

CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT INFLUENCE ON WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP  
DEVELOPMENT AT SMALL PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

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Kasie Weina

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COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Committee Chair: Denise Collins, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Women's Studies

Indiana State University

Committee Member: Vicki Kosowsky, M.S.

Vice President of Student Life

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College

Committee Member: Thomas Ramey, Ed.D.

Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership

Indiana State University

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of women's leadership and the important influential factors that impact women's leadership development. Campus environmental factors and gender socialization were examined in an effort to understand women's leadership identity and development and the potential influences on that development. Data were collected in a semi-structured interview with seven students from two different institutions. Both institutions were private and located in a Midwestern city. One institution had an entire on-campus population of women and the other institution had an on-campus population of 21% women.

This study supported the existence of a connection between women's leadership development, the campus environment, and gender socialization. Perceptions of their leadership were influenced by external factors such as role models, adult and peer affirmation, and the perceptions of others and internal factors such as confidence and initiative. The themes that emerged regarding the campus environmental differences were (a) self-perceptions through language, (b) demonstration of worth, (c) gender versus environment, and (d) expectations for behavior. Overall, the all-women's institutional environment was perceived as more flexible and less dependent on gender socialization than the male-dominated institutional environment, which supports that the campus environment is an influential factor in how women perceive leadership.

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## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

*Kaylee, a woman in her first year of college, joined a campus organization called the Student Voice. Kaylee's motivation to join Student Voice was simple: she wanted to meet new people to develop potential friendships and she wanted to learn more about her new campus. The Student Voice was a large organization with approximately 50 student members, and it was led by three undergraduate senior men. Throughout the semester, Kaylee's dedication for the organization grew stronger as she volunteered for projects that assisted with achieving the organization's goals. By the end of the semester, she collaborated with a few members to create t-shirts for the Student Voice and facilitated a session about getting involved in college at the annual Student Voice conference. As a result of the passion and dedication she developed for the organization, she applied to be one of the committee chairs for the annual conference. After spending a year in the Student Voice, Kaylee was asked what it was like to be a leader in her organization; she responded by stating, "You must be mistaken, I am not a leader."*

Leadership is defined by "a process in which an individual influences a group of individuals to work towards the achievement of a common goal or vision" (Taleb, 2010, p. 288). Despite Kaylee's denial of the title, by gathering a group of people and guiding them to create something, and by taking the opportunity to educate an audience about campus involvement, she was acting as a leader. In accordance with the definition of leadership, because Kaylee assisted

her organization in achieving its goals, she demonstrated leadership characteristics and could call herself a leader. However, in spite of this evidence, Kaylee did not view herself as a leader; why not?

It is likely that gender socialization and various environmental influences pressure women to maintain specific gender roles, which as a result causes women to downplay and devalue their own leadership skills, styles, and abilities.

### **Gender Socialization**

Gender socialization in the American society has a strong influence on behavior; in fact individuals are influenced by gender before they are even born (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Barry, Bacon, & Child, 1957; Bem, 1981; Bem & Lenney; 1976; Kimmel, 2000; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Whereas sex is identified by the biological anatomy that differs between men and women, gender is socially constructed and establishes expectations for how individuals should behave within their assigned genders (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Not only does the socialization of gender impact almost every aspect of a person's life, but it also influences the ways in which individuals perceive each other (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Barry et al., 1957; Bem, 1981; Bem & Lenney; 1976; Kimmel, 2000; West & Zimmerman, 1987; Whitt, 1993). People are taught early in their lives how to behave based upon their genders (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Barry et al., 1957; Bem, 1981; Bem & Lenney; 1976; Kimmel, 2000; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

For example, children in the early years of school are treated very differently by their peers and teachers (Aulette & Wittner, 2012). As early as kindergarten, girls receive less attention from their teachers in the classroom than boys. Often when girls are able to participate and get attention, the reaction from the teacher is not as encouraging as it would be if a boy had

responded to the question (Aulette & Wittner, 2012). Research has shown that girls typically receive a short response such as “okay” from the teacher when answering questions, whereas boys will be asked follow-up questions to continue challenging them (Aulette & Wittner, 2012). Furthermore, teachers will most often comment on girls’ appearance and clothing rather than their academic performance, which begins to place pressure on women to care about their appearance (Aulette & Wittner, 2012). At this young age, students are exposed to the gender differences because they are segregated in many school activities, such as lining up by gender for lunch (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Thorne, 2000). The “differential treatment begins with a segregation of children by gender that is done automatically and with little thought” (Aulette & Wittner, 2012, p. 142) by teachers, and children have no choice but to recognize the differences in gender.

Aulette and Wittner (2012) found that even when teachers try and encourage boys and girls to play with the same toys, the children will use the toys in a way that parallels their gender stereotypes. A young boy who was given a doll carriage as a toy to play with in a kindergarten classroom played with it, but instead of using it for a baby doll, he imagined that the carriage was actually a car and a weapon (Aulette & Wittner, 2012). The boy using this toy in this way perpetuates and unintentionally reinforces the stereotypes about boys’ behavior expectations (Aulette & Wittner, 2012). “Boys are engaged in more rough-and-tumble play, physical fighting, and overt physical conflict than girls” (Thorne, 2000, p. 32), which is viewed as acceptable behavior. If a girl would participate in rough-and-tumble play, she would be asked to stop and told that it is not appropriate behavior for young women (Thorne, 2000). The differing types of play are labeled as appropriate or not depending on the child’s gender, which begins to shape their behaviors and construct socially accepted roles (Thorne, 2000).

When these behaviors are reinforced by parents and other adults, children see these as the expected and accepted behaviors of each gender (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Bem, 1981). Even more, when individuals progress through childhood to adolescence and eventually adulthood, their behaviors and their ability to conform to the gender expectations affects their acceptance among other individuals (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Bem & Lenney, 1976; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Those individuals acting outside of existing gender norms are often secluded from the group and perceived negatively by others (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Bem & Lenney, 1976; West & Zimmerman, 1987). As a result, individuals behave in specific ways in order to fit into the gender box society has constructed (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Bem & Lenney, 1976; Kimmel, 2000; West & Zimmerman, 1987; Whitt, 1993).

### **Environmental Influence**

The strength of gender socialization in society would not be as successful if it were not for the reinforcement that the environment provides (Aulette & Wittner, 2012). As a result of gender being socially constructed, the environment must play a role in enforcing gender expectations, otherwise the expectations would no longer exist (Aulette & Wittner, 2012). The environment is one of “the most powerful techniques we have for influencing behavior . . . . Every institution in our society sets up conditions that it hopes will maximize certain types of behaviors and certain directions of personal growth” (Moos, 1976, p. 4). Therefore, the environments that individuals occupy shape the behaviors that society expects from particular genders (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Moos, 1976).

When specifically examining college environments, the campus has a considerable influence on students’ development (Astin, 1968; Moos, 1976; Strange & Banning, 2001). According to Strange and Banning (2001), different types of campus environments exist and

influence students and their development. On a college campus, these different environments impact individuals' perceptions of institutional values and what is acceptable behavior within the campus environment (Astin, 1968; Moos, 1976; Strange & Banning, 2001).

Research provides evidence for particular factors that influence the preservation of gender socialization within an environment. Because the ratio of women to men can impact the salience of gender behavioral expectations in an environment, one factor of particular interest for this study was the influence of gender ratios. Studies support that, depending on the gender ratio, gender norm expectations can fluctuate (Allan & Madden, 2006; Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Montgomery & Newman, 2010). There are situations when the gender ratio will cause an expectation of behavior and the smallest act outside of the norm can cause negative consequences (Allan & Madden, 2006; Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Montgomery & Newman, 2010). In a group of all women, for example, a woman would be likely to receive negative feedback if she chose to come to a formal party dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, when dresses and formal attire are expected. However, in environments with a balance of genders, individuals can violate the gender stereotypes by representing a characteristic other than what is expected without negative consequences (Allan & Madden, 2006; Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Montgomery & Newman, 2010). For example, the same scenario with an equal amount of each gender, the woman who decides to violate the gender norm and not come dressed up to a formal gathering may not receive any negative feedback. As a result of the environment, this woman would not be violating the gender norms.

Environments provide different levels of flexibility in the level of gender norms expected. An environment with a majority of one gender will provide a much different experience than an environment that has an equal ratio between men and women (Allan &

Madden, 2006; Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Montgomery & Newman, 2010). In situations that are not as flexible, though, women who choose to act outside of gender norms are often given harsher criticism than men who act outside of norms (West & Zimmerman, 1987). If men choose to portray a characteristic that is outside of gender-prescribed behaviors, the negative consequences for their actions may not be as severe depending on the environmental situation (West & Zimmerman, 1987). On the other hand, environments that are more flexible allow for individuals to cross the gender-imposed behaviors without adverse reactions (Aulette & Wittner, 2012). As a result, when considering gender socialization and reinforcement, the environment is a key factor in whether gender-expected behaviors are perpetuated (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

### **Leadership Development**

In relation to the focus of this study, it is important to consider the connections among gender socialization, campus environments, and leadership development. A great deal of research has been done on various leadership styles and the characteristics that accompany each style (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003; Haber, 2011; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Taleb, 2010). Although research has identified many different types of leadership, two theories capture the essence of the dichotomies within the various styles (Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Haber, 2011; Montgomery, 2010; Taleb, 2010). The first theory identifies transactional and transformational leadership (Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Taleb, 2010). Transactional leaders focus on the exchange of information and materials in order to complete a task, and transformational leaders emphasize the importance of the relationships that are built in the process of completing a task (Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly &

Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Taleb, 2010). The second theory, task-oriented and interpersonal-oriented leadership, shares some of the same characteristics.

Task-oriented leaders concentrate on completing the task and assigning duties to individuals in order to complete the task effectively (Eagly et al., 2003; Haber, 2011; Park, 1996; Taleb, 2010).

Interpersonal-oriented leaders, on the other hand, focus on developing effective group members and making decisions as a group (Eagly et al., 2003; Haber, 2011; Park, 1996; Taleb, 2010).

### **Leadership and Gender**

Among the identifiable leadership styles, research demonstrates men and women generally develop specific leadership types. Transactional leaders and task-oriented leaders possess characteristics that are typically demonstrated by men, whereas those portraying transformational and interpersonal-oriented leadership styles have characteristics that are typically demonstrated by women (Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Haber, 2011; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Taleb, 2010). This leadership style divide could potentially be attributed to gender socialization and environmental influences.

The dominant traits of transformational and interpersonal-oriented leadership styles correlate with the traits and behaviors expected of gender-socialized women (Eagly et al., 2003; Haber, 2011; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Park, 1996; Taleb, 2010). Women with these leadership styles demonstrate traits that appear to be more nurturing and give consideration to every group member's opinion (Eagly et al., 2003; Haber, 2011; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Park, 1996; Taleb, 2010). The nurturing and collaborative leadership traits correlate to the feminine characteristics acceptable as a result of gender socialization (Eagly et al., 2003; Haber, 2011; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Park, 1996; Taleb, 2010). In comparison, based on gender-socialized behaviors, transactional and task-oriented leadership should be demonstrated

by men (Eagly et al., 2003; Haber, 2011; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Park, 1996; Taleb, 2010). By giving less consideration to members' feelings and more consideration to how effectively the job gets done, these leadership styles depict traditionally masculine characteristics (Eagly et al., 2003; Haber, 2011; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Park, 1996; Taleb, 2010). Overall, because the traits are categorized as either feminine or masculine, men and women are inclined to become leaders who fit within gender-stereotyped behaviors (Eagly et al., 2003; Haber, 2011; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Park, 1996; Taleb, 2010).

### **Leadership and the Environment**

Previous research has established the existence of environmental factors that influence the development of leadership (Allan & Madden, 2006; Haber, 2011; Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005, 2006). Gender ratios are an influential factor within the environment and the combination of the two is especially important when considering the development of leadership characteristics (Allan & Madden, 2006; Haber, 2011; Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Gender ratios among peer interactions and adult interactions within an environment affect the leadership growth of an individual (Allan & Madden, 2006; Haber, 2011; Komives et al., 2005). Adult interactions, for example, include professor–student interactions or parental interactions (Allan & Madden, 2006; Komives et al., 2005, 2006), and peer interactions are often interactions with classmates and fellow organization members (Haber, 2011; Komives et al., 2005, 2006). These interactions can either foster or hinder leadership development based on the level of positivity or negativity associated with them. Generally speaking, same-gendered interactions are more positive than opposite-gendered interactions (Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Komives et al., 2005, 2006). When a person interacts with an adult or peer who is supportive of his or her leadership development, that individual will feel comfortable with the skills he or she

is developing as well as feel comfortable in taking risks to improve upon skills that are not as strong (Allan & Madden, 2006; Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Komives et al., 2005, 2006).

