significant ways and systematises relations of inequality on the basis of the difference. Social constructionism contends that meanings change and are interpreted in different ways by different individuals in different contexts. Therefore, meaning is fluid and not static and has the potential to be revised through an interpretive process.

4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter is concerned with the philosophical underpinnings of the research and the methodological choices taken by the researcher to answer the research questions. This study seeks to explore the lived experience of women senior executives working in Section 39 intellectual disability organisations in Ireland. This Chapter outlines the ontological and epistemological position adopted by the researcher and how this positionality informs the methodological choices for this study. It provides the justification for the selection of research participants and gives a detailed description of the methods adopted. It details the approach to data collection and analysis, including an analytical strategy. It outlines how trustworthiness will be achieved and finally, it considers ethical issues that may arise and the approach the researcher will use to mitigate against such matters.

4.2 Ontological, Epistemological and Methodological Approach

Grix (2002, p. 303) explains the importance of understanding the specific building blocks of social research, the specific purpose of each block, how and when to employ them and the interrelatedness between the fundamental components of the research paradigm: ontology, epistemology, methodology, methods, and sources. Table 4 provides an overview of the researchers ontological, epistemological, and methodological position adopted for this study.

While there are several research paradigms, social science has traditionally offered researchers two opposing research approaches, positivism (objectivism) and constructionism (subjectivism) (Bryman, 2016; Crotty & Crotty, 1998). The researcher compares and contrasts both positivist and constructionist paradigms, acknowledging that qualitative research is legitimate in its own right and does not need to be compared to achieve respectability (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Both paradigms include theories and methods based on different goals and underlying assumptions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). The underlying philosophical assumptions include beliefs about the nature of reality, of social beings, and of what constitutes knowledge. The choice of paradigm is fundamentally guided by the researcher's belief system or worldview. The research paradigm commences with identifying the ontological branch of

philosophy concerned with the assumptions we make in order to believe that something makes sense or is real (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

A positivist paradigm is typically characterised by a realist ontology and an objectivist epistemology (Clandinin, 2016; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). It is defined by a belief that reality is external (Creswell et al., 2004) and that there is a single objective reality to any research phenomenon or situation regardless of the researcher's perspective (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). In addition, knowledge consists of verified hypothesis that can be accepted as facts and laws (Clandinin, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In contrast a constructionist ontology is a theory of knowledge predicated on the idea that the world is socially constructed. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) within a constructionist ontology something is real when it is constructed in the minds of the individuals involved in the situation. Social reality is assumed to be subjective and varied; there is not just one story but multiple stories of lived experience (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

Understanding one's position on how knowledge is viewed and constructed. permits the researcher to define their philosophical orientation by asking questions such as:

- Is there reality out there in the social world or is it a construction, created by one's own mind?
- What is the nature of reality?
- Is reality of an objective nature, or the result of individual cognition?
- What is the nature of the situation being studied?
  (Crotty & Crotty, 1998; Grix, 2002; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017)

The researcher examined their underlying belief system and philosophical assumptions, about the nature of reality. This was an essential process in understanding the relevance of an ontological stance to guide all processes of the research paradigm from:

- Considering and developing the research question
- Ascertaining its relevance
- Considering the best methodological approach to answer the research question
- Understand the problem investigated
- Contributing to incremental knowledge development in the area of women CEO's working in Intellectual Disability Section 39 organisations.

Positivist research is conducted using rational, controlled, logical and structural approaches that consists of identifying a clear research topic, developing appropriate hypotheses and employing a suitable research methodology (Bryman, 2016; Crotty & Crotty, 1998). The world is considered observable; thus, research can be used to validate and verify, using reliable measures and techniques, the existence of a single and objective reality (Popper, 1959). The researcher rejects the latter and situates this research within an interpretive framework. This approach recognises participants as active subjects, situated within a wider social and historical context. It posits that reality is constructed through everyday experiences of meaning making (Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2016).

In contrast to constructionist researchers, positivist researchers remain detached from research participants, a central element of remaining emotionally neutral to make clear distinctions between science and personal experience. This ensures that they can clearly distinguish between fact and value judgement. As such they profess to remaining value-free and unaffected by the philosophical or cultural beliefs of the day (Carson et al., 2001; M. Fox et al., 2007).

4.2.1 Ontological Position

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017) the stances taken by the researcher provide the direction for the study. Understanding the gender gap in senior executive leadership is complex and nuanced. Darlington and Scott (2020, p. 1) contend that "positivist methods of investigation have great difficulty coping with the dynamic and complex social world of human services". Therefore, this study adopts a subtle realism ontological position as already discussed in Chapter Three. This is described as experiencing reality as "in here" but influenced by "out there" (Anderson, 2015, p. 17). "A focus on the isolated knower is replaced by an emphasis on the social context in which the linguistics and relationships create reality" (Rudestam & Newton, 2014, p. 35).

It can be argued that subtle realism is a moderate form of social constructionism. This ontological position recognises the "existence of an external reality in relation to the natural physical world, one which may be knowable" Andrews (2012, p. 39). This ontological position also raises questions that help to discover how reality can be known, the relationship between the knower and what is known, and the assumptions that guide the process of knowing. This position recognises that our ability to perceive and depict social reality is understood in context and inevitably constrained by the historical and cultural experiences known to individuals (Butler-Kisber, 2018; Crotty & Crotty, 1998; Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2011).

In Chapter Three of this study, Kalaitzi et al. (2019) identified that the interrelatedness between gender, leadership, and a countries' history and sociocultural contexts, is evidenced through the customs and barriers embedded in a society's egalitarian practices. These constructs can remain unchallenged and become the accepted norms, agreements and practises of everyday life (Hjelm, 2014).

4.2.2 Constructionist (subjectivism) Paradigm

According to (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), research conducted using a constructionist paradigm usually display the following characteristics:

- An understanding that the social world cannot be understood from the standpoint of one individual.
- The belief that realities are multiple, and realities are socially constructed.
- An understanding that interaction between the researcher and his or her research participants is inevitable.
- A recognition that context is vital for knowledge and knowing.

In this study, the research question is focused on the lived experiences of six women senior executives. Narratives, contexts, and meaning are a prominent issue in this inquiry and are a means of gathering data in a reflexive manner. This is important because women not only experience visible barriers but are often hindered from professional success by invisible barriers, incorrect assumptions and perceptions about their abilities and capacity for leadership at a senior executive level (Chin, 2004; Fletcher, 2004; Gentry et al., 2010; Macmillan & McLaren, 2012).

Social constructionism allows for consideration of things that are not immediately visible. It incorporates theory and research and offers individuals a lens to understand through symbolic interactionism how their lived experiences have been shaped through discourse, ideology, and historical and social contexts. It explores how identity has been socially constructed on an individual and collective level. It is interested in how agency is exerted within a leadership role and the confines of this agency within the bounds of gender stereotypes. It recognises the role of essentialism in perpetuating gender stereotyping as a determination of identity and it explores the shifting power relations of time and place and its effect on constructs such as gender.

A constructionist approach is committed to multiple perspectives of social reality whereby the research participant becomes "the expert" (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p. 12). It is the participants view of reality that the researcher seeks to interpret. This ensures a deeper understanding of how women leaders have been shaped and the influence of patriarchal ideology on their lives. As gender and leadership are viewed as social constructs, both are best understood by attending to the experiences, interpretations, interactions, and sense making of those involved (Badaracco, 2001). Therefore, feminism informed narrative inquiry, which is described in more detail in the following sections of this document is the appropriate approach to inform this study. The next section discusses the research methodology employed within this study and the rationale for selection.

4.3. Methodology

Methodology is a wide-ranging term used to encompass the research design, methods, approaches and processes used, in a well thought out study to find out something (Saha & Keeves, 2002). According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017, p. 28), "the methodology conveys the logic and flow of the systematic processes observed when conducting a research study, to gain knowledge about a research problem, including the acknowledgement and justification of limitations encountered". In sum, the methodology provides the theoretical perspective that links the research question with a particular method.

Methodologies are derived from a researcher's assumptions about the nature of existence, 'ontology' (Hesse-Biber, 2010). Our ontology leads to our philosophy on the nature of knowledge production 'epistemology' (Bryman, 2016). A qualitative approach to research aims to understand how individuals make sense of their social world. The social world is not independent of individual perceptions but is created through social interactions of individuals with the world around them (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Social reality is assumed to be subjective and varied; there is not just one story but multiple stories of lived experience. This section provides a detailed description and rationale for the researcher's methodological choices used in this study: a feminist influenced narrative inquiry approach.

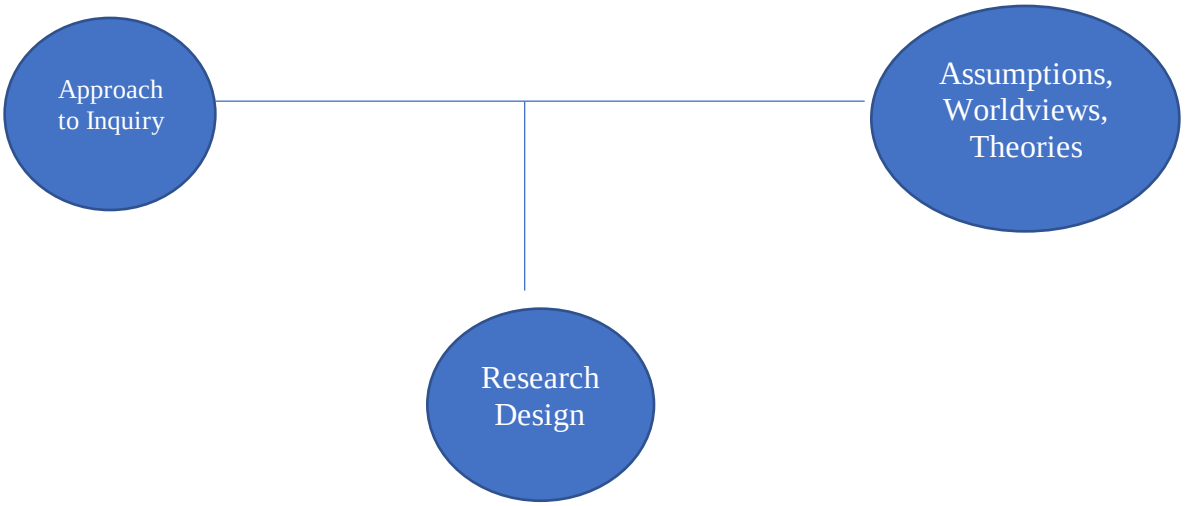
Table 4: Overview of the ontological, epistemological, and methodological approaches.

Paradigm	Ontology What is reality?	Epistemology What kinds of knowledge are created?	Methodology What types of study fit the paradigm?	Methods What techniques do you use to find out?	Data Analysis
Interpretivist	Subtle realism is underpinned by the belief that concepts are constructed rather than discovered yet maintain that they correspond to something real in the world (Andrews, 2012, p. 39)	Constructionist	Feminist Informed Narrative inquiry Approach	Semi-structured interviews	Thematic Analysis

4.3.1 Qualitative Research Design

To capture the essence of a good qualitative study, Creswell and Creswell (2017, pp. 223-224) suggest that "a study should be comprised of three interrelated circles" (depicted in Figure 3), "these circles include the approach of inquiry, research design procedures, and philosophical and theoretical frameworks and assumptions". The interplay of these three factors contributes to a complex, rigorous study and will be discussed in the following sections (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Figure 3 Visual Diagram of the Three Components of Qualitative Research



4.3.2. A Feminist Research Methodology

Exploration of the personal and everyday experiences of women's lives is at the core of feminism and feminist research (Stanley & Wise, 2000). According to Bernard (1973) the feminist revolution of the 1970's attempted to contribute significantly to sociology becoming a science of society, rather than a science dominated by patriarchal ideology and shrouded in male bias. To overhaul sociology as a male dominated science required an alternative approach to social science research. Stanley and Wise (2000) contend that what is needed is an approach that listens, records, and understands the lived experience and language of woman. Feminist research begins by positioning women as central within the research, as "both subjects of inquiry and active agents in the gathering of knowledge" (Stacey & Thorne, 1985, p. 303). This strategy is effective as it makes women's experiences visible, reveals gender-based biases and challenges male assumptions of traditional knowledge. As cited in Maynard and Purvis (2013, p. 46)

> "Feminists have been stern critics of 'hygienic research'; the censoring out of the mess, confusion, and complexity, so that the accounts bear little or no relation to the real events. But many of our accounts are full of silences too".

This research is interested in listening and understanding not only what is said, but also what isn't said and addressing the silences referred to, as very often that is where invaluable insights unfold. Stanley and Wise (2000, pp. 264-267) suggest that feminist research assumes one or more of the following propositions:

- "At the core of feminist research is a focus on women, the research is conducted by women, to politicise the voice of other women.
- There is a perceived distinction between 'malestream' quantitative methods and feminist qualitative ones. Which according to Stacey and Thorne (1985, p. 303) "is predicated on the ideology of 'reconsidering the relationship between knower and known to develop a method of enquiry that will preserve the presence of the subject as an actor and experiencer".
- There is a commitment to a feminist politics, that is, the belief that 'something is wrong' and that it can and should be changed".

Feminist theory "rejects the co-optation of feminist perspectives in which gender is assumed to belong to individuals and is conceptualised in terms of sex differences, that become measurable variables" (Stacey & Thorne, 1985, pp. 307-308). Therefore, the researcher recognises the importance of conducting this study with women leaders. To illicit the voice of women and establish the sense of the whole of the person, the researcher had adopted a feminist informed narrative inquiry approach. This approach is crucial to a theoretical understanding of the interactions of social, context, gender, and relationships.

Feminist thinking has been more successful in interpretive paradigms primarily for making women visible. As an approach it can navigate complex power relations and encourages reflexivity around the contexts and circumstances in which knowledge is produced. In contrast positivist knowledge, is phrased in abstract terms, maintaining an objective and unrelatable position (Maynard & Purvis, 2013; Stanley & Wise, 2000). The oppressive nature of a positivist research procedure is challenged through a relational position. Feminists have built upon this critique to argue that positivist knowledge fails to serve the interests of those marginalised in society, including women. This research is driven by an assumption that the traditional sexual division of labour and male dominance in this arena produces fundamental differences in the lives and experiences of women and men and recognises that this has important consequences for knowledge (Stacey & Thorne, 1985). Therefore, this study is concerned with applying the

unique epistemological principles as outlined by Stanley and Wise (2000) to underpin and guide the behaviour and analysis of the research. These include:

- The researcher-researched relationship conducted and carried out by woman and on women.
- The significance of emotion as a research experience.
- Being explicit about our own positionality and intellectual biography.
- Navigating and understanding the differing and complex realities of the researcher and researched.
- Understanding the power dynamics and acknowledging the complex question of power in research and writing.

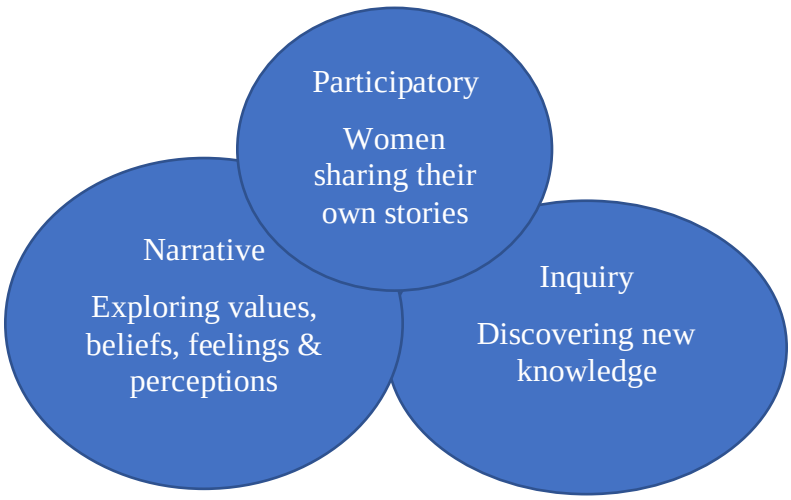
A pertinent quote from the researcher's reflective journal illustrates their positionality, their struggle to understand the complex question of power, and the power of discourse and the socio context in shaping identity:

> *"Am I a cliché. During the completion of the scoping review in Chapter Two I was struck by the barriers that women experience in the workplace. Prior to starting my Doctorate journey, I lived shrouded unknowingly with the invisible barriers of my gender. I curtailed my career path through low expectations of myself and an impenetrable glass ceiling."*
>
> (Excerpt from researcher's reflective journal, 10th September 2022)

According to Byrne and Lenţin (2000) paying attention to feminist epistemology invites reflection about how we know, what we know and is part of the basis for developing principles guiding our research. Byrne and Lenţin (2000) discuss the importance of collaborative principles that inform feminist research practice, namely participant-led interviews, and reflexivity throughout the process. This research is reflexively interested in the stories of women leaders and unearthing the barriers that they experience to challenge societal, organisational, and individual practices. It is an attempt to create the conditions for collaboration through the research process and its outcomes.

Adopting feminist principles to inform my research practice has guided me towards the use of narrative inquiry for the research. This was explored in more detail in Chapter One where the researcher identified that their positionality was shaped by their lived experience of being a white Irish woman raised at a time where Ireland was perceived as a conservative, "traditional Catholic country under whose reign progressive change for women was restricted" (McAuliffe & Kennedy, 2017, p. 134). As such the researcher became aware, through theory, education, conversations, and journalling of how they were stereotyped and subtly influenced by invisible and self-internalised barriers. Therefore, the use of narrative inquiry as depicted in Figure 4 is an appropriate approach for beginning to explore the lived experiences of other women with similar cultural backgrounds.

Figure 4 Participatory Narrative Inquiry: 'Collaboration between researchers and participants, over time, in a place or series of places and in social interaction with milieus' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000)



The next section describes how narrative inquiry as a methodology creates a space for the participants to share their experiences and its particular use in understanding the participants narratives. It establishes the use of this methodology in exploring women senior executive's experiences in Section 39 organisations.

4.3.3 Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is rooted in an ontology and epistemology related to the socially constructed nature of the world (Belser, 2004). Taking narrative as a starting point for social inquiry can support the researcher to focus on the social role of stories in grassroots movements as a powerful tool for discovering more about how situated narration can support new perspectives

and knowledge. Within this research, knowledge is generated through the interaction of the storyteller and the recognition that narrative methodologies operate within a paradigm that embrace an epistemology where knowledge is not 'found' but constructed by the participants (Belser, 2004).

Knowledge and meaning are created through interpreting stories of lived experience and the sharing of these narratives provides insights into how other people make sense of the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Within the not-for-profit sector there is an increasing call for in-depth qualitative research to enhance the evidence-base associated with the field. Narrative inquiry is considered a valuable methodology and was chosen for a number of reasons including:

- To provide the flexibility for participants to tell stories about their experiences (Connelly & Clandinin 2006).
- To place women at the centre of this research.
- Adopting women-centred research questions using narrative inquiry as a methodology provides a deeper understanding of how gender and context shape leadership.
- Its potential in helping to explore and extend our knowledge and perspectives of women leadership in a way that acknowledges the uniqueness of Section 39 organisations.
- To contribute to a better understanding of the barriers faced by women leaders in the sector; while also illustrating the benefit of approaching leadership not through the traditional male leadership lens but through the eyes of women practising leadership (Hodges & Howieson, 2017).
- The sharing of women senior executives' narratives can provide valuable insights as gender inequality is not simply the result of difference between men and women, but rather generated by social structures, institutions, and practices.
- It provides women senior executives the opportunity to recognise the interaction between their own understandings of the world as it is now and reimaging a vision of what it might be in the future.

4.3.4 Narrative as Story

In research the terms 'story' and 'narrative' are often used interchangeably (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). However, Duque (2010, p. 6) contends that there are distinctions between story and narrative and that "story is just an example of one kind of narrative". Social constructionist approach posits that one's view and understanding of the world are not necessarily reflective of the nature of that world, but instead a product of how the world is represented through language.

People shape their daily lives by stories that reflect their identity and personal agency. Stories help individuals to describe their perspective of the world. These world views are interpreted and made individually meaningful. Narratives help to highlight the temporality of knowledge generation. It draws our attention to the understanding that experience "is always more than we can know" (Clandinin, 2006, p. 25).

Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. To use "narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375). This research methodology creates a space for participants to share their experiences, and through their stories, their perspectives on their worldview will unfold. Hence, knowledge is produced 'with' the participants and not on them.

4.3.5 Narrative Inquiry and Feminist Research

Narrative inquiry and feminist inquiry as stances both acknowledge the role that practitioners play, both individually and collectively, in generating knowledge, re-envisioning and theorising practice, and interpreting and interrogating the theory and research of others (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999a). While women have increasingly moved toward greater gender equality in the workplace, gendered power relations and inequality continue to be constructed and maintained both formally and informally in organisations, especially at senior leadership level (Bismark et al, 2015; Katuna, 2014). Social constructionism attempts to navigate complex power relations and supports consideration of the contexts and circumstances in which knowledge is produced. This research aims to use narrative inquiry to make visible the hidden barriers that women leaders experience and why they are still considered an anomaly compared to men when in high positions of leadership (Chin, 2004).

Narrative inquiry has been used in a number of previous studies that involve women in leadership, for example Richardson (2021) used this approach to explore the leadership styles of women of colour in the non-profit sector. In another study Coston (2020) used narrative inquiry to explore the leadership barriers faced by African American women within the information technology sector, with Cohen (2019) adopting narrative inquiry to understand the barriers experienced by Hispanic women in community leadership in Central Texas. Finally, Dulini Anuvinda Fernando (2012) used a narrative inquiry approach supported by a social constructionist theoretical framework to explore how highly skilled women workers in Sri Lanka manage gender stereotyping in their workplaces. All studies identify women as marginalised in society and use narrative inquiry as an approach to give 'voice' to those who are seldom heard (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999b).

Listening and interpreting their stories and experiences can help to identify the strategies that women use to negotiate these gendered leadership and contextual challenges and relations. This may provide a deeper understanding of how gender shapes leadership within the work context and how gender norms can be disrupted to create opportunities to further promote gender equality at senior organisational level. The methodological rigor of narrative inquiry resonates with a social constructionist framework as it facilitates the exploration of the various ways participants construct meaning from within their social contexts and experiences to shape their stories.

4.3.6 Guidelines for Selecting and Using Narrative Inquiry

Referring to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Creswell (2016 p. 55) describes a set of general guidelines to consider when selecting and using narrative inquiry as outlined in Table 5.
The methods of conducting a narrative study are flexible and this general procedural guide merely represents an informal collection of topics.

Table 5: Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Creswell (2016 p. 55) a set of general guidelines to consider when selecting and using narrative inquiry.

Step 1	Determine if the research question/s best fits narrative research. Narrative research is designed for capturing the lived experiences of a single life or the lives of a small number of individuals.	This research study is concerned with the lived experience of six women leaders.
Step 2	Select one or more individuals who have stories or life experiences to tell and spend considerable time with them gathering their stories through multiple types of information.	This study conducted three rounds of semi-structured interviews with each research participant.
Step 3	Collect information about the context of these stories.	This study is concerned with situating individual stories within participants' personal experiences (their jobs, their homes), their culture (racial or ethnic), and their historical contexts (time and place).
Step 4	Analyse the participants' stories, and then "restory' them into a framework that makes sense.	This study gathered information from the participants that provided a chronology which consisted of past, present, and future ideas (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The story line also includes Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space: the personal and social (the interaction); the past, present, and future (continuity); and the place (situation).
Step 5	A collaborative and interactive participation process between the researcher and participant.	The role of the researcher in this study being to gather stories, negotiate relationships, and provide appropriate support to the participants.

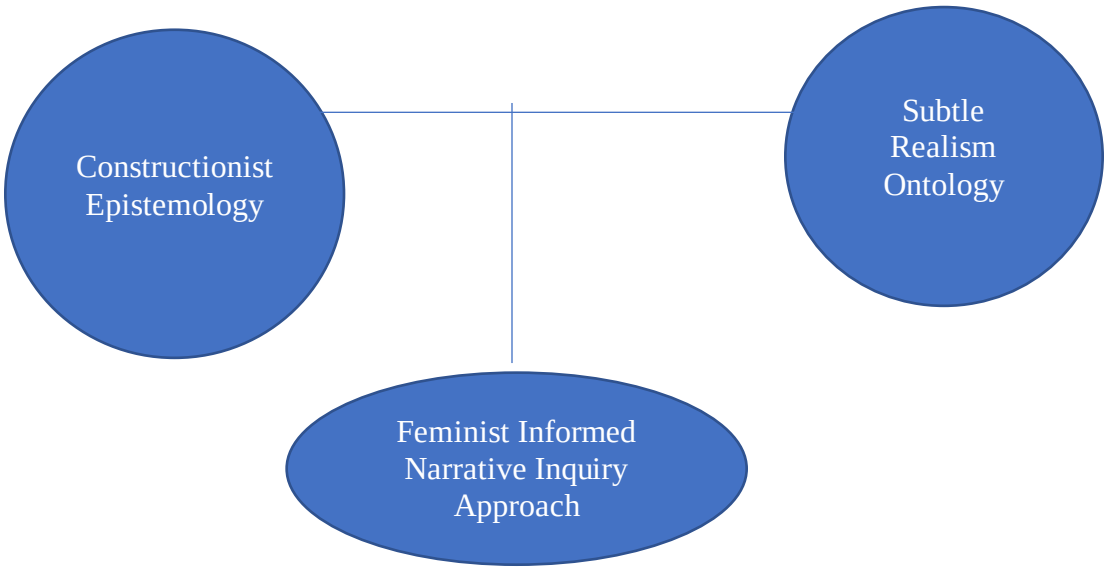
The researcher's stance in relation to their ontological and epistemological position is heavily influenced by the theory of social constructionism and draws from a feminist informed narrative inquiry methodology. The following section is concerned with describing the research design.

4.4 Research Design Methods

According to Hay (2013) unacknowledged ontological choices are a catalyst for major theoretical disputes. Researchers bring to the research their paradigms, as a qualitative researcher this study is consistent with a constructionist worldview (see Figure 5). This worldview, in turn, narrows to inform the researchers methodological options, which is feminist informed narrative inquiry, and this option should reflect the interpretive and theoretical stances taken by the researcher. Which for this study include stances informed through the lens of social construction, to develop a greater understanding of the constructs and interplay of gender and leadership. Understanding the gender gap in senior executive leadership is complex and nuanced, as women not only experience visible barriers but are often hindered from professional success by invisible barriers with both sets classified as interpersonal, internalised, and structural (Bismark et al., 2015).

As identified in Chapter Three deconstruction attempts to understand how social problems are framed within the narrative. Deconstruction also attempts to uncover embedded gender norms and conventions (Fook, 2022) while illustrating the confines of oppositional classifications that preserve gender inequalities (Morley & O'Bree, 2021). The researchers stance shapes the selection of research participants; the types of questions and problems studied; the approaches to data collection, data analysis, writing, and evaluation; and the use of the information to challenge or change the status quo (Bryman, 2016).

Figure 5 Visual Diagram of the Three Components of this Qualitative Research Study



Riessman (2008) sets out three levels of inquiry and analysis in narrative research:

1. Stories told by research participants.
2. Interpretation by the researcher (narrative of narrative).
3. The reconstruction of stories (narrative of narrative of narrative).

These steps broadly correspond to the three stages discussed in the next section 1) Data collection; 2) narrative analysis, and 3) thematic analysis and writing. These stages are supported by ongoing interpretation and possibilities for social reconstruction. The next section outlines the identified method of data collection, the research population, the criteria for selection of participants, an overview of the interview process and the significance of using a reflexive interviewing work journal.

4.5 Data Collection

There are several different choices of methods used within the methodology of feminist informed narrative inquiry. The researcher considered various methods including biographic narrative interpretive method (BNIM), journals, fieldnotes, memorabilia and artifacts, participatory action research and case study designs (Bryman, 2016). Semi structured

interviews were selected as a method for this study because the complexity of the interview process is not only a means of data collection, but a space where knowledge can be created and co-constructed (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

This is further reinforced by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) who developed a metaphor of a three dimensional narrative inquiry space, building on the work of Dewey (1938), based on Deweyan theory of experience to intellectualise narrative inquiry. The three dimensions of the metaphoric narrative inquiry space include:

- "Personal and social (interaction) along one dimension.
- Past, present, and future (continuity) along a second dimension.
- Place (situation) along a third dimension" (Clandinin, 2006, pp. 46-47).

This understanding supports the researcher to connect with the three dimensions of participants' stories, and maintain an openness to the different "voices" of participants within the process (Clandinin, 2006). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) recognised the importance of exploring the participants stories but also the importance of the socio-contextual history and institutional narratives in which individual's experiences are constituted, shaped, and normalised. Thus, working within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space highlights the relational dimension of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2016).

As already discussed in Chapter Three the researcher cannot exclude themselves from the inquiry, with subjectivities accepted as part of the interaction. However they are challenged to find ways to inquire into participants' experiences, one's own experiences, as well as the co-constructed experiences developed through the relational inquiry process (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998).

The researcher selected interviews as the data gathering method and after due consideration chose semi structured interviews as a method which best facilitated the relational aspect of narrative inquiry. The researcher rejected structured interview as a method as it follows a rigid format of set questions (Raworth et al., 2012). Similarly, BNIM uses an interviewing technique developed to elicit an uninterrupted story from participants. Both techniques are devoid of the flexibility required by the researcher in this study to explore through conversations that arise, the narratives that the participants share on the different topics discussed within the interview process (Raworth et al., 2012).

Using semi structured interviews ensured that the researcher did not 'bracket' themselves out of the inquiry but rather found ways to inquire into each participants' experiences, and to reflect on their own experiences, as well as co-constructing experiences developed through the relational inquiry process (Clandinin, 2006).

4.5.1 Semi Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews follow an interview guide, the purpose to outline a set of topics and a general series of questions that are normally amended or tweaked during the interview process. Qualitative interviewing can provide important insights into the participants world, through nuanced descriptions and the acknowledgement of multi-complex experiences acquired through interaction and the interpretation of meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Semi-structured interviews allow for the researcher to react to an interviewee's responses, by asking additional unplanned questions of the participants.

Valentine and Sadgrove (2012) recognise the importance of interlinking the theories explored in previous chapters with the design of qualitative questions to provide direction and help to frame particular ideas. Chapter Two provided an overview of literature that explored gender and senior executive leadership issues, identified gaps in the literature and appraised the barriers that caused gender disparity at senior executive level within the CVS. While Chapter Three explored the social construction of leadership. The theory from both chapters supported deeper levels of understanding of the phenomenon under study and influenced the framing and construction of the interview research guide [Appendix 12].

Agee (2009, p. 432) suggests that:

> "Qualitative inquiries involve asking the types of questions that focus on the why and how of human interactions, and embrace theory, either explicitly or implicitly as a way of giving direction and framing particular ideas."

The research questions, from conceptualising right through to transcription and analysis seek to understand the lived experience of women senior executives within the context of Section 39 organisations. The use of open-ended questions attempts to support the chronological development of the participants life experiences and positionality to reveal their true identity and provide insights into the narrator's inner world. This supported the formation of a plotline, with study questions formulated to examine the professional lives of participants in chronological order:

- The participants childhood, socio historical context
- Early career path
- On their journey to becoming a CEO
- Being a CEO

The research question are descriptive and seek to understand (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) the perspective of women CEOs in Section 39 organisations. The question seeks participants lived experiences through their stories to add to already existing knowledge base on this aspect of the social world (Green, 2008). Green (2008) suggests that the use of interrogatives can clarify the answerability of the research question as detailed below:

Who: women CEOs

What: talk about their lived experience

When: Over the duration of this research study

How: using semi-structured interviews

Why: to tell their stories about their lived experiences and perspective of being CEOs in Section 39 organisations.

While no standard procedures or rules exist for conducting qualitative interviews, (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), Duque (2010, p. 23) posits that "interviews are narrative occasions", and that interviewing methods should afford participants the opportunity to tell their story on their own terms, ensuring the sharing of power within interactions. According to Suárez-Ortega (2013, p. 190) “life stories are created by successive interviews”. In this study the researcher has carried out three rounds of interviews to illicit and understand the meaningful experiences in women’s lives, how they interpret and give meaning to, and explain them (Suárez-Ortega, 2013).

In summary, the objective of the research questions is to explain specifically what this study is about. The research questions were carefully considered by the researcher and influenced by the work conducted in Chapter Two, the adoption of a moderate social constructionist theoretical framework and the researchers professional and personal knowledge of gender and leadership within the context of Section 39 organisations.

4.5.2 Sample Size

Issues of sample size and how representative the selected samples are, have been the subject of intensive debate over time (Anderson, 2017; Kuzel, 1992). Anderson (2017) position is that 'size does matter' but that 'more is not always better'. The sample size selected for this study at the onset was eight senior executive women, acknowledging the difficulties in deciding sample sizes at the start of the inquiry processes. During the ongoing process and with considerable discussion between the researcher and the thesis supervisors this sample size was narrowed down to six senior executive women. A key factor influencing the sample size was being able to justify that the sample size selected was sufficient in satisfying the quality and validity of the study, and the ethical standards. The issue of appropriate sampling, not over-sampling or under-sampling, as well as an understanding of the term 'saturation' within the context of narrative inquiry were central tenets when considering sample size within the ongoing process. While the researcher understood that within qualitative research a greater sample size is likely to produce variations, they were restricted by the time limits of the study. Therefore, the researcher made the decision to interview each participant more than once in order to attain rich narrative data.

4.5.3 Criteria for Selecting Research Participants

Criteria for selection for semi-structured interviews includes:

- Participants must be individuals that self-identify as women.
- Participants must have a minimum of ten years' experience working in a middle/senior management role in an intellectual disability organisation in Ireland, a Section 39/Section 38 organisation.
- At the time of research, the participants must have a minimum of two years as CEO in a Section 39 organisation.

4.5.4 The Study Participants

This section provides an overview of the organisations that the participants who engaged with the study work in (Table 6). As discussed in Chapter One the research participants are CEOs in Section 39 intellectual disability organisations. Section 39 organisations are governed under

the 2004 Health Act. They provide services that are funded through the State, but their employees are not considered public servants.

Table 6 (Chapter 4) and Table 10 (Chapter Five) were individualised and sent to each participant for completion in advance of the first interview. Providing the researcher with an opportunity, to gather background information before commencement of interviews with prior consent from participants.

Purposeful sampling approach, a technique widely employed in qualitative research was used by the researcher to select participants. The purposive sampling technique, "is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses" (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 1). This study has clear research questions that can only be answered by women senior executives, working in Section 39 intellectual disability organisations, who were willing to share their knowledge and experiences. The selection of participants was based on individuals whose information-rich cases could add to the research topic (Bryman, 2016).

In identifying participants, the researcher looked for individuals that are proficient and well-informed about the context in which they work, were available and willing to participate, and possessed the ability to "communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner" (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 1). Previous studies on women in leadership explored in the scoping review in Chapter Two supported the decision-making process in relation to recruiting participants that are representative of some of the below credentials. For example, Al-Alawi (2016) study population consisted of data collected from female employees in the financial and banking sector, who represented different age groups. Brignoli (2020) criteria for selection of female participants in the department of Defence included women who were serving two or more years at the highest two levels of their leadership organisation.

The researcher recruited participants for this study that were representative of the below differentials:

- Urban and rural locations.
- Different age profiles.
- Different qualification status.
- Different size organisations.
- Had different lengths of time in their role as senior executive.
- Different nationalities.

The researcher was unable to locate participants with a different racial background from the traditional Irish women. Whilst this study was not designed to explore the intersectionality of gender, race, or cultural and ethnical backgrounds, insights on intersectionality in the context of Section 39 organisations could have added valuable knowledge to the research. This is consistent with the findings of the scoping review conducted in Chapter Two of this study where intersectionality of gender and race emerged as under theorised in the not-for-profit sector and a topic worthy of further exploration (Alcaraz-Minnick, 2020; Eaves-Boykin, 2021; Gentry et al., 2010; Kalaitzi et al., 2019; Ming & Minghui, 2018; Saliba, 2016).

4.5.5. Interview Process

The researcher developed an interview guide [Appendix 12]. The interview questions were refined based on conducting two pilot interviews with two CEOs with an understanding of Section 39 organisations, but who did not fit the criteria for this study. The research participants were sent the interview guide prior to the interviews. Each interview lasted between 45-60 minutes and interviews were recorded with the consent of each participant. Developing good relationships with participants and collecting data in the participants natural setting supports the researcher to explain the particular experience under study (Butler-Kisber, 2018). The researcher agreed with each participant that the first interview would be conducted as a face-to-face meeting in a setting of their choice. It was agreed collaboratively that the other two subsequent interviews would be conducted either face to face or carried out using Microsoft teams, a videoconferencing platform. Four participants opted for Microsoft Teams with two participants preferring in-person interviews.

In a recent study Archibald et al. (2019) outlines the advantages of using videoconferencing platforms for researchers including: convenience, cost-effectiveness, and time savings as compared to face-face interviews, especially when carrying out interviews with participants spread over a large geographical area. While acknowledging that face to face interviews remain a primary qualitative data collection method, Braun et al. (2017, p. 540) recognises that "digital research processes such as videoconferencing present positive alternatives to mainstream qualitative research data gathering processes".

Poor internet connection, sound and video quality as well as a lack of proficiency in using video conferencing technology have been cited as possible limitations in using Microsoft teams as a

tool for conducting semi structured interviews (Archibald et al., 2019; F. E. Fox et al., 2007). However, studies produced by Deakin and Wakefield (2014) and Hanna (2012), found that the benefits of using videoconferencing for data collection significantly outweighed the challenges.

Table 6 Participants organisational overviews

Participants	Overall budget of organisation	No. of people supported	No. of staff employed	Organisation Rural/National or Urban Location	Services provided by organisation e.g. residential, day, respite, advocacy, employment
P1	6.85 million	48	120	Urban	Residential, Outreach, community connection
P2	4 million approx.	45	101	Rural	Residential, Day, Respite, Individualised Supports.
P3	6.5 million	250	150	Rural	Residential, Respite, Preschool, training and employment, catering.
P4	7 million	141	135	Urban	Residential, Day, respite, outreach, home support
P5	5 million	70	100 & 45 Volunteers	National	Residential, Day,
P6	580,000	33	13 -16 staff	Rural	Day, Advocacy, Evening Respite

4.5.6 Interviewing Work Journal

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 13) outlined the significance of the researcher keeping track of the "temporal vicissitudes of an interview journey", this was achieved in this study by employing a reflexive journal as a means of recording the learnings throughout the data

collection process. Therefore, the researcher incorporated a reflexive journal as part of the investigation to note any insights obtained from conceptualisation of the interview questions, right through to analysis and reporting. The reflexive journal provided the researcher with reference points, while capturing the researchers' thought processes and insights. These insights supported the formulation of the researchers understanding and reflections throughout the processes. The next section outlines the analytical strategy employed in the analysis and coding of data.