Therefore, with positive and supportive interactions and relationships with peers and adults, individuals have an increased ability to develop their own personal leadership styles.

### **Conflicting Research**

In contrast to the research already discussed, some researchers have argued that instead of reinforcing gender norms the environment can actually dispose of them and allow individuals to develop leadership styles outside of what is expected (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Haber, 2011; Taleb, 2010). For example, in a management position in which individuals must supervise a group of people working to create a new marketing campaign for their company, the leader of the project may need to be assertive and delegate tasks in order to complete the project effectively, instead of being able to receive input from group members. In this situation, the environment is influencing the leader to possess specific characteristics regardless of gender. In situations such as this, individuals are constrained by the expectations of the position and not by the expectations of their gender (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Haber, 2011; Taleb, 2010). In cases such as this, the leader does not have to be a particular gender, as long as she or he successfully demonstrates the required leadership traits (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Haber, 2011; Taleb, 2010). This research then is evidence that the environment could be more influential than gender (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Haber, 2011; Taleb, 2010).

### **Leadership Perceptions**

Even with previous research demonstrating that individuals of either gender are successful using leadership styles contradicting gender norms, women and men can be viewed

differently when demonstrating the same characteristics (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Haber, 2011; Kolb, 1990; Komives et al., 2005; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Taleb, 2010). All four leadership styles have the capacity to complete a task effectively, but each leadership style approaches the task in a different way (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Haber, 2011; Kolb, 1990; Komives et al., 2005; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Taleb, 2010). These different approaches do not affect the end result but rather the way in which the result is reached (Montgomery & Newman, 2010). Furthermore, studies of leadership effectiveness have determined that men and women both have the ability to be successful leaders using any leadership style (Montgomery & Newman, 2010). The difference then remains in the perceived effectiveness of individuals (Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie, & Reichard, 2008; Montgomery & Newman, 2010). Women in leadership positions are perceived to be less effective than their male counterparts despite the women's ability to complete a task effectively (Johnson et al., 2008; Montgomery & Newman, 2010). Even more, when men and women demonstrate the exact same characteristics, women are still seen as less effective (Johnson et al., 2008). History has presented a specific type of leader and often those who do not fit into the mold are perceived negatively (Johnson et al., 2008).

Gender socialization creates expectations for men's and women's behaviors and the environment becomes the tool to reinforce these gender norms. As the environment verifies gendered expectations, women are forced into portraying particular leadership characteristics in order to fit into society and avoid the potential negative consequences if they do not. The disconnection in this train of thought stems from the idea that women cannot be as effective as men in leadership positions because women must act in a particular way. Society places a value on the leadership styles that are stereotypically portrayed by men, despite evidence that supports

that other leadership styles can be just as effective. Nevertheless, the research demonstrates that environments can affect how individuals are viewed and place values on different factors. In reflecting upon the opening story with Kaylee, there are a number of potential factors that could be influencing Kaylee's perception of leadership as well as her ability to see herself as a leader.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of women's leadership and the important influential factors that impact women's leadership development. Within the mission and vision of a majority of institutions, leadership is listed as a key component to developing the whole student. As a result, the responsibility rests with the institution's faculty and professionals to provide the opportunities necessary for students to gain leadership experience. This research was necessary because institutional professionals should understand how the campus environment is affecting the development of female students. Moreover, the professionals should recognize the way that gender socialization is either perpetuated or extinguished on campus.

It is important to understand the various aspects of women's leadership in order for faculty, staff, and fellow students at an institution to provide beneficial leadership experiences. An important consideration that is often overlooked is who has access to leadership opportunities and the types and diversity of experiences that are available. Throughout this study, campus environmental factors and gender socialization were examined in an effort to understand women's leadership identity development and the potential positive influences on that development.

### **Research Questions**

The goal of this research study was to seek answers to the following research questions in order to build upon the knowledge already available about women and leadership:

1. How do women students describe their leadership styles?
2. What influence does campus environment have on women's leadership experiences, their perceptions of their leadership skills, and how they perceive others view them as leaders?

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Studying leadership styles and leadership development is a not a new topic; in fact, leadership development has been studied for decades. For the purpose of this study, previous literature was reviewed in three ways. First, an examination of the general idea of leadership, including leadership styles and the influences on leadership development was conducted. Second, an analysis of the environmental impacts on students' development was accomplished. Finally, research was collected about gender socialization and the effect that it has on the behavioral development of individuals.

#### **Leadership Styles**

Leadership has been examined from a number of different angles, including what type of leadership styles exist, what influences the development of leadership, and what differences exist between genders. Through this research it has become evident that different leadership styles exist, but there has been some disagreement as to the most influential factors in determining one's leadership style.

The term *leadership*, defined at the most basic level, is “a process in which an individual influences a group of individuals to work towards the achievement of a common goal or vision” (Taleb, 2010, p. 288). As a result of such a broad definition of leadership, many approaches can be taken to develop one's personal leadership style. A majority of leadership styles are broken

into different categories, two of which will be discussed in this research: task-oriented compared to interpersonal-oriented (Haber, 2011; Taleb, 2010) and transformational versus transactional (Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Taleb, 2010). These two leadership style dichotomies provide a framework to examine the factors that influence personal leadership styles.

### **Task-Oriented and Interpersonal-Oriented Leadership**

When comparing task-oriented and interpersonal-oriented leadership styles, a number of identifiable differences exist. A task-oriented leadership style is “defined as a concern with accomplishing assigned tasks by organizing task-relevant activities” (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 786). Task-oriented leaders focus on getting the job done and working in environments with defined roles and structures that must be followed (Haber, 2011). Task-oriented leaders are more direct and do not avoid conflict situations but instead confront conflict head on (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Haber, 2011). Leaders with a task-oriented focus also place a strong emphasis on establishing boundaries between themselves and the group members (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Haber, 2011). As a result, less of a focus is placed on building relationships among team members, and without those relationships it becomes difficult for task-oriented leaders to retain and motivate the group members (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Haber, 2011).

On the other hand, interpersonal-oriented leadership is “defined as a concern with maintaining interpersonal relationships by tending to others’ morale and welfare” (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 786). Furthermore, this style places an emphasis on developing the team as a whole as well as the relationships among the team members (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Haber, 2011). Interpersonal-oriented leaders provide support to the group and ensure that the whole team is functioning well (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Haber,

2011). As part of this leadership style, individuals concentrate less on the role of being the leader and instead look at each individual and the role she or he has within the group (Haber, 2011). A weakness of this type of leadership style is the individual's tendency to avoid conflict, and instead of confronting individuals who are not doing their job, these leaders will take on more work for themselves (Haber, 2011). Interpersonal-oriented leaders believe confronting individuals will cause problems among the group, so to maintain strong relationships with their members, interpersonal-oriented leaders will avoid conflict (Haber, 2011).

Research has demonstrated several differences in gender and the development of task-oriented or interpersonal-oriented leadership styles (Haber, 2011; Park, 1996; Taleb, 2010). Overall, according to a number of researchers, women tend to develop interpersonal-oriented leadership characteristics and men tend to become task-oriented leaders (Haber, 2011; Park, 1996; Taleb, 2010). The results of these studies demonstrate that women naturally value the relationships developed with their group members more than men, which facilitates the development of a strong interpersonal-oriented leadership style (Haber, 2011; Taleb, 2010). Men, on the other hand, focus primarily on being direct and delegating to get the job done, which fosters the development of the task-oriented leadership style (Haber, 2011; Taber, 2010).

Not only do men and women tend to develop particular leadership characteristics but also, as a result, these characteristics become the social norm with each gender (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Haber, 2011). Leadership characteristics become either feminine or masculine instead of relating back to the particular leadership styles (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Haber, 2011). Even in single-sex institutions, women are more likely to develop a perceived feminine leadership style with specific leadership characteristics, identifiable by the interpersonal-oriented style (Taleb, 2010). These particular characteristics, such as relationship

building, conflict confrontation, and organization, are automatically labeled as being either feminine or masculine traits (Haber, 2011; Taleb, 2010). As a result of this viewpoint, task-oriented and interpersonal-oriented leadership styles parallel with gender and become synonymous with each other (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Haber, 2011; Taleb, 2010).

### **Transformational and Transactional Leadership**

Transformational and transactional leadership styles are another dichotomy of leadership that has been previously researched (Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Taleb, 2010). Transformational leadership “involves establishing oneself as a role model by gaining the trust and confidence of followers” (Eagly et al., 2003, p. 570). Similar to the interpersonal-oriented leadership style, a focus is placed on the group instead of the task at hand (Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Taleb, 2010). Transformational leaders strive to build mentoring relationships with their group members in order to help them be successful (Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). These leaders also create future goals and motivate the group to work towards achieving these goals (Eagly et al., 2003). Overall, transformational leaders are innovators within a group and ensure that the members are growing and striving to reach their full potential (Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

The transactional leadership style focuses on the management of the group or organization (Eagly et al., 2003). This leadership style “involves managing in the more conventional sense of clarifying subordinate responsibilities, rewarding them for meeting objectives, and correcting them for failing to meet objectives” (Eagly et al., 2003, p. 571). In contrast to transformational leaders, transactional leaders believe that interactions between group members are indeed a *transaction* or an “exchange relationship” (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 787). This

means that by accomplishing the assigned task delegated by the leader, the individuals could receive a benefit or at least avoid a punishment (Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Rewards and punishments are viewed as ways to get work done within the transactional leadership style (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). As result of this leadership mentality, the emotional well-being of individuals is not often considered, because delegation is the tool used to get tasks done in the most efficient manner (Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

Similar to task-oriented and interpersonal-oriented leadership styles, gender differences exist between transformational and transactional leadership styles (Eagly et al., 2003; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Taleb, 2010). Women have the creativity to be the innovators for the group, which demonstrates transformational leadership qualities (Eagly et al., 2003; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Taleb, 2010). Men have the ability to take those ideas from the transformational leaders and bring them to fruition, which validates the tendency for men to be characterized as transactional leaders (Eagly et al., 2003; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Taleb, 2010). With the tendency to be more “democratic and participative” (Taleb, 2010, p. 290), women are more often characterized as transformational leaders. It has even been suggested that transformational leadership characteristics are “inherent qualities of female leaders” (Taleb, 2010, p. 291).

Alternatively, some research demonstrates only small differences when examining leadership characteristics when men and women are occupying the same leadership role (Eagly et al., 2003). Despite the fact that studies demonstrate women scoring higher than men on transformational leadership scales, “the differences in the behaviors of men and women who occupy the same or similar leadership role are . . . small” (Eagly et al., 2003, p. 586). As a result,

regardless of the presence of both styles of leadership, the role that gender plays in the development of these differences in traits must still be questioned.

### **Developmental Factors of Leadership**

The development of various leadership styles and characteristics has been shown to be influenced by a number of different factors. Not only does the environment in which the leadership development is taking place influence what type of leader an individual becomes but also the people who surround the individual can influence the characteristics that she or he develops (Allan & Madden, 2006; Haber, 2011; Komives et al., 2005). Research provides evidence that both peer interactions and adult interactions impact individuals' leadership development in positive and negative ways (Allan & Madden, 2006; Haber, 2011; Komives et al., 2005). The influences that the environments along with the peer and adult interactions have on leadership development are discussed in the subsequent sections.

### **Leadership Identity Development**

Before understanding what influences leadership development, it is important to understand how individuals develop a leadership identity. Komives and her colleagues (2005, 2006) created the leadership identity development model to assist in understanding the progression of leadership development.