4.6 Analytical Strategy

Qualitative research must be systematic in its approach to data collection and analysis. This study is framed by a focus of inquiry, with data collected through semi-structured interviews. While, Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 3) proffer that thematic analysis can be used for "both inductive (data-driven) and deductive (theory-driven) analyses, narrative inquiry encourages researchers to analyse the data inductively to establish patterns or themes" (Bryman, 2016). Inductive approaches are particularly useful in qualitative research especially when trying to understand the social world through the perspectives of this study's participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In analysing data generated in this format, responses are identified as sets of meaning and the associations between sets are derived from the data itself, through a process of inductive reasoning (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Table 9 outlines Braun and Clarke (2020) analytical process applied in the analysis and coding of data. This recent paper has built on Braun and Clarke (2006) article in which the six stages of the processes have been partially renamed and in which they have broadened their guidelines to include the term "Reflexive Thematic Analysis". The importance of using this method is that the experiences of the participants is considered the primary source of knowledge. This process filters and organises the data so that the essence of the phenomena understudy can be easily identified and discussed. The next section outlines the use of NVivo, a qualitative software to support the stages of analysis and coding.

4.6.1 The Use of Qualitative Software to Support Data Analysis

NVivo 12, a qualitative analysis software package was used to support the analytical and coding process (Di Gregorio, 2000). It is important to note that NVivo is a data management tool, it is used for efficiency and effectiveness but cannot of itself conduct analysis and/or synthesis findings. However, this software supports the transparency of the study, as NVivo 12

produces a comprehensive audit trail through the categorisation of data processing and coding patterns, and evidence of analysis from open coding to theoretical coding, depicting the researcher's thought progression [see Appendix 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21]. This produces an analytical process that is traceable and transparent and on which the trustworthiness and plausibility of a study can be established (Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Miles et al., 2018).

4.6.2 Transcription

The researcher acknowledges that the essences of the experience of the research participants come from transcriptions and notes taken by the researcher immediately following each interview (Josselson & Lieblich, 2001). After transcription of the data from each round of interviews, the data was imported into NVivo 12 for analysis.

4.6.3 Analysis

According to Anderson (2015, p. 210) "analysis is a process of thought that enables the researcher to understand the nature of what is being investigated, the relationship between different variables in the situation and the likely outcomes of particular actions or interventions". Therefore, the researcher recognises that the data gathered can illuminate the research question and provide a basis for analysis. The purpose of analysis is therefore to find the answer to the research question posed at the beginning of this Chapter.

Hunter (2010, p. 44) clearly outlines that the analysis stage of a narrative inquiry study can present a number of challenges and selecting the most "suitable method of data analysis and presentation of the findings takes time and effort". Several types of data analysis can be used to support the analysis of a narrative inquiry study, some of these include thematic, content, and narrative analysis.

Content analysis is a "systematic method for analysing text or stories and developing categories based on explicit rules for coding" (Horn, 2012, p. 134). Content analysis uses a reductive approach. In order to adopt this reductive approach a large amount of data maybe ignored (Anderson, 2015). Given that this study was concerned with gathering data from six research participants, the researcher wanted to actively engage with all of the data collected and therefore rejected content analysis as a method of data analysis for this study.

Similarly narrative analysis which is the "analysis of a chronologically-told-story with a focus on how elements are sequenced" (Horn, 2012, p. 134) was considered. However given that the primary focus was on participants' experience as CEOs in Section 39 intellectual disability organisations, and not the entirety of their life story, it was not adopted (Bryman, 2016; Swords, 2021).

Discourse analysis is embedded in a social constructionist epistemology and as such it could be argued that it would be a good fit for this research paradigm. However, "discourse analysis regards language as constructing, rather than reflecting social reality and the prevalence of the power structures that shape how we talk and think" (Jaspal, 2020, p. 293). Discourse analysis requires the researcher to fully commit to this orientation (Gill, 2000). While this research is interested in the language used by the participants to describe their lived experience, it moves beyond discourse as evidenced in Chapter Three which laid out the rationale for using a social constructionist framework to underpin this study. Within this framework discourse is one of nine sensitising concepts that the researcher is interested in exploring further [Appendix 10 & 11]. Therefore, while the researcher considered content, narrative, and discourse analysis as potential methods for data analysis within this study, thematic analysis was the approach adopted for a number of reasons:

Firstly, the researcher is actively and deliberately engaged with the research. This is important for this study as it facilitates the researcher to gain deeper insights into the personal significance and meaning of the experiences shared by the research participants. This process is supported by the ability of the researcher to immerse themselves in the analytical process using a reflexive lens (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2020; Clarke et al., 2015; Terry et al., 2017).

Secondly, the research questions consider not only the effects of language but the meaning that is co-constructed between the research participants and the everyday interactions they experience in society.

Thirdly, reflexive thematic analysis is a flexible research analysis method that is compatible with a constructionist paradigm. Thus, this further supports the rationale to use thematic analysis with a subtle realist ontology and a constructionist epistemology to explore the social construction of leadership and the effects of this social construction on the lived experience of women CEOs within the context of Section 39 organisations.

4.6.4. Thematic analysis

Clandinin (2016) warns of the importance of making the most use of the data collected and representing participants narratives in a coherent and meaningful way (Clandinin, 2016). It is a method for "identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke 2006: 78). In practice, it requires the researcher to commit to an ongoing reflexive dialogue and engagement with theory, data, and interpretation.

Chapter Three explored theory relevant to this study, in particular the concept of leadership and the patriarchal construction of this phenomena. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) theory serves as a conceptual tool that used within an inquiry can support deeper levels of understanding of phenomenon. Thematic analysis emphasises the importance of the researcher's subjectivity as an analytic resource. The subjectivity of the researcher was explored in Chapter Three and acknowledged the importance of the engagement of the researcher in sophisticated subjective processes including analytical reasoning, synthetic reasoning and logical deduction throughout the analysis stage of this study (Ratner, 2002).

Thematic analysis has been used in similar studies concerning gender disparity in leadership. A study by Baumgartner and Schneider (2010) used thematic analysis on data gathered from qualitative interviews with seven women in different fields who have broken the glass ceiling at varying levels in their organisations. Similarly, in a recent study Azizi et al. (2022) used thematic analysis to identify the extent of gender disparity in the academic leadership in the top 50 North American universities. In both of these studies thematic analysis allowed for a systematic approach to data collection and analysis. Table 9 outlines Braun and Clarke (2006); (Braun & Clarke, 2020) six step approach to thematic analysis and sets out the analytical process applied in the analysis and coding of data in this study.

Thematic analysis allows for themes and constructs to arise inductively from the data. Braun and Clarke (2020, p. 14) suggest that the researcher clarify the difference between "what codes and themes represent, and the role they play in analysis". The researcher acknowledges that codes are one-dimensional, and themes are multi-dimensional. The reporting of analytic outputs is aligned to Braun and Clarke (2020, pp. 6-7) "reflexive thematic analysis approach". This approach acknowledges the values of qualitative research and the subjective skills the researcher brings to the process. As discussed in 4.7.1 NVivo technology was used to support the analysis of the data collected and the effective representation of the findings throughout the process.

Table 7: Patton (1999, p. 1190) 'the credibility issue for qualitative inquiry depends on three distinct but related inquiry elements:'

Credibility Issues	Researcher Supportive Evidence
Rigorous techniques and methods for gathering high-quality data that are carefully analysed, with attention to issues of validity, reliability, and triangulation.	Techniques and methods for gathering high quality data are detailed in Sections 4.6 Data Collection, 4.7 Analytical strategy & Analysis.
The credibility of the researcher, which is dependent on training, experience, track record, status, and presentation of self.	The credibility of the researcher is supported through in class tutorials, the thesis supervision process, presenting research at a national conference (Appendix) and detailed in Sections 4. 8 Reflexivity & 4.9 Ethical considerations.
Philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry, that is, a fundamental appreciation of naturalistic inquiry, qualitative methods, inductive analysis, purposeful sampling, and holistic thinking.	The philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry is detailed in Sections 4.3 Ontology, Epistemology & Methodological Approach 4.4 Methodology Qualitative methods, inductive analysis, purposeful sampling, and holistic thinking are detailed in Sections 4.6 Data Collection, 4.7 Analytical strategy & Analysis & Sections 4. 8 Reflexivity

4.6.5. Reliability and Validity

According to Polkinghorne (1989) in narrative research, reliability usually refers to the trustworthiness of the data, while validity refers to the robustness of the analysis of data, the dependability of the data and the accessibility to the data. Reliability and validity are evidenced by the attention and detail that the researcher directs to the dependability of fieldnotes, accurate transcriptions of interviews and the use of reflexive journalling (Polkinghorne, 1989). Table 7

outlines how the researcher addresses credibility issues within the study. The next section outlines the researchers use of reflexivity throughout the study.

4.7 Reflexivity

Taking an inquiry and feminist stance in research requires the researcher to develop and refine understandings of the role of reflection (Bryman, 2016; Stanley & Wise, 2002). A feminist informed inquiry position involves a commitment to ourselves and others to show how we know what we know (Byrne & Lenţin, 2000).

This study sits within an interpretive paradigm in which researchers do not identify researcher bias or self-reflexivity as an attempt to obtain an objective distance between the self and the research (Angen, 2000; Heshusius, 1994). Rather reflexivity is undertaken to value the researcher's own contribution to the understanding and to trace how the researcher's original sense of the phenomena under study changes over the course of the research (Angen, 2000; Bergum, 1991). Therefore the researcher uses journalling to capture the journey of discovery, how the researcher shaped and is shaped by the research process and outputs (Palaganas et al., 2017, p. 425).

Reflexivity prompts the researcher to identify and question accepted or taken-for-granted forms of knowledge and social practices (Throne et al., 2016). A relevant quote from the researcher's reflective journal illustrates how the researcher identified and considered normal social practices:

> *"The lens of social constructionism provided insights into gender as a construct and not an inherent part of my identity. I have been unconsciously shaped by a patriarchal ideology and stereotyped where both consciously and subconsciously I have partaken in 'doing gender' as part of my everyday life. My identity and agency are bounded within my perceptions of what being a woman means. When I have exerted agency beyond this stereotype, such as taking a role as a senior executive leader I am challenged to reflect on my positionality in order to understand how historical and social context, power dynamics and discourse influence my style of leadership".*
>
> (Excerpt from Reflective Journal, April 2023)

Reflexivity in narrative inquiry requires the researcher to identify their position within the research. Attia and Edge (2017) posit that the researcher must have the kind of humility that acknowledges the researcher's position, and the kind of openness that is prepared to risk having that standpoint changed. This was an important point when considering the methodology for this study as originally the researcher was using narrative inquiry only. However, informed by the scoping review completed in Chapter Two, in which various forms of oppression were identified that devalue women and prevent women from rising to CEO level, it was necessary to consider a feminist informed standpoint.

Reflexivity supports the researcher to become a vital part of the production of knowledge through their viewpoint (Maynard & Purvis, 2013; Stanley & Wise, 2000). The viewpoint of the researcher was shaped over time. Prior to commencement of the dissertation the researcher could not fully articulate and understand their 'gendered' position in society. Realisation and understanding of the social construction of life dictated by the dominant gender and the power relationship created by a patriarchal society only emerged consciously for the researcher throughout this study. This evolution of thoughts challenges the researcher to delve beneath the surface and become clearer, more informed, and transparent about the lens or the perspective being applied as it unfolds throughout the research process.

Reflexivity and social constructionism allow for consideration of things that are not immediately visible. They support the incorporation of theory and research to arrive at a more accurate understanding of the social causes and consequences of human behaviour, the dynamics of human social interaction, and the culture that surrounds everyday life. Sociology helps us to gain a better understanding and a more informed perspective of how we are shaped and influenced and how in turn this affects the researchers standpoint (Badaracco, 2001).

The researcher must have the capacity to examine their own perspectives to effectively navigate the complex worldview constructed from academia and stratified by experiences within practice (Agee 2009; Baker et. al., 2014; Throne et. al., 2016). Attia and Edge (2017, p. 34) describes this process as a "developmental approach" which is focused on the continuing growth of the researcher as fundamental to the research process. Narrative inquiry requires that the researcher has the empathic ability to relate not just to their own perspective but also to the perspectives of others. The researcher is challenged to present themselves not only as intellect, but also as a whole person committing their emotions, and values, and beliefs in the research process (Attia & Edge, 2017).

Through reflexivity the researcher must also examine the power dynamics, ensuring that they do not unduly influence positively or negatively and consequently hinder advancing the research objectives (Throne et al., 2016). To be reflexive, researchers must systematically self-evaluate, ensuring that they adopt and foster an active inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999b). This involves a transparent research process as depicted within this study through the data analysis auditing trail, awareness of the positionality of the researcher and their involvement with the research.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

The primary aim guiding ethical considerations is ensuring that participation in the study is voluntary, informed, upholds the rights of the research participants and is a safe space for participants to tell their stories. The researcher has an obligation and a responsibility to comply with the ethical guidelines and standards set by Maynooth University (Byram, 2016).

In addition, the researcher is obliged under best research practice to be cognisant and compliant with the ethical guidelines produced by the Sociological Association of Ireland (SAI). Both sets of guidelines consist of general principles and statements of ethical practice and are intended to generate awareness about potential problems and conflicts of interest that might arise in this research study ((Sociological & Ireland, n.d.).

The principle of 'do no harm' will underpin all aspects of the study and is incorporated throughout the reflexive journalling process. The researcher will ensure that all research practices are aligned with the principles of respect for human dignity, minimising risk, confidentiality, informed consent, and power dynamics (Ellis, 2007; Byram, 2016; Maynooth University, 2019). The research participants in this study are women, the oppression of women in society is well documented (Alcaraz-Minnick, 2020; Carli & Eagly, 2016; Cook & Glass, 2014; Katuna, 2014; Lahti, 2013; Nelson, 2021; Pillay, 2012). Women are constantly challenged by the societal barriers imposed upon them. The scoping review conducted in Chapter Two identified that women are often subjected to the emotional burdens of being stereotyped, sexually harassed, and isolated (Kalaitzi et al., 2019; Katuna, 2014; Lee, 2019). As gender inequality can have a significant emotional impact on women and retelling their stories as part of the interview process may trigger such emotions, it is vital that the researcher engages in constant reflexivity to ensure a strong 'ethic of care' (Kearns, 2014).

The management of research bias is complex and nuanced. Therefore the researcher used the criteria for responsible research as depicted in Table 8 (McClintock et al., 2003, p. 739) as a framework to:

- "Make invisible biases, visible
- Be reflexive
- Explore the level of influence within the research process
- Remain congruent with the ethical guidelines of the University"

The researcher's role is to enable the participants to communicate their perspectives. This is facilitated in this study through conversation and places an onus on the researcher to capture the nuances of the perspectives of participants while remaining true to the representation of their narratives (Agee, 2009). The researcher must also minimise risk to the participants through an awareness of potential consequences of the research study and its impact on participants lives at many levels, including professionally.

4.8.1 Privacy, Confidentiality and Anonymity

The quest for the advancement of knowledge cannot override the rights of the research participants to anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality (F. E. Fox et al., 2007, p. 103). While anonymity can be particularly challenging in research studies especially where small-scale research is being conducted, this does not negate the responsibility of the researcher to retain the anonymity of the research participants and not to unwittingly collect data that makes the participant identifiable (Fox, et al., 2007:103). While recognising the importance of negotiating boundaries in relation to confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity with participants.

In this study privacy has been protected through anonymising identifying details such as the participants names, and locations of work. To remain true to the research process, the blurring of identifying details must be done in a way that does not compromise the ability of the researcher to critically represent the complexity of each participants' perspectives, experiences, and positionalities (Meehan, 2019, p. 128).

Confidentiality will be safeguarded in the following ways:

- The persons real name will not be used at any point of information collection, or in the written research.
- The research participant involved in the research will be given pseudonyms that will be used in all verbal and written records and reports.

4.8.2 Minimising Risk

Maynooth University's ethical review process encourages researchers to consider and work through the intrinsic complexities that occurs in social research. According to Wiles (2012) ethical decisions should be based on the consequences of actions that are morally right and produce good outcomes for the individual and the wider society. Therefore, the researcher is obliged to both identify and address ethical dilemmas, minimise potential risks to the participants and any issues that arise within an unfolding process. Where necessary the researcher will seek guidance from their supervisors to support good ethical decision making.

4.8.3 Informed Consent

The researcher obtained written informed consent from each research participant prior to the interview process. The onus is placed on the researcher to provide appropriate information about the research; why it is being undertaken and how it will be disseminated and used, so that perspective participants can make informed decisions on whether or not to participate (Byram, 2016; Anderson, 2015).

As the research methodology is feminism informed narrative inquiry, the research is done in collaboration with people and not on them. Therefore, the research process allows the participant to tell their stories and highlight what issues and topics are important for them (Rubin & Rubin 2011). The direction of qualitative studies is not always predictable it can be a challenge to present perspective participants with all information in advance of the research (Byram, 2016). Therefore, the researcher does not regard prior consent as a once off event but as a process that occurs with the participant throughout the research.

According to the Sociological Association of Ireland (n.d.) good research practice is strengthened through discussion, reflection, and negotiation. This collaborative approach allows for the researcher and the participants to discuss and negotiate any issues or challenges

that may arise. Table 8 sets out the researchers' criteria to ensure adherence to responsible research.

4.8.4. Politics

There is national recognition that tensions and conflict exist between the CVS and the State (Day et al., 2018). This conflict is present in the context that the research participants operate. To the extent that the McInerney (2018) report was commissioned specifically to examine the serious issues between the State and eight of Ireland's larger Section 39 funded organisations.

It is therefore crucial that the researcher remain sensitive to political factors and minimise potential risks for participants. Insider understanding of the structures and relations of power, and knowledge about the wider socio-political factors which impact Section 39 organisations is advantageous in these circumstances (Issitt & Spence, 2005).

Table 8: Criteria for Evaluating Responsible Research (McClintock et al., 2003)

Criteria for responsibility (evidence of)	How it can contribute to responsibility	Desirable attributes	Researchers' responses
Self-reflection	Being aware of ideas, assumptions, and alternatives	Research journal Document changes in ideas	Reflexive journalling Documenting the researchers' thoughts and idea formation throughout the interview process
Engagement in a research community	By a 'dialogue' with other researchers By contributing to a research community	Collaboration Peer review Conferences Research	In class Supervisors & fellow classmates. Narrative Inquiry Social Care Ireland as keynote speaker. Seminars in Maynooth University.

Criteria for responsibility (evidence of)	How it can contribute to responsibility	Desirable attributes	Researchers' responses
Adequate use of available resources	Being 'accountable'	Coherence and plausibility of argument Use of time	Coherence and plausibility of argument & use of time Evident throughout the thesis and more focused in Chapter Three: Theory & Chapter Four: Methodology.
Immersion in context	By a prolonged time with people in context Through relationship building	A 'rich' picture of that context Research is relevant to that context	A rich picture of that context. Research is relevant to the Section 39 intellectual disability context Evident in: Chapters Five, Six & Seven, the Findings and Analysis

Criteria for responsibility (evidence of)	How it can contribute to responsibility	Desirable attributes	Researchers' responses
Rigour	By substantiating statements	Quoting relevant literature and sources of material	Evident throughout the thesis, particularly in: Chapter Two: Scoping review, Chapter Three: Theory, Chapter Four: Methodology Chapter Eight: Discussion
Sincerity	'Valuing' other people Consistency to aims of working with people	Learning described Developing appropriate skills	Evident in: Chapter Three: Theory Chapter Four Methodology, Chapters Five, Six, Seven & Eight Findings and Analysis, Discussion

4.9 Summary

This chapter has given an overview of how the researcher sought to answer the research question. An interpretive paradigm was chosen, guided by the researcher's worldview. This led to the researcher identifying their ontological branch of philosophy based on the nature of reality regarding gender as being a phenomenon. This ontological position posits that there is one reality, but multiple perspectives exist in relation to this reality. The epistemological stance taken viewed gender as influenced and shaped by humans, and therefore cannot be researched in the same manner as the natural sciences. A feminist influenced narrative inquiry methodology was chosen to explore the subjective experience of research participants. Information on research participant's and strategies for data gathering was discussed.

Table 9: Braun and Clarke (2006); (Braun & Clarke, 2020) Six Step Approach to Thematic Analysis

Phase 1: Data familiarisation and writing familiarisation notes	1. Reading and re-reading the transcribed data. Engaging with the data to identify patterns and capture ideas and reflections about the data. 2. Listening and re-listening to the interview recordings. Actively listening for silences, pauses, changes in tone of voice, emotions. 3. Using NVivo to annotate and capture initial ideas and reflections and significant quotes.
Phase 2: Systematic data coding. (Open coding)	1. Developing ideas and reflections identified in Step 1 into codes. According to Braun and Clarke (2020, p. 13) 'codes can be considered entities that capture (at least) one observation and display (usually just) one facet.' 2. The researcher used NVivo 12 to code the data systematically across the entire data set, collating data from transcripts relevant to each code.

Phase 3: Generating initial themes from coded and collated data. (developing categories)	1. Step 2 captured codes, ‘a code is an analytic unit, used by researcher to develop (initial) themes(Braun & Clarke, 2020, p. 13). 2. These codes were then developed in Step 3 into themes. 3. Themes captured important knowledge contained in the data in relation to the research question. 4. Themes captured representation of meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82)
Phase 4: Developing and reviewing themes. (coding on)	1. Like building blocks each step of the framework supports the researcher to systematically analyse the data. 2. Firstly, the review required the researcher to identify if Step 2 systematically captured the entire data set and coded correctly. 3. Secondly, the researcher identified if the themes from Step 3 work in relation to the coded extracts from Step 2. Within this phase the researcher identified that some themes did not have enough data to support them and also collapsed themes into other themes. 4. The final step involved generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.

Phase 5: Refining, defining, and naming themes. (Developing a thematic framework)	1. The researcher was confident that the thematic map of analysis was fit for purpose. 2. The researcher returned to already collated data extracts for each theme, and organised them clearly and logically, with relevant accompanying narrative. 3. The researcher further defined and refined the themes. Determining the essence of each theme and ensuring that all relevant information was captured. 4. This facilitated the researcher to systematically analyse the data within each theme. 5. The researcher generated clear definitions and titles for each theme. 'Themes are the final outcome of data coding and iterative theme development' (Braun & Clarke, 2020, p. 7)

Phase 6: Writing the report. (Analysis and write up)	1. The researcher is confident that they have a set of fully worked-out themes. 2. The themes support the researcher to tell 'the complicated story of the data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of the analysis' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). 3. The researcher reviewed the report to ensure that the analysis was concise, rationale, logical and non-repetitive. 4. The report was reviewed to ensure it provided a thought-provoking account of the story/stories contained within and across the themes. 5. Finally, the researcher ensured that a scholarly report of analysis was produced by relating back to the research question and the literature contained within scoping review conducted in Chapter Two.

5. Findings

5.1 Introduction

The primary aim of the study was to explore the concept of gender from a social constructionist viewpoint to determine its impact on the lived experiences of women who hold senior executive leadership roles within the context of Section 39 intellectual disability organisations. This chapter looks specifically at the significance of the historical and socio- cultural context in shaping the participants gender identity. Understanding the discourses, ideologies and attitudes that influenced the research participants earlier developmental years is a central tenet in understanding how their gendered experiences were constructed. This assists with uncovering the contextual nature of participants lived experiences and the formative agents of gender socialisation such as family, education, and religious groups.

As societal expectations shape our understanding of gender, we perform gender without inquiry, and it becomes normalised. Symbolic interactionism recognises that the construction of reality through social interactions, influentially shapes individuals. The repetition of this practice has perpetuated the continued, everyday acceptance of unequal gendered systems. This system of inequality becomes mainstreamed in every day interactions perpetuating social rules and norms that can hinder women's advancement as leaders within society. The theoretical framework adapted in Chapter Three highlights that societal rules are not natural but rather a social construct.

This chapter presents findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted with six women CEOs of Section 39 intellectual disability organisations. The process of thematic analysis resulted in themes and subthemes being identified across the collated data. The two themes explored in this Chapter and detailed in Figure 6 are both a totality within themselves, while also intricately connected with the other two themes reported on in Chapter Six. Each one represents the everyday struggle of oppression and tension, burden and exhaustion experienced by women CEO's leading Section 39 organisations, struggling under a weight of sustained, complex, and paradoxical stereotypes. The next section outlines the physical characteristics of each research participant.

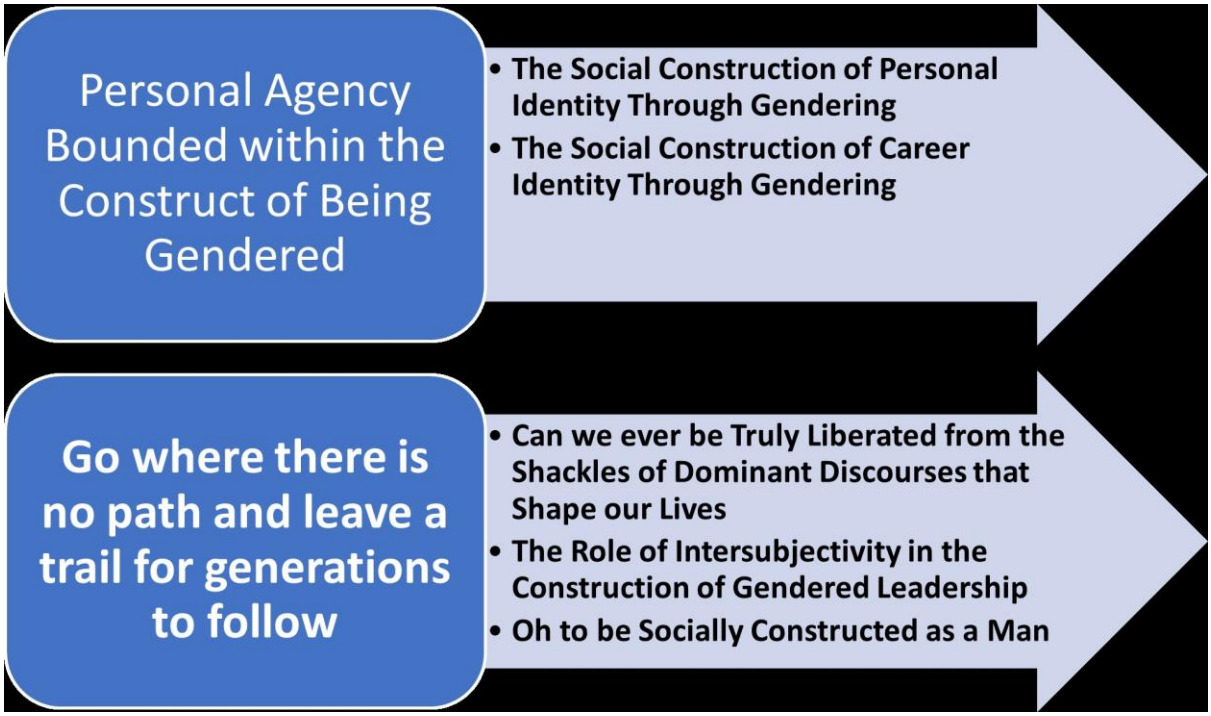


Figure 6. Theme One and Theme Two Including Sub-themes

5.2 Participants Physical Characteristics

The title for this section was informed by Callahan and Grunberg (2019) FourCe-PITO conceptual framework of leadership which is discussed in detail in Chapter Two. Character refers to understanding who the leader behind the title is, including the participants physical characteristics such as age profile, race, level of education (as outlined in Table 10). The participants in this study range in age from 51 to 67. They are all white Irish women who were raised in Ireland. These six women have served a combined 149 years working within the disability sector and collectively have 74 years' experience at CEO level, as such they have invaluable knowledge to impart.

Four of the women are qualified to master's level, while (N=2) of the research participants are qualified to degree level. All of the participants spoke about the importance of continually learning and developing throughout their careers, with some participants describing additional training that they undertook within their various job roles. (N=3) of the participants have a clinical background. (N=2) of the women have primary qualifications in nursing for people with intellectual disability and (N=1) woman is qualified as an occupational therapist. (N=1) of the research participants is a secondary school teacher, while (N=2) women are qualified in business studies with both

of them applying their respective qualification to careers in human resources. The next section outlines the coding process used to identify themes and sub-themes.

Table 10: Participants background information

Participants	Age Range	Nationality	Years working in disability sector	Years as a CEO	Primary Qualification	Highest level of qualification
P1	61-67	Irish	20	20	National Diploma	Masters
P2	51-55	Irish	25	2	Bachelor of Science Occupational Therapy	Masters
P3	51-55	Irish	5	3	Bachelor of Business Studies	Masters
P4	56-60	Irish	32	11	BA HDIP Teaching	Masters
P5	56-60	Irish	37	8	Registered Intellectual Disability Nurse	Degree
P6	56-60	Irish	30	30	Registered Intellectual Disability Nurse	Degree

5.3. Codes, Subthemes, and Themes

Thematic analysis as discussed in Chapter Four was considered the most appropriate approach for this study as it seeks to discover using interpretations (Alhojailan, 2012). The researcher employed Braun and Clarke (2006); (2020) six step approach to thematic analysis [Appendix 13].

The process of thematic analysis resulted in the classification of themes and sub themes as identified across the data. This facilitated a systematic analysis process in which codes, subthemes, and themes were inductively constructed. Codes were used to develop subthemes through categorisation and noting of patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as outlined in Figure 7.

A code is conceptualised as a basic analytic unit (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 13). The codes developed informed the categorisation of subthemes, which in turn were used as building blocks to define the overarching themes. Using an inductive approach the researcher began coding with precise content and then moved to broader generalisations

and finally to theories (Patton, 2002). This tends to ensure that themes are effectively linked to the data (Patton, 1990). The researcher examined all notes not linked to a theme carefully, and purposefully to ensure that opposing and minority opinions and experiences were included as evidenced in Figures 9 and 11. Also, to confirm that the analysis was representative of all participants voices and not just the dominant majority (Burr, 2003).

This analytic phase was informed by an iterative process of reflecting on the primary research questions, the aims and objectives as outlined in Chapter One and theoretical considerations discussed in Chapter Three. Figure 7 presents an overview of the initial codes captured. Figures 8 and 10 analysed using NVivo software, present an overview of the subthemes and overarching themes developed to answer the research questions posed.

The next section captures the participants' lived experience within the socio- cultural context that shaped their human identity and seeks to trace the discourse in the narrative by identifying patterns where gender disparity has conditioned, stereotyped, and presented as problematic for the individual.

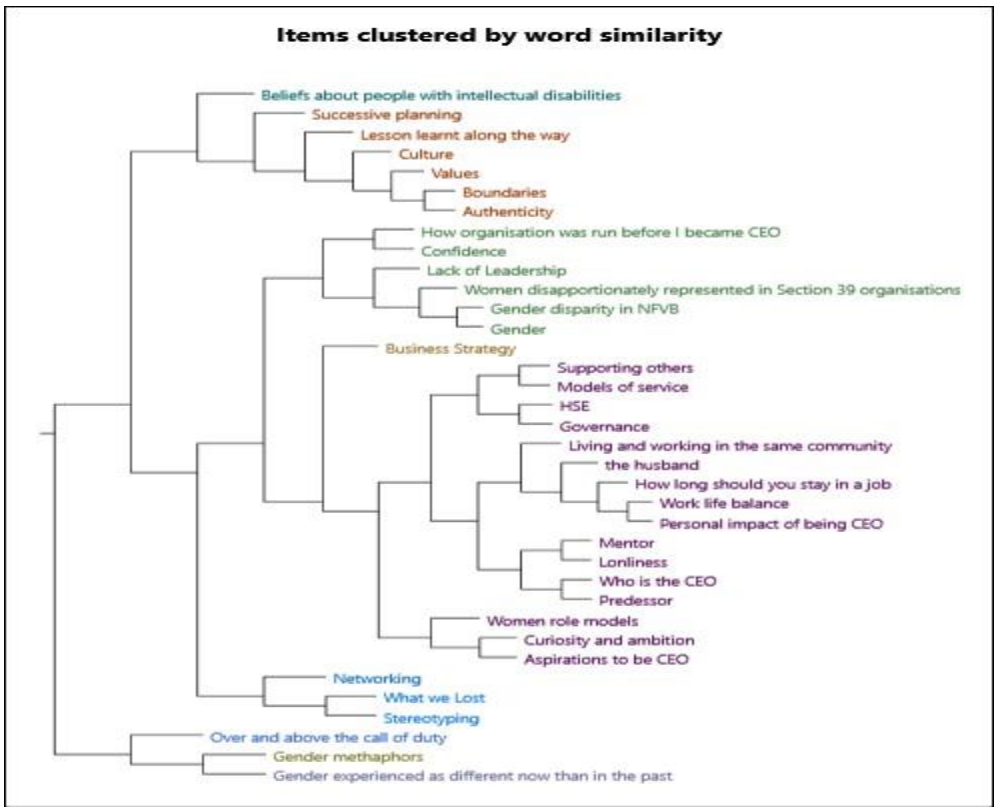


Figure 7: Initial codes developed for the first round of semi structured interviews

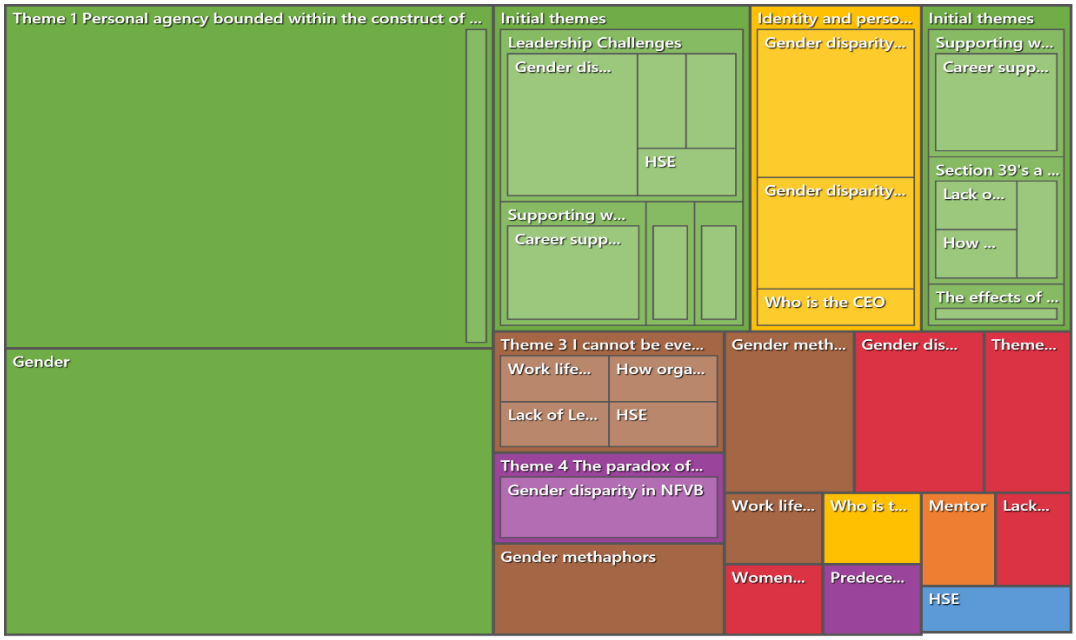


Figure 8: Overview of Theme One and Sub-themes. Demonstrating both a totality within themselves, while also intricately connected with the other themes.

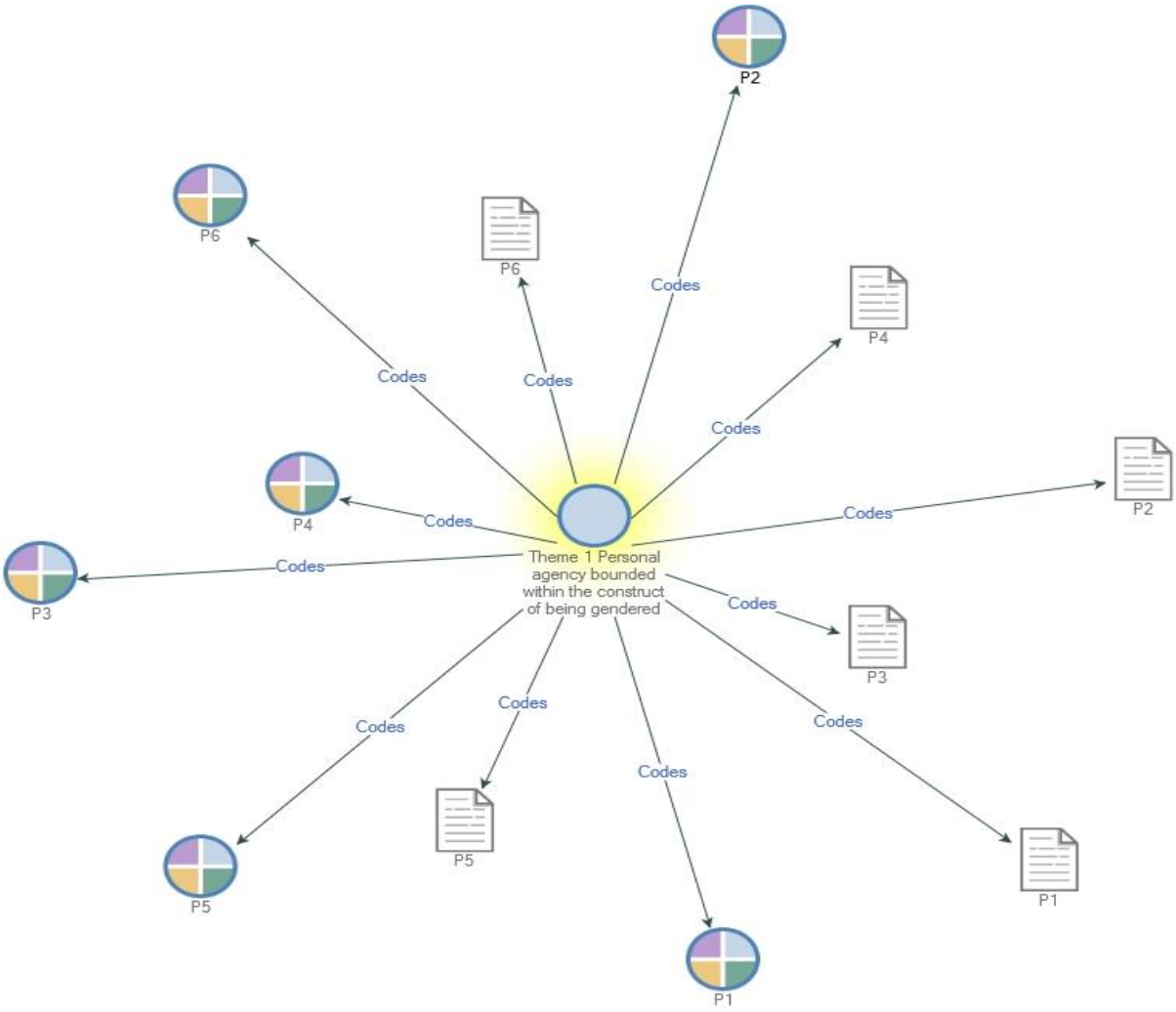


Figure 9 `Coding to Ensure that the Opposing and Minority Opinions and Experiences were included as evidenced.