The first stage is about *awareness* of leadership, meaning that individuals recognize that leadership exists and is typically seen within authority figures (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Stage 2, *exploration/engagement*, is when “students begin to experience themselves interacting with peers by seeking out opportunities to explore their numerous interests” (Komives et al., 2006, p. 406). This is a time when students get overinvolved and seem unfocused within their involvements (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). After Stage 2, individuals move into the *leaders*

*identified* stage where there is recognition of leaders and followers. Students believe “if one was not the positional leader, then one was a follower or group member and looked to the leader for direction” (Komives et al., 2006, p. 407). *Leadership differentiated* is the fourth stage, which is when students begin to see that leadership can be demonstrated both in positional leadership, but also in non-positional individuals (Komives et al., 2005). Stage 5, *generativity*, is when “personal philosophies of leadership [take] shape” (Komives et al., 2006, p. 411) and when students begin to focus their leadership in their developed passions. Finally, *integration/synthesis* takes place during the final stage (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). This stage is an understanding that leadership is a life-long development and certain experiences will continue to shape their leadership styles. As Komives and her colleagues (2006) found, students at this stage recognized “they would always have a great deal to learn from others and were open to the continual process of self-development” (p. 412).

## **Environment**

The environment can be very influential to students and the development of leadership. Various aspects of campus environments can influence students. Strange and Banning (2001) identified three different factors of an environment that can influence individuals: the physical environment, the human aggregate environment, and the organizational environment.

**Physical environment.** The physical environment on a college campus can serve as a way to maintain particular behaviors (Strange & Banning, 2001). The physical environment includes the structure of the buildings on campus, artwork, parking lots, and even the paint colors present (Strange & Banning, 2001). Furthermore, “the physical environment involves a way in which these facilities are arranged with respect to each other and their general environment context” (Astin, 1968, p. 84). These physical spaces are often encoded with messages about the

institutional priorities and the behaviors that are expected within the environment (Astin, 1968; Strange & Banning, 2001). If a campus has very little space for groups to meet or have programs, it sends a nonverbal message that student organizations and their leadership development is not a priority. On the other hand, on a campus that offers not only meeting space but also office space for organizations sends a very different message. Those organization members would see the importance that is placed on their development and the success of their organization. The physical environment impacts not only how others view the importance of leadership, but also the appropriate behaviors to be enacted (Astin, 1968; Strange & Banning, 2001).

**Human aggregate environment.** The human aggregate environment also impacts the behaviors and perceptions of campus students (Astin, 1968; Moos, 1976; Strange & Banning, 2001). This type of environment is a reflection of and is influenced by the individuals who inhabit it (Astin, 1968; Moos, 1976; Strange & Banning, 2001). Moos (1976) stated, “The character of an environment is implicitly dependent partly on the typical characteristics of its members” (p. 286). This means that individuals within an environment act a certain way, and if they do not act in accordance with the behavioral expectations that have been established, negative consequences are a possibility (Astin, 1968; Moos, 1976; Strange & Banning, 2001). Students naturally build stronger relationships with individuals who are like them and share similar characteristics (Astin, 1968; Moos, 1976; Strange & Banning, 2001). As students build these relationships, human aggregate environments are created and sustained (Astin, 1968; Moos, 1976; Strange & Banning, 2001). When individuals try to be part of a particular environment but do not share similar characteristics, students can be pushed away, which can be detrimental to their development (Astin, 1968; Moos, 1976; Strange & Banning, 2001).

Additionally, this maintains the behavioral norms within that human aggregate environment (Astin, 1968; Moos, 1976; Strange & Banning, 2001). Environments that are welcoming to students and provide opportunities for development, especially leadership development, can have positive outcomes for students (Astin, 1968; Moos, 1976; Strange & Banning, 2001).

**Organizational environment.** The organizational environment, as it was called by Strange and Banning (2001), is similar to the administrative environment that Astin (1968) identified. Organizations include academic departments as well as student affairs departments (Astin, 1968; Moos, 1976; Strange & Banning, 2001). The organizational environment influences students and their leadership development because the decisions made by those in the environment affect the opportunities for students (Astin, 1968; Moos, 1976; Strange & Banning, 2001). How resources are allocated, such as funding for student programs, can either positively or negatively impact leadership development (Astin, 1968; Moos, 1976; Strange & Banning, 2001). For example, if the organizational environment provides funds for a leadership conference for students, individuals will have the opportunity to explore their leadership abilities. However, if resources such as this are not provided, students will not have an opportunity to advance their leadership capabilities. The organizational environment becomes an important aspect of students' leadership development because of the opportunities that will or will not be provided to them (Astin, 1968; Moos, 1976; Strange & Banning, 2001).

### **Peer Interactions**

In addition to the various environments that exist within an institution, interactions that happen within those environments play a significant role in students' leadership development. Individuals are surrounded by their peers, especially in a school environment, and as a result peers influence the way in which individuals develop their leadership skills (Allan & Madden,

2006; Komives et al., 2005, 2006). According to Komives and her colleagues (2005), “peers [serve] as roles models in early leadership identity stages” (p. 597). Individuals look to people their age to determine their own actions to ensure a sense of belonging and membership within a group (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). The more consistent one’s behavior is with the behavioral expectations of a group, the easier that individual will be accepted as a member (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). For example, with students in a classroom who are participating in a laboratory experiment, if a member of the group is trying to contribute but the other members are ignoring him or her, this member will become discouraged and not feel included (Allan & Madden, 2006). As a result, that individual could become disengaged and feel devalued as a member of the group (Allan & Madden, 2006). “Peers [serve] as sources of affirmation” (Komives et al., 2005, p. 597), so when students feel as though their peers are not accepting them, their development is hindered. These students may remain as members of the group and never reach their full potential as leaders, or these students will seek out individuals who are like them to feel a sense of belonging and foster a healthy development (Allan & Madden, 2006; Komives et al., 2005, 2006).

Therefore, students who share similar characteristics tend to find each other and facilitate healthy development of leadership skills, which parallels the environmental influence of the human aggregate (Astin, 1968; Komives et al., 2005, 2006; Moos, 1976; Strange & Banning, 2001). With a sense of belonging, peer interactions can enable an increase in self-confidence and a positive self-image, which lead to development of a personal leadership style (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Furthermore, once an individual has accepted a leadership style that she or he feels comfortable with, a safe environment provided by peers allows for individuals to take risks and try new styles in an environment that does not threaten exclusion from the group (Bressler &

Wendell, 1980; Komives et al., 2005, 2006). These peer interactions, while enabling individuals to develop their own leadership styles, also allow individuals to “overcome self-imposed barriers” (Bressler & Wendell, 1980, p. 662) that may exist in furthering their leadership development. Overall, it is evident from the positive and negative consequences that peer interactions influence the way in which leadership styles are developed (Allan & Madden, 2006; Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Komives et al., 2005, 2006).

### **Adult Interactions**

In addition to peer interactions, various relationships and encounters with adults can influence the development of leadership skills (Allan & Madden, 2006; Haber, 2011; Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Unlike peers, adult interactions start early in life with parents and guardians and continue throughout life with the addition of teachers, professors, and supervisors (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Behavioral norms begin with young children and as they continue to adulthood these behaviors factor into the development of a leadership style (Haber, 2011). For example, a girl who heard from adults multiple times the “importance of serving and including other people” (Haber, 2011, p. 92) will, as an adult, still believe in serving others and incorporate this aspect into her leadership style. She will gather group members’ opinions and make sure to provide the support they need to be successful because it was what she was taught as a child (Haber, 2011). Demonstrated by this example, adults have a considerable influence on the type of leaders individuals become because of the lessons they teach to children (Haber, 2011; Komives et al., 2005).

Past childhood, adults still influence individuals in their leadership development. Komives and her colleagues (2005, 2006) agreed that adults are usually the first to recognize students’ potential to be leaders and often provide opportunities for their leadership growth.

Adults are also a source of substantial support and affirmation for students throughout their development (Allan & Madden, 2006; Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Adults continue to be role models and mentors to individuals, especially when students enter college (Allan & Madden, 2006; Komives et al., 2005). Role models are important for individuals to have because they provide developmental guidance and assist in the struggles of finding a personal leadership style (Allan & Madden, 2006; Komives, 2005, 2006). It is important to note that although these adults can be positive influences, they can also be negative influences on leadership development (Allan & Madden, 2006). Students in a classroom where they are never called upon by a professor or never asked to be group leader for projects will question their leadership skills (Allan & Madden, 2006). As a result, these students will doubt their ability and never reach their full potential as leaders (Allan & Madden, 2006). Having positive adult role models in an individual's life to act as a mentor and provide support is essential for positive leadership development (Allan & Madden, 2006; Komives et al., 2005, 2006).

### **Gender and Leadership**

Gender is a characteristic that individuals are assigned at birth and is a characteristic that influences many aspects of life in the American society (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Barry et al., 1957; Bem, 1981; Bem & Lenney, 1976; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Behavioral norms influence the ways in which different genders act, and research has demonstrated that leadership behaviors are also influenced by gender socialization. By socializing children at a very young age about the existence of genders and how different genders are expected to behave, individuals tend to develop very different leadership styles that match these behaviors (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Barry et al., 1957; Bem, 1981; Bem & Lenney, 1976; Kimmel, 2000; West & Zimmerman, 1987; Whitt, 1993).

Researchers have been trying to understand how gender socialization happens and what it means for society (Kimmel, 2000; West & Zimmerman, 1987). To begin, it is important to understand the difference between sex and gender. Sex is biological and more concerned with “anatomy, hormones, and physiology” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 125). Sex is assigned to infants at birth and has “essential biological criteria that unequivocally distinguishes females from males” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 131). Gender is an achieved status, constructed from “psychological, cultural, and social means” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 125). The debate of how gender is socially constructed and maintained in society continues despite the research and discussion on the topic (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Bem, 1981; Kimmel, 2000; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Although several different theories exist about gender socialization, there are parallels that can be identified among them (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Bem, 1981). Individuals at a young age begin to internalize how one should portray gender (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Barry et al., 1957; Bem & Lenney, 1976). Young girls are taught throughout their childhood to be more nurturing and obedient, but young boys are taught to strive for achievement and be self-reliant (Bem & Lenney, 1976). As a result of being “tutored in femininity and masculinity from infancy, and because gender actions are supported or required in many social contexts, [individuals’] performances feel instinctive and natural” (Aulette & Wittner, 2012, p. 73). According to gender schema theory, children build their gender schema based on what they see and observe about those individuals around them and their portrayal of gender (Bem, 1981). As children observe these behaviors they build a connection between what they see and who is doing the action, which eventually leads them to connect particular behaviors with certain genders (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Bem, 1981). The outcome is the addition of this behavior or

attitude to their gender schema (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Bem, 1981). Therefore, at the beginning stages of one's life, gender socialization is the personal development of the gendered self and the internalization of the information that society presents (Aulette & Wittner, 2012).

Once gender has been internalized by individuals, these attitudes and behaviors are “sustained by the social expectations, gender categorization, and accountability at the interactional level” (Aulette & Wittner, 2012, p. 93). In society, gender is “omnirelevant” (Aulette & Wittner, 2012, p. 77), meaning that gender is everywhere and inescapable. As a result of gender consuming every aspect of society individuals must conform and enact gender in what is believed to be appropriate ways to be accepted (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Bem & Lenney, 1976).

In Bem and Lenney's (1976) study of sex-typing, the data supported that individuals feel more comfortable and had fewer negative feelings about performing tasks that they believed were gender-appropriate behaviors, compared to those that were considered to be gender-inappropriate behaviors. For example, women may see cooking dinner as being a gender-appropriate behavior, whereas men see it as a gender-inappropriate behavior (Bem & Lenney, 1976). Furthermore, this not only affects their own behavior, but as gender becomes engrained it causes individuals to hold others accountable for behaving in gender appropriate ways (West & Zimmerman, 1987). For fear of how other people might react to their behaviors, individuals feel the need to “live up to the normative conceptions of femininity or masculinity” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 136) or risk ridicule and isolation from society. The necessity of conforming to society's constructed gender norms is essential to functioning within society (Aulette & Wittner, 2012). If one behaves in what is deemed inappropriate ways, an individual could be outcast and considered socially incompetent (Aulette & Wittner, 2012). The social

pressures and accountability placed upon individuals facilitates the continual perpetuation of the gender roles and how the roles are portrayed in society (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

In addition to the internalization and accountability of gender roles, the social structure of gender within society continues to maintain its existence (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Kimmel, 2000). As individuals interact with each other and reproduce the same gendered social interactions, a structure is created and preserved (Aulette & Wittner, 2012). Aulette and Wittner (2012) stated, “understanding that we are the producers of the very structures that limit our social action is vitally important” (p. 80). An example is the gendered divisions found in the work environment (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Kimmel, 2000). Men and women tend to select occupations that perpetuate the expected gender, which only reinforces the structure that exists (Kimmel, 2000). “So even as [individuals] do gender at the local, interactional level of social life, that activity supports, reinforces, and re-creates broader structural and institutional processes” (Aulette & Wittner, 2012, p. 79).

With the structural constraints of society and the gender expectations that have been historically established, it is easy to see that gender matters (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Barry et al., 1957; Bem, 1981, 1983; Bem & Lenney, 1976; Kimmel, 2000; West & Zimmerman, 1987; Whitt, 1993). Gender is something that is internalized at a very young age and perpetuated throughout life as individuals hold each other accountable for their actions and behaviors (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Furthermore, this accountability facilitates the perpetuation of the gendered structures already in place by society (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Kimmel, 2000; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Gender socialization is not a concept

that can be readily changed and, as a result, it is important to consider how this socialization affects individuals' aspects of their lives, such as leadership.

### **Gender, Environments, and Leadership**

Gender ratios in an environment are an important aspect to consider when examining what affects leadership development (Haber, 2011; Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011; Komives et al., 2005, 2006; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Taleb, 2010; Whitt, 1993). Leadership development is not only influenced by the presence of gendered role models and interactions with individuals of the same or opposite gender, but also how individuals view themselves as leaders (Allan & Madden, 2006; Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Haber, 2011; Koenig et al., 2011; Kolb, 1990; Komives et al., 2005, 2006; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Taleb, 2010; Whitt, 1993). "Gender roles may contaminate organizational roles to some extent and cause people to have different expectations for females and males" (Eagly & Johnson, 1990, p. 235), which can influence the type of leadership traits individuals acquire.

Role models of the same gender play a significant part in how men and women view leadership and their potential to become leaders (Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Haber, 2011). On college campuses where men outnumber women, especially in roles such as professors, deans, or directors, women lack appropriate role models to represent effective leadership behaviors (Whitt, 1993). Without more mature women to model particular behaviors in an environment where women are learning and growing into adults, it is difficult to know how one should be acting (Whitt, 1993). An environment that is male dominated, especially in leadership positions, sends a message to young women about the type of positions they can or cannot have in the future (Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Haber, 2011). Overall, with a positive same-gender role model,

research has demonstrated that individuals will view leadership positively and build their leadership self-confidence (Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Haber, 2011; Whitt, 1993).

In addition to having positive gender role models, gender can also influence leadership development by the differing ways in which individuals are treated both by peers and by individuals with authority (Allan & Madden, 2006; Haber, 2011). Gender socialization has led women and men to believe that they must act in a certain way and when they do not conform to these expectations individuals can be treated unfavorably (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Barry et al., 1957; Bem, 1981; Bem & Lenney, 1976; West & Zimmerman, 1987). For example, a female student in a male-dominated classroom, or a male student in a female-dominated classroom, is often treated differently regardless of academic or social ability (Allan & Madden, 2006; Haber, 2011).

*Chilly classrooms* are a phenomenon that has been researched and has assisted in understanding how men and women are treated differently (Allan & Madden, 2006). Women in classrooms that are dominated by men are often ignored by professors or told that they should not be doing specific tasks because of their gender (Allan & Madden, 2006). This treatment by individuals in authority can lead students to have low self-confidence and question their abilities as students (Allan & Madden, 2006).

When considering leadership skills, this concept is not any different. Not only are Women and men are treated differently not only in classrooms but also when acting in leadership roles (Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Haber, 2011; Kolb, 1990; Komives et al., 2005, 2006; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Taleb, 2010). Considering the gender composition of a group or organization, the ratios are influential in how individuals are viewed and treated as leaders (Haber, 2011). Women leaders are traditionally viewed as “less

hierarchical, more cooperative and collaborative, and more oriented to enhancing others' self-worth" (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 782). If women decide to venture out of these stereotyped leadership roles, especially in a group that is dominated by men, there can be consequences for that leader (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Haber, 2011; Kolb, 1990; Komives et al., 2005, 2006; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Taleb, 2010).

Women who do not conform to the gender-stereotyped leadership behaviors receive less favorable evaluations and are seen to have less potential than their male counterparts with the same leadership skills (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Montgomery & Newman, 2010). These women can be publicly ridiculed and potentially outcast by their group members (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Komives et al., 2005, 2006; Montgomery & Newman, 2010). Some women have even been referred to as "men in skirts" (Taleb, 2010, p. 296) when their leadership styles are not congruent with the stereotyped behavior that is expected. This research suggests that gender ratios influence the way in which leadership is developed and the leadership characteristics that each gender will acquire (Komives et al., 2005; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Taleb, 2010; Whitt, 1993).

Finally, the ways in which individuals view themselves as leaders will influence the leadership skills and abilities that one develops (Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Kolb, 1999; Komives et al., 2005). Often individuals seek "support and approval of adults in the early stages of their leadership identity development" (Komives et al., 2005, p. 600). With the support and encouragement from important people, usually of the same gender, individuals will gain confidence in their own leadership skills and not be afraid to take more risks in exploring their own personal leadership traits (Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Kolb, 1990; Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Research has

demonstrated that building one's confidence will support the development of a positive self-concept and in turn will facilitate a positive perspective of oneself as a leader (Komives et al., 2005, 2006).

It seems evident, then, that the presence of an encouraging role model of the same gender and an appropriate gender ratio are vital for the success of individuals developing leadership skills (Allan & Madden, 2006; Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Haber, 2011; Komives et al., 2005; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Taleb, 2010; Whitt, 1993). Individuals at single-sex institutions appear to provide this type of learning environment and some research has shown this to be a positive influence on leadership development (Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Kolb, 1999; Whitt, 1993). By removing the gender differences, men and women can focus more on their personal leadership development and not as much on how they feel they should act to fulfill their gender roles (Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Kolb, 1999). A single-sex institution can help individuals "overcome self-imposed barriers" (Bressler & Wendell, 1980, p. 662) and allow individuals to be confident in their leadership abilities as a result of the decreased pressure to conform to stereotypic gender roles.

Furthermore, when individuals are among people of the same gender, they are often treated in a positive and encouraging manner which initiates a positive self-image as a leader (Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Montgomery & Newman, 2010). By decreasing the presence of gender stereotypes "women leaders can produce a more androgynous concept of leadership and thereby reduce bias towards current and potential women leaders" (Koenig et al., 2011, p. 618). This decrease in the bias and expectation to conform to the gender leadership roles allows individuals to develop more self-confidence and leadership styles they are comfortable with (Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Kolb, 1999; Koenig et al., 2011). It is clear then that gender ratios

impact the presence of influential role models along with the ways in which one is treated as a leader. Accordingly, gender ratios influences the ways in which individuals will perceive themselves as leaders (Haber, 2011; Koenig et al., 2011; Komives et al., 2005; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Taleb, 2010; Whitt, 1993).

### **Contradicting Research**

Not all researchers, however, share these views about gender and leadership. Some researchers have found that leadership traits and styles are not always influenced by gender but rather by the organizational structures and the behaviors that roles require (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Haber, 2011; Taleb, 2010). Although previous research discussed implies that gender roles are more influential than organizational demographics, some research has demonstrated that these organizational structures are more influential than gender roles (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Haber, 2011; Taleb, 2010). Eagly and Johnson (1990) found that “sex differences in leadership style are less stereotypic in organizational settings” (p. 242) because of the need to follow the “fairly clear guidelines about the conduct of behavior” (p. 234) that leadership positions provide. Organizational leadership roles can supply behavioral norms that contradict gender role behaviors (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Individuals possessing leadership positions are then responsible for following organizational norms and not gender norms (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

Furthermore, while individuals are interacting with strangers they are more likely to expect gender stereotypic behaviors than when interacting with those with whom they have developed long-term relationships (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). When someone develops relationships with others and no longer sees them just as a specific gender, research demonstrates a decrease in the importance of abiding by gender stereotypic leadership behaviors

(Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Taleb, 2010). From the perspective of this research, the “socialization into leadership roles and selection for these roles suggest that male and female leaders who occupy the same organizational role should differ very little” (Eagly & Johnson, 1990, p. 234).

### **Previous Comparable Research**

The previous research that has been conducted placed a strong focus on the differences that generally exist between men and women as well as identified the stereotypical types of leaders that a person of a particular gender possesses. Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) have done extensive research identifying the differences that exist between men’s and women’s leadership styles, but their research does not focus on women specifically as this current study did. A modest amount of research exists that focused solely on the leadership of women in different college environments.

One study in particular parallels the research questions and the methods that were used in this study. Whitt (1993) completed a study on the leadership development of women students at three all-women’s colleges. This study was designed to “examine and understand the nature of, and student experiences within, selected women’s colleges, and to determine what, if anything, women’s colleges might ‘say’ to coeducational institutions about women’s education” (Whitt, 1993, p. 2). Data were collected qualitatively in this study, using not only observation but also one-on-one interviews (Whitt, 1993).

From this research study, Whitt (1993) discovered that a single-sex institution for women can be very beneficial because of several different environmental factors. The first environmental influence was the presence of role models because of the ability to learn by watching others (Whitt, 1993). At an all-women’s college, individuals are able to see women in

leadership positions and observe their behaviors (Whitt, 1993). Additionally, a women's college was able to provide a higher set of expectations for the students' success but with more opportunities for women to explore their leadership styles and abilities and meet those expectations (Whitt, 1993). According to Whitt's research, a women's college provides a level playing field that coeducational schools cannot provide. When looking at the development of men and women, differences in the needs exist, and often at coeducational institutions resources do not accommodate these differing needs (Whitt, 1993). Instead, at a single-sex institution, professionals have the advantage of being able to accommodate to the needs of just one gender (Whitt, 1993). Overall, from this research, Whitt discovered that an all-women's college environment benefits female students' development in positive ways compared to the ability of coeducation institutions.

### **Summary**

From the research presented between gender and leadership, it is apparent that there is contradicting information. The degree that gender influences leadership development in individuals still needs to be examined. Individuals are influenced by the presence of role models of the same gender as well as the gender ratios that are present throughout the leadership development process. However, whether other factors are more influential is still debated (Allan & Madden, 2006; Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Haber, 2011; Koenig et al., 2011; Kolb, 1990; Komives et al., 2005, 2006; Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Taleb, 2010). As Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) argued, individuals "conforming to their gender roles can produce a failure to meet the requirements of their leader role, and conforming to their leader role can produce a failure to meet the requirements of their gender role" (p. 786). Therefore, it is important to continue

researching the influence that gender plays in developing one's leadership in order to understand how to effectively develop leadership skills among individuals.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

The purpose of this study was to qualitatively explore influences on leadership development, specifically with women undergraduate students. More precisely, this research examined campus environmental influences as well as gender socialization influences.

#### **Design of the Study**

For this research study, a qualitative interview-based method was used. As a result of the research questions presented, it was appropriate to select a research method that would allow for the understanding of the individualistic nature of leadership development and the meaning making process (Merriam, 1998, 2009; Stage & Manning, 2003). Qualitative research has been identified as the appropriate method to research because of the important characteristics of this type of study (Merriam, 1998). The first is that qualitative research focuses on “understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). Instead of quantitative research which focuses on numerical data, such as how much or how many, qualitative research examines how individuals interpret their surroundings and experiences (Merriam, 2009). When researchers seek to understand a phenomenon via qualitative research, they are seeking to understand how individuals construct meaning to comprehend the world that these individuals live and work in (Merriam, 1998, 2009). As Merriam (2009) stated, qualitative research

“assumes that reality is socially constructed, that is, there is no single, observable reality” (p. 8). Therefore, because individuals construct their own meaning, multiple realities can coexist (Merriam, 1998, 2009). Through qualitative research, the researcher strives to not only describe and understand the meaning making process, but also to interpret the process in order to find commonalities and differences among individuals (Merriam, 2009).

This study was qualitative in nature because the way in which individuals perceive and define leadership can be very individualistic and based on previous experiences. Therefore, this study focused not on how many women are in leadership positions, or what specific type of leaders women are, but rather on how women define their leadership experiences as well as how women perceive themselves as leaders.

A second characteristic of qualitative research is that the primary instrument to gather data is the researcher, and the researcher is the primary tool for data analysis (Merriam, 1998). Instead of using an inanimate instrument such as a constructed computer survey, as with quantitative research, qualitative research uses the researcher to collect data through interactions with the participant (Merriam, 1998). Having the researcher collect the data instead of a non-responsive instrument allows the researcher to go into more depth (Merriam, 1998). The researcher has the ability to adapt techniques depending on the participants’ responses and also has the ability to ask additional questions for clarification to understand the data more thoroughly (Merriam, 1998, 2009). With a topic such as women’s leadership development, this type of research was essential in order to be able to understand the participants’ experiences and decrease the number of assumptions that were made about the responses (Merriam, 1998, 2009).