5.4. Theme One: Personal Agency Bounded within the Construct of Being Gendered

Gender has become normalised, taken-for-granted and is so pervasive in our society that it is rarely questioned. It is continually shaped and re-shaped from human interaction. Gendering in western society is done from birth, it is a human production that depends on everyone continually doing gender (Lorber & Farrell, 1991; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Our personal characteristics, emotions, inspirations, and ambitions flow from our gendered position in society. Gender classification has the power to assign roles and tasks within society because the process and its outcome are legitimated by religion, law, education, science, and society (Lorber & Farrell, 1991).

This study was interested in gaining a greater understanding of the participants interactions, socio-historical contexts and the institutions and gendered discourses that contoured their lives.

In considering the participants experiences of growing up in Ireland during the 1960's and 1970', it is important to locate this within the historical context of the State's and the Roman Catholic churches conceptualisation and response to females as detailed in Chapter One. The Catholic Church was fundamental in utilising their strong partnership with the State to exert patriarchal ideological influences within the Irish socio-cultural context. This is significant because their agenda actively excluded women from positions of power and confined them through discursive routes: to be a good girl, wife, mother, and caregiver. Essentially to meet the demands of the male breadwinner.

Gender is a construct created, changed, and reproduced through historical and social processes. Therefore, it is important to note that as a construct it can be redefined in different historical periods. The socio context that existed in Ireland and that shaped the lives of the participants is now a vastly different landscape, for example women in employment has become normalised in today's society whilst this would not have been an accepted norm in the 1960s and early 1970s. This is captured by Participant 4 who identified that:

> *"The attitude has changed to women working generally and women's participation in everything generally. And I think that there is a broader acknowledgement now that the key thing is getting the right person as opposed to getting the right gender."*

5.4.1 Sub-theme One: The Social Construction of Personal Identity Through Gendering

This study identified the historical social context that the participants identity was shaped by to fully understand if oppressive and essentialist ideology was a significant factor in their lives. Pervasive ideologies in society, such as patriarchy can set the terms of discrimination that are then enacted at structural, institutional, and individual levels. As a result, women often experience subtle, socially constructed obstacles, while men benefit from the apparent normalcy of patriarchy. One line of inquiry in the interviews was to explore if the participants viewed gender as essentialist or not. Basically, is gender socially constructed or a product of the individual? All of the research participants involved in the study recognised that gender was a social construct, but also that women biologically existed independent of this construct. Participants recognised that their own hopes and dreams were limited with their bounded gendered stereotype:

Participant 1, made a very significant statement about the context in which she grew up "*nobody aspired with you or for you."* The emotion surrounding this statement was experienced by the researcher as a burdensome cloak worn by a young girl back in the late 1970's. This girl had her whole life in front of her but already knew that her ambition to be a farmer would never be realised in a society where the woman's role was confined to being a farmer's wife:

> *"I would have been out working with daddy on the farm and I would have heard people say to daddy, God, that's a great girl you have there, she'll make some farmer a great wife."*

She described the socio context in which she grew up as one where women were bounded within stereotypes.

> *"How many women were in marts buying and selling cattle? I was the only girl there. So, there was no role models or concept of how you could become a woman farmer."*

Participant 2 recognised how the construct of gender placed men above women in society and within her family home and considers that this was the norm within Ireland in the 1970's and 1980's:

> "*My mam was always at home, my dad was the person who went out, he earned the money."*

She talks proudly about having a "*very progressive, very open minded"* mother. A mother who raised her daughter to understand and appreciate the importance of having:

> "O*ur own qualifications, your own career, that you're not dependent on anyone else."*

However, Participant 2 also recognised that her mother's ambitions for her held significant limitations:

> "O*h, you'd never be a CEO that job would be a bit too much for you, kind of preconceived ideas about how the world is and where men and women fit into different categories."*

From an early age some participants identified that through social interactions, gender categorisation was used to shape and reinforce normative stereotyped bounded conduct. The socio context in which participants were shaped as children categorised women and men in terms of the division and types of labour. This was reinforced within the Irish school system where some participants described their experience of attending religious segregated educational systems:

> *"Girls and boys were educated separately, in separate schools and girls were taught how to work in the home and boys were taught how to be breadwinners."* (Participant 1)

These stereotypical gender norms were institutionalised in everyday practices. Participants described their mothers as being "a teacher", "a nurse", "a homemaker" and a "farmers wife". Some participants described their fathers as the "breadwinner" and "the farmer". The gendered work adult parents did, shaped many of the career choices of some of the participants whose earlier careers included nursing, teaching, and working in the civil service:

> *"My mother was a Nurse, and some of the other female family members were Nurses. I grew up in a small country town, there just wasn't the variety of careers for women that you'd have today."* (Participant 5)

One participant vividly recalls the anger that she experienced when she realised that no-one was going to ask her what she wanted to do when she left school because:

> *"If somebody had asked me what I wanted to be, it was a farmer or an actor. But in the environment that I grew up, woman didn't have a lot of choice."* (Participant 1)

As gender shaping occurs during childhood it often becomes indistinguishable from the personal hopes and desires of individuals. As part of a stratification system, gender ranks women lower than men of the same race. As human beings' women are also responsible for producing and perpetuating gender. This is achieved by continuing to behave in accordance with our appropriate gender classification.

5.4.2. Sub-Theme Two: The Social Construction of Career Identity Through Gendering

As previously discussed gender classification and our life histories shape our identity which are linked to how we are expected to conform and perform in different social settings and positions. Our representations tend to be produced from our gendered position. As identity is socially constructed both on an individual and collective level it becomes bounded within the parameters of gender classification. The repetition of this practice has perpetuated the continued, everyday acceptance of gendered systems. This system of inequality requires that the majority of individuals continue to justify that men and women are sufficiently different in ways that approve men's greater power and privilege.

In this study many of the participants earlier career choices conformed to gendered career roles such as nursing, teaching, administration within the civil service and human resource management. Many participants recognised that they had a level of personal agency but that it could only be exerted within the bounds of gender stereotypes:

> *"If you stepped outside of what was regarded as the choices that were there for you, there was no pathway. There was no way to do it."* (Participant 1)

Gender power inequality is evidenced throughout the study and enshrined in essentialist ideology that dominated Irish society. For example, Participant 1 expressed her anger and frustration with the unequal power relations between women and men in terms of career choices:

> *"Devaluation is something that I have experienced in wanting to do something that I didn't get to do, because where I grew up, in the time I grew up in, women were devalued."*

Gender is a useful lens for understanding the socially constructed roles that women and men are expected to fulfil in the workplace. This section also captured the human emotions experienced by some participants who felt that they were devalued and undermined because of their gender in all aspects of Irish society. A number of participants expressed frustration at being "contained" and "limited" in their career choices and felt that they had far more to offer and contribute to the Irish labour market.

Furthermore, the analysis so far has highlighted the significance and influence of the historical and socio-cultural context in which women were raised and how this has shaped their gender identity. This gendered shaping is maintained through everyday social relationships and interactions within the home, education and religious institutions and society in general.

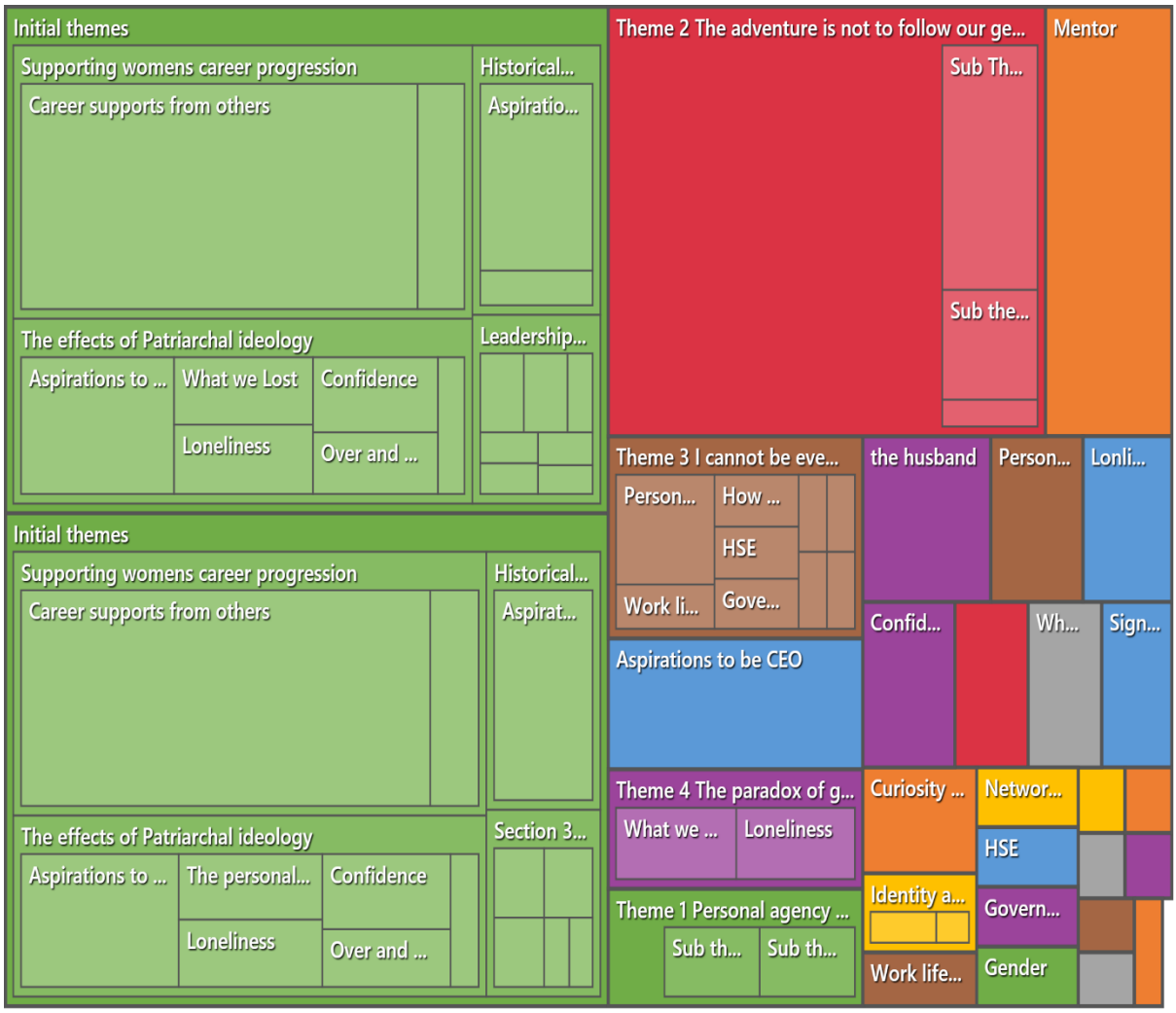


Figure 10: Overview of Theme Two and Sub-themes. Demonstrating both a totality within themselves, while also intricately connected with the other themes.

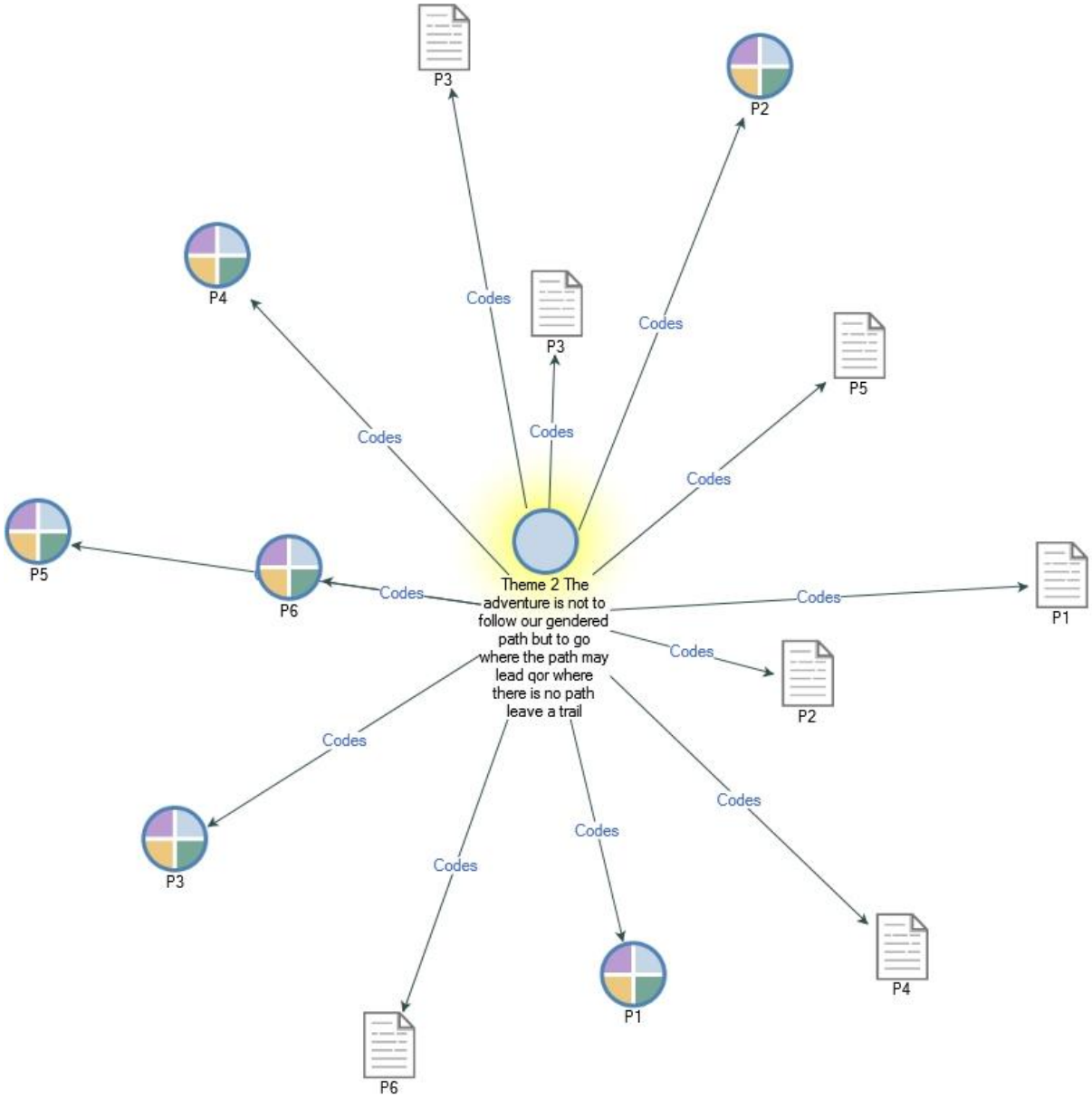


Figure 11 Coding to Ensure that the Opposing and Minority Opinions and Experiences were included as evidenced.

Theme Two: Go where there is no path and leave a trail for generations to follow.

Gender is a socially constructed concept that bounds us within obligatory norms. We are conditioned to reproduce gender. However, when we push boundaries and step out of the norms of our gendered lives we are challenged through discourse, unequal power relations and our own internal personal identity conflicts, to adhere to the rules of society.

Participant 1 reflected on the anger that she experienced when her wish to pursue a career as either a farmer or an actor was not considered an appropriate career choice for her gender:

"I'll show them. It was almost, yeah, I'll show… There was a piece of me, I'll show them."

When we challenge gender norms we are often perceived as a threat to the natural order of a patriarchal constructed society. All participants succeeded in challenging the norms by becoming senior leaders within their respective organisations at a time when women still remain underrepresented in such positions.

However, (N= 5) of the participants did not purposefully set out on a career path to become CEO and in fact had not considered themselves for such a position. (N= 4) of the participants were encouraged to apply for the role of CEO by a male colleague. The participants then actively considered this advice as they appreciated their respective male colleague's level of business acumen, seniority, and support. When Participant 5 was asked why she didn't apply for the role initially of her own volition, she reflected:

> *"I just didn't ever see myself in that kind of role. I just thought 'I don't have the skills' or 'that's not where I'm at now."*

The above excerpt is similar to the reaction of two of the other participants who had just never considered applying for such a role. However, they were all appropriately qualified, had strong sectoral experience and had a track record in performance at senior management levels. Participant 3's rationale for not considering herself for position of CEO on the surface remains unrelated to her gender:

> *"I never thought I would be CEO, not on my horizon, assumed it wasn't a possibility but that's because of my profession which is HR, I had never seen that HR could be appointed to CEO."*

Human resources due to its supportive function is often perceived as fitting within a stereotypical female management role. The narrative above could also possibly sit within the premise that women are less likely to apply for a role when they feel underqualified for it as opposed to men. Internalisation of gender norms can reduce the confidence of women to apply for roles that are considered outside of the gendered division of labour.

Participant 4 started off her career as a teacher, a traditionally female dominated career occupation. She describes gaining varied experience by challenging herself to move to different roles:

> *"I tended to move to other opportunities that arose kind of between a window of about five, six, seven years. Promotions of sorts."*

In contrast to (N= 4) participants, when the vacancy for CEO arose in a Section 39 intellectual disability organisation she applied unprompted for the role. She describes the organisation prior to her arrival as being institutionalised and thinking:

> *"There's a lot I could do there to open up those gates, the big, black palisade gates. So, I applied for it, and I got it.'*

The above reflection from Participant 4 offers us insights into a woman who had career ambitions and challenged the norms by stretching herself to apply for a position of CEO. Women often have lower expectations of success than men when applying for leadership positions, which might be indicative of limitations of personal agency. Lack of self-confidence was described by many participants as a rationale for not applying for senior positions. In some cases, participants expressed concern that they did not have the capability and skills for the role. Participant 4 considered that the position she was applying for was a "*big jump"* but believed when she applied for the role that:

> *'I wasn't expecting to get it."*

While she acknowledges that she does observe that gender inequality still exists in all facets of Irish society she proclaims that:

> *I'm not interested enough to be concerned about whether somebody is concerned that I'm the female or not. So, it isn't an area that overly concerns me. It's certainly not an area that inhibits me."*

After being asked to apply for the role of CEO through an internal nomination system, Participant 5 initially declined. However, when the organisation was in crisis she felt compelled to take the position of CEO:

"The position for CEO was vacant, they couldn't fill it. It was really only when there was a crisis and it was clear that we needed to do something, that in the end it was kind of like 'Oh why not? sure, I'll give it a go."

The above reflection prompts the following questions,

- Have women gained access to senior leadership roles by default because men are not applying or refusing to accept the terms and conditions of employment in Section 39 organisations?
- Are women being preferentially placed in CEO roles that are associated with an increased risk of negative consequences?
- Do women take on these vacant roles out of a sense of duty and responsibility?

Participant 6 recounts a similar account of being offered the position of CEO after two males had refused it:

"Well, I suppose I came from a huge Section 38 organisation, I had an amazing backroom team. I came back to work here as CEO, and I didn't even have a computer. You're thinking oh my God look what I'm after given up for this."

The above reflections highlight the importance of not only focusing on the gender barriers that women experience in their career advancement but also the circumstances surrounding their appointments. The participants in this study have negotiated their paths to positions of power, authority, and prestige regardless of the discriminatory impediments that they experienced either internally or externally along the route. The next section explores how gender as a social construct is created and sustained through everyday discourses which condition individuals' behaviour.

5.5. Sub- theme One: Can we ever be Truly Liberated from the Shackles of Dominant Discourses that Shape our Lives

Discourse allows us to understand the complex ways in which ideologies such as essentialism and social constructions such as gender subtly shape our lives. While also allowing us to explore the nuanced and complex relationship between identity, subjectivity and human agency and the way these relate to gender discourses. This section identifies the role of essentialist

discourses and hegemony and discourse in constructing inflexible positions that regulate gender constructed norms.

5.5.1. Essentialist Discourses

A dominant discourse identified in the data was the social process of being gendered. For example, the use of the phrase "good girl" and "typical woman" was used by many participants in different ways. Firstly, as an internalised discourse when one behaved appropriately in society and was praised within close interactional relationships:

> *"I probably would have thought that I didn't want to let my mom down because she was working so hard to do so well by us. And so, I would definitely have been, the good girl. No trouble. Never failed the college exams."* (Participant 3)

Secondly as an external discourse used by men to other men to encourage essentialism:

> "*That's a great girl you have there, she'll make some farmer a great wife."* (Participant 1)

Thirdly as a discourse used by women to women CEOs to describe their clothing attire when they are dressed casually and not in work:

> *"I met a staff member coming out of a restaurant one night and she said to me – Jesus, 'you're in a pair of jeans and you're dressed like a little girl'."* (Participant 4)

Also, as an external discourse used by men to exert overt power and influence:

> *"Without discussing it with me two male staff were trying to put a service user into a room that was too small. I was like that rooms too small, and they were like oh it's already a done deal. So, then it like they wanted me to agree with them. I was like I'm not agreeing with that, it's not right. And it was a bit like - oh typical woman doesn't get all stroppy about it now."* (Participant 2)

The exercise of power in the above discourse was met by Participant 2 with overt resistance, which was evident in her use of discourse. The above narrative depicts a scene in which men attempt to dominate a female colleague through discursive power.

Participant 6 describes a situation in which the discourse of the board undermines her style of leadership:

> *"If you're looking at gardening project and you're seeing the big wins for service users, and you try and explain this to the board. The board don't see it like that because they say well what is she on about, isn't she lucky enough to have a job, what is this celebration kind of thing about."* (Participant 6)

The exercise of power in the above discourse was met by Participant 6 with a benign acceptance:

> *"Sometimes people just don't see it like I do or understand it."*

Power and oppression are enacted through discourse even when women have reached the most senior position within their organisation. The lack of overt positive appraisal from work colleagues and the board within the daily working world of women CEO's contributes to, and can shape, their professional identity, and their subsequent status in the organisation's hierarchy. This raises the question of structural differences in terms of the level of authority of the CEO and whether the position yields lesser authority if held by a woman as opposed to a man?

5.5.2. Hegemony and Discourse

Hegemony is a term used to describe the dominance of one social group over another and it is often supported by an ideological discourse used to subtly shape power relations. Ideologies such as patriarchy and essentialism which favour men are building blocks for the social construction of an unequal gender reality. This reality becomes embedded within discursive practices and supports the production, replication, and perpetuation of unfair power relations of dominance.

Discourses such as women *"take care"* and men *"take charge"* continues to dominate current leadership thinking. Many participants explained that as a result they often overcompensated for being a woman leader by over performing. With Participant 6 describing a throw away commentary between two male board members with regard to her performance: *"oh well maybe she is able to do the job."* This flippant recognition takes place through a third-party

conversation and is experienced by the participant as condescending especially as Participant 6 reports that:

> *"I spent years of working overtime to try and prove myself and so that these men would trust me."*

This reflection indicates that the participant as a women leader is expected to work harder than her male counterpart to earn trust and recognition. Women often perceive that they must outperform men significantly to counteract bounded gendered norms and to be perceived as equally competent. Furthermore, the feedback received is deficient as it is not constructive or objective, and as such is not positively encouraging or assistive in performance development. This has significant implications for the development of women's identity as leaders. Constructing and internalising a leadership identity is central to maintaining and sustaining leadership roles.

Participants negative interactions with people in positions of power, such as board members can lead to the development of a discursive culture. If such a culture becomes normalised then the autonomy of the CEO to perform their role can slowly erode overtime. Such a discursive event is described by Participant 1 whom in her role as the CEO presented a robust business case to the board for de-congregating residential services. The boards response was to undermine the CEO by hiring a man with no sectoral experience to advise them if what the CEO presented made good business sense:

> *"Even though I was the CEO, even though I knew exactly what needed to happen, I wanted a thinktank on it, but they brought a man in to review that. The board brought a man in, they always got these male technical advisors who were from ex-Department of Health, who came in and had no insight and no empathy for people."*

Men continue to be the ruling hegemony within Irish society and therefore still dictate the rules of leadership. The hegemonic struggle of women won't change while they continue to accept the existing social order. Dominant discourse can be used by male and female social groups to sustain or transform social norms.

5.6. Sub-theme Two: The Role of Intersubjectivity in the Construction of Gendered Leadership

Intersubjectivity is a term used to describe the experiences that occur through human interactions. The meaning that is attached to women in leadership, how it has been constructed and institutionalised, is a product of human actions. The interactions between women leaders and people in positions of power has the potential to perpetuate gender stereotypes, undermine women leaders and promote inequality in the workplace. Intersubjectivity has the potential to shape the nature of discursive practices through control, internal rules, and the regulation of access to knowledge and power.

A subtle realist's orientation as discussed in Chapter Three recognises that there are multiple perspectives of reality and that the explanation of reality at a given time is fluid and can change when influenced and shaped by dominant societal discourses and intersubjectivity. In other words, the constructs of gender and leadership which were socially constructed from essentialist and patriarchal ideology are a result of human actions. However, intersubjective experiences of some participants suggest that unequal power relations between men and women even when women have reached the pinnacle of their careers still exist:

> "*They interviewed twice for position of CEO. The first person that was offered the job was male and I would say there was a bit of a disappointment when he didn't take it. I think they probably would have liked to have seen a man in it."* (Participant 6)

Participants 5 describes commencing her role as CEO:

> *"I think people, they just automatically assumed that I was going to be a man… I mean I think some of the jealous comments; I don't think if I had been a man I would have gotten them, and sometimes even… and broader, you know even working with the HSE, I've just felt I had to, say something and then reinforce it, and I wasn't convinced that a man would have had to reinforce it as much. I do think there's definitely times I've had to stand my ground, and I've wondered if a man would have to do the same. And it can be as much with other women as men, and in fact sometimes even more with other women."*

Do we own our gender identity? As women is it possible to liberate ourselves from dominant discourses that bound us and control us? Continued gendered conformity undermines human

agency. However, intersubjectively creates emerging social realities, and therefore can offer insights into how meaning is negotiated through experiences. The next section reflects the participants perceptions that being gendered as a man would be far more advantageous for career advancement.

5.7. Sub-theme Three: Oh, to be Socially Constructed as a Man

A pattern identified in the data was a pervasive perspective that if one was socially constructed as a man than the number of challenges that one had to contend with would dramatically be reduced. Firstly, there were a number of occasions throughout the study when participants were struck during the interview about how they had bounded and normalised their own gendered leadership identities. This led to one participant questioning if her decision making would be perceived in society differently and less harshly if she was a man:

> *"Actually, I was thinking about your research focusing on, being a woman leader, and it has crossed my mind, if I make some controversial changes, the fact that I'm a woman, will that be part of the informal commentary on some unpopular changes? Like I mightn't even think this way if I wasn't engaged with you, but I am thinking, you know if a male CEO went ahead with these unpopular changes, would they say, 'Well you know, he's not afraid of change and he's able to implement the unpopular, and good for him.' But if it's a female, will they say 'Oh she doesn't care. She's lacking emotion. She's more focused on the money and the business than the families' because that might be contrary to people's assumptions about a female CEO. So, I did have some thoughts about that as I thought about you and your work."* (Participant 3)

Secondly, Participant 6 perceives that career progression for men is much easier than for women as gender expectations within the home still have to be met regardless of the woman's working status in the open labour market:

> *"I think men will put themselves forward quicker. I think women probably step back and let them have it, let them go on because they probably have 125 more things on their mind.*

It's a little bit like okay you're in work today but you're still thinking now well I have to go home and do the housework over the weekend. I still have as much to do; but the man is sitting at the meeting, he's not thinking about who is collecting the kids from school or who is doing this or that in the home. So, I think that's probably why women will say 'oh for the love of God I've enough on my plate, go on take it.' It's not that they're not able to do it."

In the above excerpt Participant 6 describes a society which still maintains patriarchal values. This ideology ranks men as superior and women as subordinate and is still perpetuated in an assumed and often unconscious manner. The narrative implies that traditional patterns of family life are a barrier to women's career progression.

Thirdly, Participant 5 describes the automatic autonomy of men when they assume a senior leadership role and the struggle women have to exercise autonomy successfully:

"I do think there's definitely times I've had to stand my ground, and I've wondered if a man would have to do the same. To say 'No, look, this is how it should be done.' Yeah, no, definitely there's times I've thought it might be easier if I was a man."

Finally, another dominant discourse used by a number of participants especially when describing their leadership challenges was:

"God this would be just easier if I was a man." (Participant 5)

5.8. Summary

To conclude, women CEOs reflected on the reality of the historical socio context that they grew up in and how this shaped their gender identity. As gender hierarchies formed in a patriarchal society, men gained power over women. While men dominated the boardroom women became confined to a role of domesticity within the home. Participants acknowledged gender as a social construction, while acknowledging that the biological composition of women and men being different recognises and accepts an essentialist component within their lives. In other words, even if gender is deconstructed, women will continue to biologically exist.

It is already well established that women face far greater barriers than men in their career journey to the position of CEO. Moreover, it is apparent that in some instances that they are being prompted to apply for positions that are vacant for prolonged periods or have been turned down by male applicants. When they are appointed to the position of CEO, they are exposed to greater scrutiny and criticism than their male counterparts. In some instances, they experience an unsupportive intersubjective relationship with staff and the board of the organisation.

A number of participants feel that this is influenced by how gender has been socially constructed in everyday interactions. Participants described their experiences of essentialism and hegemony in dominant gendered discursive practices and reflected on their responses. Furthermore, women CEOs are often expected to carry out their duties without receiving the autonomy, authority and power required to do their role. However, where women are provided with appropriate levels of support to enact their role they recognise that they have the opportunity to construct an identity beyond the confines of gendered norms and in doing so can provide new pathways for generations of women to follow.

6. Findings

6.1. Introduction

Chapter One outlined the current pressures that present within Section 39 organisations. These include chronic underfunding, a staffing crisis, the existence of multiple, competing and often contradictory regulatory processes, and State control and compliance agenda. This chapter presents the findings in relation to the challenges experienced by women CEOs specific to the context of Section 39 intellectual disability organisations.

Gender and leadership are concepts that have been socially constructed through a patriarchal ideology and as such are incongruent with one another. As the concept of leadership originated from a dominant white male perspective, women's voices have been silenced, tolerated but unacknowledged and absent from the discourse on leadership. This Chapter also presents findings regarding participants perspective in relation to their leadership identity as women to gain important insights into how the contradictory social constructs of gender and leadership are personally negotiated and experienced. As already discussed in Chapter Five the process of thematic analysis resulted in themes and subthemes being identified across the collated data. The two themes explored in this Chapter and detailed in Figures 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 are both a totality within themselves, while also intricately connected with the other two themes reported on in Chapter Five.

Figure 12: Theme Three and Theme Four Including Sub-themes

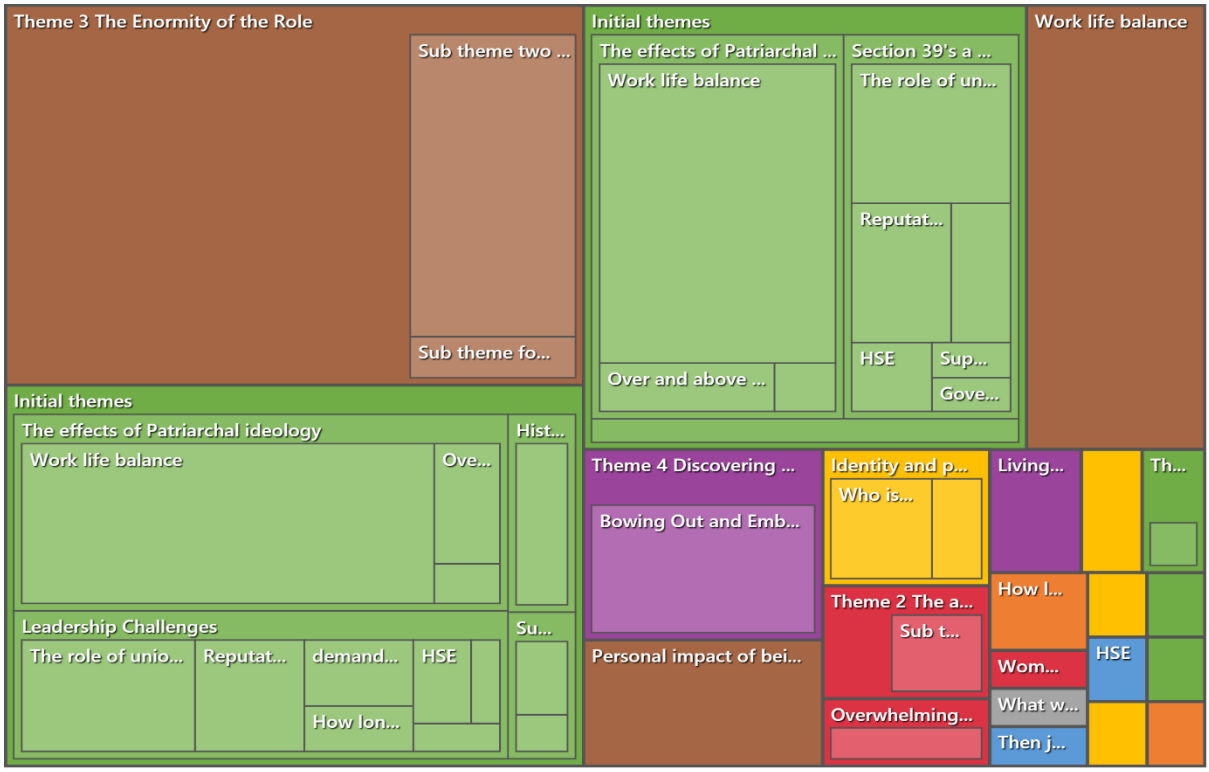


Figure 13: Overview of Theme Three and Sub-themes. Demonstrating both a totality within themselves, while also intricately connected with the other themes.

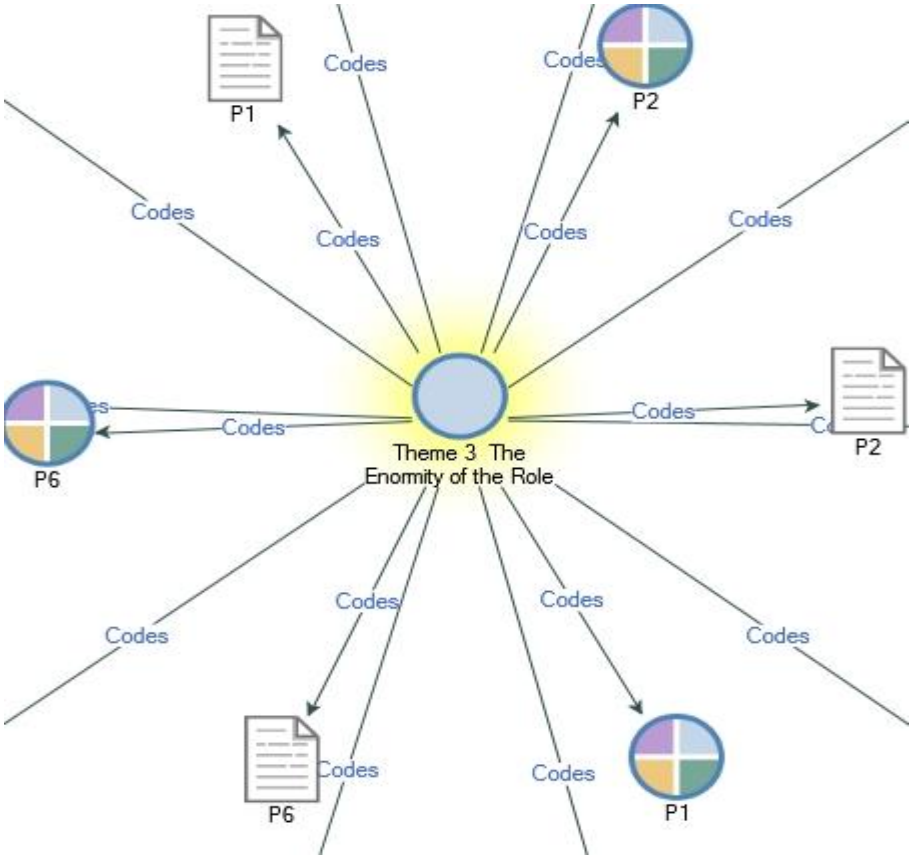


Figure 14: `Coding to Ensure that the Opposing and Minority Opinions and Experiences were included as evidenced.

6.2. Theme Three: The Enormity of the Role:

"The role is all consuming" (Participant 4)

The varied roles of a CEO within a Section 39 organisation reflect societal needs, the needs of people being supported, the lack of organisational capacity and resources to meet these needs, and institutional frameworks that are cumbersome, costly, and difficult to navigate. The CEOs role has been described by participants as "*all consuming," "stressful," "lonely" and "isolating".* A role that requires huge commitment and energy. The constant pressures experienced by CEO's come from many different directions and many competing stakeholders and require capacity, resources, appropriate funding levels, systems, and structures to address them. The participants identified the following challenges that they experience within the workplace:

- Upholding the vision, mission, and values of the organisation
- The unmet needs of the people supported.
- The changing needs of people supported.
- The ever-increasing demand for services from people that have inadequate, inappropriate or no supports.
- The compliance standards of multiple regulatory bodies.
- Compliance standards that are at odds with the will and preferences of the people supported.
- A staffing crisis.
- Section 39's inability to compete with the employment terms and conditions of Section 38 organisations.
- Limited internal capacity to execute strategic, operational, compliance and regulatory objectives.
- Limited capacity and staffing resources result in staff double jobbing, being overworked and high levels of burn out.
- Financial instability – underfunding and constant threat of withdrawal of funding.
- The HSE power and control agenda of neutralising Section 39's unique identity and autonomy as independent companies.
- Lack of any meaningful engagement with the HSE – preventing proactive business planning and the development of appropriate services to meet the needs of people with intellectual disability.
- The competing demands of stakeholders.

It is not possible to cover all of the topics individually as listed above due to the limitations of the study, however the researcher engaged in the iterative process of thematic analysis in which four sub themes were identified as depicted in Figure 12. These sub themes will be discussed in detail in the next sections.