A semi-structured interview process was the design of this study, meaning that a list of questions was developed to ask participants; however, additional questions were asked of the

participants based on the responses (Stage & Manning, 2003). Through this method, as the principal investigator, I was able to not only ask the written questions but also use follow-up questions, or probes, to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's experience (Stage & Manning, 2003). Finally, after conducting the interviews and collecting data, a constant comparative methodology was used to analyze the information.

### **Participants**

Participants for this research study were chosen from two institutions located in a mid-sized Midwest city, referenced in this study as Saint Catherine of the Rose College (SCRC) and Midwest Polytechnic Institute of Technology (MPIT). These two institutions were strategically chosen to maintain as many consistencies as possible within this research. When comparing the two institutions, participants for this study shared some similar experiences. In terms of location, all participants currently were living in the same Midwest city and had lived in the area for at least one academic semester. Additionally, all participants were attending a small private institution and living in a residence hall on their respective campuses. Students shared the experience of attending college courses and having at least one outside campus involvement.

SCRC is a small, private, religiously affiliated women's college in the Midwest. The college was founded in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century by a religious order of nuns as a Catholic institution for women. Although SCRC's total enrollment is 1,700 students, only 325 of those students participate in the single-sex campus-based undergraduate program. The remaining students participate in a distance education program available for both genders. SCRC is a liberal arts college and is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Its mission indicates that the college

is committed to higher education in the tradition of the liberal arts. The college serves a diverse community of learners in undergraduate and graduate programs, while maintaining its historical commitment to women in its campus program. By participating in this community, students develop their abilities to think critically, to communicate responsibly, to engage in lifelong learning and leadership, and to effect positive change in a global society. (Retrieved from SCRC website)

The comparison population of participants was selected from MPIT. This institution was founded in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a technology-based institution, students at MPIT gain degrees in science, mathematics, and engineering. As one of the top engineering-focused institutions in the country, MPIT receives roughly 3,800 applications a year but maintains an overall enrollment of 1,780 students. MPIT is a campus primarily dominated by men, with only 21% of undergraduates identifying as women (T. Chow, personal communication, November 18, 2011). MPIT is also accredited by The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, in addition to other accrediting bodies. Its mission and vision is as follows:

To provide our students with the world's best undergraduate education in engineering, mathematics and science in an environment of individual attention and support. To be the best in engineering, mathematics and science education; to make an impact upon the world in which we live; and to be a leader in every aspect in the delivery of education and the development of tomorrow's leaders.

(Retrieved from MPIT website)

I sought to interview four women from each campus. These individuals would provide information to “answer the questions posed at the beginning of the study” (Merriam, 2009, p.

80). With four individuals at each institution the data collected would reach a point of “saturation or redundancy” (Merriam, 2009, p. 80). Individuals had to meet several criteria to be considered for participation. First, the participants in this study had to be women, as this is a study about women’s leadership. Second, each person had to be an undergraduate student participating in the on-campus program as well as currently living on campus in the residence halls that each institution provided. Individuals selected for this study were also full-time students and spent their entire undergraduate career at either SCRC or MPIT. With all participants enrolling in the on-campus program, living on campus, and spending all of their time at one institution, individuals shared similar on-campus experiences. In addition, the women selected for this research were students with at least one involvement outside of the classroom, and they were traditional students between the ages of 18 and 22. By limiting this study to traditionally aged students, I hoped that individuals would have been at similar developmental levels and make meaning in similar ways. Additionally, with placing a requirement of having at least one outside involvement, I assumed that students would be more likely to have had previous leadership experience and would be able to discuss that experience.

### **Recruitment of Participants**

To begin recruiting participants for this study, I contacted the directors of student life at each institution to serve as a connection between me and the current students on campus (see Appendix A). These individuals provided suggestions of students who could potentially participate; I emailed the students asking for their participation (Appendix B). The goal in communicating with the directors on campus was to recruit students through purposeful sampling, meaning that these people could identify women who would be appropriate for this

study because they would have thought about and experienced leadership. I expected purposeful sampling to identify women who could effectively communicate their experiences.

The student recruitment email was designed not only to explain the focus of the study, but also to state the eligibility requirements for the participants and to ask for students' participation. If individuals were interested in the study, they were encouraged to contact me to set up a time to interview.

Upon receiving an email response from the potential participants, I responded with an email (Appendix C) asking for a convenient time to meet. After establishing the time and location of our meeting, I sent an additional email one day before our interview to confirm the date and time and provide my phone number in the event that we could not find each other at the designated location.

The SCRC director of student life forwarded names of six women on campus that he believed would be willing and able to participate in the study. The dean of student services at MPIT also sent a list of women and provided four names with an offer of providing more if needed. I began at the top of each list and contacted the first four students at each college to ask for their participation in the study. Upon receiving an email stating their agreement to participate, I arranged a time and location for our interview. The four contacts from MPIT all agreed, but the students from SCRC required more contact.

Three of the four initially emailed from SCRC responded stating their interest and we set up an interview time. The fourth student in the first round of emails did not respond, so a follow-up email was sent to request her participation one more time. After waiting a week without a response, I emailed the next student on the SCRC list. She replied that she was interested in participating, but after sending her times and dates that I was available for an

interview, our communication stopped. I sent three follow-up emails to her asking for her to verify her interest in the study and asking for a convenient time when we could meet. However, after a week without a response, I attempted to email the last name that the director of student life had provided. Again, upon receiving her email stating her interest to participate, I sent her a list of times and dates that I was available with the option of her providing a more convenient time. Again, a lack of communication appeared and as a result of time, I did not pursue finding a fourth student from SCRC. Consequently, the participants interviewed included four women from MPIT and three women from SCRC.

### **Data Collection**

Prior to interviewing the participants from MPIT and SCRC, I did pilot interviews with students at my own university. Stage and Manning (2003) highlighted, “Interview selection and training have a direct impact on the quality of interview data collected, the initial interpretations the interviewer makes in the follow-up questions asked, and the field notes recorded” (p. 42). Therefore, in order to train myself to conduct the best interviews possible, it was essential that I conduct pilot interviews.

I met with two students at my current institution as a way to prepare myself for the interviews with the other participants. To recruit these individuals, I mirrored the recruitment of the students from the outside institutions. I contacted the associate director of student activities and requested a list of names of individuals who would meet the qualifications for participation. Upon receiving a list of five students from the associate director, I contact the first two on the list. One immediately responded back and we scheduled a time to meet and conduct the interview. The second individual did not respond, so I moved onto the third name on the list.

She replied confirming her interest in participating, and we also scheduled a time to have the interview.

These interviews were conducted in the same fashion by having the individuals select a pseudonym, complete the informed consent, and then answer a list of questions about their leadership experiences. These interviews were also digitally recorded, so I could listen and critique the experience afterwards.

After the interviews were completed I reflected both individually and with my thesis chair. Individually, I listened to the recordings and assessed the success of the interview. With my thesis chair, I talked about my concerns and together we came up with ways I could improve for the additional interviews. After reflecting, it became obvious that as an interviewer I needed not to focus so much on the list of questions but rather to focus on probing questions to explore more about the students' experiences. It was a goal for the research interviews to focus more on the conversation and information provided by participants and to ask additional questions that would delve deeper into their experiences, while not forgetting the structured questions. The pilot interviews facilitated a better understanding of how the interviews could be successful with the participants from the other institutions.

The interview with each participant lasted approximately one hour in a location chosen by the participant to ensure each person was comfortable in a space she was familiar with. Typically the participant and I met on her campus either in the student union, an office, or the library. Prior to asking questions about these women's experiences, an informed consent document (Appendix D) was completed, which included an opportunity for the women to ask any questions. To maintain confidentiality of the participants, each individual was given a pseudonym which is used throughout this document. Only I know the true identity of each

participant. The women were given the option at the beginning of their interviews to select her pseudonym. If the participant could not think of a name, I proposed a name that they could use.

The interview followed a semi-structured protocol. The questions were broken down into several categories, which were general leadership, personal leadership, campus leadership, and gender leadership (Appendix E). The questions were ordered in a way that low-risk questions about general leadership and participants' personal experiences were asked first in order to build rapport. Upon achieving rapport, the questions began to go more in depth and ask about experiences in relation to their campus and gender. Given that this interview was semi-structured, probing questions were asked to have participants explore their previous responses further and for me to gain a deeper understanding (Stage & Manning, 2003).

Each interview was recorded using a digital recorder and the audio files were downloaded to my computer and password protected. After the completion of the interview, each individual's digital recording was transcribed. In addition to the audio recording, some field notes were taken during the interview. These notes served as a precaution in the event that the audio recording malfunctioned or if the audio recording did not capture some aspects of important data.

### **Analyzing the Data**

The primary way in which the data were analyzed was through the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 2009). The focus of this type of analysis is creating categories for the data being collected while continuing to collect data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 2009). After completing the interviews, I read over the transcriptions and "[jotted] down notes, comments, observations, and queries in the margins" (Merriam, 2009, p. 178). These notes were interesting pieces of the data that appeared to answer the research questions

that were posed at the beginning of this study (Merriam, 2009). This process is called open coding because it first is very broad and considers everything in the data to be relevant (Merriam, 2009). As the coding was taking place, categories were created, which eventually became the themes found within this research (Merriam, 2009).

Within the constant comparative method, the construction of the categories allowed for the data to not become so overwhelming (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 2009). The categories within this research are defined as “conceptual elements that ‘cover’ or span many individual examples of the category” (Merriam, 2009, p. 181). After going through the interviews and noting ideas or statements that stood out, categories were identified by grouping these different ideas (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 2009). These categories were then grouped into themes and this process continued until I was satisfied that the data were fully analyzed and could not be analyzed any further (Merriam, 2009).

In the construction of the categories it was important to consider conditions in which the categories should be created (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) established several criteria that the constructed categories should achieve. The criteria for the categories created are relating to the purpose of the research, encompassing all of the applicable and significant data, and limiting pieces of data to only one constructed category (Merriam, 2009). Furthermore, the data within the categories should be recognizable by the name of the category, so individuals not involved in the study can recognize the data within the group (Merriam, 2009). Lastly, the categories should “be conceptually congruent” (Merriam, 2009, p. 186), which means that the “same level of abstraction should characterize all categories at the same level” (Merriam, 2009, p. 186). Each of these criteria adds importance to the constructed categories created and were considered in this study.

**Trustworthiness**

To ensure the internal validity, or trustworthiness, of the data being collected, I used triangulation (Merriam, 2009). This triangulation process is a way of checking data by having multiple sources examine the data (Merriam, 2009). Aside from myself, as the principal investigator, I gave participants in the study the opportunity to review the transcript from their interview. This process is called member checking and allowed individuals to identify any discrepancies or misinterpretations of the data collected (Merriam, 2009). Additionally, I shared my interpretations with my thesis advisor so that she could provide further insights and feedback about the conclusions.

**Confidentiality**

Confidentiality of the participants was very important and, as a result, there were a number of precautions put into place to certify this privacy. Throughout the study, pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants. Additionally, to ensure confidentiality after the completed study, the digital audio files, transcriptions, and any other documents related to this study were stored on my personal external hard drive and personal computer, both of which are password protected. These files will be maintained for three years and then destroyed, as per Institutional Review Board requirements.

**Standpoint**

As the principal investigator in this study, it is important to understand my personal experiences with women's leadership as well as my connection with the topic. I am a White, heterosexual, middle-class woman. I have lived in the Midwest my entire life, except for three months I lived in western New York for an internship. My passion for leadership began as a first-year student at my undergraduate institution.

Prior to college I had never viewed myself as a leader, despite several of my involvements. As a high school student I was involved in a number of activities, but my focus remained with the tennis team and band involvements. Within band, I not only was section leader for my instrument, but I also took on the role of drum major, which is the person who directs the band in events such as parades or half-time shows during football games. Despite this position, if asked as a high school student, I would have quickly denied the role of being a leader.

As a first-year college student I lacked self-confidence and still could not picture myself in a leadership position. Although at the time I believed that leadership was strictly defined by holding an authority position, I quickly learned through my involvement in a student organization on my campus that this was not the case. I encountered a number of different challenges as a woman trying to be a leader, but I had a strong support system and a few women in professional positions who served as role models.