6.2.1 Sub-theme One: The Challenges that the Socio Historical Context of Section 39 Organisations Present

There are different service delivery challenges facing CEOs one of which is understanding the historical socio context in which these organisations were shaped. This is significant because it offers the CEO a lens to appreciate how staff members and people with intellectual disability,

experiences, have been formed through discourse, ideology, and historical and social contexts. Within the intellectual disability sector organisations have simply been divided into two classifications, institutionalised services, and community-based services.

As already outlined in Chapter One many of what we now term Section 39 organisations were formed, in the 1960s or 1970s by parents and friends' associations. They are credited with spearheading the development of community-based services. There is also a small subset of faith-based Section 39 organisations. Many Roman Catholic faith-based organisations providing services to people with intellectual disabilities were delivered within regimented institutional settings.

Symbolic interactionism recognises that the construction of reality through interactions that occur between people, help to shape, and influence individuals. Institutionalisation naturalised the domination and oppression of people with intellectual disabilities and excluded them from society. This established the sovereignty of non-disabled people over disabled people. The repetition of this practice has perpetuated the continued, everyday acceptance of disability as a human deficit and constructed a societal system of inequality in which the justification of disabled and non-disabled people is sufficiently different in ways that approve non-disabled people's greater power and privilege. (N=1) participant is currently the CEO of what was traditionally a Roman Catholic faith-based organisation and recalls the poor practices and treatment of people living within institutions prior to commencing as CEO:

> *"I would just keep asking the questions. Why is everybody living in dormitories? I remember sitting in the previous CEO's office and looking out the window and seeing staff out walking and they thought this was an activity. And I remember the two staff were walking with three or four people in a row and the two staff were talking to each other. And I remember thinking…, why don't you talk to people? Why would you not talk? That's what you're here for. You're here to engage. The organisation was poorly run because there wasn't enough oversight and there wasn't enough support. These are ordinary people. What are they all doing in this institution?."* (Participant 1)

Deinstitutionalisation under the leadership of Participant 1 has overseen the closure of a large institution and the establishment of community-based supports. However, invisible walls can

still exist even though people have been rehoused, the discourse of the traditional medical model can still dominate service delivery unless sufficiently challenged:

> *"They had gone from an old institution to the new buildings, and they had brought everything, including a bad culture, with them."* (Participant 5)

There is a significant difference between institutional and community-based types of service delivery which is explored in the next section through medical and social care discourses.

6.2.2 Sub-theme Two: Medical Model Discourse Versus Social Care Model Discourse

The theory of social constructionism holds relevance within the organisational space, as it focuses on the relations through which social actors such as staff members construct realities. The organisational language that the CEO cultivates to describe all aspects of service delivery is paramount to creating either an empowering or disempowering support environment. To achieve a shared interpretation, all the research participants recognised the importance of having clearly defined vision and mission statements, framed by a set of person-centred values that underpins and guides the organisational approach to service delivery:

> *"As CEO, the tough calls have to be made for the families and individuals that we support. And always keeping the mission and the value to the forefront of what you're doing is very important. "*(Participant 4)

> *"We are trying to keep our ethos and values, which is easier said than done and you know even people, who will say to you, 'Oh I like this organisation, it's like a family, I like the ethos', and then you say to them, 'Well I really need you to be at a community event or I really need you to do this', and, 'Oh I don't have enough time', so even where people can see that they like something they don't always see that they need to engage in it for it to happen."* (Participant 5)

A shared interpretation, is constructed internally within organisation, through conversations, negotiations, and consensus:

> *"We've just written our first strategic plan, we've agreed a new mission statement, and vision and values."* (Participant 3)

"That is one of the most important things a CEO does is looking at how do you embed the culture and the values of what you're doing and what you want to do. So, for me, the most important thing is meeting every member of staff this year to do values integration. They're all going to have a day with the CEO. And I'm going to hear their voice. When I look then at our strategic objectives, are we delivering on them? And I need to hear the voices of the people who we support. Are we really doing what we say we are?" (Participant 1)

"Our mission says, we give services to people with intellectual disability – it doesn't say if we're paid. So, for example, I took an individual into day services a couple of years ago, and the HSE were giving out – but that individual was at home uncared for, and there were serious issues there. That's our mission, and they didn't want him taken in, because they said they weren't funding him." (Participant 4)

"You must be authentic to your values and continue them values for the people you support." (Participant 5)

The organisational language of how people with disabilities are supported is important because it has the power to shape how staff deliver supports. Language and the ideas they represent are fluid and change overtime influenced and shaped by values and new knowledge. One of the roles of the CEO of a Section 39 organisation is to challenge the medical discourses that has traditionally supported the delivery of services in large, regimented institutions in which:

"Staff controlled the place. Absolutely controlled it. Doors were locked at six o'clock in the evening. The door between two units was locked, which meant if you were over in that unit, you couldn't come over here. We had a kitchen that ran itself, that dictated when people would get food. People sat down for their lunch, and it was handed to them whether they liked it or not. No choice. The dining room was locked after dinner, after lunch, after tea." (Participant 1)

The medical model is heavily influenced by multidisciplinary teams comprised of medical

professionals and as such diagnosis and labelling based on professional assessments determine the services that individuals receive:

> *"And again, it was the nurses who ruled the roost. If the nurse said, everybody sat back and said, fine, OK. Inject him now. Yeah, fine. The doctor came in and the psychiatrist came in and met with the nurse manager but not with the person they were changing the medication of."* (Participant 1)

The medical model is limiting in that the power to determine the services and therefore the lifestyle of a person with disabilities is controlled by professionals in the absence of the individuals will and preference:

> *"Disability services were a totally different space at that stage. They were institutional, they were regimented, they were medical. Totally medical."* (Participant 1)

> *"What we have done is we have said - well this is what people need but I find when the service users decide what they are doing themselves, they were getting more out of it."* (Participant 6)

People with intellectual disabilities became bounded and limited within socially constructed identities. Therefore, it is important that the CEO challenges discourses that reproduce disability as a domineered category. The medical oppositional categorisation of disability versus ability or that of normal/abnormal is unhelpful. Current typical understandings of disability have created distinctive and restrictive binaries around the phenomenon, whereby there is reliance on the concepts of the medical versus the social model for explanation. When such binary divisions become embedded within the concept of disability they can limit individuality. Categorisation and labelling perpetuate the reproduction of disability discourse in which deviations from human ability or appearance result in individuals being viewed as different. As such this can shape the type of services that these individuals receive and legitimise their absence from societal roles such as employment:

"I know people with disabilities. I know they're not sick. These people, these young people, are being minded to death." (Participant 1)

"The people we support are not interested in all going out as a group and you see them sometimes, from other religious services, where staff and people with disabilities are going up the main street in a line, you're like, oh God." (Participant 2)

In contrast the social care model in its purest form puts the individual at the centre of directing their own supports to meet their needs:

"We've moved people into independent living that they always wanted, and making all those little changes to give people the lives they want, it's great. We were in two big, huge units in an industrial estate on the edge of town and we've moved to three units in the middle of town, and you know we're getting great feedback that this is great, I'm in the middle of town, I can do my own thing." (Participant 3)

Disability is considered a form of diversity that offers society a unique standpoint that should be valued and celebrated. As a social construct disability through language and discourse is continually shaped and re-shaped from human interaction. Disability language and discourse has been influenced by the socio historical context in which services are delivered. The move from institutionalisation and stigma to living in the community and ableism have dramatically changed and reshaped disability discourse which is now underpinned by a human rights agenda. However, the States disability discourse continues to be driven from a neoliberal agenda. People with intellectual disability are categorised as either mild, moderate, severe, or profound for the purpose of monetising individuals by linking them to 'one size fits all' funding brackets. People with disabilities have become costing units based on crude assessments that fail to consider their individual needs.

6.2.3. Sub-theme Three: The Implications of a Staffing Crisis: "The Sector is Bleeding"

Section 39 organisations appear to be in a prolonged never-ending crisis. While historically they were never adequately funded, the 2008 credit crunch, an existentialist event, plunged organisations into even greater crisis. This compounded with the growing inequality between Section 38 and Section 39 organisations terms and conditions of employment remains problematic for the hiring and retention of staff. Social care workers, care workers and nurses are the main professional component of front-line staff in Section 39 organisations, and their contribution is recognised as essential to meeting organisational goals and delivering safe and effective supports. Participants within this study identified that in some instances they are struggling even to provide a minimum level of staffing and not just within frontline positions but also within middle and senior management roles.

People with intellectual disabilities in receipt of services traditionally spend a large amount of time with paid staff members. Therefore, a challenge of the CEO is to ensure that the values, attitudes, and beliefs of staff members are congruent with organisational values that promote quality-based services and are underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities:

> *"I suppose I'm very humbled by the people that I work with. Some of them just have extraordinary skills and they just work every day and the level of care and consideration for all aspects that they do. The breadth of their skills excited me because I felt, oh, we're going to be able to do so much for the community and for families."* (Participant 4)

> *"So, we would be very much the person first and it is a social care model and we're very inclusive of families as well. The staff are very experienced in sitting back and seeing what the person wants and going with that and they're not as directive maybe as some other staff might be in other places. People do have lives where they say, well I'm doing this or I'm doing that and we're not going."* (Participant 2)

However, the competition for attracting skilled staff is intense, as Section 39 organisations are unable to offer the same terms and conditions of employment as Section 38 organisations, this is an increased pressure that CEO's must contend with:

"Yeah, so pay is a problem, staff were very significantly underpaid. The pressure upwards on every salary is just enormous and I go onto national HR meetings, and sometimes I'm listening and there's a good few Section 38s there and they are talking about this allowance and that allowance and I'm sitting thinking, I never even knew there was such an allowance never mind having it in place. So, sometimes those meetings can be a bit soul-destroying and then I'd be praying that my staff don't know that information." (Participant 5)

"*One of the biggest issues for us is staff retention, some staff have said 'I love working with you, but I'll get more money going to a Section 38'."* (Participant 1)

The current employment market is highly competitive and obtaining suitable members of staff becomes increasingly problematic as the number of applicants per vacancy declines:

"Recruitment, that's both internal and external pressure, so, we have a vacancy for a community leader, we only had one applicant." (Participant 5)

"We have difficulty getting the right staff with the right skill mix." (Participant 1)

The pressure to fill vacancies especially within frontline positions has to be balanced with hiring people with the right values and attitudes, otherwise the quality-of-service delivery will be sub-standard:

"Not to be bounced into filling vacancies for the sake of filling them and getting the right match of individual in terms of skills. And in terms of quality, and in terms of attitude and ethical considerations, getting all of that right, so that they can perform the way we would expect them to perform." (Participant 4)

"We've got a lot of new staff coming in from the private sector, and sometimes it's not the right fit, it doesn't work. I suppose it is the quality of their work or just their ability to do the work, that's a problem. I think a huge problem because a lot of time goes into induction and support and mentoring people but at the end of the day they have to work on their own, where you realise whether the person is the right fit or not." (Participant 2)

There is also a pressure to recruit and retain staff in senior leadership roles to ensure that the discourse of social care and normalisation is nurtured amongst all staff levels:

"For the Assistant Managers role, having the right people there, because you can have operational people who are very processed driven and are very regulation bound, even if we're not bound by regulation and that's what they focus on. Now if they focus on it, the trickle down on that is they're going to have the Team Leaders focusing on that, and then they're going to be requiring the staff to be focused completely on paperwork, instead of on what the person they support wants. So, it's very easy to fall back over into that control and command medical model. Instilling the right culture and values, requires the right people in the right spaces, but also you need your senior leadership to be in place." (Participant 1)

There is a constant pressure on the CEO to recruit and retain staff so that the risks of service closure are reduced. However due to recruitment challenges participants are currently experiencing the pressure of making high risk decisions in which they either close services or hire staff that may not have the right skills or competencies to deliver good quality supports:

"We're scrambling and we have a couple of serious issues around one service and there's a lot of gaps there and it's filled by agency staff because we cannot recruit enough staff for the roles. The cost of agency staff is significant and the quality of the service, I don't think it's good quality and there's been a lot of problems and somebody with complex needs, needs consistent good quality support. But if you don't have the staff you can't run the service." (Participant 2)

All participants are aware of the need to have a robust human resource strategy to ensure adequate and appropriate staffing levels so that services can be delivered to high quality standards. While the development of strategies such as becoming an employer of choice, employer branding, marketing and favourable terms and conditions of employment can support the retention of staff and increase the number of applicants per advertised vacancy, Section 39 organisations are so underfunded that they cannot afford such investment:

"I think that a lot of the staff at the lower levels, they probably carry more than they should, because we don't have appropriate levels of staff everywhere, because historically we've been underfunded and we need to do a piece of work with the HSE, to assess the correct level of staffing everywhere and make sure we get that." (Participant 3)

Underfunding is an issue that can only be resolved through engagement with the HSE, the next section identifies the difficulties experienced by participants in this process.

6.2.4. Sub-theme Four: The Struggle for Meaningful Engagement with the HSE: "It's like pushing a boulder 'up' a hill"

Traditionally the relationship between the State and Section 39 organisations in general has been productive and beneficiary. However, according to participants this has not been the current state of play for the last number of years. A control and compliance HSE led agenda has been experienced by many participants as hindering these organisations from meeting the needs of the individuals they support:

> *"There's a huge amount of demand and command from the HSE. And I'll give you an example – we hadn't signed our service arrangement with the HSE because we had an issue we needed clarification on. Then a new Head of Services came into disabilities and said, 'Well if you don't sign it by whatever date – 30/31st of May – I'm going to initiate the reduction in your grant.' And we said, 'we can't sign it until you give us clarification on these four things.' The HSE didn't come back to us with any clarifications, they just cut the grant."* (Participant 1)

The relationship experienced by many of the participants when dealing with the HSE is described as 'hostile'. A participant described a situation in which they were shouted at by a HSE representative:

> *"The HSE paid us differently, from years back they acknowledged that people should be on more or less on HSE rates, I got shouted at when I mentioned this to a HSE disability manager."* (Participant 5)

> *"There isn't a collaborative approach. The Catherine Day Report spells it out. We've known it for years. It's almost like nearly going into a battlefield. There's a huge amount of demand and command from the HSE."* (Participant 1)

All participants identified lack of funding as having a major impact on the organisations ability to meet the needs of people with intellectual disability, to recruit and retain staff members, and

in relation to the future viability and sustainability of Section 39 organisations:

> *"The biggest pressure is the funding deficit. Being so underfunded, which is a historical legacy issue. Is a massive pressure, to run the service when it's so underfunded in terms of the services, the staffing in the services, the utilities, all the overheads, the physical offices, the support departments… the underfunding just causes so many difficulties."* (Participant 3)

A participant spoke about lying awake at night worried that she would not have enough money to pay staff members, a situation that continues and has never been addressed by the HSE because of their inflexible funding structures:

> *"It kept me awake at night; would we have enough money to pay staff. So, God forbid someone passes away or somebody is no longer here, that money is taken back immediately by the HSE and that's the knife edge you're constantly living on. How do you turn around and say to that staff that has a mortgage and small children, there's a possibility you won't have a job."* (Participant 6)

Underfunding of organisations is further compounded by a lack of meaningful engagement from the HSE as participants try to manage high risk situations:

> *"The HSE relationship, which of course is constantly challenging as a consequence of the underfunding, but like it just feels that the way that they approach their business, it's so short-sighted, it's so short-term, it's one year to the next. So, I can probably assume that I'll get the same funding next year as I have this year, but yet I don't know exactly what it is until I get the Service Level Agreement, and it's a constant arm wrestle with the HSE on every single issue."* (Participant 3)

Section 39 organisations are legally separate entities. However, participants are concerned about the level of control the State tries to exert and their inability to give recognition to the statutory obligations of these companies:

"I don't always take everything from the HSE either. We are a private company. They don't own us even though they say they do. They don't. Legally. So, just making them understand that is a bit difficult sometimes." (Participant 4)

"We are a legal company I try not to drift from that, I try to stick to the line, no sorry this is what we do, this is how we do it because if you start losing that I think you just get lost. You have to stick to your guns on some things." (Participant 2)

The demand from the HSE for a lot of information, the lack of understanding that we're private companies. And that we have a governance structure, and we have an accountability structure, and we have a GDPR responsibility, and we have all these responsibilities around the individual. Yes, we're reporting to them. We're the service provider, they're the service commissioner, and as the commissioner of services, sometimes because they're service providers as well, they think that we are an extension of their service provision and demand and demand. That isn't a collaborative approach." (Participant 1)

Many of the participants described a breakdown in trust between Section 39 organisations and the HSE:

"So, you know I suppose nobody trusts the HSE." (Participant 2)

"Now, I feel that dealing with the HSE is a challenge because I feel that it's almost like a game of cat and mouse all the time and that that relationship you know you have to be on your toes because at all times you might come a cropper on something, and they will be swift to identify that and exploit it. I'm very cautious of that that I could end up in a position of vulnerability." (Participant 3)

Traditionally at local level, effective and collaborative working relationships between the Sector and the HSE were formed and supported the provision of services. However, since the 2008 financial crisis, the HSE has restructured and centralised disability services. As explained by some of the participants, this has caused huge tension and a breakdown in relationships as local disability managers no longer have the level of autonomy they once had to make decisions in relation to funding issues. Therefore, the participant supplies the local disability manager with what they perceive as an "excessive amount of information".

Centralised decision-making results in this information being escalated upwards, which according to many participants is done at an "extremely slow pace" which is described as "frustrating" and "ineffective". There is no onus on the HSE to relay their decision-making response to a Section 39 organisation within a set time frame. Despite continuous attempts by participants to engage with the HSE they are often met with lengthy silences or refusals to engage further on matters, while organisations are left dealing with high-risk crisis on the ground. This is further compounded by HSE staff members being out on sick leave or HSE staff members leaving their current post without information about who the participants should contact in their absences:

> *"We're bottom of the pile, we're only small and you know the response time from the HSE is stressful, especially when it's something quite significant. A lot of the times you'd ring and HSE staff are out sick or they're not available. If you go to the general manager with a funding issue, they have to check it all with the head of disability – like the decision-making, even like small decisions have to go right up to the top, so from my point of view it's challenging"* (Participant 2)

> *"You ring up the HSE this week and you get one-person, next week that person has moved onto something else, and there's no continuity, there's no opportunity to build up that relationship and I think that that's just a pressure we don't need. There's often a breakdown in communication, because the HSE person will do it one way, the person the next time will do it a different way, and the CHO areas, none of them speak… you know, never the twain shall meet."* (Participant 6)

A breakdown in trust and a lack of respect from HSE representatives are experienced by participants as creating unnecessary challenges. HSE centralised decision-making structures are inflexible and unresponsive to service provision crisis. The strained relationship and tensions experienced by participants when dealing with the HSE has been identified as a major challenge in the provision of service delivery within Section 39 organisations.

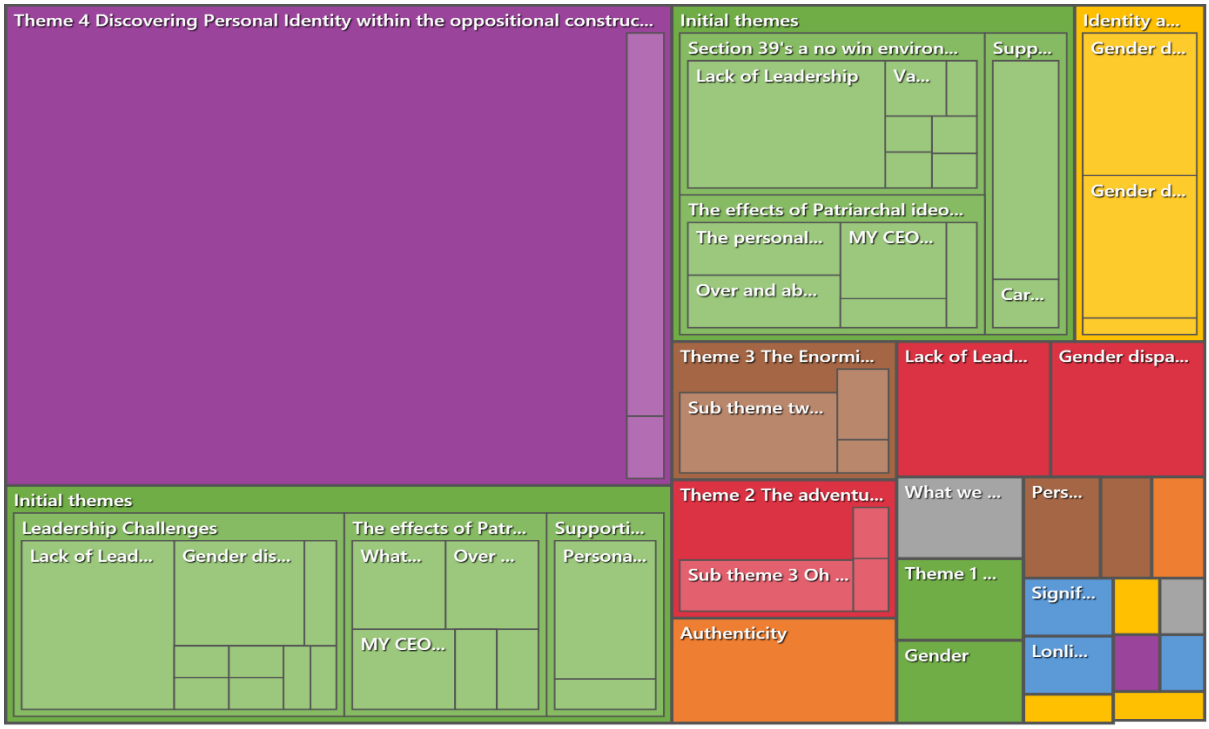


Figure 15: Overview of Theme Four and Sub-themes. Demonstrating both a totality within themselves, while also intricately connected with the other themes.

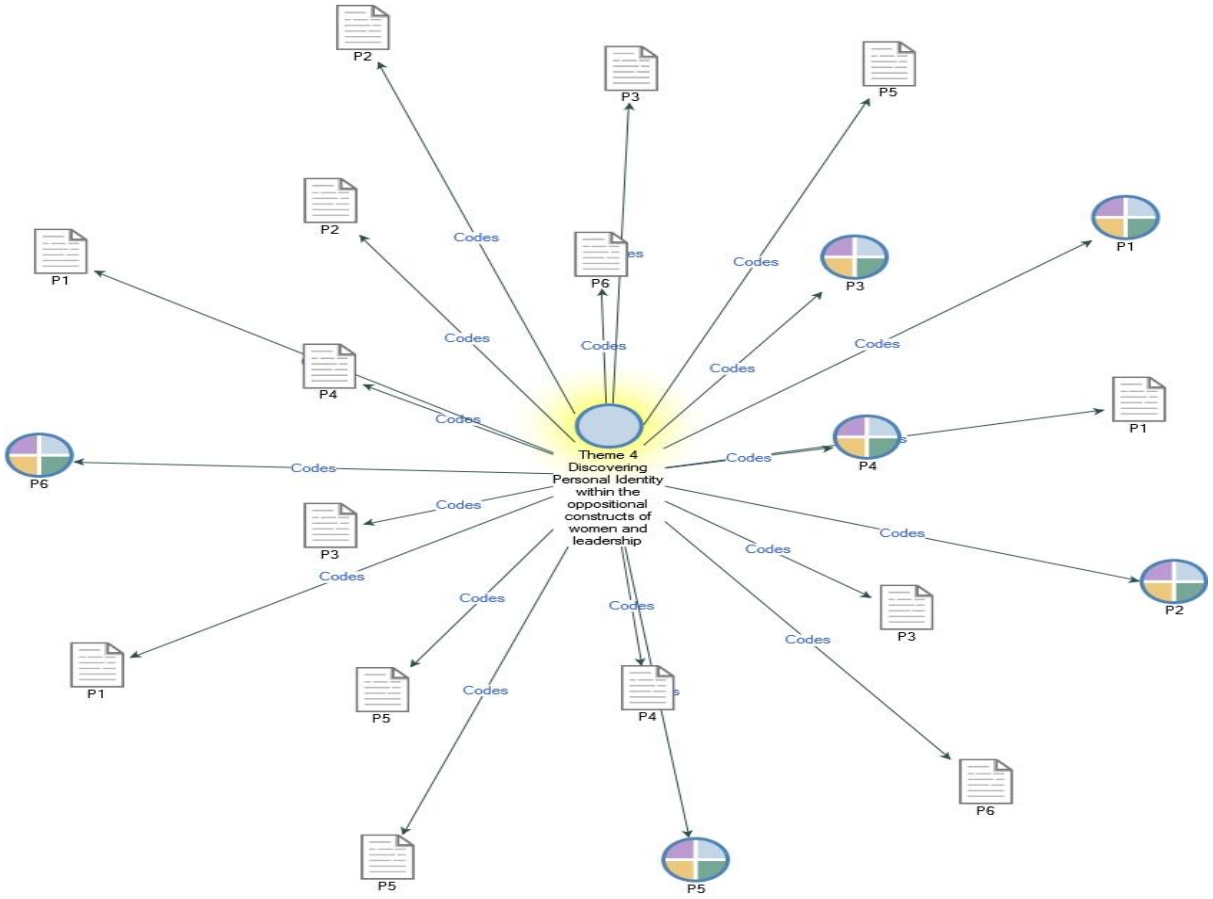


Figure 16: Coding to Ensure that the Opposing and Minority Opinions and Experiences were included as evidenced.

6.3. Theme Four: Discovering Personal Identity within the Oppositional Constructs of Gender and leadership

Identity formation is fluid and therefore constantly in the process of change and transformation. The research that informs this study suggests that the experiences of participants in the shaping of their identities as CEOs is complex, nuanced, and contradictory. Leadership especially at CEO level is a gendered construct. The discourse on gender and leadership have been classified within society as oppositional. Many participants identified that they were predominantly exposed to a stereotyped male leadership style:

> *"I'm in my 50s so the people that I saw in leadership were males. I didn't see very many females as I said to you before, when I saw the first female CEO, I was like - oh, it can be done. And the style of leadership I was exposed to was quite directive, not that collaborative. Sometimes aggressive."* (Participant 2)

Five participants identified that they naturally gravitated to collaborative, empathetic and collegial styles of leadership considered consistent with female leadership discourses:

> *"Probably culturally my own style is not very autocratic. It's collaborative and collegial as well. So, the person doing two hours in the kitchen is as important to me as the person who's the CNM2. Everybody has a role, and everybody has a voice."* (Participant 4)

> *"I am a collaborative leader and I believe if you're going to be person-centred for core members, you have to be person-centred for everyone. You have to listen to everyone's voice."* (Participant 5)

However, some participants also described defaulting to a more traditional male dominant leadership style when confronted with uncomfortable work situations:

> *"I suppose you're thinking of male leaders from the past and I might be managing a tricky issue, and it would be you need to do this, that and the other, and in that style, which doesn't, fit for me but I feel like sometimes I have to push myself to be less collaborative and more direct."* (Participant 2)

> *"I think you become, not even argumentative, but you are more, straightforward and you are pushing. Whereas you don't have to do that. I think that is maybe where the conflict piece between traditional leadership styles and your own style of leadership can happen."* (Participant 6)

Being bounded within a cultural stereotype can limit one's ability to express their identity when it is at odds with societal norms. Participant 3 describes her natural style of leadership as being a combination of both masculine and feminine leadership stereotypes:

> *"When I think of my own leadership style, I think it's a blend of the two because I think that on the one hand I'm very collaborative and I think I've fairly good empathy. That's more on the feminine side. But I'm very much data-driven, logic, reasoning, goals, objectives, which is, the more masculine side, and I tend to make decisions based on logic and data rather than emotion. I tend to look at the goals and the objectives on where we're going and focus more on that than*

relationships. So, I think I'm a blend of the two. I don't think that I'm particularly feminine or very masculine." (Participant 3)

Participant 3 reflects that as a woman she is aware that she masks her authentic self by conforming to expected female stereotyped norms that are at odds with her natural way of being:

"I think we expect women to care more, to listen more, to be more empathetic, and we expect men just to sort of almost stick to the business, and just get straight to the point. Yes, I think we do have those expectations. Some aspects of masculine stereotyping come naturally to me. But some parts of feminine leadership I find really hard." (Participant 3)

The personal identities of the participants when they reach CEO level could be described as disjointed as they have been constructed within different, often oppositional, and incompatible discourses, practices, and subject positions. The stereotyped distinctions formed within the constructs of gender and leadership encapsulate the existentialist dichotomy of humanity, quiet simply women concurrently are both individual beings and social entities that are influenced by all elements of context.

6.3.1. Sub-theme One: Gaining Confidence and Claiming Leadership

It is apparent from the interviews with the participants that the longer they remain at CEO level the more confident they become in their role. Overcoming various challenges and being exposed to new experiences, during a time when the sector is in both a funding and staffing crisis has pressured participants to assert their claim of legitimacy as CEO:

"Sometimes I am going to have to be a bit more cutthroat." (Participant 2)

"I think what I want out of this situation, and I now assert myself and go for it." (Participant 1)

The complexity of the environment that the participants operate in requires participants to find ways of leveraging power and of exploiting new opportunities to ensure organisational stability and sustainability:

"I've sent in a business case to the HSE, as a service provider we have done everything we could possibly do, the ball is now in the HSE's court. Now, if they refuse to move for me, we'll have to go back and see what we can do to force them." (Participant 5)

All of the participants viewed their CEO identity as being both fluid and dynamic. As such they recognised that by gaining legitimacy within their role, personal agency could be exerted beyond bounded gendered stereotypes. New experiences and challenges resulted in participants increased confidence in their ability to perform at CEO level:

"I would be much more confident the first two years, I was here in this role, I just fire fought, so, now there's still firefighting the odd time but we've done it before, and I've done it and therefore I'm much more confident. I'm much clearer about what I can control." (Participant 5)

"Experience adds to your confidence as a leader and new situations and difficult situations, but it doesn't mean it's not challenging. Certainly, you do get certain amount of confidence from dealing with the difficult tasks. It does make you confident when you come out the other end good, bad, or indifferent that you've done something. And in essence, you're leading and you're guiding, and you are making decisions based on the team around you and based on what you think is the best way forward." (Participant 3)

"OK, I do this, with more confidence, by standing a bit taller. I now have the confidence, but I had to build my confidence as I went along, and I became more confident and more rounded in my boots." (Participant 1)

All of the participants described a historical social context in which leadership was associated with stereotypical masculine norms. Thus, participants recognised that in trying to develop a leadership identity they were sometimes hindered within the bounds and constraints of their gendered agency. However, by reaching CEO level the participants have inadvertently challenged the dominant discourses of traditional leadership.

6.3.2 Sub-theme Two: Bowing Out and Embracing the Final Curtain

The enormity of the role as discussed in Section 6.3. and the high-risk challenges that face CEO's working in Section 39 organisations play a significant part of the rationale why (N=3) participants spoke about stepping away from the role of CEO. The Section 39 Sector is in crisis, due to under-funding, a staffing crisis, increased levels of accountability and compliance and regulatory requirements and an unhealthy working relationship with the HSE. When these stresses are coupled with visible and invisible gendered barriers and the push and pull of family commitments, participants recognise that carrying the responsibilities of these organisations is burdensome and cannot be sustained indefinitely:

> "*I do feel pressure to keep my own concerns, about the deficit and the funding and the cash reserves and the HSE relationship. I feel a pressure to carry that, so that my staff are not aware of, the challenges in that. The scope of the role and the under resourcing, there's a pressure as a leader to balance and prioritise and juggle so much, and to be the leader of all of that."* (Participant 3)

The pressure of the role of CEO has resulted in (N =3) participants making an informed choice that they will step away from this position, all will continue to work but not at a senior level:

> *" I am planning to finish as CEO at the end of this year."* (Participant 5)

This participant is willing to relinquish her role as CEO without having an alternative career option, she clearly articulates:

> "*I don't really want to do this role anymore…."* (Participant 5)

While Participant 2 explains that she will move from the position of CEO in five years' time:

> "*I have 12 years left to work, 'm not going to stay as CEO for 12 years. I don't think I would like to be a CEO for longer than five years."*

Participant 3 discusses the challenges, stresses, and pressure of the role of CEO and that working that intensely can only be sustained for a limited period of time:

> *"So, I've done three years as CEO, I'd say I'll do another five years you know. It's very, very hard work like I work very, very, very hard."*

(N = 3) of the participants will continue as CEO up until their retirement which will occur within the next five to eight years. They also recognise that sustaining a role within the current climate is extremely difficult with one participant suggesting that the tenure of CEO should not be longer than eight years:

> *"I've managed most of my life to do things for roughly about eight years, and I said at the very beginning I would do it for eight years, I've a real sense that leadership should change. I actually think it's not good for one person to be in the role for very long. The role is all consuming."* (Participant 4)

The findings demonstrate that participants recognise that the role of CEO in a Section 39 organisation is "all consuming" "lonely" and "isolating". Thus, the majority of participants are clearly making lifestyle choices to bow out of this position in favour of less stressful career options. Relinquishing the power that is inherent in the role of CEO was not perceived by any of the participants as an issue:

> *"I don't want to be CEO into the future, I have a real belief in letting things go and moving on. I don't care about the title."* (Participant 5)

Becoming CEO is often depicted as reaching the pinnacle of one's career journey but interestingly is not perceived as such by the majority of participants who describes it as:

> *"Just a small part of my life journey."* (Participant 5)

Participants are exerting their human agency and making the personal choice to leave the role of CEO to suit their work/life balance. However, their choices are heavily influenced by working in a Sector that is in constant crisis and in which participants are overworked and under resourced and have little time available for family life:

> *"The biggest sacrifice I made to take on the role of CEO was not having a family. It's huge. Because you put everything into the job and it's very hard when you have all those expectations and there were huge expectations. Massive because they wanted this place set up that all of a sudden you can't turn around and say well, I'm going on maternity leave."* (Participant 6)

Therefore, while participants are making personal choices to leave their role as CEO, their options are bounded within societal structures that enable and constrain agency. Thus, it is important that the researcher acknowledges that these choices are limited and cannot be understood separate from context.

6.10. Summary

The historical underfunding of Section 39 organisations, high levels of regulation, a staffing crisis, and a lack of meaningful engagement with the HSE, places significant pressure on participants to ensure the sustainability of their respective organisations. In addition, women CEOs also contend with negotiating their identity, bounded within the oppositional social constructs of gender and leadership. A women's identity as CEO develops over time as they encounter and learn from new experiences and challenges.

However, unless the historical underfunding of Section 39 organisations is addressed, and the development of a partnership approach is fostered between these organisations and the HSE, this Sector will remain in constant crisis. Continually, leading an organisation in crisis is unsustainable and women CEOs are making lifestyle choices to leave their roles and seek less pressurised working positions.

7. Discussion

7.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a critical analysis of the findings of the research presented in Chapters Five and Six. In addition, this chapter ascertains how the findings relate to the existing literature explored in Chapter Two. Also, the relevance of social constructionism in understanding the constructs of gender and leadership relational to the Irish social and historical context in which participants identities were shaped and conditioned. The uniqueness of Section 39 intellectual disability organisations and the challenges that this poses for women CEO's is explored through a neoliberalist lens. Finally, this chapter identifies the generation of new knowledge from the application of the research design and outlines the potential limitations of the adopted approach.

7.2 Aim of the Study

This study sought to explore the tension that exists between the socially constructed concepts of gender and leadership and thus provide insights into how these conflicting constructs manifest within the everyday lives of women CEOs. The objectives of this research study were:

- To examine the significance of the historical and socio-cultural context, discourse, and ideology in shaping women's gender identity.
- To explore how women CEO's experience the interplay between the categorised oppositional social constructs of gender and leadership.
- To gain a greater understanding of the challenges that women experience within their role as CEO, that are unique to working within a Section 39 intellectual disability organisation.

Social constructionism is a lens which alerts us to the fact that gender inequality is not a natural phenomenon, with both feminist literature (Butler, 2009; Carli, 1999; Ford, 2006; Radtke et al., 1994) and research participants acknowledging gender as a cultural manifestation. A moderate social constructionist stance also accepts that even as constructs evolve and change the biological reality of women and men still exists. In the findings, participants identities were bounded within the traditional binary classifications of women and men.

The findings highlight that when women view their classification of gender as a social construct and not as a biological sex term, it provides greater insights and clarity on how they have been conditioned and shaped within the socio-cultural context that they were raised. Thus, by adopting a subtle realist ontological position the researcher acknowledged that each participant had a unique worldview and differing perspectives which provided valuable insights into the identity formation and the paradoxical constructs of gender and leadership.

A consideration throughout this research process, was whether gender in relation to leadership was a helpful or unhelpful construct for women. Analysis of the findings are consistent with leadership literature (Al-Alawi, 2016; Alcaraz-Minnick, 2020; Barelka & Downes, 2019; Brignoli, 2020; Carli & Eagly, 2016; Clevenger & Singh, 2013; Cook & Glass, 2014; D'Souza, 2007; Eaves-Boykin, 2021; Fernandez-Mateo & Fernandez, 2016; Gentry et al., 2010) which suggest that women are typically disadvantaged with respect to their male counterparts in leadership roles.

The participants recognised that gender as a construct bounded their identity and limited personal agency. The findings of the study are also considered in terms of Goffman's (1959, 1974, 1983) Butler's (1988, 2009) and Mead's (1934) work and are discussed under key objective 7.3 and 7.4. The role of neoliberal rationality is addressed in further detail under key objective 7.5 in relation to the challenges it presents for women CEOs in Section 39 organisations.

7.3. Objective One: The Significance of the Historical and Socio-cultural Context, Discourse, and Ideology in Shaping Women's Gender Identity

7.3.1 Identity formation

Identity formation can be understood through the theory of social constructionism (Andrews, 2012; Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Burr, 2015; Hjelm, 2019; Merton, 1968) and through Goffman's works which have been credited with advancing our understanding of the development of personal identities in terms of how they are constituted through social interactions (Hacking, 2004; West, 1996; West & Zimmerman, 1987). If we adopt a social constructionist perspective we assert that our human world does not exist beyond how it has been socially constructed (Andrews, 2012; Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Burr, 2015).

This researcher considers Goffman's "ability to appreciate the importance of apparently insignificant aspects of everyday conduct" recognising that the roles that women act out in life subtly become innate features of the person (Manning, 2013, p. 4).

This was evident in the findings where participants described their childhood memories of oppression and gender conditioning including being verbally chastised for expressing career aspirations beyond their bounded identity. In other words, participants were being 'gendered' to behave in accordance with how they have been classified and socially conditioned to act out identities in everyday life (Butler, 2009; Fletcher, 2004; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Childhoods which shaped gender behaviours and norms were socially constructed through male dominated discourses and reinforced through discursive practices, creating hegemonic norms at all levels within Irish society. This dichotomy appointed men as the holders of power and knowledge creating a prevalent gender hierarchy that oversaw the oppression of women (Foucault, 1985, 2007; Ruben, 1975). Findings highlight that participant's experienced an identity construction that limited their dreams, career choices and aspirations and that was reinforced through dominant discourses. Participants recognise that they have been positioned within a socially constructed domineered category.

In addition, Goffman's observations of ordinary people's social interactions in social situations are also helpful in understanding how gender has been constructed as a "socially scripted dramatization" (West, 1996, p. 130). This metaphor presented by Goffman is depicted in the participants formative experiences in which the teachings of the educational and religious institutions that participants were exposed to, reinforced, and encouraged gendered performances. These included being subservient and being obedient, behaving always as a 'good girl' who accepts and upholds the status quo. These findings also highlight that gender is not simply something that occurs in the recesses of interaction, on an ad hoc basis but is entrenched in all aspects of our everyday lives and interactions and is embedded systematically within institutions.

It can be concluded that dominant patriarchal discourses subtly influenced all aspects of the participants earlier lives. These findings are also consistent with a social constructionism stance which argues that it is within an individual's socio-cultural historical context, and everyday interactions that dominant discourses are co-constructed, reinforced and behaviours become normalised. (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Burr & Strickland, 1992; Grint, 2005; Hjelm, 2014).

7.3.2. Gendering: Passed Down from Generation to Generation

There is an emotional and psychological cost to being classified and stereotyped. Participants recognised that they had been unwilling subjects of an "embodied, gendered life" (Radtke et al., 1994). There was also a realisation that stepping beyond their bounded identity was to challenge Irelands entrenched hegemonic socio-cultural ideology of the nature of women and men and could incur social repercussions especially in the 1970's and 1980's. However, there was also recognition that when participants remain bounded within stereotypes they unwillingly become part of the problem. In this sense participants have to constantly negotiate the social practices of gender, when to resist, when to push boundaries and when to do gendering.

Extending on Goffman's work, Butler (1988, 2009) also contends that gender is an ongoing live performance. Similar to an immersive play the social audience are not passive recipients but active participants with the power to engage, influence and create experiences. The findings support Butler's (1988) assertions that gender performance is passed down from generation to generation reinforcing the normalisation of gender identity.

Participants described childhood experiences in which the roles their parents performed were immersed in traditional patriarchal ideology. These gendered work roles influenced the career trajectory choices of some of the participants. If a participant's life aspirations were outside the norm, then the previous generation used their 'regulatory' influence and power to reassert societies natural order. Butler (2004, p. 41) suggests that the "regulation of gender requires and institutes its own distinctive regulatory and disciplinary regime within social practices". Thus, adding further to the complexities and nuances of gendering.

7.3.3. Power and the Discursive effects of Gendering

The issue of women's power status, relative to men's is not merely academic (Carli, 1999). Gender differentials in power have real consequences for women (Smith, 2002). Therefore it stands to reason that one's primary socialisation informs their identity and position in society (Andrews, 2012; Burr, 1998). Findings highlight that the socialisation process in Ireland is male dominated and reinforces gender stereotypes which favour white males. Language and discourse support this narrative and permeate and mediate the objective reality of society. This in turn has reinforced traditional power relations in which participants struggle to maintain

appropriate power levels commensurate with their leadership position against invisible, oppressive doctrines and gendered codes of behaviour.

The norms of gendering within society are implicit in practice (Butler, 2004). However, they become dramatically visible in the effects that they produce. The scoping review conducted in Chapter Two highlights how gender stereotyping negatively impacts women's self-confidence (Lee, 2019; Leslie et al., 2017). Oppositional emotions such as the fear of failure and the fear of success (Ming & Minghui, 2018) and the push and pull of gendered obligations (Barelka & Downes, 2019) highlight the complex effects of social control. This was consistent in the findings in which the majority of participants described experiencing feelings of poor self-confidence and dissonance when they were performing roles incongruent with their gender identity.

The normalisation of gendering from birth is ever persistent, covert, marginalises and sustains the subordination of women. Women are constantly regulated within their homes, their communities, institutions, and the organisations that they work in. The enormity of the subterfuge raises questions, such as how can women even begin the process of finding their core identity? Who would we be and what role would we play as equal contributors in society if we hadn't been gendered? Is our identity the sum total of our societal construction or is there an authentic part of us ungendered, battling to be liberated?

Mead (1934, p. 140) describes the self, as a "social structure" identifying that individual's "experience themselves not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of their respective social groups". This suggests that the authentic self that resists gendering can 'arise' therefore women have the opportunity to respond to one's self (Mead, 1934, p. 141). Findings identified that participants often maintained an inward dialogue when resisting being gendered or when subject to dominant discursive practices or unequal power dynamics.

Mead (1934) regards this ability as a central tenet in which individuals can negotiate the world. This suggests that the complex effects of patriarchy, which contributes to the hegemony of men, and condition's women to behave in a way that is consistent with this ideology can be challenged when women become aware and alert to the subtle manipulation involved in the process of gendering. As gender classifications are manifests of social construction they are fluid (Foucault, 2007) and participants described situations in which they either resisted or passively accepted their bounded identity.

7.4. Objective Two: Exploring Women CEOs Experiences of the Interplay Between the Categorised Oppositional Social Constructs of Gender and Leadership

7.4.1 Gendered Leadership Traits

The findings suggest that experiences of women CEOs in the formation of their identities is complex, nuanced, and confusing (Radtke et al., 1994). Participants recognised the challenges of having a gender classification immersed in traditional dominant white male ideology and holding a CEO position that is perceived as oppositional to expected behaviours related to the binary classification of gender (Butler, 1988, 2009; West, 1996; West & Zimmerman, 1987)

Literature highlights that women in CEO roles are more disadvantaged than their male counterparts by being stereotyped on perceived communal traits traditionally associated with female leaders (Alcaraz-Minnick, 2020; Cook & Glass, 2014; Rosette & Tost, 2010). These communal attributes, include but are not limited to being gentle, caring, emphatic, good communicators, helpful, inclusive, person orientated, and relationship builders (Alcaraz-Minnick, 2020; Carli & Eagly, 2016; Cook & Glass, 2014; Katuna, 2014; Lahti, 2013; Nelson, 2021; Pillay, 2012).

Within a patriarchal culture there is a perceived mismatch between the agentic traits credited to the classic male leader and the communal traits associated with the female gender (Rosette & Tost, 2010, p. 221). These agentic traits include confidence, assertiveness, command and control which closely resemble those which are usually attributed to men, and are deemed compatible with leadership (Al-Alawi, 2016; Carli & Eagly, 2016; D'Souza, 2007; Pillay, 2012; Schwanke, 2013). It is argued that a country embedded in a dominant patriarchal culture is consistent with more men holding positions of power (Fernandez-Mateo & Fernandez, 2016; Katuna, 2014). Literature also depicts gender stereotypes as shaping expectations of how women should behave. This is problematic for women as the "behavioural qualities attributed to women diverge from the stereotypical qualities expected of leaders" (Soklaridis et al., 2017, p. 13). Findings suggest that women are acutely aware of these leadership stereotypes, and this can cause internal dissonance and conflict when they act in a way that is inconsistent with an expected leadership style.

Findings were consistent with the literature in which women are appraised negatively for displaying agentic traits (Cook & Glass, 2014; Schwanke, 2013). However, findings differed

from some other studies (Clevenger & Singh, 2013; Harris, 2019b; Schwanke, 2013) in that the display of communal traits was perceived as a positive, and not a negative contribution to the work culture of Section 39 organisations. The following two studies may go some way to providing an explanation for this. The first study conducted by Alcaraz-Minnick (2020) found that female communal competencies were considered particularly valuable in organisations, similar to Section 39's, that are in crisis. The second study conducted by Ming and Minghui (2018) highlighted female communal competencies were highly valued in organisations whose mission supports a social justice agenda, again similar to Section 39's.

7.4.2. Gendered Labour: The Invisible Shackles of the Kitchen Sink

The prevalent historical socio culture in Ireland is reflective of dominant discursive practices of patriarchal ideology. The effects are the subordination and inequalities that arise for women within the structural features of society. As a structure, gender divides labour into two categories occurring either within the home or within the workplace. While men dominated positions of power and leadership (Lorber & Farrell, 1991) women became the beholders of symbolic power within the home (Williams, 1988). This was reinforced through dominant discursive practices, where a woman's role is to "*take care"* and a man's role is to *"take charge".* These "traditional caricatures" marginalised and devalued women (Williams, 1988, p. 807). Findings also provided evidence that traditional 'gendering' resulted in feelings of frustration and anger at being repressed and bounded within a stereotype.

Domestic ideology, first introduced as a concept by Welters (1966) describes the characteristics assigned to womanhood, such as piety, submissiveness, purity, emotionally and mentally delicate, warm and loving. A woman's function in life was to ensure that the family home was a "cheerful place, so that brothers, husbands and sons would not go elsewhere in search of a good time" (Welter, 1966, p. 163). The ideal woman kept the heart of the family home beating, and her performance was assessed and measured by her ability to keep her husband happy.

The role of the domesticated woman was celebrated within society, ingrained within our institutional structures and it has shaped and influenced the earlier career choices of women as evident in the findings. Indeed, participants acknowledge that when they behave in a manner or take on a role that is incongruent with how they have been categorised such as a CEO position it causes feelings of dissonance. As the act of being a CEO is at odds with being a woman, to reduce these feelings of dissonance and guilt participants report that they either re-conform, develop a persona, or overcompensate by trying to excel in all areas of life.

The findings highlight a shift to a more modern view of a man's role in the home in which he also takes responsibility for domestic chores and his offspring. However, all participants acknowledged that the main responsibility for domestic chores, child minding and being a carer of older parents rested with them as the woman of the house. The pressure of domestic competence and motherly duties as well as maintaining a high-powered job considered beyond their social status is quite possibly the reason why many of the participants are happy to relinquish their role as CEO.

7.4.3. Unsustainable Leadership Practices

In addition, findings depict hegemonic work cultures which perpetuated the subjugation of women CEOs with participants describing situations in which inequitable power dynamics manifest in everyday social interactions with both internal and external stakeholders. Indeed, Mead's (1934) theory of symbolic interactionalism goes some way to explaining how the social control of women, even when operating within a senior leadership role is exerted subtly, extensively and covertly over an individual's behaviour. Acker's (1990) work on organisational theory clearly outlines how 'gendering' in organisations is manifested through the social construction of gendered identity, the division of labour and the symbols and imageries that were created to underpin and strengthen those divisions. The former is reinforced through an ongoing process of developing and sustaining social interactions and social structures that legitimise dominance and submission.

Findings illustrate that many participants often overcompensated for being a woman leader by over performing. Women often perceive that they must outperform men considerably to offset bounded gendered norms. This is accomplished by putting in long hours at the office, over preparing for meetings and ensuring that they are always up to date and well informed of organisational priorities often at the expense of family and work/life balance. This has significant implications for the longevity of women occupying such high-pressure roles especially as they report experiencing the push and pull between work and home.

7.4.4. Leadership Identity

Constructing and internalising a leadership identity is central to maintaining and sustaining leadership roles. However, findings that the 'doing of gender' as a societal norm was still required within the role of CEO and that behaviour within everyday interactions was still

confined and bounded within gendered norms and expectations challenges the former. Considering the findings through the work of Goffman, gender behaviour can be viewed as a staging of societies idealisation of how women should behave in a leadership role (Fletcher, 2004; Goffman, 1959; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Some participants spoke about performing to gendered expectations to maintain harmony within the workplace. Women CEO's acknowledged that they threatened the status quo by moving beyond the notion of traditional gender display (Butler, 1988, 2009; Fletcher, 2004). Interestingly, many participants reported experiencing the negative effects of this social elevation more from female colleagues than male.

While it is plausible to contend that gender displays beyond the conventionalised are optional for women, findings suggest that even when women reach what is considered the pinnacle of their careers, essentialism and hegemony in dominant gendered discursive practices require women to constantly justify their position. Participants are challenged to perform and represent themselves as leaders under the scrutiny of a patriarchal ideology while remaining bounded within their gendered construct. This creates a huge burden and pressure and often results in burnout and exhaustion.

7.4.5. Towards a Non-gendered Egalitarian Leadership

Leadership has been over theorised with little clarity on what distinguishes leaders from non-leaders (Stogdill, 1974). Research highlights that there are more than 65 classification systems used to define the dimensions of leadership and that the number of definitions in existence is evidenced by the number of academics that have attempted to define it (Manning & Curtis, 2002; Stogdill, 1974). Findings support the former, suggesting that there is a lack of cohesion and clarity about what leadership looks like within Irelands Section 39 intellectual disability sector and that this is further complicated by gender. Generalised gender stereotypes have traditionally created a crude blueprint for leadership that is challenging for women, as the female viewpoint has been slow to be heard or considered (Ford, 2006).

However, developing a new style of leadership, constructed through the various discourses or narratives within which women are transitorily positioned may result in just a new form of stereotyping of women in roles and occupations considered appropriate for female leadership. Studies highlight that the construction of leadership identity can be contradictory and vague (Ford et al., 2008). When women consider crafting a leadership identity, findings acknowledge

that the social context in relation to power differentials, discourses, discursive practices, symbolic interactionism, and the pervasiveness of patriarchy in which the participants are positioned greatly shape and influence the process.

Findings suggest that women leaders are hindered and bounded by the shackles of societies expectations of how they should behave. While many participants described their leadership style as inclusive of predominantly communal competencies other participants felt that their leadership style was more closely aligned to agentic traits. However, findings indicated that participants felt they performed better and to a higher standard when they allowed their true 'self' to become the driver of performance. This supports an agenda of avoiding the development of yet another homogeneous definition and style of leadership (Ford et al., 2008).

If we consider gender and leadership to be socially constructed concepts, then it must be possible for them to be constructed differently. To achieve this implies that women can no longer be passive recipients of societal and cultural norms (Butler, 2011). Gender stereotypes have pervasively dominated the ways in which we think so that it appears as if there is no other way of being. It is essential to create the social space to fully embrace a new philosophy informing gender identity.

Findings highlight that participants have seen significant changes in the role of women within the family and the division of labour within and outside the home. They have also benefitted by seeing more women in CEO roles and holding positions of power in recent years. These new dynamics indicate a cultural and societal shift in gender perspectives which gives rise to hope that attitudes toward women in CEO roles and institutional reforms are likely to become more egalitarian (Norris & Inglehart, 2001).

It has been suggested that co-creation has the potential to provide an opportunity for the deconstruction of the dominant discourses and discursive practices of gendering (Butler, 2004; Lorber & Farrell, 1991). However, Fook (2022) warns that the process of deconstruction is complex and nuanced. It requires a form of authentic social negotiation and co-creation in which the role of language, power, discourse, and human agency become unravelled (Butler, 2004; Flax, 1990; Fook, 2022).

7.5. Objective Three: The Challenges that Women Experience within their Role as CEO, that are Unique to Working within a Section 39 Intellectual Disability Organisation

Findings paint a bleak picture of the battle of Section 39 organisations to survive within the current Irish landscape when they are pitted against Section 38 organisations who are closely aligned to the State and the marketisation of care within the private sector (Lynch, 2018). Similar to the Day et al. (2018, p. 9) report, findings suggest that there is a "significant mutual reliance" between Section 39 organisations to deliver supports to people with intellectual disabilities and the State's role in providing funding. This reliance is underpinned by an unequal power dynamic in which the CEO's of Section 39 organisations experience vulnerability and frustration.

The Report of the Independent Review Group (2018) established to examine the role of CVS in publicly funded health and personal social services pledges to strengthen the relationship between the two Sectors, citing the sharing of the delivery of quality services as the collective goal in which to build common interests upon. Findings however demonstrate that while the majority of CEOs clearly acknowledge the former as their mission, their lived experience of working with the HSE is contentious and a strong belief prevails that the HSE's interest lies in either the closure or take-over of Section 39 organisations, especially the smaller ones.

Continuous gross underfunding (Power & Power, 2022) and the withdrawal of funding instead of the repurposing of funding within an organisation to alleviate crisis renders Section 39 organisations financially unsustainable. Sustainability is also hindered by acrimonious one-way communication, micromanagement and cumbersome governance structures instituted by the HSE and which serve as constant reminders of the inequitable power dynamics that exist between funder and recipient.

The findings present a negative analysis of sectoral arrangements dominated by HSE control and command agendas. CEO's describe trying to run independent companies whilst being subjected to statutory compliance and governance that is often at odds with the myriad of other regulations that they are subjected to such as the Companies Act 2014. Power and Power (2022, p. 74) describe the struggle of Section 39 organisations to operate while "chronically and comparatively underfunded". This is further challenged by underpaid staff teams that are understandably demoralised and disheartened by the lack of progress on pay parity in line with their counterparts in Section 38 organisations (Murphy & O'Sullivan, 2021). Several articles (Considine & Dukelow, 2012; Dukelow & Kennett, 2018; Dukelow & Murphy, 2016; Gill,

1995; Lynch, 2018; Murphy & O'Sullivan, 2021) describe the discursive influence of neoliberalism as playing a significant role in the demise of Section 39 organisations.

7.5.1 The Discursive Effects of Neoliberal Ideology

A study conducted by Dukelow and Kennett (2018) examined the welfare state in Ireland and expanding on Gill's (1995, 2008, 2017) work explored the concept of disciplinary neoliberalism in relation to the state, market and society. This perspective offers insights into the rationale for the increased over regulation and systems of control incorporated by the HSE to micromanage independent Section 39 companies. Findings suggest that the continuous erosion of a company's independence using legitimised coercive powers to withhold funding can over time reduce the status of the CEO that runs that company. The only way to maintain and sustain funding for a Section 39 organisation is to toe the line and follow the path of least resistance. However, in so doing the CEO becomes a passive recipient of a "neoliberal market civilisation" agenda that will ultimately destroy what is good about Section 39 organisations (Gill, 1995, p. 399).

Gill (1995, p. 400) describes neoliberal market civilisation as an ideology framed by the discourse and discursive practices of neoliberalism. This signifies the gradual death of the welfare state as pervasive ideals such as individualism, the reintroduction of class systems and institutional power slowly seep into society. It supports and upholds the supremacy of those with power (Harvey, 2006) such as the HSE and is instituted in policies such as the Department of Health's (2012, 2020) Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services in Ireland (VFMDS). This report problematised the lack of funding and placements for people with disabilities not as the responsibility of the State but as the fault of the sector. This is evidenced through policy discourse based on 'reforming' the sector making it 'fit for purpose' and ensuring 'value for money' and 'efficiencies' (Health, 2012, 2020).

> *"Driving efficiency within an organisation should be the responsibility of its chief officer, who will report to the HSE on efficiency gains on an ongoing basis as part of the SLA monitoring process. Staff numbers in Section 39 agencies should be monitored as part of a more comprehensive information-gathering and performance- monitoring system across the sector potentially through th*e *SLA process.* (Health, 2012, pp. 3-11)

This problematised discourse positions people with intellectual disabilities as "measurable outcomes". The HSE have developed centralised costing systems that are subject to a managerialism agenda of regular reviews and audits and devoid of any human rights context. Managerialism being a neoliberal process (Lynch, 2018) used by the HSE to institute market principles and "narrowly defined and state prescribed outcomes" (McMahon, 2018, p. 138) into the governance of Section 39 organisations.

Indeed the discourse of neoliberalism shapes and influences a cultural hegemony that promotes the ideals of "rationality, individuality, and self-interest, in which every social subject is redefined in terms of economics" (Peters, 2001, p. 7) Governments that have been rationalised by such ideology govern societies by promoting the self-reliance of individual subjects (Marttila et al., 2018). This is evidenced in the VFMDS report:

> *"Public transport should be used in all circumstances where it is an option. This can have benefits in terms of personal development for the service users and is also more efficient."* (Health, 2020, p. 4)

Despite the fact that the philosophy of neoliberalism supports a reductionist role by the State in the provision of services, the State has actively sought to remain central in its institutionalisation (Finnegan et al., 2021; Marttila et al., 2018; Peters, 2001). Thus the provision of services to people with disabilities is reduced to a secondary consideration and construed as a management issue that can be resolved through managerial regimes (Lynch, 2018). As opposed to being considered a human rights and social issue requiring a high level of attention. Lynch (2014, p. 5) highlights that the values of "trust, integrity and solidarity" that should underpin the relationship between the State and Section 39 organisations have been subordinated to one of "regulation, control and competition."

Findings suggest that this has resulted in the development of transactional relationships between the two sectors based on mistrust and cynicism and has replaced the human relational relationship that previously existed, albeit a number of years ago. In addition, neoliberalism discourse has weakened the capacity of Section 39 organisations to challenge inequality (Dukelow & Murphy, 2016; Finnegan et al., 2021; Lynch, 2018).

7.6. Limitations

This research is subject to some limitations which concern the sample size, the diversity of the research participants, and the positionality of the researcher in relation to the research participant.

The researcher engaged in a process of journalling and reflection throughout the study. This was effective in identifying issues which were brought by the researcher to supervision meetings for further discussion. Therefore, it was evident from the onset of this practice that the generalisability of the aims and objectives of the research would not be representative. The two main reasons for this were that a subtle realist orientation (ontological) adopted for this study is underpinned by the belief that there are multiple perspectives of gender and leadership. Therefore, inquiry cannot replicate these constructs, but merely capture their essences. It is the participants view of reality that the researcher sought to interpret.

Secondly, the sample size for this study was small. However, the sample size was discussed at length within supervision, a decision was made on an appropriate sample size after due consideration. The key rationale was the selection of semi-structured interviews as the data gathering method. Semi-structured interviews facilitated the relational aspect of narrative inquiry. In addition to develop a deeper understanding of the participants experiences of gender and leadership it was necessary to conduct three interviews with each participant. To facilitate this within the limited time constraints of the study required a small sample size. However, a small sample size can raise concerns about ensuring participants privacy and anonymity. The researcher sought to mitigate this by ensuring that the use of identifiable information was minimised throughout the study.

The scope of this study was limited by the inclusion criteria for the participants. The study sample being limited to women CEOs currently, working in Section 39 intellectual disability organisations. This study did not allow for the perspectives of women CEOs that had left their positions and may have valuable insights. Male CEOs holding the same position were not considered for this study as the researcher adopted a feminist informed methodology and was interested in gender and leadership not through the traditional male leadership lens but through the eyes of women practising leadership (Hodges & Howieson, 2017).

Using the process of purposeful sampling the researcher was unsuccessful in the recruitment of participants of different race, nationality, or cultural backgrounds. To ensure participants for

this study were representative of other differentials the researcher selected participants working in both urban and rural organisations and from different size organisations. The researcher also differentiated through selecting participants from different age profiles, who had different qualification statuses and had dissimilar lengths of time in their role as CEO.

The researcher's positionality, similar to the participants was shaped by the socio and cultural context in which they were raised. It was also informed by their social interactions, exposure to discourses and discursive practices and influenced by their educational and practitioner experiences within the Irish disability Section 39 sector. This presented the possibility of researcher bias within the process. The researcher attempted to mitigate this through continual self-reflection, dairying and discussions within supervision meetings focused on thought progression, assumptions and issues of bias that arose.

As previously discussed in Chapter Two this study was not designed to explore the intersectionality of gender, race, or cultural and ethnical backgrounds, however, insights on intersectionality of gender and race in relation to CEO's identity formation as a leader could have added valuable knowledge to the research. This topic is worthy of further consideration and exploration.

7.7. Summary

This chapter presented a critical assessment of the findings. Drawing from a social constructionist perspective, the relevance of the socio historical context in identity formation was explored. The findings and literature illustrated that Irish history testifies to the social subordination of women and a pervasive patriarchal ideology that ranks men as superior. An ideology that is still perpetuated in an assumed and often unconscious manner and continues to undermine the position that women play in society today. Considering socio-cultural context facilitated a greater understanding of the pervasive ideologies and discourses that shaped and normalised the participants personal identity.

This chapter also extended the relevance of social constructionism by reflecting on the work of other relevant theorists such as Mead, Goffman, and Butler. These theoretical considerations were useful for exploring the constructs of gender and leadership, especially when trying to interpret the data collected and the themes generated through inductive analysis.

Findings highlighted the challenges of having a gender classification immersed in traditional dominant white male ideology and holding a CEO position that is perceived as oppositional to expected behaviours related to the binary classification of gender. It is reasonable to argue that gender presentations beyond the conventionalised are optional for women especially with the decline of the patriarchal influence of the Catholic church. However, findings suggest that essentialism and hegemony in dominant gendered discursive practices require women to constantly justify their leadership competence even at CEO level.

Structural inequality persists within Irish society and women CEO's who deviate too far from their socially constructed bounded identity experience internal and external pressure to re-conform to gender norms. Gender was acknowledged in the findings as a fluid and changing construct and one which woman can exert some influence upon. To this end women can no longer afford to be passive recipients in an inegalitarian society. The co-creation of a leadership beyond gender is possible through social negotiation and the creation of new discourses and power dynamics that can dismantle the institutional structures that sustain inequalities. Authentic solidarity amongst women and men, and women and women are required for such a process.

Findings depict the relationship between the HSE and Section 39 organisations as strained and acrimonious. Trust and respect have been replaced by unequal power dynamics and the discourse and discursive practices of neoliberal ideology has reduced discussion about disabled peoples supports to units of analysis and cost containment. The voice of CEOs of Section 39 organisations have been silenced and their influence on broader policy issues reduced. The sector has been demoted and organisations struggle to survive against a barrage of regulation, command and control agendas, gross underfunding, and the inability to offer staff teams public sector terms and conditions of employment.

8. Conclusion

> I am struck by the participants passion to enact the mission, vision and values that underpin the respective organisation that they work in. Constantly battling with the HSE for appropriate funding for people with intellectual disabilities and their families is both frustrating and exhausting. The individuals supported are not units of cost but real people with real hopes and dreams and aspirations. Values become compromised under a neoliberal regime. The egalitarian challenges that face women CEO's is similar to the challenges facing Section 39 organisations and facing people with intellectual disabilities. Neoliberalism has produced a hegemonic discourse that has caused destruction within divisions of labour, the welfare state, social relationships, and human ways of being. (Reflective Diary, 19th September 2023)

8.1. Introduction

The reflective diary account at the beginning of this chapter illustrates the structural barriers and challenges that participants experience as women, as women CEOs and as CEO's working in Section 39 intellectual disability organisations. It depicts their passion and courage to go beyond the bounds of their gendering and to fight for the provision of high quality supports in solidarity with people with intellectual disability.

This study explored how the paradoxical concepts of gender and leadership impacted on the lived experience of six women CEOs. Drawing from a social constructionist perspective, this feminist informed narrative inquiry explored the stories, narratives, and insights of participants in relation to the socio historical context that they grew up in and its relevance to their identity formation. This research facilitated a greater understanding of the pervasive ideologies and discourses that shaped and normalised the participants personal identity.

This study offers a qualitative, intersubjective review, which deepened and developed as the research participants stories and experiences slowly became unpacked. Fundamentally, through the eyes of the participants the researcher was facilitated to view the depth of influence of pervasive ideologies of patriarchy and neoliberalism on their lives. In doing so recognising that the constraints and confines of both ideologies have insidiously become part of our daily existence. As such we have a choice to either be passive recipients or resistant activists in an ever changing and fluid dynamic.

The concepts of gender and leadership are socially constructed through language, discourse and symbolic interactionalism (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Hjelm, 2019). Co-creation through

authentic social negotiation has the potential to provide an opportunity for the deconstruction of the dominant discourses and discursive practices of such constructs (Butler, 2004; Lorber & Farrell, 1991).

The application of social constructionism has offered new theoretical insights into the effects of the Irish socio historical context on identity formation of women who progress to become CEOs and their experiences of socially navigating the interplay between gender and leadership. In this final chapter, the researcher provides an outline on how the research question was addressed, a summary of the key findings and their implications for women CEOs and lastly, recommendations for future research.

8.2. Addressing the Research Question

The concept of leadership shaped though patriarchal ideology and strategically socially constructed as oppositional to the construct of gender is relevant to this study, as it explored the impact of this power dichotomy on the lived experience of women CEOs working in Section 39, intellectual disability organisations in Ireland. The researcher's stance of moderate social constructionist was explicitly stated and justified in Chapter 3 (Andrews, 2012; Cromby & Nightingale, 1999; Stam, 2001; Wong, 2006) This position acknowledges the role of language, the relevance of the socio historical context and social interactions in the construction of gender and leadership (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999).

It is also compatible with a subtle realist ontological position and recognises that there is multiple perspectives of reality and that the construct of gender can evolve and change (Grint, 2005). However, the biological reality of women and men will still exist beyond this social construction. This study was not concerned with the biological composition of women and men, but rather how the social construction of gender has shaped and influenced the lives of women CEOs.

Objective one examined the significance of the historical and socio-cultural context, discourse, and ideology in shaping women's gender identity. Findings illustrated that participants were subjected to a gendering process throughout their childhood, which was underpinned by a prevailing patriarchal ideology. They were socially conditioned to perform in accordance with their gendered categorisation and as such became recipients of a gender hierarchy that oversaw the oppression of women.

Objective two sought to explore how women CEO's experience the interplay between the categorised oppositional social constructs of gender, and leadership. Findings recognised the challenges in having a gender classification constricted by dominant white male ideology and holding a CEO position that is perceived as oppositional to the binary classification of female gender. Women in CEO roles were found to be more disadvantaged than their male counterparts with findings depicting hegemonic work cultures in which inequitable power dynamics existed in everyday social interactions with both internal and external stakeholders.

Findings suggest that participants are incumbered and bounded by societies beliefs of how they should behave. Domestic ideology was significant in understanding the push and pull emotions that arise for women when they are at work and when they are at home. The pressure to be a domestic goddess and maintain a high-powered job means that women not only work extremely hard in work but must work equally so at home.

Objective three attempted to establish a greater understanding of the challenges that women experience within their role as CEO, that are unique to working within a Section 39 intellectual disability organisation. Findings highlighted a sector in turmoil suffering the discursive effects of the institution within society of a neoliberal agenda. The outcome is gross underfunding, a staffing crisis and a HSE control and compliance agenda that isn't fit for purpose. In essence human beings with intellectual disabilities have been reduced to units of cost that must be unrealistically contained.

8.3. Reflection on the Research Paradigm

A significant part of this research journey was to establish a position on how the researcher viewed knowledge and its construction. This was achieved by using a reflexive diary to ask and answer ontological questions such as, what is the nature of reality and the situation being studied? This helped to define the researcher's philosophical orientation and taking a subtle realist ontological stance was the first step in guiding subsequent research decisions.

The ontological stance was reinforced by adopting a constructionist epistemology which acknowledges that the social world cannot be understood from the standpoint of one person. This stance also recognises that realities are socially constructed and that there are multiple realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, a prominence of the subjective experience is assumed. Within this approach context is considered as vital for knowledge and knowing and

this aligned with the researchers decree to explore the concepts of gender and leadership in relation to the participants historical and current social contexts. This facilitated a deeper understanding of the social gendering that participants experienced within their homes, communities, religious and educational institutions, and society in general.

Identities were constructed through dominant discourses and gender norms were reinforced through social interactions and instituted in individual behaviours. This supported the researchers decision to adopt a feminist informed narrative inquiry methodology to 'out' the visibility and voice of Irish women who have been silenced under dominant patriarchal ideologies for far too long (Maynard, 1994; Stacey & Thorne, 1985; Stanley & Wise, 2002). This approach has been used in a number of previous studies that involve women in leadership (Cohen, 2019; Coston, 2020; Richardson, 2021).

The theory of social constructionism facilitated inquiry into taken for granted social constructs that are considered 'right' and 'acceptable' (Flax, 1990). Thereby, it offered an opportunity to expose patriarchal socially constructed discourses used in daily interactions, passed on through generations and sustained through social relationships and everyday conditioning (Morley & O'Bree, 2021).

The research question focused on the lived experiences of six women CEOs. Therefore, as people's identities can be reflected in the stories that they share about their everyday life, semi-structured interviews were considered the best method of data collection. These types of interviews create space for participants to share their perspective of the world (Clandinin, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Conducting three interviews with each participant facilitated an in-depth analysis of the participants nuanced and multi-complex experiences and perceptions of the paradoxical constructs of gender and leadership. It also allowed space for both the participant and researcher to reflect and make sense of their personal experiences and worldviews.

In summary, this study has highlighted and critically explored the concepts of gender and leadership through the theory of social construction. It therefore contributes a different way of thinking and considering these paradoxical constructs and the significance of the socio-historical context and dominant societal ideologies on identity construction. It presents an alternative explanation for the gender disparity that exists at senior executive level within the Irish CVS.

8.4. Impact & Relevance of this Research

A social constructionist approach adopted for this study supported the view that gender inequality is not a natural phenomenon, with both feminist literature (Butler, 2009; Carli, 1999; Ford, 2006; Radtke et al., 1994) and research participants acknowledging gender as a cultural manifestation. This research is important because it highlights that the construct of gender is fluid, contextual, temporal, and relational while also acknowledging that the biological reality of women and men still exists beyond gender construction (Andrews, 2012; Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Burr, 2015; Hjelm, 2019; Merton, 1968).

This was significant for two reasons firstly, when women view gender as a social construct and not as a biological sex term, it provides greater insights and clarity on how their identity is conditioned and shaped relational to their socio-cultural contexts. Secondly, this identifies gender and leadership as manifests of social construction and as such these constructs are fluid, therefore participants have a choice to either resist or to passively accept their bounded identity (Foucault, 2007).

The study confirms that women are typically disadvantaged with respect to their male counterparts in leadership roles and that gender disparity at senior executive level remains an issue within the Irish CVS (Brignoli, 2020; Carli & Eagly, 2016; Clevenger & Singh, 2013; Cook & Glass, 2014; D'Souza, 2007; Eaves-Boykin, 2021; Gentry et al., 2010; Wheel & Horwath, 2014).

The research captures the emotional struggles of women to perform and represent themselves as CEOs under the scrutiny of a patriarchal ideology while remaining bounded within their gendered construct. This research is important because it also highlights that women remain subjected to the gendered discursive effects of essentialism and hegemony regardless of their CEO status. The status of CEO is perceived as less powerful when held by women then by men.

This research also depicts the destructive effects and discursive influence of neoliberal ideology in the demise of Section 39 organisations (Considine & Dukelow, 2012; Dukelow & Kennett, 2018; Dukelow & Murphy, 2016; Gill, 1995; Lynch, 2018; Murphy & O'Sullivan, 2021). Findings highlight that the operationalisation of a neoliberal regime by the State has undermined the larger, democratic role of Section 39 organisations to support and provide advocacy on broader political and policy issues and on relevant disability matters.

Finally, the research identifies that the essence of the enactment of a neoliberal regime by the State has played a pivotal role in the development of a hegemonic culture that pits the funder against the recipient of the funding. This power dynamic does not support a partnership of equals but a culture in which the State as the dominant partner is empowered by the discourse of control and command and the threat of financial punitive consequences to demand terms (Dukelow & Murphy, 2016; McInerney, 2018; Wheel & Horwath, 2014).

8.5. Recommendations for practice

The subordination of women appears to be inherent in Irish societal and organisational structures. Gender discrimination, stereotyping and bias are still experienced by women in the workplace. National policies and legislation must continuously improve to promote the equal inclusion of women at all levels within the workforce and structural barriers preventing women from reaching senior organisational positions require an urgent reappraisal.

The unequal power dichotomy that exists within the Irish workforce is a societal one and cannot be problematised within a female meritocracy narrative. Women continue to be subjected to unequal power differentials in the workplace even when they reach positions of power. Both women and men play a role in perpetuating the discourse and discursive practices that continue to promote the supremacy of men in society. The latter naturally continues to disadvantage women and necessitates a critical review

Many participants were struck by their acceptance of the status quo and how they often conformed ‘to keep the peace’. Research demonstrates that people who are dominated often learn to suppress their own reactions to oppression (Sebrant, 1999). The questions used to unpack the participants stories and narratives during a three-stage process of semi-structured interviews created a space for reflection and consideration of women’s position in society. Creating spaces for women to share their stories and reflect on their identity formation in relation to gender as a social construct could be a powerful process for enacting individual and societal change.

The position of CEO has been described by participants as lonely, isolating, demanding and high pressured. All participants acknowledged that having a formal/informal mentor and a supportive network was an essential component required to support them within their CEO role, this is an important recommendation within workplaces.

Finally, relationships between the State and Section 39 organisations are experienced by all participants as negative and strained. Even though Section 39 organisations have their own legal identity and therefore should be rendered autonomous, their financial dependence on the State jeopardises this position. Control and command State agendas, under funding, an ongoing staffing crisis, and lack of trust has created a significant negative shift in collaborative interactions.

The implementation of solidarity amongst other organisations operating under the same regime could provide important opportunities to improve the current relationship dynamic between both sectors. Negotiation may facilitate more meaningful engagement and support a more positive discourse that goes beyond the neoliberal regime of managerialism and marketisation.

8.6. Recommendations for Further Research

While considering the literature from the scoping review, analysing the data collected and developing themes, recommendations for future research was identified. This included, expanding this study by including the voice of:

Women CEO's who worked in Section 39 intellectual disability organisations and have retired or left this position within the last five years. These women could provide valuable perspectives on their lived experiences. Insights into their rationale for leaving could be useful in identifying a greater number of support measures that could be put in pace to sustain women in such roles.

Male CEO's working in this sector may also offer new insights into their lived experience of identity formation, and how the constructs of gender and leadership impact on their role as CEO. Also, to explore if the challenges that women CEOs identified as being unique to Section 39 organisations is similarly experienced by men.

Intersectionality remains under theorised in the community and voluntary sector and is a topic worthy of further exploration (Alcaraz-Minnick, 2020; Eaves-Boykin, 2021; Gentry et al., 2010; Kalaitzi et al., 2019; Ming & Minghui, 2018; Saliba, 2016). Women CEO's who experience intersectionality in relation to gender and sexual orientation, race, or cultural and ethnical background (as well as all other relevant social constructs) could provide important new perspectives and insights into identity formation, and their experiences at senior executive level.

Finally, the reconstruction of leadership as a more egalitarian construct is worthy of further study. Asking important questions such as can a social constructionist perspective on leadership help to eradicate the silence and 'invisibility of women? What does an alternative homogenous leadership construct look like? In reconstructing leadership how does one avoid the pitfalls of creating just an alternative hegemonic construct that perpetuates other forms of inequality? What pervasive ideology will support this reconstruction? What discourse, discursive practices, power dynamics and symbols will support this reconstruction?

8.7. Concluding Reflections

Throughout the research process, it has been impossible to ignore the paradox that exists within the social constructs of female gender and leadership. This paradox is evidenced by the underrepresentation of women at senior executive level, women been held to higher standards of performance and appointed less status and power than their male counterparts in comparative roles. It is important to acknowledge that this is not an issue specific to Ireland, but an international one (Aguilera-Caracuel et al., 2015; Ahmadi et al., 2018; Al-Alawi, 2016; Barelka & Downes, 2019).