My decision to research women's leadership was spurred because of two aspects. The first was my own personal experience in discovering my ability to be a leader. The second was my personal observations of leadership on college campuses. After spending time on several different campuses, I have noticed gender differences in leadership representations and I am interested in discovering why those differences exist and their impact.

It is important to identify what some of my preconceived notions were in regards to this research topic. First, it was my assumption that a difference would exist in the leadership of women at these two different institutions. I believed because of the drastic difference in campus climate and gender ratio, women's leadership development would vary across the two institutions. Secondly, in recognizing those differences, I theorized two different possibilities.

The first assumption was that women of SCRC would view themselves as leaders more than women at MPIT, because of the empowerment that may take place on the campus at SCRC.

Women would also have more opportunities to have leadership positions at SCRC and not view gender as a salient part of their leadership experience.

My second theory was that the women of MPIT would be more likely to view themselves as leaders, instead of SCRC. A potential explanation for this difference was that women's leadership opportunities are more plentiful at MPIT than at SCRC because at SCRC women are competing against other women. Additionally, I believed that women at MPIT would recognize that gender affects their experiences on campus, but these women would not believe that it hindered their experiences in any way.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of women's leadership and the important influential factors that impact women's leadership development. Furthermore, the influence of gender on campus was a point of interest. As gender socialization is such an influential factor in human development, this study explored how unbalanced gender ratios are enacted in the campus environment and how that affects women's perceptions of their leadership. Through this study, campus environmental factors and gender socialization were examined in an effort to understand women's leadership development and identify potential influences on that development. The goal of this research study was to seek answers to the following research questions in order to build upon the knowledge already available about women and leadership:

1. How do women students describe their leadership styles?
2. What influence does campus environment have on women's leadership experiences, their perceptions of their leadership skills, and how they perceive others view them as leaders?

This chapter highlights the findings of the research conducted for this study. The findings are based on interviews with seven traditionally aged college students. The data are presented by thematic categories developed according to the constant comparative method

(Merriam, 1998, 2009). An introduction to each participant is presented to provide more context and support the findings of this study.

### **Participant Introduction**

Seven women were interviewed from two institutions. According to the required criteria, each woman was at least in the second semester of her first year and had only enrolled in her current institution. Each participant was living on campus and had at least one outside involvement of her classes. Racially the participants were similar as six of the women were White and one identified as biracial. Geographically the individuals were from cities in the Midwest, and the states represented were Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, and South Dakota.

Each participant was traditionally aged and there was one freshman, one sophomore, three juniors, and two seniors. The women at MPIT each had an engineering major, as that is the focus of the institution. The participants from SCRC had two individuals seeking degrees in education and one in music therapy.

#### **Midwest Polytechnic Institute of Technology**

**Claire's story.** Claire was a sophomore student at MPIT studying chemical engineering. Originally from Indiana, she grew up in a traditional family with one brother and both her parents. She is biracial and described herself as both Black and White: "I'm half, I'm both. So White people see me as Black and Black people see me as White. I think, 'No, I'm Claire, that's who I am.'"

Claire decided on MPIT after her high school teachers identified her strengths in math and science and suggested she look into engineering as a career option. She visited other schools, but felt after visiting MPIT that it was the best option. She "loved the atmosphere" and she felt "it was all about the community and people want to be uplifting and be there for each

other.” Ultimately, Claire would like to be in engineering or management but as she is only a sophomore her career goals are still being explored.

Claire was a very involved student on campus. She was a member of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE), the Delta Delta Delta sorority, and a campus book club. Additionally, she had gone through a campus leadership program, first as a student and then the following year as a mentor. During the summer before her sophomore year, Claire had an internship in product engineering with a well-known company. The following year after our interview, Claire was taking a year away from school to study in Germany. She would not only be taking classes to learn the language but also participating in an internship while overseas. This program was not connected to MPIT and would require her to add a year to her academic studies.

Claire identified herself as a leader on campus but, as she stated, “I don’t know in what capacity.” She mentioned that she did a lot on campus to try and identify herself as a leader, such as building relationships and acting as a role model for other students, but she was “not the top leader or anything.” She currently held an officer position within her sorority and identified that as her “biggest leadership role” on campus. She was nominated to be president of NSBE, but because of plans to study in Germany she could not pursue that option. As a leader, Claire believed her ability to “listen to other people” was her strongest leadership quality.

In her interview, Claire discussed her difficulties in being a person of color and a woman and trying to be a leader. She stated, “People look at me first and see me as a joke.” She expressed feeling a need to prove to others that as a person of color and as a woman she can do whatever is being asked of her. She stated that she had struggled all her life with it because she

went to schools that were primarily White, but she constantly tried to “beat those stereotypes.” She went even further to state that “especially being a female that’s Black that’s even worse.”

However, despite the struggles, Claire discussed how being involved in a sorority had empowered her as a woman to stand up for herself and not be afraid to tell a man not to be disrespectful. She said that she did not encounter many incidents when she felt disrespected but when it did happen, she felt comfortable enough to say something. She said that MPIT allowed her to “learn a lot of self-respect in general.”

**Jennifer’s story.** Jennifer was a junior studying at MPIT and was originally from a small town in Ohio. Jennifer knew she was interested in engineering early in high school because her school allowed her to take engineering classes from the time she was a freshman. Jennifer discovered MPIT from a high school teacher, and when she came to campus to visit, she discovered “people just talk to each other, our tour guide said ‘Hi’ to like 50 people personally and knew their name. And I knew you didn’t find that everywhere else.”

As a student, Jennifer had been extremely involved in clubs and organizations. As a first-year student, she was involved in Society of Women Engineers, Residence Hall Association (RHA), Delta Delta Delta, concert and pep band, and the basketball team, on which she played for a brief period. As a sophomore, Jennifer reduced her involvements slightly but still was busy. She became a sophomore advisor (SA), was elected into an officer position in RHA, and remained a member of concert band and her sorority. Finally, as a junior, Jennifer still had an officer position in RHA and was involved in her sorority and the concert band, but was now a Resident Assistant (RA) instead of an SA.

Jennifer considered herself a leader on campus, specifically in her RA role. She stated that “people look up to me on the floor especially. When something goes wrong they come to

me.” Jennifer believed that others perceive her as a leader but she wanted to ensure that others saw her as a fun leader and not a strict leader because “people view the RAs as the bad guy.” However, Jennifer disclosed that within her sorority she saw herself as a leader but others did not treat her that way because she was not in an officer position. “Sometimes it’s a little hurtful thinking about that but I feel like it happens just because . . . they have the role and they think they’re in power.”

When asked about gender and leadership, Jennifer stated that men tend to be more competitive than woman, so in particular situations men are better than women in leadership positions. However, she also identified that in certain non-competitive situations women are better than men. When asked specifically about her institution, Jennifer mentioned that women find support among other women, whether in a student organization or on their residence hall floors. Furthermore, she said that at MPIT sometimes it is easier to obtain a leadership position as a woman because the students recognize the women on campus and are therefore more likely to vote for them.

**Katherine’s story.** Katherine, a senior at MPIT, did not plan to attend MPIT right away. Katherine had been recruited to another institution to play basketball, but after her father had seen a few conference banners for MPIT he convinced her to look into the institution as an option. Regarding her decision, Katherine said, “It was a questionable decision on my part. . . . I didn’t think it was going to be perfect. I was questioning it a lot but I absolutely love it. I wouldn’t change it for the world.”

Katherine’s main extracurricular involvement centered around basketball because she was a starter on the team beginning her first year at MPIT. As a junior, Katherine became the team captain and remained so during her senior year. Additionally, as a first-year student

Katherine was involved in a number of different clubs including the Christian group and RHA. After her first year, her involvements became very specific. She continued to play for the basketball team and then spent time working for residential life as an SA and an RA.

When asked about her leadership, Katherine identified that she was a leader on campus within her RA position and as the captain of the basketball team. “I’ve done pretty well with basketball so my success there has for some reason enabled me to be a leader with people I don’t really know that well.” Katherine was very self-aware of her interactions with others and how she may be perceived. She talked about her sarcastic nature and how, as a leader, that could be perceived as mean and she “definitely had to work to come off more gentle.”

Katherine was aware of the growth she had made during her four years at MPIT, especially during her sophomore and junior years. She was in a difficult relationship and was dealing with a very sick mother, and during this time she discovered herself and what kind of woman she wanted to be: “I kind of learned to do what I can with college now and I think that helped me a lot. I think I changed a lot as a person.” As a leader, the two years as the captain of the basketball team were the most influential in her development: “They helped me change my leadership a little bit every year.”

Katherine was the participant who acknowledged and spoke the most about her personal development during college. She used her experiences within her leadership positions and her education to search for jobs and, prior to spring break, had already accepted a position with a company.

**Tracey’s story.** Tracey was a first-year student studying chemical engineering at MPIT. Originally from Missouri, Tracey wanted to attend a smaller institution because she thrived in an environment where she knew people and where she could build relationships with her

classmates. As she stated, “I can walk to class and see 10 different people just on my way to class. And I know everyone in my class and you can go and get homework help from anyone.”

Tracey was currently the class president, a member of the tennis team, a member of Chi Omega sorority, and an actor in the campus musical. Tracey decided to run for class president not only because she knew it would be a way to learn about MPIT while gaining leadership experience, but also because “they told me if I was a girl I would win.” With her involvements, Tracey considered herself to be a leader on campus, but as she said, “I don’t always enjoy the title of it because I think the title makes people stand off from me a bit.” She talked about how she tried to present herself in a friendly way and learn others’ names to make her seem more personable, so they did not feel inferior to her.

For Tracy, being a leader meant that others demonstrate respect towards her and view her as someone they can call a role model. As a leader on campus, she understood that she needed to be aware of how others perceive her, so she chose not to partake in particular behaviors that might separate her from other students on campus. Tracey talked about leadership in relation to age, saying, “I find it easier to be with younger people and older people rather than with people my age.” When asked why that was, she highlighted that with the two different groups she felt she could make more of an impact. With people who are older, she could teach them new things and help them understand, whereas with younger people, she was able to be a role model and someone to admire as a leader. With students her own age, she felt she was unable to make the same impact.

Finally, when asked about the gender imbalance on her campus, Tracey discussed how she actually believed that men and women were separated more and she did not always feel the imbalance. She stated that when she wanted to focus on academics, she tended to spend her time

with the men on campus, but when she was looking to be social she hung out with her female friends. However, she did state, “That’s interesting because a lot of times I feel more comfortable stepping up to be a leader when it was girls than when I’m with guys.”

### **Saint Catherine of the Rose College**

**Joan’s story.** Joan was a junior at SCRC studying music therapy. Joan was originally from South Dakota and had been interested in music since high school. She knew in high school it was something she wanted to pursue as a career. She was primarily a vocalist but had learned a variety of instruments throughout her time in high school and college. When searching for an institution, Joan stated the following about SCRC: “There is some type of commonality with students but I couldn’t exactly put a word on it, but it was some type of identity that I could sense.” Campus and the people felt personable, and Joan decided it was the perfect place for her to attend college.

During her first year of college, Joan was very involved in a variety of activities. Joan was a member of the student senate and the music therapy club. Additionally, Joan participated in music ensembles and had a role in a play. As a sophomore, she continued to participate in those activities but also became a member of the Presidential Core, which was “a group of students that are supposed to be an extension of the president and so [they] represent the college at different events.” During Joan’s junior year, she had continued to participate in plays and the student senate, and she also held officer positions in two student organizations. She was the vice president of one club and the president of the other. Joan was not elected into her presidency, but as she stated, “I had an idea for the club and I proposed it to the club advisor. . . . So I was like okay and I was nudged into the position, but it’s been really good.”

As part of Joan's leadership experiences, she had to learn to balance her roles and she spoke openly about the occasional struggle. She said, "Sometimes I have to take a step back and remind myself of what my role is because even though I've been in senate as long as the other officers, that's still not my role." Joan hesitated when asked about whether she believed she was a leader then stated, "I think it's difficult to take ownership sometimes."

Joan credited her institution for allowing her to be able to explore a variety of leadership opportunities. SCRC emphasizes the idea of having each student "find their voice" and Joan discussed how each person on campus lives by that statement: "It is not necessarily an expectation but it is modeled throughout people's four years here." Joan valued her experience and recognized that being at an all-women's institution allowed her to be comfortable being herself and taking risks as a leader.