This research is not simply about gender and leadership but about the lived experience of women who all grew up in Ireland in either the 1960s or 1970s where patriarchal ideology was pervasive and religious institutions helped to enforce its doctrine. A time in which women remember being dominated, constrained, and frustrated within a socio culture whose purpose was to demote them to a life of servitude within the home. Overtime and with the introduction of new gender equality policies and legislation more women began to enter the labour market.

While this has incrementally improved opportunities for women, they still remain underrepresented at senior executive level. This study highlighted through a social constructionist lens the effects of patriarchal ideology on women CEOs. The social construction of gender is complex because it has been instituted and reinforced not only at political and institutional and broader societal levels but also within the family home. It is enacted in everyday life through language and discourse such as 'good/bad mother' 'caring/uncaring daughter' 'great/bad wife' and/or 'good/bad girl'. These metaphors garnish either societal praise or negativity and are aligned to a perceived social gender status.

If we create narratives to align to the reality of the situation we are in, them women will never cease agency beyond their bounded gender, and we will remain stuck in an unequitable status quo. There still remains few women holding influential seats of power within our society. This is worrying as the future of society is hard to predict.

Human crises such as pandemics, wars, famines, and extreme weather events can help to reshape history. If the wrong people take power, there is a possibility that a more powerful patriarchy ideology could regenerate and the progress that has been made regresses. Patriarchal beliefs are still prevalent although more subtly couched in neoliberal discourse of rationality, individualism, and self-interest. For these reasons, women cannot afford to ignore or remain complicit in the continuation of a gendering process that hierarchically places women below men.

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Appendix 1: Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) Checklist

SECTION	ITEM	PRISMA-ScR CHECKLIST ITEM	REPORTED ON PAGE #
TITLE			
Title	1	Identify the report as a scoping review.	1
ABSTRACT			
Structured summary	2	Provide a structured summary that includes (as applicable): background, objectives, eligibility criteria, sources of evidence, charting methods, results, and conclusions that relate to the review questions and objectives.	1
INTRODUCTION			
Rationale	3	Describe the rationale for the review in the context of what is already known. Explain why the review questions/objectives lend themselves to a scoping review approach.	2 - 4
Objectives	4	Provide an explicit statement of the questions and objectives being addressed with reference to their key elements (e.g., population or participants, concepts, and context) or other relevant key elements used to conceptualize the review questions and/or objectives.	4 & 8
METHODS			
Protocol and registration	5	Indicate whether a review protocol exists; state if and where it can be accessed (e.g., a Web address); and if available, provide registration information, including the registration number.	5
Eligibility criteria	6	Specify characteristics of the sources of evidence used as eligibility criteria (e.g., years considered, language, and publication status), and provide a rationale.	10
Information sources*	7	Describe all information sources in the search (e.g., databases with dates of coverage and contact with authors to identify additional sources), as well as the date the most recent search was executed.	8
Search	8	Present the full electronic search strategy for at least 1 database, including any limits used, such that it could be repeated.	10
Selection of sources of evidence†	9	State the process for selecting sources of evidence (i.e., screening and eligibility) included in the scoping review.	11
Data charting process‡	10	Describe the methods of charting data from the included sources of evidence (e.g., calibrated forms or forms that have been tested by the team before their use, and whether data charting was done independently or in duplicate) and any processes for obtaining and confirming data from investigators.	12

SECTION	ITEM	PRISMA-ScR CHECKLIST ITEM	REPORTED ON PAGE #
TITLE			
Data items	11	List and define all variables for which data were sought and any assumptions and simplifications made.	12-13
Critical appraisal of individual sources of evidence§	12	If done, provide a rationale for conducting a critical appraisal of included sources of evidence; describe the methods used and how this information was used in any data synthesis (if appropriate).	N/A
Synthesis of results	13	Describe the methods of handling and summarizing the data that were charted.	18-32
RESULTS			
Selection of sources of evidence	14	Give numbers of sources of evidence screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the review, with reasons for exclusions at each stage, ideally using a flow diagram.	14
Characteristics of sources of evidence	15	For each source of evidence, present characteristics for which data were charted and provide the citations.	15-18
Critical appraisal within sources of evidence	16	If done, present data on critical appraisal of included sources of evidence (see item 12).	15-18
Results of individual sources of evidence	17	For each included source of evidence, present the relevant data that were charted that relate to the review questions and objectives.	15-18
Synthesis of results	18	Summarize and/or present the charting results as they relate to the review questions and objectives.	18-32
DISCUSSION			
Summary of evidence	19	Summarize the main results (including an overview of concepts, themes, and types of evidence available), link to the review questions and objectives, and consider the relevance to key groups.	32
Limitations	20	Discuss the limitations of the scoping review process.	33
Conclusions	21	Provide a general interpretation of the results with respect to the review questions and objectives, as well as potential implications and/or next steps.	35
FUNDING			
Funding	22	Describe sources of funding for the included sources of evidence, as well as sources of funding for the scoping review. Describe the role of the funders of the scoping review.	N/A

JBI = Joanna Briggs Institute; PRISMA-ScR = Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews.

* Where *sources of evidence* (see second footnote) are compiled from, such as bibliographic databases, social media platforms, and Web sites.

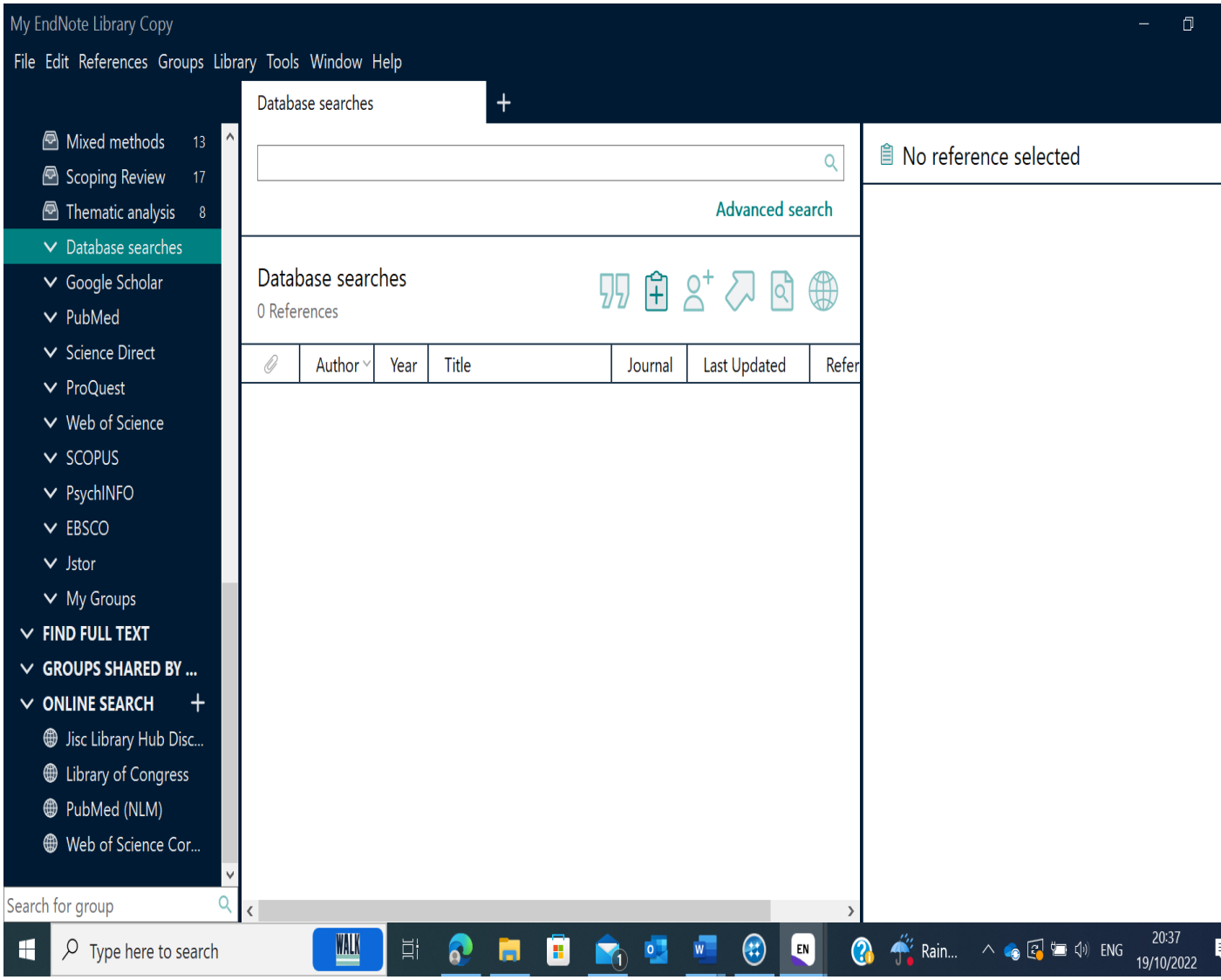
† A more inclusive/heterogeneous term used to account for the different types of evidence or data sources (e.g., quantitative and/or qualitative research, expert opinion, and policy documents) that may be eligible in a scoping review as opposed to only studies. This is not to be confused with *information sources* (see first footnote).

‡ The frameworks by Arksey and O'Malley (6) and Levac and colleagues (7) and the JBI guidance (4, 5) refer to the process of data extraction in a scoping review as data charting.

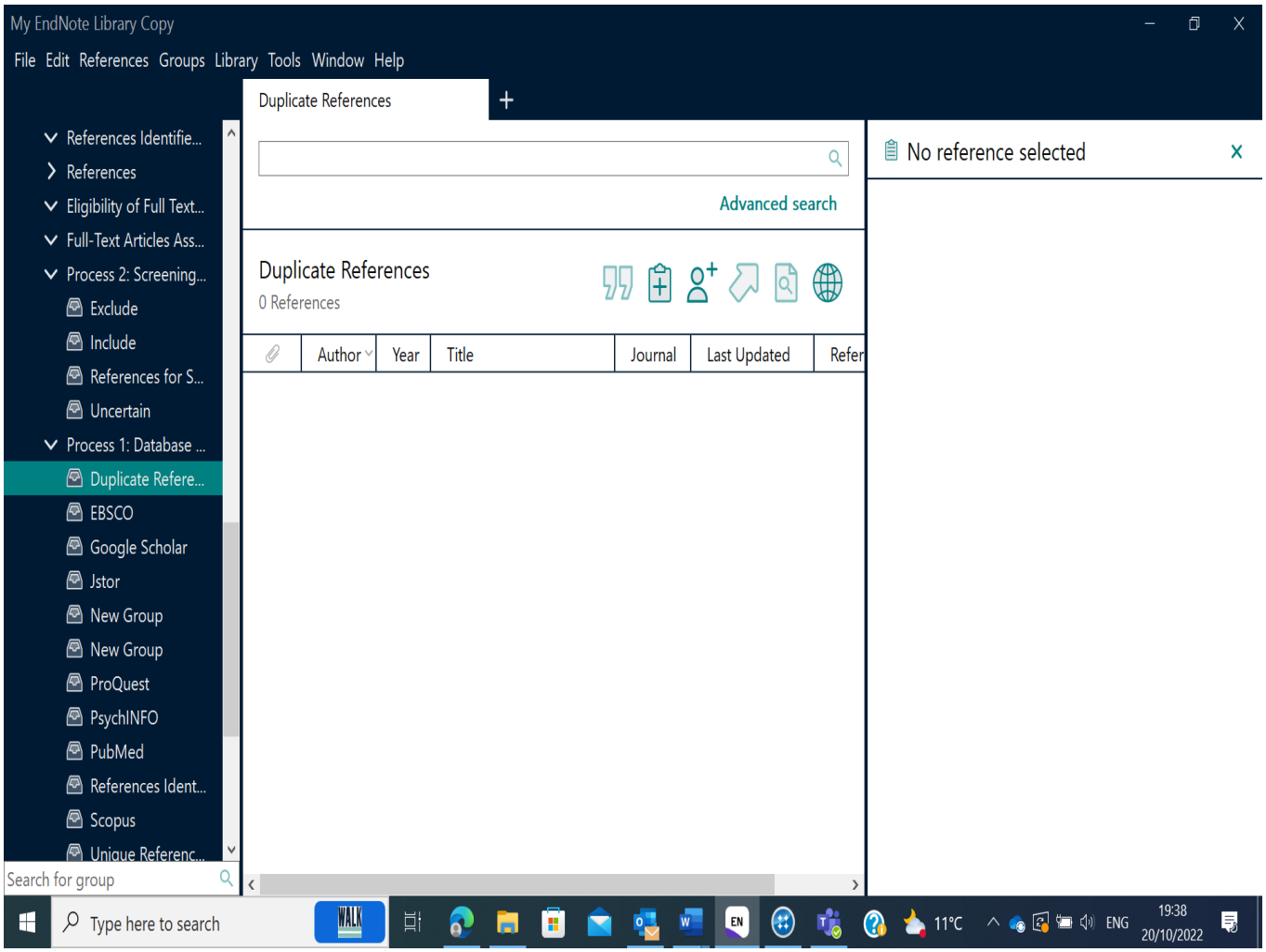
§ The process of systematically examining research evidence to assess its validity, results, and relevance before using it to inform a decision. This term is used for items 12 and 19 instead of "risk of bias" (which is more applicable to systematic reviews of interventions) to include and acknowledge the various sources of evidence that may be used in a scoping review (e.g., quantitative and/or qualitative research, expert opinion, and policy document).

From: Tricco AC, Lillie E, Zarin W, O'Brien KK, Colquhoun H, Levac D, et al. PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMAScR): Checklist and Explanation. Ann Intern Med. 2018;169:467–473. doi: 10.7326/M18-0850.

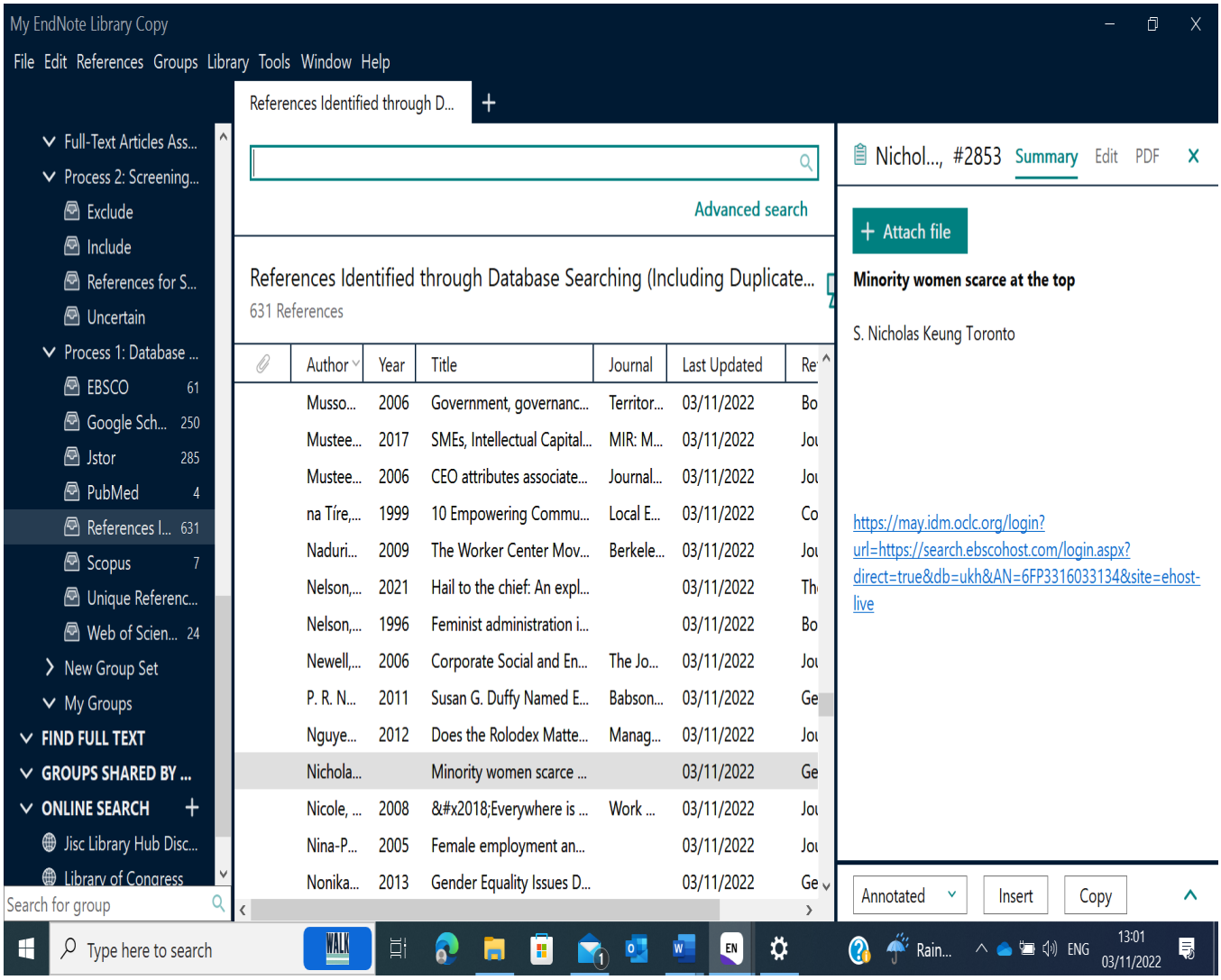
Appendix 2: Endnote Group Sets



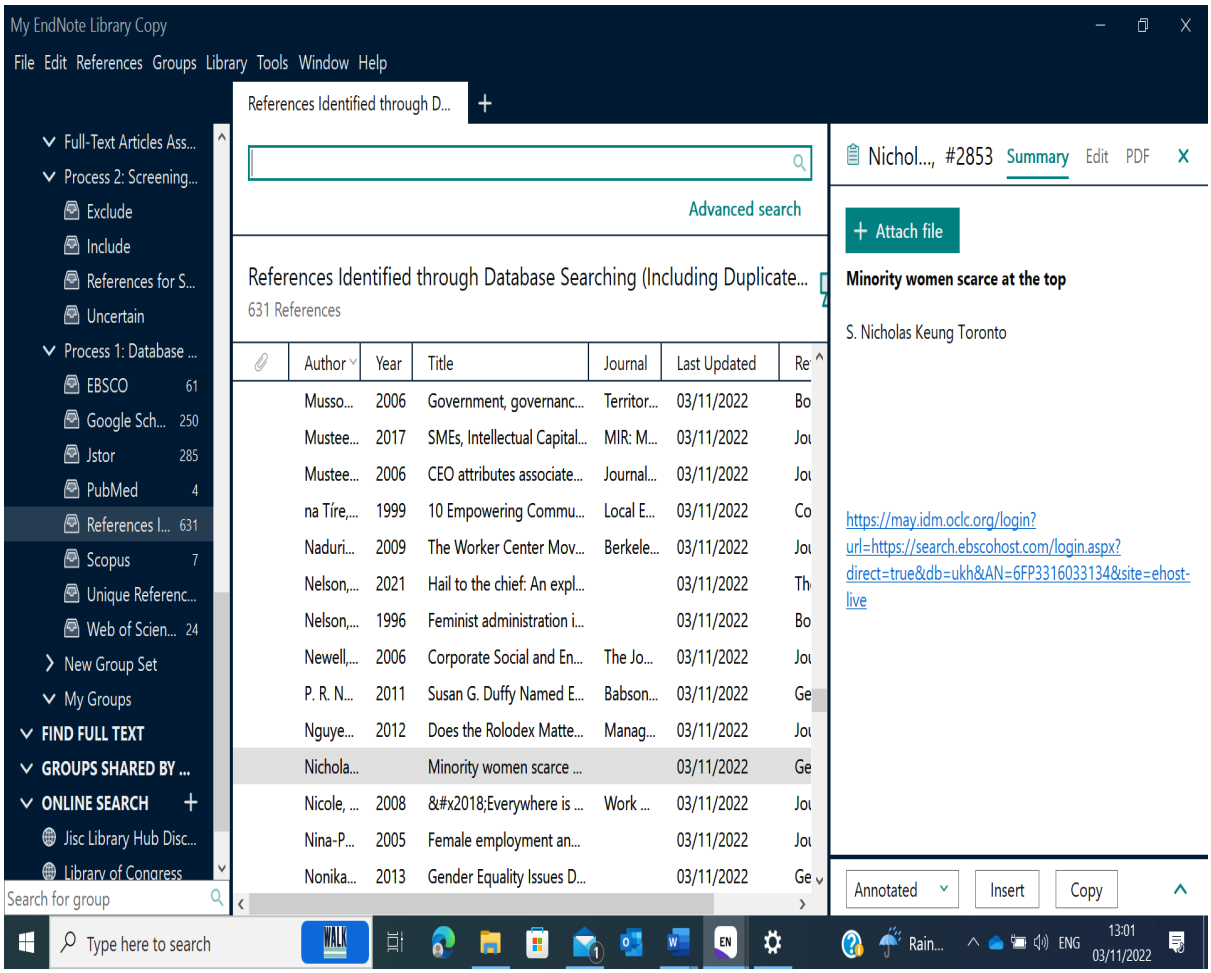
Appendix 3: Duplicate Reference Group



Appendix 4: All references downloaded into appropriate database search folders in Endnote



Appendix 5: Process 2 screening references



Appendix 6: A full description of all included articles that were reviewed

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Al-Alawi, A. I.	Status of Bahraini women in the banking and financial sector: Challenges and opportunities	2016	Bahrain	Journal	Mixed Methods	Banking and Financial Sector	Gender discrimination Limited opportunities to reach management positions. A 'glass ceiling' exists and there are barriers to promotions of women in this sector. It is not what you know but who you know. Women strive to balance work, personal achievements, and their social norms and duties	More persuasive and assertive despite their flexibility and less aggressive approach. Stronger interpersonal skills compared to their male peers.	Not Cited	Not Cited	One of the most interesting studies concluded that maternity leave is one of the major causes of lower salaries of women compared to men, and hence lower career advancements
Alcaraz-Minnick, Katya	The Non-profit Gender Leadership Gap: Data-Driven Systemic and Inclusive Solutions	2020	America	Thesis	Quantitative	Non-Profits	Gender stereotypes, lack of mentorship and network support programs, and inflexible work schedules. Inequitable performance evaluations, and the normalisation of men's authority and historical contributions.	Mission critical positions. Empathy, communication skills and understanding.	Not cited	Democratic, people-oriented, and collaborative Transformational	Women leaders were increasingly devalued when they took on the stereotypically masculine leadership traits.

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Barelka, Alex & Downes, Meredith	A career-stage approach to understanding glass ceiling perceptions	2019	America	Journal	Qualitative	Family Businesses	Obstacles can broadly be divided into individual, societal and organization-related barriersInvisible Barriers "a barrier so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong that it prevents women and minorities from moving up in the management hierarchy" (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990;)	women have more empathy, supportiveness, and relationship-building qualities than their male counterparts, are more concerned with an organization's duty to its employees (Ludlum et al., 2016), and thus display more of the qualities associated with transformational leadership (Chin-Chun et al., 2011).	Riger & Galligan (1980) suggested that women's traits and behaviours are inappropriate for managerial roles.In a study on women's career development, Bombuwela et al. (2013) found individual factors such as a lack of self-confidence and emotionally driven behaviour to be most influential as barriers to advancement. Women themselves have indicated that several self-imposed barriers (Boone et al., 2013) are the most inhibitive to moving up in the corporate hierarchy, with "lack of skills and education" being the most salient obstacle.	Transformational Leadership	The subtle barriers that have become invisible to women

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Brignoli, Tammy Lynn	Women leaders: The exploration of contributing factors advancing women to executive leadership positions	2020	America	Thesis	Qualitative	Department of Defence	Invisible barriers. Gender bias. Male dominated cultures and gender-biased roles in the workplace, along with an absence of women role models or mentors, leaves women underrepresented in leadership roles. Internal Barriers: Perceptions, feelings, and thoughts within women keep them from aspiring to higher levels of leadership	Nurturing and caring. Serves selflessly more collaborative	Behaviour at odds with stereotype	Servant leadership	Internal Barriers: Perceptions, feelings, and thoughts within women keep them from aspiring to higher levels of leadership

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Buckingham, Heather Paine, Angela Ellis Alcock, Pete Kendall Jeremy Macmillan, Rob	Who's speaking for whom? Exploring issues of third sector leadership, leverage, and legitimacy	2014	America	Journal	Qualitative	Third Sector	As not many within the sector have access to or influence over the important national policy debates and practice issues concerning 'the sector', There is little research on leadership across the third sector (Macmillan and McLaren 2012), yet it is neither a new phenomenon, nor a new problem (see for example: Lewis, 1995; Finlayson, 1994). It is arguably, however, an increasingly contentious issue.	Values, Independence: Being able to speak out on important issues, Connections: bringing people in, maintaining, and developing relationships, working collaboratively, and communicating well with a range of stakeholders. Representation: Being genuinely representative, through being able to 'embody the spirit of what you're representing' and not just speaking on behalf of others, but also enabling them to speak for themselves. Accountability: being open, honest, transparent, and accountable. Insight and experience: having a good understanding of the internal and external environment, being able to 'see the bigger picture'.	Self-serving	values based leadership	There is little research on leadership across the third sector (Macmillan and McLaren 2012), yet it is neither a new phenomenon, nor a new problem (see for example: Lewis, 1995; Finlayson, 1994). It is arguably, however, an increasingly contentious issue.

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Carli, Linda L. Eagly, Alice H.	Women face a labyrinth: an examination of metaphors for women leaders	2016	America	Journal	Literature Review	N/A	Gender stereotypes that depict women as unsuited to leadership, discrimination in pay and promotion, lack of access to powerful mentors and networks and greater responsibility for childcare and other domestic responsibilities.	Stereotypically feminine characteristics and interpersonal skills along with traditionally masculine characteristics and directive skills (Koenig et al., 2011).	Being a woman	Transformational leadership	Although the glass ceiling metaphor implies that women face obstacles once they have risen to very high levels of leadership and the sticky floor metaphor implies that women are prevented from any advancement beyond entry level, the labyrinth reflects the myriad obstacles that women face throughout their careers

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Cleveng er, Leslie & Singh, Neha	Exploring barriers that lead to the glass ceiling effect for women in the US hospitality industry	2013	America	Journal	Qualitative	Hospitality	Stereo typing Internal Business Structural Barriers (2) Societal Barriers (3) Governmental Barriers	Being a man	Being a woman	Not Cited	Women have higher levels of education then men

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Cook, Alison & Glass, Christy	ABOVE THE GLASS CEILING: WHEN ARE WOMEN AND RACIAL/ETHNIC MINORITIES PROMOTED TO CEO?	2014	America	Journal	Quantitative	Fortune 500 Companies	Experience of token or solo status will reduce job success and satisfaction, resulting in higher turnover and shorter tenures for occupational minorities.	Women have more empathy, supportiveness, and relationship-building qualities than their male counterparts, are more concerned with an organization's duty to its employees and thus display more of the qualities associated with transformational leadership.	Not cited	None Cited	Consistent with the glass cliff, we find that women are more likely than white men to be promoted CEO in firms experiencing short-, medium-, or long-term declines. We also find that negative firm performance in the short, medium, or longer term leads to the replacement of occupational minority CEOs with white men, a process we term the saviour effect.

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
D'Souza, Fahmida Zaman	Become the CEO your mom wanted you to marry: Women who shatter the glass (the social and cultural construction of gender stereotypes among a sample of women in business)	2007	America	Book	Mixed Methods	MBA Graduates Workplaces	Gender Stereotypes lack of female role models; incompatibility of careers in business with their personal goals (43%); lack of confidence in math (45%); and a lack of encouragement by employers (42%). Experienced environment to be overly aggressive and competitive.	Women are characterized as kind, helpful, sympathetic, and concerned about others.	Women take care; not charge	Not Cited	Women operate from a framework of caring rather than one of justice in terms of morale orientation

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Eaves-Boykin, Kelley Nichole	Navigating the double-bind dilemma: Understanding the leadership behaviour of women executives and the impact on organizational culture and effectiveness	2021	America	Thesis	Qualitative	For Profit Colleges	Negative gender stereotypes caused by the double-bind to impact organisational culture and effectiveness.	Women are more prepared, through education and mentorship, to assume leadership roles	Demonstrating emotions and being too passive in the workplace	Transformational Leadership, Servant Leadership, and authentic leadership	The results support implementing policies and practices that create effective organisations with strong organisational cultures that focus on workplace gender equality, mentoring, coaching, and recognition

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Erakovic, Ljiljana	Governance and leadership challenges for third sector organisations: Core purpose vs. end purpose	2015	New Zealand	Journal	Qualitative	Third Sector	Non-profit barriers to success are a lack of congruence between leadership, values, and mission	Developing good relationships and working together and having a shared vision	Not harnessing the talents of people with a good skill mix	Congruence leadership	In trying to understand the major challenges in NPOs face, analysis generated evidence related to four prevailing themes: Environmental drivers, Acting in public interest, Organisational capacity, and Board's role.

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Fernandez-Mateo, Isabel	Bending the Pipeline? Executive Search and Gender Inequality in Hiring for Top Management Jobs	2016	America	Journal	Mixed Methods	Executive Search Hiring Firms	Gender-biasing biased self-assessments of one's own ability. Lack of women COE's reflects, at least in part, the limited pipeline of experienced female candidates. organisational demand-side barriers.	Not cited	Not cited	Not Cited	Preference of men leaders include theories of gendered organizations, queuing theory, status expectations theory, role congruity theory, double-standards theory. Although they emphasize different reasons, all theories posit that employers have definite preferences for men.
Gentry, William A Booysen, Lize Hannum, Kelly M Weber, Todd J	Leadership responses to a conflict of gender-based tension: A comparison of responses between men and women in the US and South Africa	2010	America	Journal	Quantitative	Not-for-profits	Stereo typing and performing to the stereo type	Inclusive and collaborative, encourage participation and interaction with others for decisions, strategy, or goal setting. Good social measures or interpersonal aspects of leadership.	Not cited	Democratic based leadership	Conclusion, a person's prototype of what a leader should do influences how he or she acts.

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Harding, Steve John	Values alignment in voluntary and community sector organizations	2015	England	Book	Qualitative	Community & Voluntary Organisations	Barriers faced by CVS Shift in central government's approach to procurement and delivery of services will impact how the sector responds to many challenges if not examined and reviewed.	Competencies of CVS leaders to inspire, common purpose, sense of community and person centered values	Not Cited	Values based leadership	Values alignment is a central component of CVS

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
HARRIS, BRYNN	WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP: A QUALITATIVE REVIEW OF CHALLENGES, EXPERIENCES, AND STRATEGIES IN ADDRESSING GENDER BIAS	2019	America	Journal	Qualitative	Across multiple industries	Structural and implicit biases of co-workers, superiors, and company leaders. Barriers can be categorised as interpersonal, internalised, and structural. Women face challenges socially, internally, and in work environments. Stereotyping despite having the skills for a role. Leading to stereotype threat, where women are perceived (and often perceive themselves) as less capable of taking on leadership roles, so, do not seek out those roles or do not succeed when they do.	Women's strength and perseverance add just as much value as their more typically cited female qualities, such as emotional intelligence, empathy, and intuition. Research supports the notion that companies perform better when they include women in leadership positions, possibly because of skills such as empathy, emotional intelligence, intuition, perseverance, and ability to multi-task	Not cited	Not cited	Strategies include using adaptable approaches to leadership, building informal networks necessary for advancement (e.g., mentors and sponsors), and increasing individual self-efficacy. An effective approach was partnering women with coaches and mentors who could provide specific career advice and help them learn and implement strategies to advance their careers.

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Kalaitzi, Stavroula	Women, healthcare leadership and societal culture: a qualitative study	2019	Netherlands	Journal	Qualitative	Healthcare	Lack of social support, culture, equal career advancement, mentoring, networking, leadership skills, flexible work environment, opportunities, isolation, lack of confidence, role models constructed, gendered norms and expectations dictated prioritisation of household and child-rearing tasks over a career.	Not cited	Not cited	Not Cited	Findings: underlying interactions among gender, leadership, and countries' sociocultural contexts, which may elucidate the varying degrees of strength of norms and barriers embedded in a society's egalitarian practices. Cultural tightness has been found to be experienced by societal dividends as a barrier against sociocultural transformation.
Katuna, Barret Mary	Breaking the glass ceiling? Gender and leadership in higher education	2014	America	Thesis	Qualitative	Education	Sexual harassment Stereotyping	Emotional leading and empathy. Rewarding exceptional performance, being supportive and encouraging	Leaders that do not understand the culture and organisational values	Transformational Leadership	Building networks through non-gender specific academic leadership trainings overcomes an "old boys' network" and encourages a degendering of the profession.

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Lahti, Elsi	Women and leadership: factors that influence women's career success: female leaders' reflections on their career development and leadership	2013	Finland	Thesis	Qualitative	Across multiple industries	Societal, organisational, and personal barriers	Social skills and social interaction, conversational style of communication, acceptance of differences, being multi-skilled and working well in groups. A clearer vision of the bigger picture	Not cited	Female Leadership	Most women answered that the most important factor advancing their career is their own determination. The lack of sufficient networks and supporters is what makes women depend on themselves. The second most significant factor was the support of their managers. Other career advancements were the division of work at home, a supporting spouse, education, the right networks and connections and women's own attitudes.

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Lee, Young-Joo	Scarce as Hen's Teeth: Women CEOs in Large Non-profit Organizations	2019	America	Journal	Quantitative	Large Non-profit Organisations	Gender Bias	Women's higher relational intelligence and holistic thinking	Not cited	Not cited	Despite the perception that women face better prospects for advancement in the non-profit sector than in for-profits, studies report that men hold a disproportionate share of top management positions. 2010 survey by University of Denver, women made up 45% of non-profit CEO positions overall, but this dropped to 21% among organisations with budgets of $25 million or more.

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Leslie, Lisa M Manchester, Colleen Flaherty Dahm, Patricia C	Why and when does the gender gap reverse? Diversity goals and the pay premium for high potential women	2017	America	Journal	Quantitative	Fortune 500 Companies	Women earn lower pay and are less likely to be hired and promoted into high-level positions than men. stereotypes that women lack the qualities needed to succeed, and women's limited access to powerful sponsors. female penalty, in spite of equivalent skills, behaviours, and experiences. less access to challenging assignments, critical feedback, and powerful sponsors.	Not cited	Not cited	Not Cited	The prevalence of diversity goals, coupled with the scarcity of women in high-level positions, is likely to create greater demand for high potential women than for high-potential men, all else being equal, due to their ability to reach the upper echelons. As a result, high-potential women have more value than do high-potential men, which creates upward pressure on their pay.

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Macmillan, Rob &McLaren, Vic	Third sector leadership: the power of narrative	2012	England	Book	N/A	Third Sector	Third sector barriers Austerity, recession, increased demand for services against reduced resources, and in seeking to understand and negotiate a changing political and ideological climate. Shift towards a rather defensive emphasis on survival and 'resilience', along with an intensified focus on collaboration and merger, and attempts to demonstrate impact and value for money.	Political skills, being able to see the big picture and work collaboratively to give a single voice to the third sector.	Third sector leaders give interviews, make individual speeches, and write occasionally entertaining blogs, but there appears to be no sustained sector-wide conversation about the potential transformation underway	leadership beyond organisation and across broader collectivises in the third sector (leadership of the sector).	Significant transformation in its shape, its role and its relationship with the state, de-coupling of the closer relationship between the state and third sector. The accent remains on leadership as configured within individual organisations rather than leadership between organisations or across the third sector. The latter would require a style of leadership which demands highly sophisticated political skills

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Ming, Xie	A Cross-Cultural Examination of Chinese and American Female Leadership in Non-profit Organizations	2018	China	Journal	Mixed Methods	Non-Profits	sex-role stereotypes, male managerial model, attitudes about women's competence. Fear of failure, fear of success, low self-esteem, and role conflict. Underlying prejudices, organisational buy-in, the current leadership model. Work/life balance, job placement, and networking.	Not cited	Not cited	Transformational, collaborative, and participatory	Organisational buy in Is critical for changing institution design
Nelson, Danette	Hail to the chief: An exploration of female chief executives' successes	2021	America	Thesis	Quantitative	For Profit Corporates	Lack of mentorship, gender and age bias, organisational and external barriers. Typecasting of women and women held to different and higher emotional regulation standards than men.	Technical skills and expertise, demonstrating strong leadership and social skills	Lack of motivation and knowledge influences and networks	None cited	The most common advice the study participants offered aspiring female chief executives was to take risks and persevere, along with developing expertise in their profession.

Osula, Bramwell Ng, Eddie CW	Toward a collaborative, transformative model of non-profit leadership: Some conceptual building blocks	2014	America	Journal	Qualitative	Non-Profits	Challenges of non-profits leadership responsibilities, one's speech, conduct, interactions with others, as well as the quality of Personal life can impact the perception of employees. Having all aspects of the organisation clear about the same values and sharing the same assumptions.	Values based, community oriented, productive, good communicator	Misconduct and highly questionable behaviour in both faith-based and secular environments	Values based leadership	Great leaders understand that it is their duty to shape values and educate through vivid, living, personal example that ultimately directs the course of a firm

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Percup chick, Harry	Women in leadership: Understanding potential drivers/restrainers of female progression in the workplace	2011	America	Thesis	Qualitative	Education, government, services, and non-profit organizations	stereo typing, lack of opportunities, gender bias	Not cited	Presenting competencies that are perceived as male competencies such as being autocratic	Transformational and transactional leadership	Women have the same educational levels as their male counterparts in many instances excelled in obtaining graduate degrees. Experience seems to be the only area in which the female leader falls short.

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Pillay, Pamela	The perception of the glass ceiling phenomenon	2012	South Africa	Book	Mixed Methods	Government	The male perception of female manager. Stereotyping, patriarchal culture.	The ability to integrate people, listen to them, and motivate them through non-monetary incentives and cooperativeness.	Trying too hard to gain recognition and acceptance; lack of corporate political and power skills; poor communication; excessive task orientation; Previous experience of discrimination being used as an explanation for work-related problems.	Not Cited	The world of management is depriving itself of a pool of talented people who can make an important difference to an organisation's future.

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Saliba, Rosali	Women in the Boardroom: How Do Female Directors of Corporate Boards on Business Performance?	2016	Norway	Journal Article	Quantitative	Corporate Companies	less justice, lower cohesion, and higher levels of conflicts. Seen as tokens'' or ''symbols'' who are highly visible but stand alone as a minority within organisation. Therefore, perceived negatively, will be doubted, or not trusted. As a result, women may feel uncomfortable, isolated, and self-doubt.	Positively influence value creation in the organisation; Bring a ''broader, fresher, and different voice to the table	Not Cited	Not Cited	Many women seem to have the same educational backgrounds and professional training as their male colleagues, and hence they may be perceived as professionals in their careers, and not primarily as women.