**Michelle's story.** Michelle was a junior at SCRC and working toward a degree in education, specifically secondary English education. Michelle was recruited to SCRC as a cross-country runner from a town in Indiana. Aside from being recruited for cross-country, she felt a connection when visiting and she enjoyed that people talked about being able to learn to use their voices as students.

Based on the recommendation of her professor, Michelle started her involvements on campus by becoming a tutor for history. As a sophomore, she became an orientation leader, which led to her being hired in an RA position as a junior. She enjoyed her position as an RA because it provided "more of a permanent connection" compared to the orientation leader position. In addition to these responsibilities, Michelle was also involved in student senate starting her sophomore year, and as a junior she was the student senate vice president for her class. She especially enjoyed this position because of the impact she was able to make at the

school. At one point when considering her involvement within student senate, Michelle debated running for president.

I had a friend at the same time who is on senate that also wanted to run for president. And I had originally said, “Okay, well, I am not going to run.” But the current president told me I should run for president. And then I started to think about it, because I was just thinking about it before. My friend got really upset; she said, “You said you weren’t going to run.”

As a result, Michelle decided not to run for president because she did not want to ruin her friendship. When she was asked whether that negatively impacted her development as a leader, she said it might: “I would never know what kind of president I could have been.” She also recognized, however, that as a leader there are occasions that individuals cannot let their personal relationships stop them from achieving their own personal goals. “That’s hard and that’s part of your leadership development, is you have to be willing to let some things go.”

Michelle spoke highly of her institution and the experiences and leadership opportunities that she had been able to gain as a woman. When asked what the important thing she was going to be leaving SCRC with, she stated, “I think confidence. I think confidence in the way that I carry myself and the way I can talk to other people.”

**Sarah’s story.** Originally from a southern city in Indiana, Sarah was a senior at SCRC. Similar to Michelle, Sarah was recruited to play sports at SCRC; she played softball. However, she said, “that was my original foot in the door, was through the athletic program and then when I got here, as soon as I drove onto campus I was like ‘wow.’” Sarah was working toward a secondary education degree with concentrations in social studies and math.

From the very beginning of her college career at SCRC, Sarah was an involved student. In addition to playing softball, she immediately became a member the psychology club and the sophomore/freshman leadership council (SFLC), on which she was elected vice president. As the vice president, her role was not only to learn from the current sophomore president for the following year, but also to work with the group to raise money for an event that took place as juniors on campus. After her first year of college, Sarah was elected president of the SFLC and hired as an RA. In her final two years of college, Sarah remained as an RA on campus, played softball, and was elected as junior and senior class president.

As many of the other women did, when Sarah was asked, she identified herself as a leader. “I think one of the main reasons is because, partially, of the positions I have. . . . I feel like I’m a leader because I’m given tasks that I get to have control of.” To her, being a leader was “leading yourself and leading others, . . . being a good role model, [and being able] to take what you have and go to a place that would beneficial.” Sarah was also very conscious that as a leader she needed to be aware of her actions and behaviors because she was constantly being watched, which “makes me second-guess everything before I do it.” Knowing how important it was to have a positive perception as a leader, while providing a positive perception for her institution, is something that she valued.

Attending an all-women’s institution at first made Sarah a little nervous, but as she said, “that has truly been probably the best thing about this college.” She mentioned a number of different times how supported she felt by the women on campus and how that enabled her to develop her own leadership. Furthermore, she stated,

when you need a president of a class or a president of the student senate, it has to be a woman in order to fill that. I find that to be super empowering, that's a really special and awesome thing that we have here.

### **Data Analysis**

As discussed in Chapter 3, the data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Merriam, 1998, 2009). After reviewing the data, themes were created and are discussed within this section. The themes that emerged from the data relate to the research questions.

#### **Research Question 1**

Several themes emerged relating to the first research question regarding how participants described their leadership styles. Their definitions of leadership and the characteristics of leaders yielded a wide range of responses. Common characteristics identified included care for others, trust, and strong presence.

**Participant definitions of leadership.** Each woman was asked to define what leadership meant to her and each presented a different idea. As demonstrated in their statements, leadership ranged from striving to serve the greater good to an expression of specific personality traits, such as charisma. Jennifer made the following statement about leadership:

To me leadership is someone who isn't afraid to be wrong or be proven wrong. Because you have to take that risk, if you just sit back and not try something because you're afraid to do poorly or get made fun of, to me that's not being a leader. Taking the risk, taking the challenges, and accepting them, and even accepting that you were wrong. I view that as great leadership.

As confirmed from Jennifer's response, some women do not distinguish between the words leader and leadership. Even when a few women identified a difference

between the two words, they still struggled to provide definitions and explanations as to why these two concepts were different.

I have thought about leader before, but I have never thought about leadership before. Um, I would say leadership is a decision to strive for excellence. It is a decision to really work for a greater good in a situation. (Joan)

I feel I should get my dictionary out. I guess the ability . . . Leadership is a noun, so it's, . . . I'm trying to think of it in the sense of the noun. I can do a leader. It's just a person who acts on the behalf of someone else or for the purpose of others. (Michelle)

I think I would define leadership . . . Hmm, that is a good question. I think I would define it as a role that sometimes you choose and sometimes you don't. Which affects many things and it can bring you joy; it can bring you a lot of heartache. Leadership is a role that you accept and that you could fill in order to help others reach a goal. (Sarah)

Katherine, Claire, and Tracey discussed the intentions of the individual:

An addicting aura that people can put out. It's something about the way that they carry themselves and it is something that people are drawn to. That people want to listen to. I think it's very much about charisma you could say but it's just wanting to do the right thing for whatever group you are with. . . . I think it's the initiative to take care of the people around you. The initiative to do what's right for those around you. (Katherine)

Hm, I like the self leader part, so someone that is willing to maybe go out of their way or their comfort zone and go above and beyond what is expected. And also do what they expect others to do. (Claire)

I would say that a leader is someone that can get people's attention for the right reasons and can then take, use the energy, to get people's attention to go forth with whatever their action is. It's someone that's very confident in themselves but not self-centered. It's a positive person that's encouraging and uplifting others. They can also follow through with making a plan and following through with the actions. (Tracey)

Although one single definition of leadership did not exist among the participants, several characteristics of good leaders emerged as common themes. These themes were care for others, trust, and strong presence.

**Care for others.** One of the most powerful characteristics that all of the women identified was the ability to care for those whom they were leading. Not only did they identify leaders who possess these qualities but they also claimed to have this ability as well.

Jennifer mentioned her boss as a person she sees as a great leader because "I can always just go find him, sit in his office, and chat for an hour." Tracey identified a camp counselor that she said "was there to support us and care for us and within just a week of camp I felt very comfortable going and talking with her about anything." Additionally, each one of the women talked about a leader who had the ability to make personal connections, listen to the people they were leading, and worked to make a cohesive team.

Caring for others also was an essential leadership skill that the participants recognized in themselves. Sarah stated, "I think it's important to dedicate the time to be present wherever I

am. I think that makes the people I'm around, it makes them feel like I'm there for them.”

When talking about her leadership skills, Katherine highlighted her ability to take “the initiative to take care of the people around you. The initiative to do what’s right for those around you.”

The participants asserted that in being an effective leader they must care for the ones they are leading. The personal relationships and connections they developed were described as important in gaining others’ respect and allowing them to be effective leaders.

The students highlighted that they often chose positions or involvements because they “could help other people” (Sarah) or because they could “worry about it for them” (Jennifer) instead of putting the burden on other people. As leaders these women “genuinely want to know what other people think about” (Joan) an idea. They wanted to know what they could do to be successful with the team and often considered everyone’s opinions before making decisions. As Joan stated, “It’s a balance of making sure you get the job done and [having] relationships with the people you are working with.”

**Trust.** Participants identified trust as an important aspect of their leadership. “Trust is really [an] important quality. I think that’s a really big deal to be able to trust whoever’s in charge or being a leader” (Tracey). The women talked about how crucial trust was to being a leader because otherwise those they were leading would not believe in them or be able to fully listen to and respect them as leaders. Joan elaborated further, stating, “Trustworthiness is being able to make ethical decisions.” In being leaders, these women often talked about making change and taking the initiative. As leaders they recognized that without trust those individuals whom they were leading would not feel comfortable to follow them in a different direction.

**Strong presence.** The women also discussed the presence of a leader and how that presence reflects their motivation for being in the position. Katherine acknowledged leadership

as an “addicting aura” that people put off and something she hoped she had as a leader. In her opinion, leaders carry themselves differently and are “wanting to do the right thing for whatever group [they] are with” (Katherine). A number of the women described this trait as charisma and they strived to be seen as charismatic leaders.

Furthermore, “a leader is someone that can get people’s attention for the right reasons and can . . . get people’s attention to go forth with whatever their action is” (Tracey). As women leaders on campus, each one hoped to be able to appear as a person who can make change and, as Joan stated, make the “decision to strive for excellence.” When these women talked about leadership skills, although difficult to put into words, they described characteristics that discussed the compelling presence of a leader and that ability allowed others to follow them.

The care for others, trust, and strong presence themes that emerged from the data were the ways in which the participants described their leadership characteristics. Participants also spoke about how they define themselves as leaders. The data yielded themes regarding how these definitions stem from external and internal influences. The themes that emerged were adult/peer affirmation, role models, the perception of others, confidence, and initiative.

**External definition.** The women interviewed for this study discussed a number of ways in which others define them as leaders and how they use those external definitions to understand their own leadership. Not only have other individuals identified them as leaders, but they also use others as role models to shape their own behaviors. Finally, the women discussed the importance of others’ perceptions and how those perceptions also shape the way they view themselves as leaders.

**Adult/peer affirmation.** Each of the women had been identified as a leader from various adults and peers on her campus. For example, Katherine was selected by her coach as team

captain for the basketball team, Sarah was elected for multiple class presidencies by her peers, and Claire was slated by her sorority sisters to be the PanHellenic Delegate for their chapter. Joan, who was nominated by her faculty on campus, was selected to be a member of the Presidential Core group, who were students who assisted with important events on campus.

Joan mentioned her organization presidency and said, “I was nudged into the position, but it’s been really good.” Furthermore, she continued, “I think professors are able to identify strengths in students and so I think they definitely play a role of an encourager.” The encouragement of their professors and other staff on campus influenced the potential participants saw in themselves as leaders. To encourage this idea even further, Michelle stated, “It’s nice to have someone telling you you’re doing a good job. It feels good. And it’s good for someone to reassure your abilities. . . . For them to realize more potential than you see for yourself.”

The importance in having the support and encouragement of the professionals and peers on campus is clear. Discussing her PanHellenic position, Claire stated, “You can turn it down but it is highly discouraged because they really want those girls because sometimes you don’t see yourself as good at that position.” Claire—and other women—used the reassurance of others to personally define her own leadership ability. She believed that if others could see her in the position and possessing the skillset to be successful, she must be able to be successful.

***Role models.*** Roles models are also an influential factor in how women see themselves as leaders and the way in which they described their leadership styles. During the interviews, participants discussed not only how they were role models for others but also how peers and adults had been role models for them. Joan stated, “I think what affects students most is being able to see leadership modeled by their peers and modeled by the people that are just a few years

older than them, and they think ‘I can do that too.’” What is deemed a leader on campus by other people became a way to define their own personal leadership styles and characteristics.

In addition, it became a way to gauge what leadership experiences they may be interested in. Tracey discussed her experience in her sorority, and when she was asked about whether she wanted to obtain an officer position next year, she stated, “I know my big [sister], she’s had an executive position last year and this year and she loves it. I think that’s really good to see.”

These women relied on others surrounding them to define what a valuable leadership opportunity looks like. These role models provide guidance for the characteristics they should possess as leaders. As a result, when the participants were asked what leadership skills they possess, they mentioned characteristics similar to the ones that their great leaders possessed. “She is one of the people that I got most of my leadership qualities from,” Sarah said about her mother. She identified her mother as one of the “best leaders” she knew, and when identifying the defining characteristics her mother possessed, the majority of them aligned with her own skills.

Katherine discussed her perception of leadership and described leadership as “wanting to do the right thing for whatever group you are with.” When later listing her top three leaders, she identified her boss and stated, “I don’t doubt his decision-making at all. He always has [our school] in his best interests.” Therefore, in developing an idea of leadership and defining their own personal leadership abilities, the women in the study use their role models to provide guidance and direction.