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Schwanke, Dee-Ann	Barriers for women to positions of power: How societal and corporate structures, perceptions of leadership and discrimination restrict women's advancement to authority	2013	Canada	Journal	Literature Review	Corporate Companies	The Queen Bee Syndrome wanting to integrate herself with her network of associates but feeling pressured to do so by separating herself from her female colleagues at lower ranks. Discrimination in the workplace, Internalisation of incidents. High standards of meritocracy. The societal expectation of female leaders.	Women were more likely than men to ask for a variety of skill-building experiences, to proactively seek training opportunities, and to make achievements visible, including asking for feedback and promotions.	Women can perpetuate barriers.	Non cited	Although prejudices and discrimination toward women in the workforce have diminished, they still exist strongly for women in senior positions. The perception that women do not advance because they shrink from opportunity, a choice termed the "ambition gap," is a myth. The phenomenon of "glass cliffs" is another threat to women entering positions of power

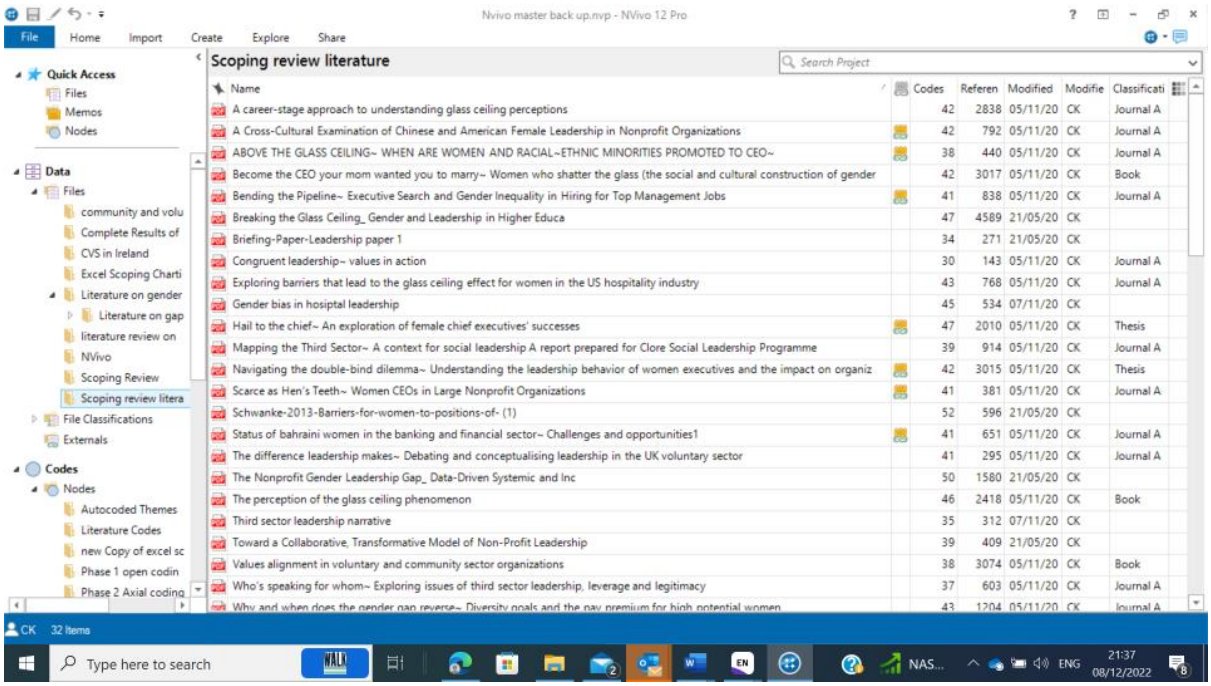
Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Soklaridis, Sophie	Gender bias in hospital leadership: a qualitative study on the experiences of women CEOs	2017	Canada	Journal	Qualitative	Hospitals	Meritocracy. gender bias perspective, Inequality. Gender stereotypes. Two forms of prejudice: descriptive prejudice refers to what women are like, and prescriptive prejudice refers to how women should behave. Both identify behavioural qualities attributed to women that diverge from the qualities expected of leaders.	Not cited	Not Cited	Not cited	Women are favoured for positions that lead in crisis, creating a scenario in which burnout or failure is a potential risk. Women who push through the glass ceiling are seen as desirable candidates to take over in crisis situations. Because of limited support network, women often find these roles highly stressful, so they often leave their positions.

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Stanley, David	Congruent leadership: values in action	2008	Australia	Literature Review	N/A	Hospital Setting	Clinical leadership is rarely the subject of research because of its low status when compared with the academic, political and management domains. For this reason, the uniqueness of clinical leadership has remained largely unrecognized and under-valued.	Approachable and open. Seen to be displaying their values and beliefs, they lived out what they believed to be important to them. They know where they stand and hold fast to their guiding principles. Effective communicators Positive clinical role models Empowered / Decision makers Visible	Novice clinicians, poor decision-makers, and those who were less visible in the clinical environment.	Congruent leadership	Theories are vital if common understanding is to prevail. They act like foundations on which understanding, explanation and implementation are built.

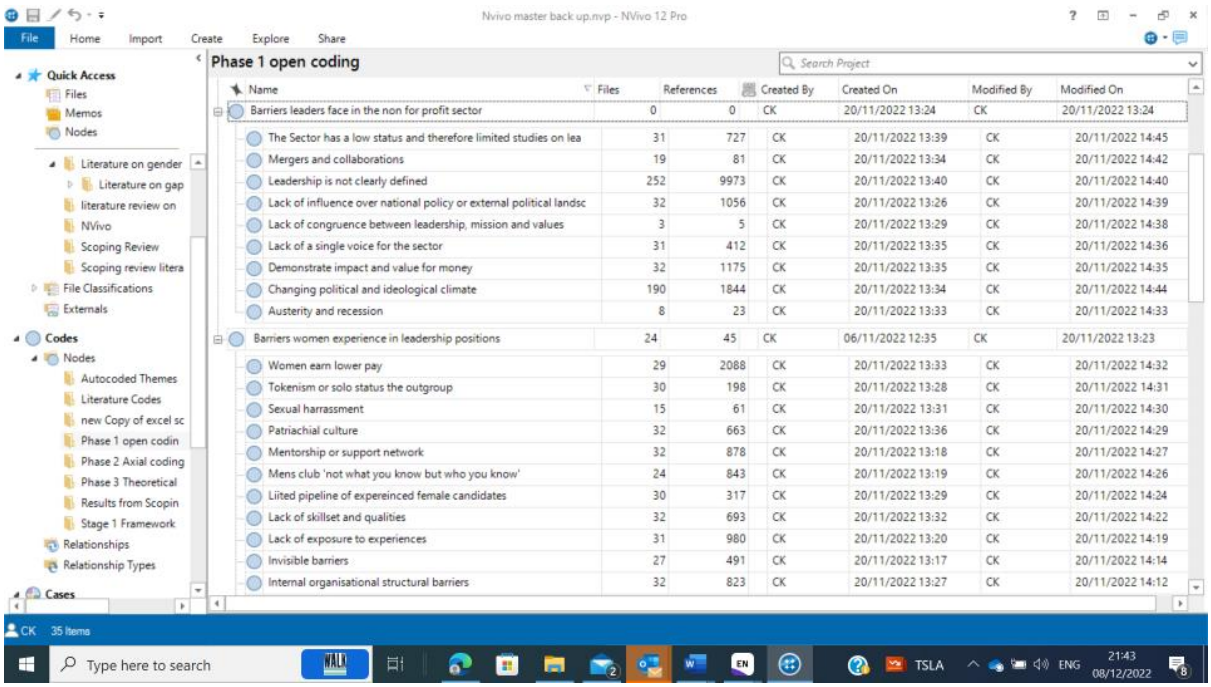
Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Terry, Vita Rees, James & Jacklin-Jarvis, Carol	Briefing Paper academic debate on leadership in the voluntary sector	2006	Ireland	Journal	Qualitative	Voluntary Sector Youth and Community Work	Leadership is not clearly defined, and the voice of the sector is lost	'Charismatic' and 'visionary' qualities, Strong personal skills to actively engage with and motivate groups. 'Authentic', 'transparent', and 'genuine'. Having wide-ranging and multifaceted core skills and traits to navigate the turbulent operating environment. The ability to successfully manage the passion and values of their workforce.	Not having core values of the CVS	Conceptualisations of leadership as collective rather than as individual, as distributed across different levels within an organisation, and as being highly relational in nature	Direction that represents departure from Leadership as a lone individual with a hierarchical position, the 'heroic leader' perspective.

Author	Title	Year	Country	Type of Article	Study Design	Type of Setting	Barriers/ Challenges	Competencies	Ineffective Competencies	Models of Leadership	Findings of Interest
Terry, Vita	The difference leadership makes. Debating and conceptualising leadership in the UK voluntary sector	2020	United Kingdom	Journal	Literatur e Review	Voluntary Sector	Leadership, and leaders, in the voluntary sector are under scrutiny perhaps more than ever before, but this does not appear to be matched by a clear evidence base nor a consensus as to what constitutes 'good' leadership.	Charismatic' and 'visionary' qualities, and strong personal skills to actively engage with and motivate groups of individuals. Integrative and speculative thinking, drive and persistence, a strong value-base, focus; and networking	Not cited	Collective leadership	The way forward is to reject theories and models that traditionally place the focus on individuals and on hierarchical models of leadership. Instead, there is emerging evidence that collective, shared, or dispersed leadership is the way forward.

Appendix 7: Evidence of literature reviewed exported from endnote to NVivo.



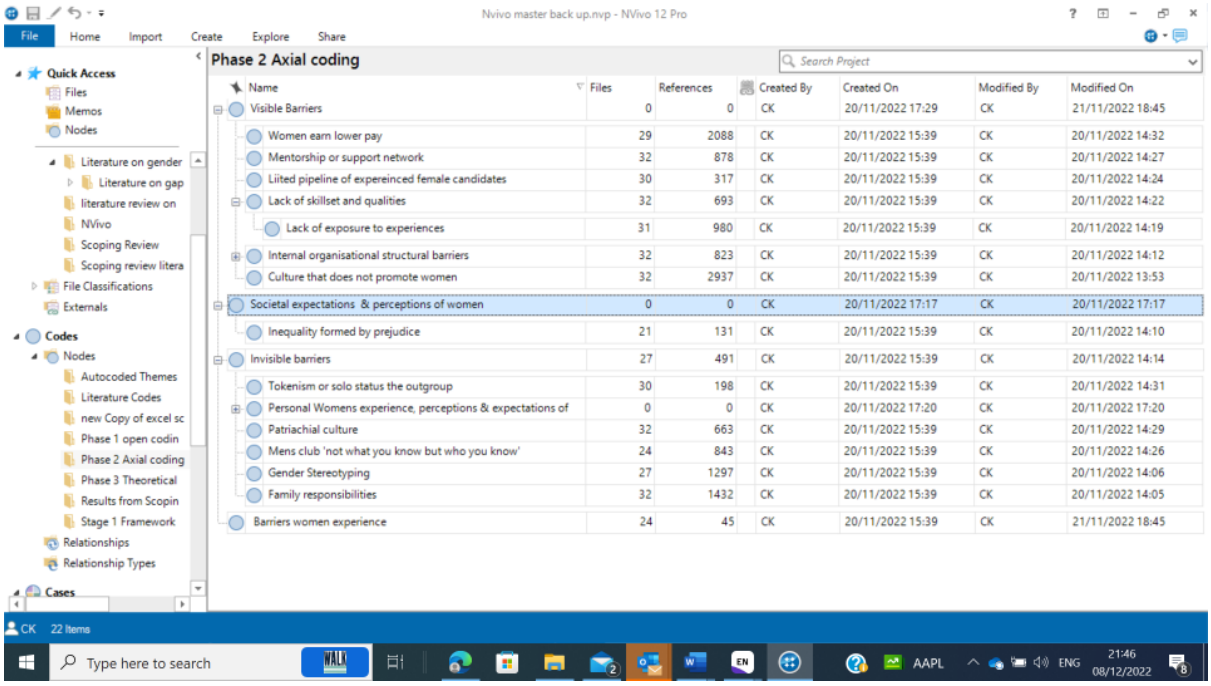
Appendix 8 Phase one of the coding and analytical process



Phase 1 open coding

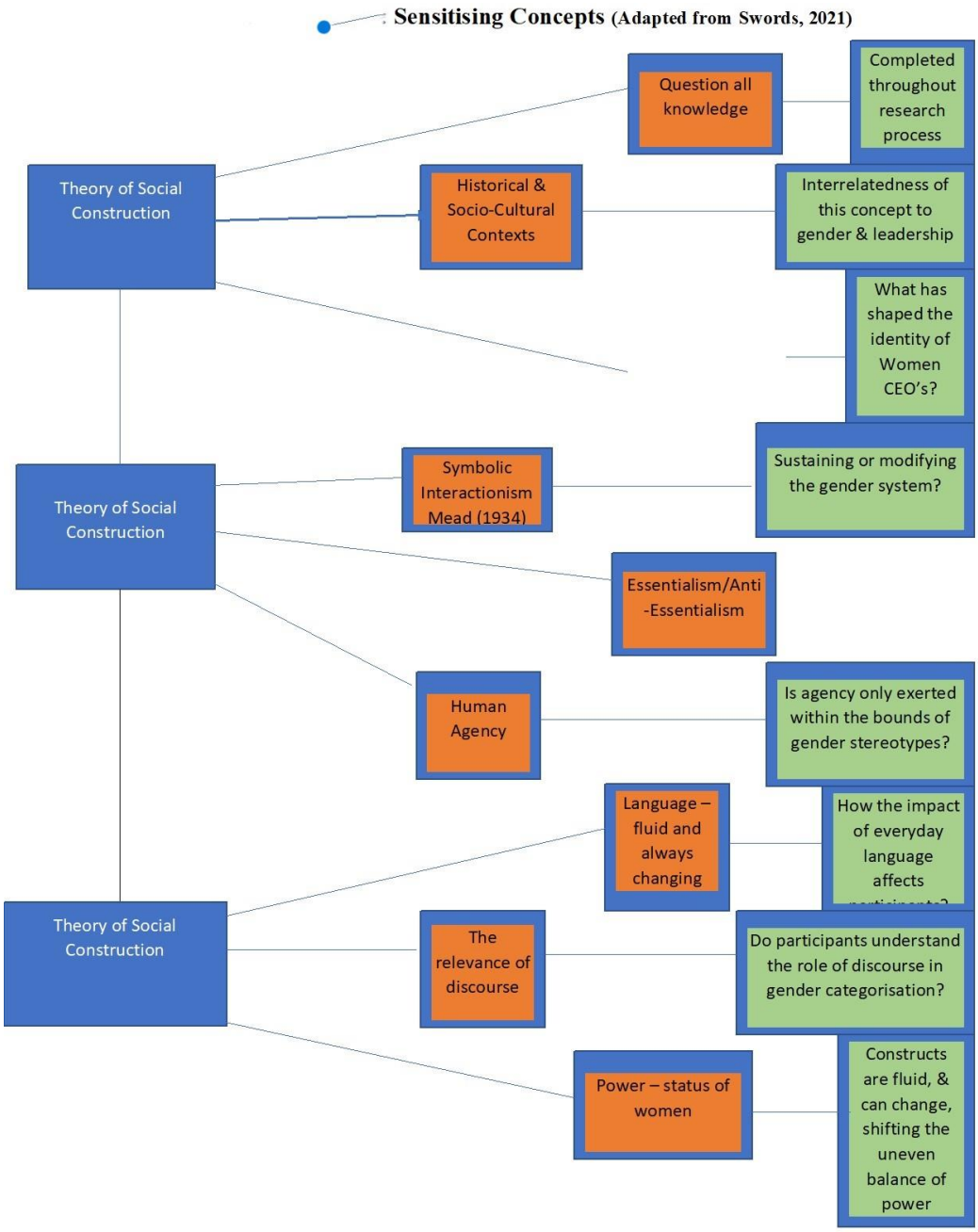
Name	Files	References	Created By	Created On	Modified By	Modified On
Barriers leaders face in the non for profit sector	0	0	CK	20/11/2022 13:24	CK	20/11/2022 13:24
The Sector has a low status and therefore limited studies on lea	31	727	CK	20/11/2022 13:39	CK	20/11/2022 14:45
Mergers and collaborations	19	81	CK	20/11/2022 13:34	CK	20/11/2022 14:42
Leadership is not clearly defined	252	9973	CK	20/11/2022 13:40	CK	20/11/2022 14:40
Lack of influence over national policy or external political landsc	32	1056	CK	20/11/2022 13:26	CK	20/11/2022 14:39
Lack of congruence between leadership, mission and values	3	5	CK	20/11/2022 13:29	CK	20/11/2022 14:38
Lack of a single voice for the sector	31	412	CK	20/11/2022 13:35	CK	20/11/2022 14:36
Demonstrate impact and value for money	32	1175	CK	20/11/2022 13:35	CK	20/11/2022 14:35
Changing political and ideological climate	190	1844	CK	20/11/2022 13:34	CK	20/11/2022 14:44
Austerity and recession	8	23	CK	20/11/2022 13:33	CK	20/11/2022 14:33
Barriers women experience in leadership positions	24	45	CK	06/11/2022 12:35	CK	20/11/2022 13:23
Women earn lower pay	29	2088	CK	20/11/2022 13:33	CK	20/11/2022 14:32
Tokenism or solo status the outgroup	30	198	CK	20/11/2022 13:28	CK	20/11/2022 14:31
Sexual harrassment	15	61	CK	20/11/2022 13:31	CK	20/11/2022 14:30
Patriachial culture	32	663	CK	20/11/2022 13:36	CK	20/11/2022 14:29
Mentorship or support network	32	878	CK	20/11/2022 13:18	CK	20/11/2022 14:27
Mens club 'not what you know but who you know'	24	843	CK	20/11/2022 13:19	CK	20/11/2022 14:26
Liited pipeline of expereinced female candidates	30	317	CK	20/11/2022 13:29	CK	20/11/2022 14:24
Lack of skillset and qualities	32	693	CK	20/11/2022 13:32	CK	20/11/2022 14:22
Lack of exposure to experiences	31	980	CK	20/11/2022 13:20	CK	20/11/2022 14:19
Invisible barriers	27	491	CK	20/11/2022 13:17	CK	20/11/2022 14:14
Internal organisational structural barriers	32	823	CK	20/11/2022 13:27	CK	20/11/2022 14:12

Appendix 9: Phase two axial coding



Name	Files	References	Created By	Created On	Modified By	Modified On
Visible Barriers	0	0	CK	20/11/2022 17:29	CK	21/11/2022 18:45
Women earn lower pay	29	2088	CK	20/11/2022 15:39	CK	20/11/2022 14:32
Mentorship or support network	32	878	CK	20/11/2022 15:39	CK	20/11/2022 14:27
Liited pipeline of expereinced female candidates	30	317	CK	20/11/2022 15:39	CK	20/11/2022 14:24
Lack of skillset and qualities	32	693	CK	20/11/2022 15:39	CK	20/11/2022 14:22
Lack of exposure to experiences	31	980	CK	20/11/2022 15:39	CK	20/11/2022 14:19
Internal organisational structural barriers	32	823	CK	20/11/2022 15:39	CK	20/11/2022 14:12
Culture that does not promote women	32	2937	CK	20/11/2022 15:39	CK	20/11/2022 13:53
Societal expectations & perceptions of women	0	0	CK	20/11/2022 17:17	CK	20/11/2022 17:17
Inequality formed by prejudice	21	131	CK	20/11/2022 15:39	CK	20/11/2022 14:10
Invisible barriers	27	491	CK	20/11/2022 15:39	CK	20/11/2022 14:14
Tokenism or solo status the outgroup	30	198	CK	20/11/2022 15:39	CK	20/11/2022 14:31
Personal Womens experience, perceptions & expectations of	0	0	CK	20/11/2022 17:20	CK	20/11/2022 17:20
Patriachial culture	32	663	CK	20/11/2022 15:39	CK	20/11/2022 14:29
Mens club 'not what you know but who you know'	24	843	CK	20/11/2022 15:39	CK	20/11/2022 14:26
Gender Stereotyping	27	1297	CK	20/11/2022 15:39	CK	20/11/2022 14:06
Family responsibilities	32	1432	CK	20/11/2022 15:39	CK	20/11/2022 14:05
Barriers women experience	24	45	CK	20/11/2022 15:39	CK	21/11/2022 18:45

Appendix 10: Sensitising Concepts (Adapted from Swords, 2021)



Appendix 11: The Strategy Employed to Connect the Theoretical Framework and the Research (Adapted from Swords, 2021)

This table outlines each stage of the dissertation process. Starting with a social constructionist theoretical framework which is comprised of a number of sensitising concepts. These sensitising concepts are examined in each phase of the dissertation development. The rationale section of the table outlines their application within the process depicting how each phase was informed by the theoretical framework and the sensitising concepts.

Theoretical Framework	Sensitising Concepts	Rationale
Social Constructionism	**Question all Knowledge**	A critical element of social constructionism is understanding that what counts in society as a 'truism' is the outcome of contending accounts of reality. Reality from a social constructionist perspective is constructed through discourse and the interrelatedness between gender, leadership, and a countries' history and sociocultural contexts. Therefore, we must continually question all knowledge because reality as we perceive it is constructed through language and there are multiple perspectives of this reality. The explanation of reality which pervades at a given time, can therefore be both contentious, temporary and a collective phenomenon.
	Historical & Socio- Cultural Context	Social constructionism offers individuals a lens to understand how their experiences have been shaped through discourse, ideology, and historical and social contexts. Traditionally the defining group for conceptualising leadership and gender constructs have typically been white middle-class males with women excluded from the conversation.
	Human Identity	Identity is socially constructed on an individual and collective level but bounded within the parameters of societies regulated freedoms which has not boded well for women.

Theoretical Framework	Sensitising Concepts	Rationale
	Symbolic Interactionism	Symbolic interactionism recognises that the construction of reality through interactions that occur between people, help to shape, and influence individuals. The repetition of this practice has perpetuated the continued, everyday acceptance of gendered systems. This system of inequality requires that the majority of individuals continue to justify that men and women are sufficiently different in ways that approve men's greater power and privilege.
	Essentialism/anti-essentialism	Essentialism perpetuates gender stereotyping as it supports the belief that members of a category share deep-seated properties that determine their identity.
	Human Agency	Moderate social constructionism acknowledges the role of personal agency in conjunction with the social construction of personhood. Recognising that agency is exerted but only within the bounds of gender stereotypes.
	Language	Central to the social constructionist approach is that our view and understanding of the world and the objects, including people contained within this perception are not necessarily reflective of the nature of that world but instead a product of how the world is represented through language.

Theoretical Framework	Sensitising Concepts	Rationale
	Discourse	Meanings are articulated through discourses. Individuals' lives are mediated by discourses which construct concepts such as leadership and gender (femininity and masculinity) in particular ways. Systems of discourse summarise and produce knowledge about the world. These discursive systems are rarely simplistic but complex and nuanced. The gender categorisation in society of woman/man gives rise to competing discourses on issues such as, who holds the power to determine what is true and what is not true?
	Power	Gender expectations and the expression of power were cast within a predominant white male culture and evaluated within these cultural values. This supported the earlier dominance of men in leadership positions and was reinforced through a functionalist position on leadership. Social constructionism rejects a functionalist position and posits that constructs are understood as "fluid, and unstable, changing with the shifting power relations of time and place.

Research Design	Sensitising Concepts related to design	Rationale
Research Questions	**Question all Knowledge**	The development of the research questions was informed by the findings in the scoping review and the theoretical framework**.** The researcher initially began by creating discovery-oriented questions to facilitate the process of developing and refining questions that seek to uncover the perspectives of the individual participants (see appendix 13: Interview guide).
	Historical & Socio- Cultural Context	The questions also focused on the particularities of the local historical and socio-cultural norms relevant to each participant and grounded within the thick description of human interactions in that context. For example, asking the participants to describe their personal journey to becoming a CEO.
	Human Identity	As already detailed above identity is socially constructed on an individual and collective level but bounded within the parameters of societies regulated freedoms, which has not boded well for women. Questions such as: Did you aspire to become a CEO? Were asked of the participants, as eliciting this knowledge would provide greater understanding of the participants human identity and the parameters of societies freedom, as relevant to women's career aspirations.

Research Design	Sensitising Concepts related to design	Rationale
	Symbolic Interactionism	Asking the question: Have you experienced any barriers as a woman in progressing into a senior executive position? aligns with seeking to understand the interactions that take place which hinder the career advancement of women.
	Essentialism/Anti-essentialism	The research questions seek to explore essentialism/anti-essentialism by specifically asking questions in relation to the construction of leadership and gender.
	Human Agency	The researcher is interested in the level of agency that participants have in their roles and if these are constrained by gender or other issues such as overregulation. This is achieved through the design of questions that look at the barriers and the internal and external pressures that women face within their role as CEO.
	Language	The questions are concerned with exploring language that is used by the participants and within society that consciously or unconsciously perpetuate gender stereotyping.
	Discourse	The questions seek to explore the discourses that hinder or enable women CEOs.
	Power	The research questions, especially in relation to barriers that women experience, help to gain a greater understanding of the power dynamics that exist for women CEOs. They also help to ascertain if women CEOs perceive that they have equal power in comparison to their male counterparts in similar roles.

Research Design	Sensitising Concepts related to design	Rationale
Methodology Chapter	**Question all Knowledge**	The researcher has adopted a subtle realist ontological position that aligns to a social constructionist approach. The researcher questions all knowledge predicated on the idea that the world is socially constructed. The researchers position asserts that something is real when it is constructed in the minds of the individuals involved in the situation. Social reality is assumed to be subjective and varied; there is not just one story but multiple stories of lived experience.
	Historical & Socio- Cultural Context	The methodology was developed to provide a systematic structure for ensuring the most effective means of exploring and eliciting the social artefacts of gender and leadership. **Ontology:** Subtle realism **Epistemology:** Constructionism **Methodology:** Feminist Informed narrative inquiry Approach **Methods:** Semi-structured interviews **Analysis:** Thematic analysis
	Human Identity	Integral to the methodology was the development of an approach within all stages which sought to explore identity construction.
	Symbolic Interactionism	The methodology was influenced by symbolic interactionism. The research design was structured to develop a greater understanding of how interactions shape and influence women's career path as CEO.

Research Design	Sensitising Concepts related to design	Rationale
Scoping Review	**Question all Knowledge**	As the scoping review focuses on the requirements for wide-ranging coverage (breadth) of the available literature, it facilitated the reviewer to evaluate previous work on the research topic, to develop a deeper understanding of the breadth of literature relevant to the study and to establish the current state of knowledge in the field where the research is situated, including opposing perspectives of relevant theories and concepts.
	Historical & Socio- Cultural Context	The historical patriarchal foundations of our society, set the terms of discrimination that are then enacted at structural, institutional, and individual levels. Therefore, women constantly confront subtle, socially constructed obstacles, while men benefit from the apparent normalcy of patriarchy.
	Human Identity	The scoping review highlighted the dramatic "push and pull" between family and work responsibilities are subtle and often invisible barriers that women face. As gender affiliation overshadows other determinants of success, it becomes a powerful source of social identity.
	Symbolic Interactionism	Symbolic interactionism recognises that the construction of reality is shaped and influenced by interactions between individuals. The scoping review identified that the underlying interactions among gender, leadership, and countries' sociocultural contexts, helps to clarify the varying degrees of strength of norms and barriers embedded in a society's egalitarian practices.
	Essentialism/Anti-essentialism	The review explored if gender was seen as property of a women or to what extent was it considered a social construct. The communal gender stereotyping of women is generally perceived as incompatible with leadership.

Research Design	Sensitising Concepts related to design	Rationale
	Human Agency	The review examined the barriers women experience when they try to assert control outside of their gender bounded conformity parameters and found that they experience attitudinal penalties for not conforming to perceived roles.
	Language	The review allowed the researcher an opportunity to reflect on the language used within the literature in relation to gender and leadership. It also facilitated an understanding of the power of language to construct concepts such as gender and to create power differentials through this construction.
	Discourse	The review process identified the role and power of discourse in shaping constructs such as gender and leadership and how such discourses have negatively impacted the advancement and sustainability of women in senior executive positions.
	Power	The theme of power inequality is evidenced throughout the review and enshrined in patriarchal ideology that dominates western society.
Theory Chapter	**Question all Knowledge**	This chapter outlined the rationale for using social constructionism as a theoretical framework. It also identified the approach being adopted by the researcher as one of a moderate social constructionist. This approach acknowledges in line with the researcher's ontological position of subtle realism that there are multiple perspectives about reality, but a reality also exists independent of us.
	Historical & Socio- Cultural Context	The historical and socio-cultural context was examined in this chapter. In addition, the social artefacts of social constructionism were also reviewed. They form the framework for the dissertation and constitute

Research Design	Sensitising Concepts related to design	Rationale
	Human Identity	Theory and theorists examined in this chapter provides us with insights into how the identity of women was formed, shaped, and influenced throughout history**.**
	Symbolic Interactionism	There was a focus throughout this chapter on how interactions at individual, organisational and societal level influenced the constructs of gender and leadership.
	Essentialism/Anti-essentialism	The researcher outlined their positionality in relation to essentialism and gender and took an anti-essentialist position.
	Human Agency	Theory illustrated the limits of control women experience due to being bounded within the confines of a stereotype that is ever present in society and continually perpetuated by both women and men.
	Language	Language is referenced throughout this chapter and its relevance in relation to the perpetuation of unequal gender power differential's.
	Discourse	The theory of social constructionism suggests that if we can shift perspectives to reveal the societal influences of discourses and practices that constitute the dominant cultural ideals of gender and leadership, then the process of deconstruction is possible.
	Power	Power is explored in detail in this chapter especially the positions of power that men hold versus the underrepresentation of women within these roles.

Research Design	Sensitising Concepts related to design	Rationale
	Essentialism/Anti-essentialism	Essentialism/anti-essentialism were relevant throughout this chapter in relation to the social construction of gender and leadership and the different participants perspectives on this topic.
	Human Agency	The research design was developed to ensure that issues of agency and their relevance to the social construction of leadership and gender could be explored in detail.
	Language	Feminist informed narrative inquiry was chosen as the methodology because knowledge and meaning are created through interpreting stories of lived experience. The sharing of these narratives provides insights into how women CEOs experience and make sense of the world
	Discourse	The methodology was informed by discourse in order to understand how discourse reflects social reality and the prevalence of the power structures that shape how women talk and think.
	Power	Decisions concerning power were considered throughout this chapter and were central to adopting an interpretive paradigm. Interpretive paradigms have been cited as approaches that support the visibility and voice of women. It addition, it also tries to navigate complex power relations and the reflexivity around the contexts and circumstances in which knowledge is produced.

Research Design	Sensitising Concepts related to design	Rationale
Data Collection Phase	**Question all Knowledge**	Sending the interview questions to participants in advance gave them the opportunity to reflect on their lived experience and their personal knowledge. Gathering data from all participants gave multiple perspectives on participants experiences and knowledge in relation to gender and leadership. Follow up questions allowed the opportunity to further question and clarify participants perspectives.
	Historical & Socio- Cultural Context	The researcher was concerned with identifying the social artefacts relevant to the lives of the participants especially within the formative years of the participants lives which for some dated back to the 1960's. The researcher was also interested in gathering data to ascertain if the social artefacts from the 1960's were still prevalent and relevant within the present day.
	Human Identity	Conducting the qualitative semi structured interviews supported the process of questioning certain assumptions about the participants personal identity. For example, the influence of gender stereotyping on participants lived experiences and life choices.
	Symbolic Interactionism	The interactions that maintain gender stereotypes and the interactions when women rise above these stereotypes to assume CEO roles was a central part of data collection.

Research Design	Sensitising Concepts related to design	Rationale
	Essentialism/Anti-essentialism	Essentialism and anti-essentialism were considered throughout the data collection process especially in relation to how the participants viewed the construct of gender. Was gender internal and inherent within the participant or was it a social construct prompted by obligatory norms.
	Human Agency	The researcher was interested throughout the data collection process in examining if the participants human agency was exerted as CEO beyond or within the bounds of gender stereotypes.
	Language	**The researcher used the data collection process to elicit the role that language plays in the narratives of the research participants. Capturing metaphors such as the glass ceiling or a woman's place is in the home helped to gain a greater understanding of gender stereotyping and the barriers women experience within their role as CEO.**
	Discourse	The researcher was interested in examining the collective study of symbolic interactionism, narratives and systems of discourse as detailed by the participants throughout the data collection process. As this supports our understanding of and gives coherence and meaning to the everyday lives of women. Identifying systems of discourse relative to gender and leadership supported the researcher to summarise and produce knowledge about how gender categorisation in society gives rise to competing discourses on many issues including, who holds the power to determine what is true and what is not true.

Research Design	Sensitising Concepts related to design	Rationale
	Power	The data collection process was informed by an interest in exploring the participants experience in terms of how their lives have been shaped by patriarchal ideology in which there is unequal power differentials between women and men, with men holding the majority of power.
Analysis	**Question all Knowledge**	The analysis stage required the researcher to examine all the different perspectives of all of the participants in relation to the research questions posed. Also, through a subtle realist ontology understanding that each account is not the absolute truth and that there are multiple perspectives. Therefore, the researcher's role is to identify shared understandings that occur. This process filters and organises the data so that the essence of the phenomena understudy can be easily identified, analysed, understood and discussed. It allows for shared understanding of knowledge on how doing gender in leadership is experienced.
	Historical & Socio- Cultural Context	The focus of analysis in relation to historical and socio-cultural context was interested in the participants formative years and social artefacts that dominated the context in which they were raised. For example, the significance of the catholic church and its impact on women born in the 1960's and 1970's and whether this influence has lessened but still remains dominant in gender stereotyping and unconscious limitations that women place on themselves as they progress through their careers.

Research Design	Sensitising Concepts related to design	Rationale
	Human Identity	The analysis was concerned with the ability of women CEOs to maintain their authenticity within senior executive roles while overcoming barriers and in the face of internal and external organisational pressures. Also, the insights of the participants into how their identity has been shaped through dominant patriarchal ideology.
	Symbolic Interactionism	The analysis focused on gaining a greater understanding of the participants experiences of everyday interactions and how this has shaped them as a woman CEO.
	Essentialism/Anti-essentialism	The analysis was concerned with identifying the participants perspective on essentialism/anti-essentialism in relation to the social construction of gender.
	Human Agency	Analysis was concerned with the effects of social constructs on the personal agency of the participants. Limited personal agency is prevalent in the tradition-bound gender categories enacted through leadership. The researcher analysed the participants deeply held cultural assumptions and beliefs concerning individuals as independent and rational moral agents.

Research Design	Sensitising Concepts related to design	Rationale
	Language	Analysis of language was relevant in the sense that language/discourse is linked to the participants interpretation/ the means by which they engage, make sense of, and construct the world.
	Discourse	The analysis of discourse was concerned with the participants experience of gender inequality at societal, organisational, and local levels. In addition, is gender inequality an outcome of representation, symbols and discourse that are part of a complex form of social control.
	Power	Analysis was concerned with identifying the relevance of Foucault's theory on the power of resistance, which he professed could be utilised by the oppressed who experienced invisibility and silencing within society. Did the participants reach the pinnacle of their career in defiance of their status of invisibility within the higher echelons of leadership?
Findings and Discussions	**Question all Knowledge**	The questioning of knowledge was shaped by the ontological position, which in turn influenced the analysis stage of the process in which the researcher was concerned with the participants perspectives of reality. Shared experiences were identified within the analysis process and the extent to which participants identified the influence of gender stereotypes on their everyday interactions was examined.

Research Design	Sensitising Concepts related to design	Rationale
	Historical & Socio- Cultural Context	The researcher reviewed the social artefact findings from the scoping review and from the research. The researcher was interested in what has changed in terms of gender stereotyping since the 1960s and what has remained the same?
	Human Identity	The findings from the scoping review and the research acknowledge that identities can be regarded as the connection point in discourses and practices in which women locate themselves as the social subjects of specific discourses. Thus, the discourse of gender categorisation and related discursive practices have been unhelpful as a basis through which female individuals' identities are created.
	Symbolic Interactionism	The findings from the scoping review and the research recognises that gender stereotyping was the norm within society and greatly influenced all aspects of women's lives including their career choices.
	Essentialism/Anti-essentialism	A stance was taken based on the ontological and epistemological position of the researcher that gender is a social construct and as such there are multiple perspectives on the extent to which the social construction of gender has influenced and shaped women's lives. The ontological position also recognises that women exist in reality beyond a gender classification.

Research Design	Sensitising Concepts related to design	Rationale
	Human Agency	Has the social construction of gender categorisation changed and evolved over time and how does this bode for women in senior executive roles.
	Language	Has the language of leadership changed and evolved overtime to include women within its narrative**?**
	Discourse	Is discourse and discursive practices embodied in patriarchal ideology? How can we positively change and influence discourses that support an egalitarian society?
	Power	The findings from the scoping review and the research support the notion that men are the dominant gender within society and are more likely to hold influential and high-powered leadership roles then women.

Appendix 12: Interview Guide

SRESC TEMPLATE
INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Information Sheet

Purpose of the Study: I am Catherine Kelly, a doctoral student, in the Department of Social Sciences, Maynooth University.

As part of the requirements for a degree of Doctor of Social Science in the Faculty of Social Sciences, I am undertaking a research study` under the supervision of Dr Brian Melaugh & Dr Calvin Swords.

The study is concerned with understanding the experiences of women senior executives working in Section 39 organisations.

What will the study involve? The study will involve participating in three interviews. The first interview will be face to face and the other two subsequent interviews will be conducted using Microsoft teams. Interviews will last approximately 60 minutes. If you give permission all three interviews will be recorded. The researcher will explicitly seek consent to record the interviews by asking you to sign the consent form and in addition the researcher will ask your permission to start recording at the start of each interview. You are under no obligation to agree to the recording unless you are happy to do so. The study will take place over a 12-month period starting in January 2023 and finishing in December 2023.

Interview One

If you agree to take part in this study the researcher will contact you directly to agree a time, location, and date for the first interview. The researcher is happy to travel to meet you in a location of your choosing. Once the first interview takes place the interviewer will transcribe the interview recordings and is happy to send you a copy for your consideration.

Interview Two

The second interview will take place approximately two months after the first interview via Microsoft Teams and a date and a time will be agreed with you at least one month in advance. The researcher will transcribe the interview recordings and is happy to send you a copy for your consideration.

Interview Three

The third and final interview will also take place via Microsoft Teams approximately two months after the second interview and again the researcher will follow up with you at least a month in advance to agree a time and a date for this interview. The researcher will transcribe the interview recordings and is happy to send you a copy for your consideration.

When the researcher has transcribed the interviews of all participants, she will then begin an analysis of all the interviews to identify common themes that may emerge from the participants stories and lived experiences. She will write this up as part of her dissertation which will be submitted to Maynooth University as part of her fulfilment requirements for the Doctorate in Social Sciences.

Who has approved this study? This study has been reviewed and received ethical approval from Maynooth University Research Ethics committee. You may have a copy of this approval if you request it.

Why have you been asked to take part? You have been asked to participate in this research because you are a women senior executive working in an intellectual disability Section 39 organisation and as such I am very interested in your lived experience of the interplay of gender and leadership within the context that you work.

Do you have to take part?

No, you are under no obligation whatsoever to take part in this research. You are invited to take part in three one-one interviews as already outlined above. It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not you would like to take part. If you decide to do so, you will be asked to sign a consent form and given a copy and the information sheet for your own records. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and/or to withdraw your information up until such time as the research findings are analysed which will occur within six months post interview. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect your relationships with Maynooth University.

What information will be collected?

As this is a qualitative study the researcher is interested in listening to your lived experience. Therefore, the information that is collected will be the story you tell during the three one-hour, one-to-one interviews. Attached are the interview questions, so that you have an even greater understanding of the information that the researcher is looking to hear your insights on. Also attached is background information and an organisational template for completion prior to the first interview.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential? Yes, all information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept confidential. No names will be identified at any time. All information will be held electronically, and this electronic information will be encrypted and held securely on MU PC or servers and will be accessed only by Catherine Kelly.

I would like to place an anonymised version of the data on the Irish qualitative Data Archive (IQDA) so that other researchers may benefit from access to it if you agree to so.

No information will be distributed to any other unauthorised individual or third party. If you so wish, the data that you provide can also be made available to you at your own discretion.

'It must be recognised that, in some circumstances, confidentiality of research data and records may be overridden by courts in the event of litigation or in the course of investigation by lawful authority. In such circumstances the University will take all reasonable steps within law to ensure that confidentiality is maintained to the greatest possible extent.'

What will happen to the information which you give*:* All the information you provide will be kept at Maynooth University in such a way that it will not be possible to identify you. On completion of the research, the data will be retained on the MU server. After ten years, all data will be destroyed (by the PI). Manual data will be shredded confidentially, and electronic data will be reformatted or overwritten by the PI in Maynooth University.

What will happen to the results? The research will be written up and presented as a doctorate thesis and maybe presented at National and International conferences, in mainstream media and maybe published in academic journals. A copy of the research findings will be made available to you upon request.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

As part of this study the researcher is asking you as the participant to share your lived experience as a women CEO working in the context of a Section 39 organisation. Previous studies highlight that women can face many barriers and challenges to becoming a senior leader within an organisation therefore it is possible that talking about your experience may cause some distress.

As part of my role as a researcher I will agree a check in protocol with you throughout the interview and after the interview in relation to how you are feeling. You can at any stage stop the interview or take a break. The research will be underpinned by the principle of 'do no harm' and I can direct you to the employee assistance scheme if any information should come to light that causes you emotional distress. If at any stage, you are not happy with how the interview is being conducted you can contact either or both of my two supervisors whose details are listed below.

What if there is a problem? At the end of the interview, I will discuss with you how you found the experience and how you are feeling. If you experience any distress following the interview, you are free to discuss it with me and I will also, if you agree do a follow up check in.

You can also contact the employee assistance programme on 1800995955.

You may contact my supervisors Dr Brian Melaugh brian.melaugh@mu.ie and Dr Calvin Swords calvin.swords@mu.ie if you feel the research has not been carried out as described above.

Any further queries? If you need any further information, you can contact me: Catherine Kelly, (087) 9029605, email Catherine.kellymason.2021@mumail.ie.

If you agree to take part in the study, please complete and sign the consent form overleaf.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Consent Form

I……agree to participate in Catherine Kelly's research study titled: An inquiry into women senior executive perspectives on leadership in Section 39 intellectual disability organisations.

Please tick each statement below:

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me verbally & in writing. I've been able to ask questions, which were answered satisfactorily. □**Yes** **No**□

I am participating voluntarily. □**Yes** **No**□

I give permission for my interview with Catherine Kelly to be audio and video recorded. Recordings will be stored on MU Server and deleted from the server once the information provided in the recording has been anonymized and transcribed.

□**Yes** No□

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether that is before it starts or while I am participating. □ **Yes** No□

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data right up to analysis of the research which will be completed six months after the date of my last interview □**Yes** **No**□

It has been explained to me how my data will be managed and that I may access it on request.

□ **Yes** No□

I understand the limits of confidentiality as described in the information sheet □ **Yes** No□

I understand that my data, in an anonymous format, may be used in further research projects and any subsequent publications if I give permission below: □**Yes** **No** □

Please tick the box to consent to the following:

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview **□Yes** **No □**

I agree for my data to be used for further research projects **□Yes** **No □**

I agree for my data, once anonymised, to be retained indefinitely in the IQDA archive **□ Yes** **No□**

Signed……. Date…….

Participant Name in block capitals ……...

I the undersigned have taken the time to fully explain to the above participant the nature and purpose of this study in a manner that they could understand. I have explained the risks involved as well as the possible benefits. I have invited them to ask questions on any aspect of the study that concerned them.

Signed……. Date…….

Researcher Name in block capitals Catherine Kelly

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the Maynooth University Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nu.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

For your information the Data Controller for this research project is Maynooth University, Maynooth, Co. Kildare. Maynooth University Data Protection officer is Ann McKeon in Humanity house, room 17, who can be contacted at dataprotection@nu.ie. Maynooth University Data Privacy policies can be found at https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/data-protection.

Two copies to be made: 1 for participant, 1 for PI

Participants Background Information & Organisational Overview

Participants Name:

Date:

Age Range 30- 35, 36-40, 41-45, 46-50, 51-55, 56-60, 61-67	Nationality	Years working in disa-bility sector	Years as a CEO/ Senior executive leader	Primary Qualifica-tion	Highest level of qualification e.g., degree, masters,

Organisational Overview

Participants Name:

Date:

Overall budget of organisa-tion	No. of people supported	No. of staff employed	Organisation Rural or Urban Location	Services provided by organisation e.g., resi-dential, day, respite, advocacy, employ-ment

Semi-structured Interview Guide

Interview One

RQ1. How ***to develop a better understanding of the experience of women senior executives in Section 39 disability organisations***

Did you aspire to become a CE0/ mentor/support/training plan

Can you describe your journey to CEO and who supported you/was it your personal choice

Can you describe your experience of being a women senior executive in a Section 39 intellectual disability organisation? Prompt did you need to change who you were to be in this position/could you remain authentic to your true self?

From your experience do you think women are disproportionately underrepresented at senior executive levels in Section 39 Intellectual disability organisations?

In your experience what are the highs and lows of being a women senior executive in a Section 39 intellectual disability organisation?

Is it a lonely place? Prompts Supports/ mentors

Prompts:

Explore the emotion evoked by the questions.

Self: Was there a personal impact for you in taking on the role of CEO and the journey there, when you look back at your journey to CEO what feelings come to the fore, what types of inner conversations did you experience?

Organisational Staff: Do you think being a woman in a CEO role impacted on the staff in any way, (change in behaviour, culture, team dynamics).

Board relationships: Do you think being a woman in a CEO role impacted on the staff in any way, (change in behaviour, culture, team dynamics).

Finish with: Anything else you would like to say that you feel you didn't get the opportunity to say.

Interview Two

Developing an understanding of the internal and external forces which shape this experience

What are the internal pressures that you experience as a women senior executive working in a Section 39 intellectual disability organisation?

What are the external pressures that you experience as a women senior executive working in a Section 39 intellectual disability organisation?

What sort of pressures do you face as a leader that you feel are specific to Section 39 organisations?

Interview Three

Developing an understanding of how women maintain identity within the gendered construct of leadership?

Some literature suggests that the masculine stereotyping of leadership still remains a challenge facing women in senior executive roles:
Have you experienced this within your organisation or from other stakeholders?
Do you experience this as a personal internal conflict?

Do you experience any conflict (it can be an internal feeling) between how a leader should act and how a women should act?
Has this caused you to alter your style of leadership?

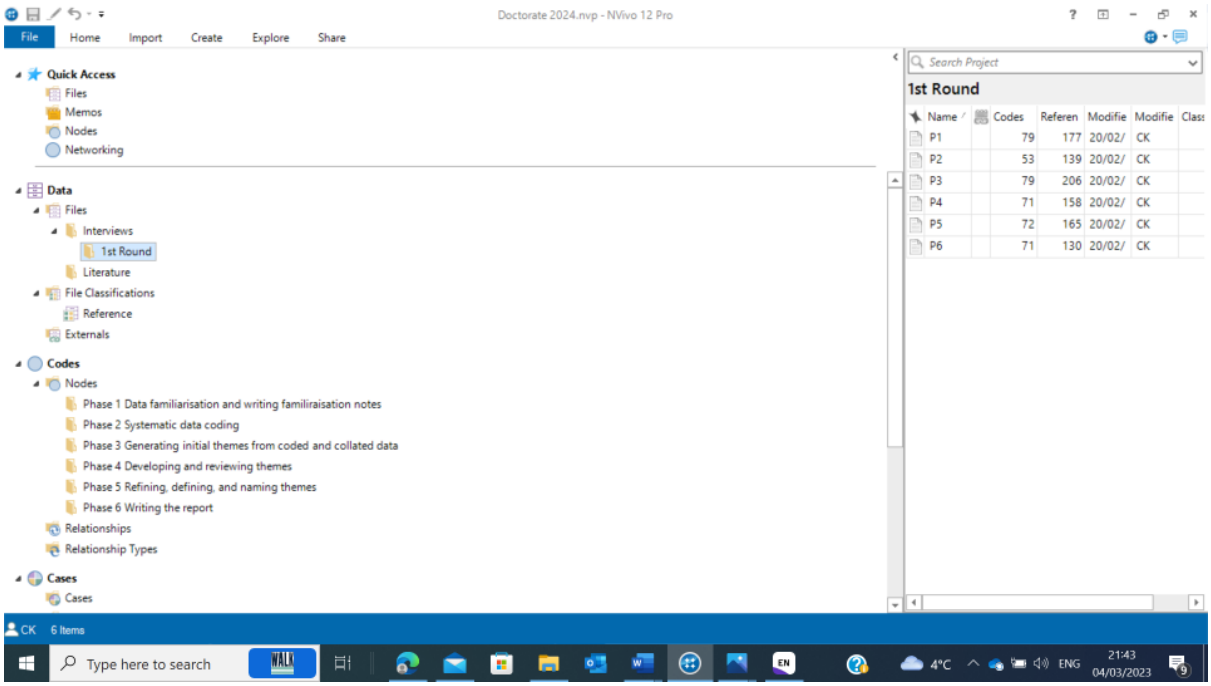
Has your personal identity changed within your role as CEO?

If yes, what changes did you have to make? b. What prompted you to make these changes?

Do you feel attitudes towards women leaders are changing? Why or why not? What evidence of change do you see from your experience?

We have completed all of the questions. Is there anything you would like to add, or any further comments you would like to make?

Appendix 13: The researcher employed Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87) six step approach to thematic analysis



Appendix 14: Sensitising Concepts-Relevance to Theory and Literature

Social Constructionism	Explanation	Questions	Themes	Sub-themes	Theories for further analysis	Literature
Question all Knowledge	The development of the research questions was informed by the findings in the scoping review and the theoretical framework**.**	The researcher initially began by creating discovery-oriented questions to facilitate the process of developing and refining questions that seek to uncover the perspectives of the individual participants.	Using thematic analysis, the researcher implied an iterative process to identify patterns in the data. This facilitated a systematic analysis process in which codes, subthemes, and themes were inductively constructed	The codes developed informed the categorisation of subthemes, which in turn were used as building blocks to define the overarching themes.	Consider the aim of the research, the theoretical framework, the scoping review, the findings. In addition, link the findings with new literature	Bryman, Crotty, Braune & Clarke, Creswell, Connelly, Clandinin, Grix
Historical & Socio- Cultural Context	Social constructionism offers individuals a lens to understand how their experiences have been shaped through	• Did you aspire to become a CE0/ mentor/support/training plan • Can you describe your journey to CEO and who supported you/was it your personal choice	• Personal Agency Bounded within the Construct	• The Social Construction of Personal Identity through Gendering	Goffman identity formation Butler	Andrews, Berger & Luckman, Burr, Merton, Hjelm, West & Zimmerman Ruben

	discourse, ideology, and historical and social contexts. Traditionally the defining group for conceptualising leadership and gender constructs have typically been white middle-class males with women excluded. Questions focused on the particularities of the local historical and socio-cultural norms relevant to each participant and grounded within the thick description of human	• Can you describe your experience of being a women senior executive in a Section 39 intellectual disability organisation	of Being Gendered	• The Social Construction of Career Identity Through Gendering	Gender Theory	Goffman

	interactions in that context					
Human Identity	As already detailed above identity is socially constructed on an individual and collective level but bounded within the parameters of societies regulated freedoms, which has not boded well for women. Questions such as: Did you aspire to become a CEO? Were asked of the participants, as eliciting this knowledge would provide greater understanding	• Did you need to change who you were to be a women CEO/could you remain authentic to your true self? • Did you aspire to become a CE0/ mentor/support/training plan • Has your personal identity changed within your role as CEO? • If yes, what changes did you have to make? b. What prompted you to make these changes?	• Personal Agency Bounded within the Construct of Being Gendered • Discovering Personal Identity within the Oppositional Constructs of Gender and leadership	• The Social Construction of Career Identity Through Gendering • Gendering: Passed Down from Generation to Generation • Discursive effects of Gendering	Goffman identity formation Butler Gender theory	Andrews, Berger & Luckman, Burr, Merton, Hjelm, West & Zimmerman Ruben Goffman

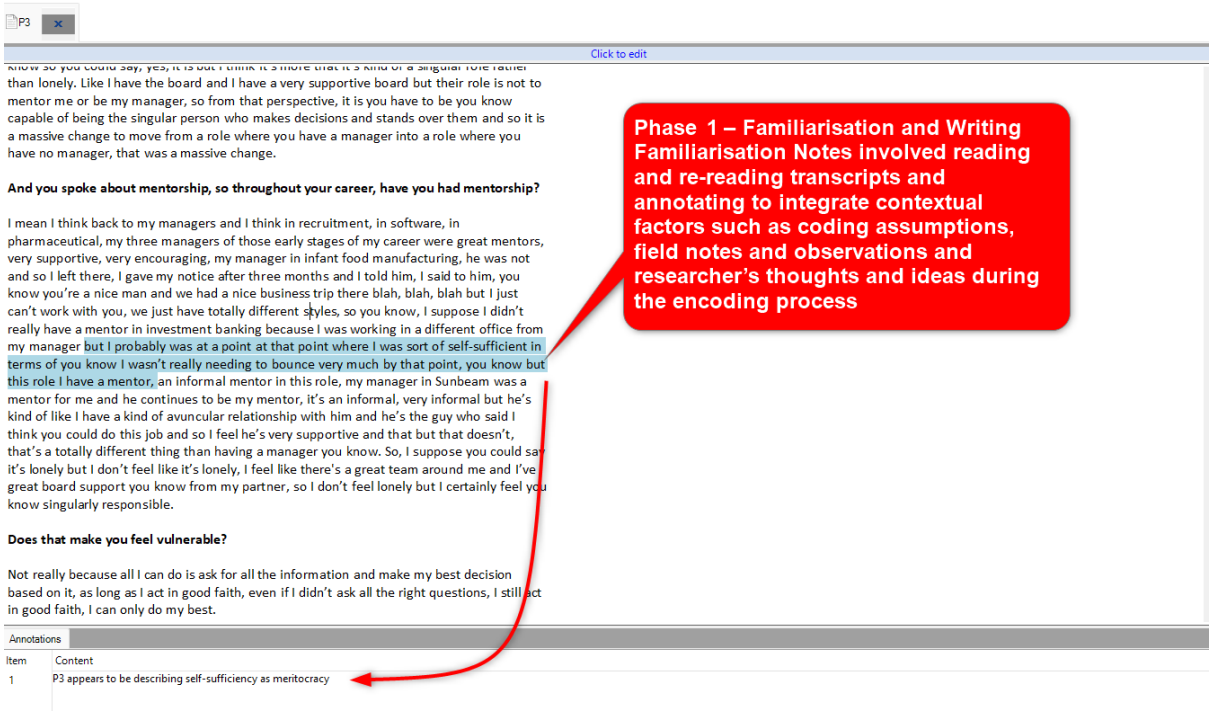
	of the participants human identity and the parameters of societies freedom, as relevant to women's career aspirations.					
Symbolic Interactionism	Asking the question: Have you experienced any barriers as a woman in progressing into a senior executive position? Aligns with seeking to understand the interactions that take place which hinder the career advancement of women.	• Was there a personal impact for you in taking on the role of CEO and the journey there, when you look back at your journey to CEO what feelings come to the fore, what types of inner conversations did you experience?	• Discovering Personal Identity within the Oppositional Constructs of Gender and leadership	• Gaining Confidence and Claiming Leadership • Bowing Out and Embracing the Final Curtain	Mead, Dewey, Cooley, Pierce, Blummer, Symbolic Interactionism	Butler Lorber & Farrell

Essentialism/Anti-essentialism	The research questions seek to explore essentialism/anti-essentialism by specifically asking questions in relation to the construction of leadership and gender**.**	• From your experience do you think women are disproportionately underrepresented at senior executive levels in Section 39 Intellectual disability organisations?	• Go where there is no path and leave a trail for generations to follow	• The Role of Intersubjectivity in the Construction of Gendered Leadership	Popper Butler gender theory Welters Domestic Ideology	Butler, Burr, Welters
Human Agency	The researcher is interested in the level of agency that participants have in their roles and if these are constrained by gender or other issues such as overregulation. This is achieved through the design of questions that look at the barriers and	• What are the internal pressures that you experience as a women senior executive working in a Section 39 intellectual disability organisation? • What are the external pressures that you experience as a women senior executive working in a	• The adventure is not to follow our gendered path, but to go where the path may lead or where there is no path and leave a trail.	• The Implications of a Staffing Crisis • The Struggle for Meaningful Engagement with the HSE	Neoliberal Ideology within Irish context	Lynch, Power & Power, Dukelow & Kennett, Gill

	the internal and external pressures that women face within their role as CEO.	Section 39 intellectual disability organisation? • What sort of pressures do you face as a leader that you feel are specific to Section 39 organisations?				
Language	The questions are concerned with exploring language that is used by the participants and within society that consciously or unconsciously perpetuate gender stereotyping.	• Was there a personal impact for you in taking on the role of CEO and the journey there, when you look back at your journey to CEO what feelings come to the fore, what types of inner conversations did you experience?	• Go where there is no path and leave a trail for generations to follow	• Oh, to be Socially Constructed as a Man	Fook deconstruction	Butler, Flax, Fook
Discourse	The questions seek to explore the discourses that hinder or enable women CEOs.	• Do you feel attitudes towards women leaders are changing? Why or why not? What evidence of change do you see from your experience?	• Go where there is no path and leave a trail for generatio	• Can we ever be Truly Liberated from the Shackles of Dominant Discourses	Goffman identity formation	Foucault Reuben West Burr Hjelm

			ns to follow	that Shape our Lives • Medical Model Discourse Versus Social Care Model Discourse	Butler Gender theory	
Power	The questions, in relation to barriers that women experience, help to gain a greater understanding of the power dynamics that exist for women CEOs. Also help to ascertain if women CEOs have equal power in comparison to their male counterparts in similar roles.	• Is it a lonely place? Prompts Given that women are underrepresented at CEO level are you treated equally at external CEO meetings? • Are you treated differently because you are a women CEO?	• Discovering Personal Identity within the Oppositional Constructs of Gender and leadership	• Gaining Confidence and Claiming Leadership	Foucault	Reuben Parton Haslett

Appendix 15[6]: Codebook - Phase 1 – Familiarisation and Writing Familiarisation Notes



[6] Codebook – Phase 1 – Familiarisation and Writing Familiarisation Notes involved reading and re-reading transcripts and annotating to integrate contextual factors such as coding assumptions, field notes and observations and researcher's thoughts and ideas during the encoding process

Appendix 16[7]: Codebook\\Phase 2 - Phase 2 Systematic Data Coding (Open Coding)

Phase 2 Systematic data coding - 38 codes developed in phase 2	Code Definitions for Coding Consistency (rules for inclusion)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Aspirations to be CEO	Did you aspire to becoming CEO	5	11
Authenticity	Can you be authentic to who you are as a CEO or a woman in work or did you have to change or dilute your values	5	9
Beliefs about people with intellectual disabilities	What are the beliefs about people with intellectual disabilities, types of support	1	2
Boundaries	do we put boundaries in place to protect ourselves from overwork	3	6
Business Strategy	Where business models are used and types of business models	3	5
Change		2	2
Communication		3	6
Confidence	Confidence in themselves	2	5
Culture	A culture of organisations that women work in or work in and the experience	2	6
Curiosity and ambition		6	12
Do you enjoy being a CEO		1	1
Gender	Significance of being a women or relevance if any	6	20
Gender disparity in NFVB	Gender disparity in umbrella organisations	5	8
Gender metaphors	Metaphors used during interviews to describe gender experiences	1	3
Governance	Governance, regulation compliance	4	7
How long should you stay in a job	In interviews CEOs had a particular opinion on length of time they should stay in a position or in an organisation	4	11
How organisation was run before I became CEO	Thoughts from CEO's on how the organisation was run before they became the CEO	2	3
HSE	Funding, interactions, relationships	7	13
Lack of Leadership	Shortage of leaders, large volume of other job opportunities	3	8

[7] Codebook -Phase 2 – Generating Initial Coding involved deconstructing the data from its original chronology into an initial set of non-hierarchical codes

Phase 2 Systematic data coding - 38 codes developed in phase 2	Code Definitions for Coding Consistency (rules for inclusion)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Lesson learnt along the way	learning from experience	2	4
Living and working in the same community	A lot of CEO work in rural communities or work where they grew up	2	3
Loneliness	Is it lonely being a CEO	6	11
Mentor	A person that mentored, or supported or asked the individual to go for a position, moving out of their comfort zone, thinking about a position they never saw themselves in.	6	18
Models of service		5	14
Networking	Exposure to people or experiences that are significant for your career advancement	2	2
Over and above the call of duty	When you can never turn your phone off	1	1
Personal impact of being CEO	Negatives that come from being CEO on a personal level	5	19
Predecessor	Was the predecessor male or female and was that significant	6	11
Stereotyping	Where we are stereotyped or where we play a stereotype role	1	2
Successive planning	successive planning or leaving a legacy	3	5
Supporting others	How CEO talks about supporting others or being a role model for others	4	8
the husband		3	7
Values	Why work in this job	4	6
What we Lost	What women feel they lost on their journey to CEO	1	4
Who is the CEO	Who am I as a CEO what is my role, my function	6	15
Women disproportionately represented in Section 39 organisations	Does the CEO feel that women are disproportionately represented in section 39 organisations	2	3
Women role models	Women to aspire to and women that became CEO's	3	4
Work life balance	Experience of family loss compromise	5	21

Appendix 17[8]: Codebook\\Phase 3 Generating Initial Themes from Coded and Collated Data (Developing categories)

Phase 3 Generating initial themes from coded and collated data - 4 initial themes developed in phase 3	Code Definitions for Coding Consistency (rules for inclusion)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Historical & Socio- Cultural Context	How the participants experiences have been shaped through discourse, ideology, and historical and social contexts.	7	32
Aspirations to be CEO	Did you aspire to becoming CEO	5	11
Do you enjoy being a CEO		1	1
Who is the CEO	Who am I as a CEO what is my role, my function	5	20
Leadership Challenges	Leadership structures and practices	12	267
Value congruency	Why work in this job	7	12
Governance	Governance, regulation compliance	9	23
HSE	Funding, interactions, relationships	11	40
Lack of Leadership	Shortage of leaders, large volume of other job opportunities	5	15
Culture	A culture of organisations that women work in or work in and the experience	3	7
Models of service		10	28
Business Strategy	Where business models are used and types of business models	3	5
How organisation was run before I became CEO	Thoughts from CEO's on how the organisation was run before they became the CEO	2	3
Successive planning	successive planning or leaving a legacy	5	9
Supporting others	How CEO talks about supporting others or being a role model for others	4	8
How long should you stay in a job	In interviews CEOs had a particular opinion on length of time they should stay in a position or in an organisation	4	11

[8] Codebook – Phase 3 – Searching for Themes – involved merging, renaming, distilling, and clustering related coded into broader categories of codes to reconstruct the data into a framework that makes sense to further the analysis.

Phase 3 Generating initial themes from coded and collated data - 4 initial themes developed in phase 3	Code Definitions for Coding Consistency (rules for inclusion)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded	
Barriers experienced in the not-for-profit sector	Barriers that women senior executives experience in the not-for-profit sector		0	0
Gender disparity in leadership	Gender disparity in umbrella organisations		6	12
Predecessor	Was the predecessor male or female and was that significant		7	12
Terms and conditions of employment			6	28
The role of unions			5	8
Too many hats for my head			6	31
The victims of bureaucracy			1	1
Minding service users to death			5	6
Reputational Concerns			5	5
demands for services			2	3
Supporting women's career progression	What enables women to successfully succeed in their careers		8	70
Career supports from others	Who supported these participants to become CEO		8	45
Personal enablers	Enablers that successfully progress and sustain women in their career		6	25
The effects of Patriarchal ideology	The visible and invisible barriers encountered by women throughout their careers		9	79
Aspirations to be CEO	Did you aspire to becoming CEO		5	11
Confidence	Confidence in themselves		2	5
Loneliness	Is it lonely being a CEO		7	12
MY CEO Image			2	5
Over and above the call of duty	When you can never turn your phone off		5	12
Stereotyping	Where we are stereotyped or where we play a stereotype role		2	4
What we Lost	What women feel they lost on their journey to CEO		2	5
Work life balance	Experience of family loss compromise		6	25

Appendix 18[9]: Codebook\\ Phase 4 Developing and Reviewing Themes (coding on)

Phase 4 Developing and reviewing themes - 6 developed themes extrapolated under review from 4 initial themes developed in phase 3	Code Definitions for Coding Consistency (rules for inclusion)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Historical & Socio- Cultural Context	How the participants experiences have been shaped through discourse, ideology, and historical and social contexts.	5	11
Aspirations to be CEO	Did you aspire to becoming CEO	5	11
Identity and personal agency within the gendered construct of leadership	Does a women's identity change when they become a CEO? How do they step into the shoes required to fill this role? How do women navigate the paradox of women and leadership?	12	82
Gender disparity in leadership	Gender disparity in umbrella organisations	6	12
Gender disparity in NFVB	Gender disparity in umbrella organisations	5	8
How long should you stay in a job	In interviews CEOs had a particular opinion on length of time they should stay in a position or in an organisation	4	11
Too many hats for my head		6	31
Who is the CEO	Who am I as a CEO what is my role, my function	5	20
Overwhelming sense of responsibility	Carrying the heavy burden and the load	2	3
Living and working in the same community	A lot of CEO work in rural communities or work where they grew up	2	3
Section 39's a no-win environment	Leadership structures and practices	12	211
Governance	Governance, regulation compliance	9	23
HSE	Funding, interactions, relationships	11	40
Lack of Leadership	Shortage of leaders, large volume of other job opportunities	5	15
Culture	A culture of organisations that women work in or work in and the experience	3	7
Models of service		10	28
Business Strategy	Where business models are used and types of business models	3	5

[9] Codebook – Phase 4 – Reviewing Themes involved breaking down the now reorganised categories into sub-categories to better understand the meanings embedded therein.

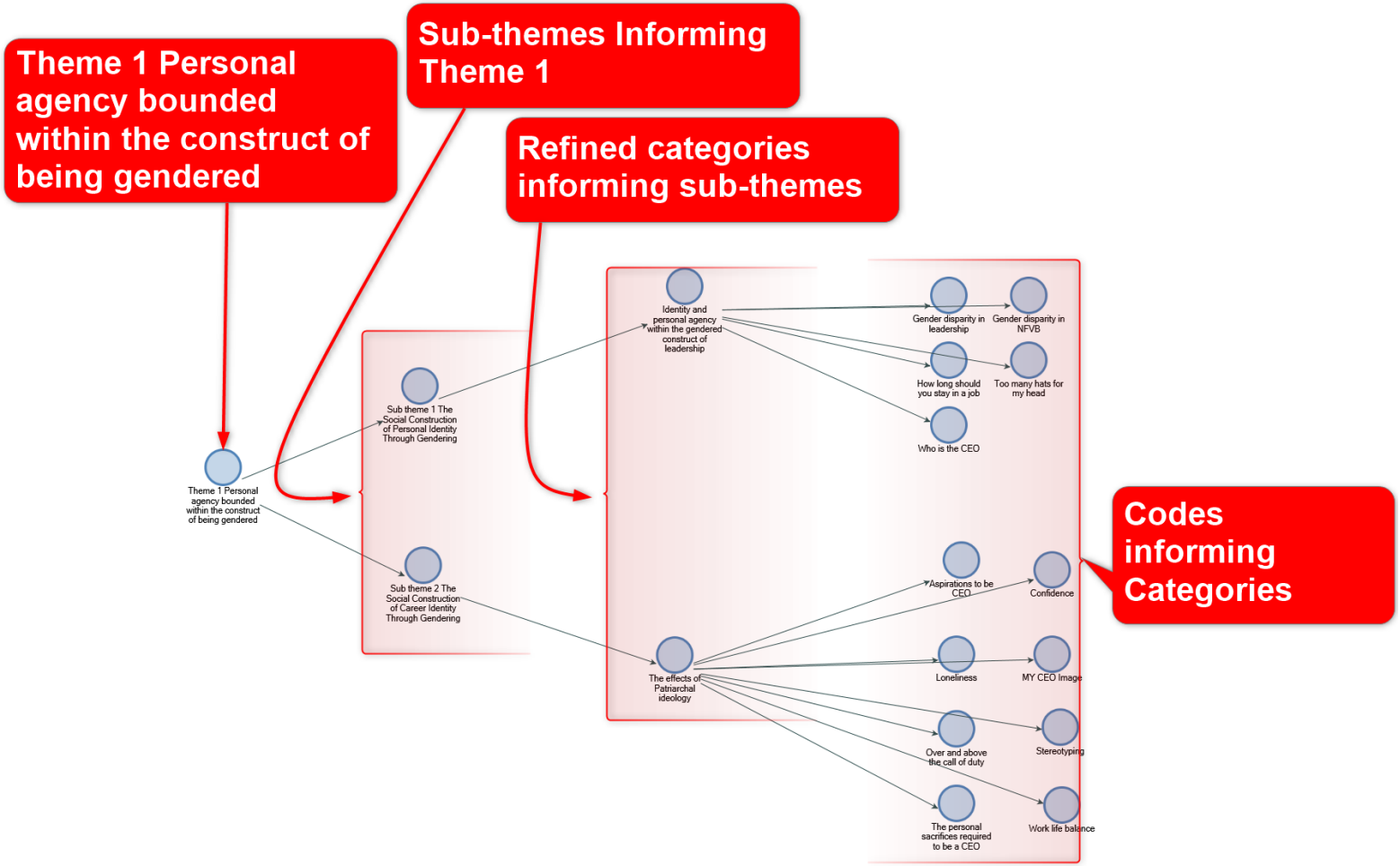
Phase 4 Developing and reviewing themes - 6 developed themes extrapolated under review from 4 initial themes developed in phase 3	Code Definitions for Coding Consistency (rules for inclusion)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
How organisation was run before I became CEO	Thoughts from CEO's on how the organisation was run before they became the CEO	7	14
Successive planning	successive planning or leaving a legacy	5	9
Supporting others	How CEO talks about supporting others or being a role model for others	4	8
Terms and conditions of employment		6	28
The role of unions		5	8
Minding service users to death		5	6
Reputational Concerns		5	5
demands for services		2	3
Value congruency	Why work in this job	7	12
Supporting women's career progression	What enables women to successfully succeed in their careers	8	70
Career supports from others	Who supported these participants to become CEO	8	45
What keeps me going	Enablers that successfully progress and sustain women in their career	6	25
The effects of Patriarchal ideology	The visible and invisible barriers encountered by women throughout their careers	9	79
Work life balance	Experience of family loss compromise	6	25
Stereotyping	Where we are stereotyped or where we play a stereotype role	2	4
Aspirations to be CEO	Did you aspire to becoming CEO	5	11
Loneliness	Is it lonely being a CEO	7	12
Confidence	Confidence in themselves	2	5
Over and above the call of duty	When you can never turn your phone off	5	12
MY CEO Image		2	5
The personal sacrifices required to be a CEO		2	5

Appendix 19[10]: Codebook\\Phase 5 Refining, Defining and Naming Themes (Developing a Thematic Framework)

Phase 5 Refining, defining, and naming themes - 4 themes Defined and Named with 11 sub-themes	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Theme 1 Personal agency bounded within the construct of being gendered	**7**	**43**
Sub theme 1 The Social Construction of Personal Identity Through Gendering	4	8
Sub theme 2 The Social Construction of Career Identity Through Gendering	6	12
Theme 2 Go where there is no path and leave a trail for generations to follow	**9**	**82**
Sub theme 1 Can we ever be Truly Liberated from the Shackles of Dominant Discourses that Shape our Lives	3	10
Sub Theme 2 The Role of Intersubjectivity in The Construction of Gendered Leadership	6	12
Sub theme 3 Oh to Be Constructed as a Man	5	12
Theme 3 The Enormity of the Role	**13**	**281**
Sub theme 1 The Challenges that the Socio historical context of Section 39 Organisations Present	9	24
Sub theme 2 Medical Model Discourse Versus Social Care Model Discourse	12	127
Sub theme 3 The Implications of a Staffing Crisis	6	28
Sub theme 4 The Struggle for Meaningful Engagement with the HSE	11	61
Theme 4 Discovering Personal Identity within the oppositional constructs of women and leadership	**18**	**185**
Sub theme 1Gaining Confidence and Claiming Leadership	6	18
Sub theme 2 Bowing Out and Embracing the Final Curtain	9	51

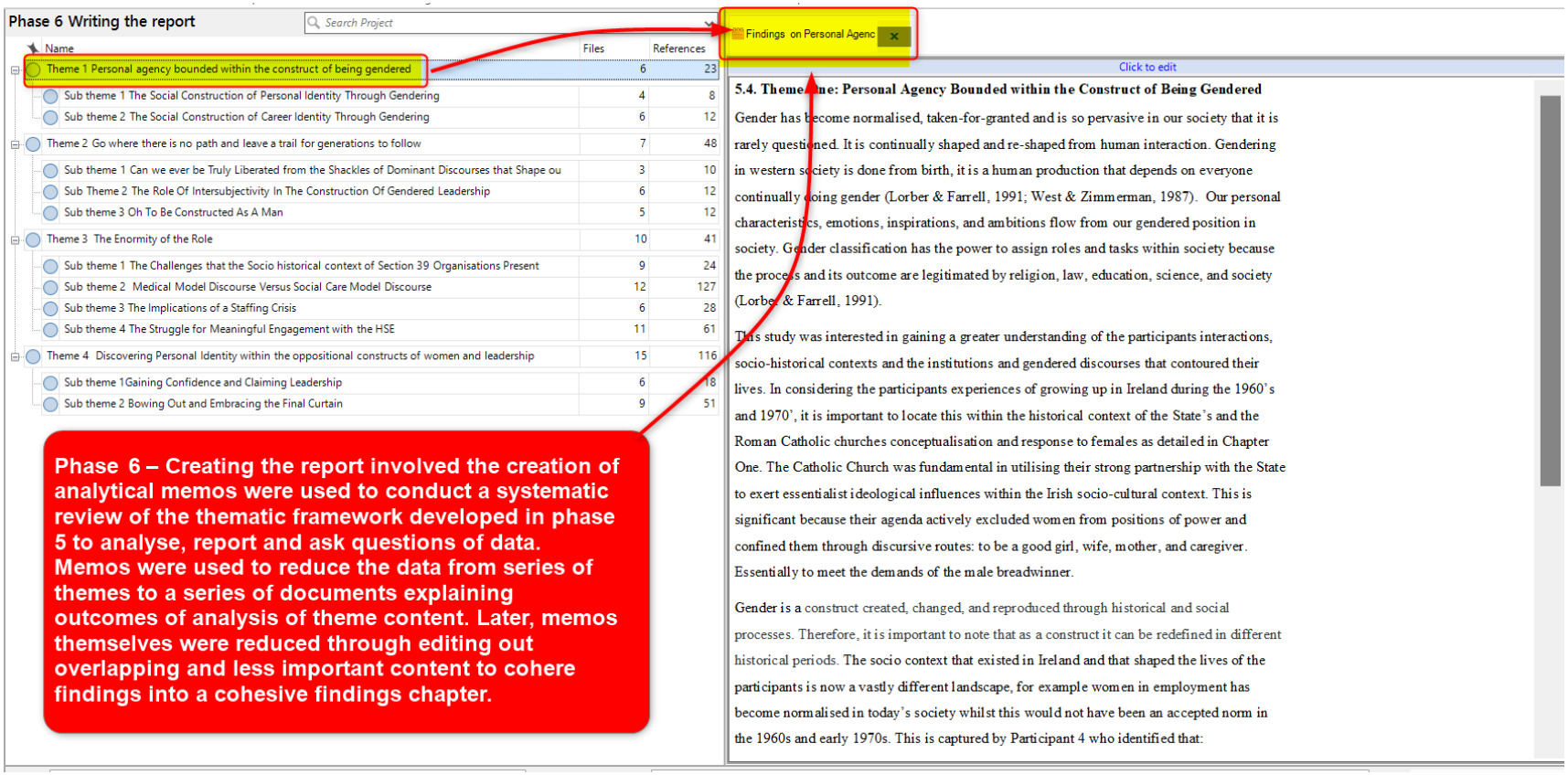
[10] Codebook – Phase 5 – Defining and Naming Themes involved conceptually mapping and collapsing categories into a broader thematic framework.

Appendix 20[11]: Example of flow from codes to categories to themes



[11] Codebook – example of the flow from codes to categories to themes for Theme 1 Personal agency bounded within the construct of being gendered

Appendix 21[12]: Example of the role Analytical Memo (Phase 6 – analysis and write up)



[12] Codebook – conceptual maps were used to make sense of themes identified in data and to consider relationships across and between themes in a visual and less structured manner