*Perceptions of others.* In addition to allowing affirmation from others and role models to define these women’s definitions of leadership, the perceptions of others were also used to influence the perceptions of themselves. Many of the women identified the idea of “living in a fishbowl” (Michelle), which is “the idea that you’re always being watched” (Sarah). These

women understand that individuals are constantly watching them as a result of being given the leadership title. Furthermore, their acknowledgement of constantly being watched leads them to change their behaviors and try to enact the behaviors of a leader.

Sarah declared, “You’re always being watched and that does affect my behavior a lot.” She continued to say, “It makes me second-guess everything I do before I do it.” The perceptions of others influence their behavior in addition to the perceptions of themselves and their ability to be leaders. Michelle highlighted, “Regardless of their watching all the time, you still have to carry yourself in a way that is representative of the image that you want to give off.” Michelle also acknowledged that “sometimes you are judged in a way that isn’t how you would like to be.”

Joan discussed the struggle she faced as she tried to balance preserving a particular perception while being able to manage her time effectively as a leader. She asserted,

I really struggle with that because I want to maintain a perception of being reliable and I want to meet the expectations that’s been made of me, so I think that has been a really hard struggle that I’m not done with yet.

As a student on campus, Joan was very busy but she was still very concerned about maintaining a perception that she was reliable and helpful. As a result, she changed her behavior and occasionally sacrificed other areas of her life to keep that reliable leader perception. Other women in the study also changed their behaviors to be seen as a particular type of leader. Tracey admitted, “I don’t get involved in alcohol or anything because of myself but also because that would separate me from the other people that don’t drink on campus.”

Claire, who was a delegate for the PanHellenic Council within her chapter, talked about how it was difficult to play devil’s advocate because she was representing something that was

not her own viewpoint. She revealed, “I feel really bad sometimes. As you can’t always put it as ‘I don’t feel this way but . . .’ because you actually have to make people believe you.” This is another example of how important the perceptions of others are to these women. Claire was put in a difficult position that occasionally caused a negative perception and she struggled knowing that sometimes it had to be that way because of her position.

The women in this study were beginning to understand themselves as leaders; therefore, they used the perceptions of others to shape their own understanding of their leadership. When others projected their views onto them, they listened and used the information to help them become what they believe to be better leaders. In addition to these perceptions, it is evident their external definition also stemmed from the role models they look up to as well as the affirmation they get from the adults and peers that surrounded them at their institutions.

**Internally defined leadership.** Women in this study also discussed ways in which they internally defined leadership. As they used the external factors to define their leadership abilities, the participants discovered internal factors that were also important to their own perceptions of leadership. This development led these women to discover confidence in their abilities and encouraged them to take initiative within their positions.

**Confidence.** Throughout their experiences at their institutions, the women developed a level of confidence in their own abilities to be leaders. Some identified specific experiences that increased their confidence, and others credited their whole college experience for developing confidence in themselves.

Jennifer discussed wanting to become an RA the year after she was an SA for a floor. She discussed a specific occasion when she managed an event for her floor because her other floor partners were unavailable. She stated that the event allowed her to “see how well I can

handle the stress and handle the pressure and, like, it was awesome!” The positive experience that Jennifer had in getting her residents involved and making the event successful boosted her confidence and allowed her to see herself as a successful leader.

Katherine had a similar experience as she became the captain of her basketball team. At first Katherine was hesitant to stand up and direct her teammates when they needed it and was concerned that it was not her place to tell them when they were doing something wrong. However, she discussed the process of learning how to make those decisions and stated, “The more I felt like I made those very decisions, I think I just built my confidence.” The internal sense of confidence she gained when making these decisions allowed her to perceive herself as a strong leader on campus. With Katherine it also helped to build confidence in her other positions and not just her captain role.

Another woman, Claire, discussed her involvement specifically with her sorority and how that affected her leadership. She stated, “Being in a sorority has definitely allowed me to become a better leader. Through that my confidence has been built up.” Just as Katherine and Jennifer gained confidence in their skills through their involvements, Claire did as well. In her case, her involvement in the sorority allowed her to believe in herself after others believed in her and she saw her own potential.

Two other women talked about their experiences and their increased confidence in their abilities. Michelle, when asked what her institution provided her as a student, declared, “I think confidence in the way that I carry myself and the way I can talk to other people. I think confidence in my own abilities.” Not only did she recognize the confidence she gained, but she also demonstrated an increased confidence when she continued to get involved in experiences that were not encouraged by her professors and peers on campus.

Sarah discussed her development over her four years as a student. When Sarah took on her first leadership role as a first-year student, she said she was “nervous, definitely, to be stepping into that role was something I wasn’t used to.” She even stated, “It was a little intimidating at first the idea.” In the beginning of Sarah’s college experience, she lacked confidence because the idea of being a leader was unfamiliar and she was not sure what it meant to be a leader. However, as Sarah gained the confidence from her experiences, she talked about her abilities and how she could now speak for herself but still felt comfortable asking questions. She gained confidence and that facilitated her success as a leader on campus.

The women, whether through one particular experience or the entirety of their college experience, gained an internal sense of confidence in their own abilities as leaders. Although that confidence was still influenced by external factors, the confidence affected the way in which they were leaders on their campuses and allowed them not to be as dependent on others’ perceptions.

***Initiative.*** The increase in confidence within these women also increased their ability to take initiative and make changes within their leadership roles. As the women spoke about their experiences, it became evident that taking initiative was not only for when they were in leadership positions but also in a number of different aspects in their lives.

For example, when Claire chose to attend MPIT she looked forward to the education she would be able to get, but she was disappointed because they lacked a study abroad program. As a result of still wanting to study abroad, Claire did her own research and found an opportunity that fit for her, and despite having to take a year off of school, Claire decided to apply for the program. Claire’s resourcefulness was a demonstration of her internal confidence in her abilities, because she applied to a program where she was selected from an applicant pool of over

150 candidates. Claire stated, "I am not usually a follower. I'm not the person that'll do things just because others say so or because they are doing it. I'm usually the person that'll do things because other people aren't doing them."

Just as Claire had taken the initiative to find something that her institution was missing, a number of the women also took the initiative to improve or change something within their involvements on campus. The participants spoke specifically about their initiative to take leadership positions because of the positive change they hoped to make. Katherine spoke of her desire to be the basketball captain because she felt the team needed a positive leader. Typically the coach selects the team captains and more often than not the captains are chosen based on seniority. However, despite this norm, Katherine asked her coach to be considered for the captain position despite only being a sophomore student. She said,

I felt like I wanted to take a step as a leader in basketball. I had talked to coach and told him that I wanted to be captain and I know usually the older kids are the captains but I feel like I know what you want and I feel like I could do that for you.

Furthermore, Katherine told me, "being a captain is seen as a right and not a privilege and so for me to fight that and to make it happen I think was a big step." This initiative on Katherine's part demonstrated her belief in her own leadership abilities because if she had not been convinced of her own ability she would not have asked her coach for such a responsibility.

Joan and Sarah also demonstrated a desire to take initiative and make change. Joan discussed at length her role as the initiator in her organizations, especially when it came to making decisions and providing direction. She said, "The president position has fit the initiator role well because it was a dormant club, so I could come in with a bunch of ideas." Joan was

excited to be in a role that allowed her to make changes and implement her ideas. Moreover, she said, even when brainstorming with others “I am the person who will come in and say we can either do this or this.” Joan believed in her own abilities and was confident in taking the initiative to help a group make decisions.

Sarah embraced change and demonstrated that she was not afraid to take the initiative to make things happen. She declared, “I think that’s something that you have to learn here is that we have our traditions but it’s important to remember that sometimes those can change and that’s perfectly okay.” In an institution that is rooted in tradition, Sarah found a way to initiate positive change and challenge some of the traditions of her institution. Although she was met with some resistance, Sarah took the initiative to make some changes that would not have happened without an internally defined sense of self.

## **Research Question 2**

Several themes emerged to answer the second research question regarding how the campus environment influences women’s perceptions of leadership and how they feel others perceive them. To understand the effect that campus environment has on women’s perceptions of leadership, the data were reviewed for aspects common to both campuses. This yielded several similarities, including the size, culture, and non-competitive atmosphere. Next, there was a comparison of the responses from SCRC and MPIT to reveal environmental differences. These differences included self-perceptions through terminology, demonstration of worth, finding support with women, gender versus experience, and the expectations of demonstration.

**Similarities in campus environment.** Each institution had a strong identity and it was evident from talking with these women that they felt supported and encouraged by the individuals on their campuses. When the participants were asked about what they liked about

their institutions, each discussed the atmosphere and the community environment she felt on campus. As Jennifer said, “It’s really a family atmosphere. And I love it a lot.” Within the environment, the women felt supported and felt they were able to contribute to that environment.

As many of them identified, part of the reason that they love their institutions was the size. Claire stated, “This size, it’s really small and the professors are always there for you and the students are always there.” Katherine stated, “It’s kind of scary how quickly some of them know you but at the same time you don’t ever feel like everyone knows you or that everyone’s in your business.” Joan summarized how the size affected her ability to be a leader and how others perceived her: “I think this is a very unique campus environment because of its size, and so I think it’s not easy to be a leader but I think it’s easier to be recognized as someone who is a leader.” Furthermore, she stated, “it is kind of hard to not get involved in things.” Tracey also discussed that she enjoyed the small size of her campus because “my personality: when I’m in a large group, I tend to pull back and get quiet and fall into the crowd.”

A number of the participants also highlighted that the culture of their institution was a place that generated success. Katherine confirmed that “there’s a culture about this place that’s very made for success. It is breeding success.” The campus culture provided opportunities to allow students to get involved and provided them with the resources and support to be successful. Another woman, Claire, affirmed that “it’s all about the community and how people are wanting to be uplifting and be there for each other. Be successful.” As Sarah pointed out, “The people that are here want you to be successful, and it has really been endearing.” As leaders on campus, these women felt they could be successful because the campus environment was filled with achievement and support.

Finally, an aspect that was mentioned by the participants was the non-competitive nature of their institutions and how they worked more in teams than as individuals. “I don’t feel like I’m competing against the person sitting next to me. We are working together” (Claire). They did not feel that they have to upstage their peers, but rather they worked together to be successful. Michelle also spoke about the lack of competitiveness she felt with her colleagues, despite her desire sometimes to partake in a debate. When talking about her involvements she stated, “I think we’re not fighting for positions because we’re each a different piece of the puzzle” and “I think it’s just a different environment where it’s not as competitive.”

From the viewpoint of the participants, the environment of both campuses focused on bringing success to the students, and the women highlighted how important that had been to their development as leaders.

**Differences between the campus environments.** In addition to the similarities across the two colleges, there were also a number of differences presented in how the campus environment influences the women’s leadership development.

*Self-perception through language.* The first theme became immediately evident during the interview process with each participant. This theme surrounds the participants’ self-perceptions through the language they chose to identify themselves and their peers. Throughout the interviews there was a distinct difference in use of the words *girl* and *woman*. Women enrolled at MPIT utilized *girl* when referring to their peers much more than their peers attending SCRC. Not only did the participants of MPIT use *girl* when referring to their peers and those individuals that they led, but they also used it to describe themselves. For example, Tracey stated, “. . . and they told me if I was a girl I would win.”

Additionally, aside from the words used to describe a woman, there was a significant difference between the use of the word *man* compared to *boy*. The use of these words presents an interesting representation of the self-perceptions of the participants in this study. The word *kid* was also significantly used more by the women from MPIT than by the women of SCRC. It was evident through the conversations with these participants that the vocabulary used on their campuses is a reflection of the perceptions of these individuals as leaders.

***Demonstration of worth.*** A theme emerged from the data about the demonstration of one's worth or the need to be able to prove themselves as leaders and as women. The SCRC women did not demonstrate this need in the same way as the MPIT woman. Each of the participants from MPIT discussed how important it was to prove themselves as creditable as the rest of their peers. Claire asserted that "just being able to earn respect is even harder being a female." She talked about the struggle to prove herself worthy of respect not only because she was a woman, but also because she was a woman of color. She also described the intersection of these identities as a challenge: "Especially being a female that's Black, that's even worse." Claire indicated that she wanted to be taken seriously by her peers, especially her male peers. Her nomination for president of NSBE allowed her to feel she had finally proven that she could handle such a position with more responsibility. She stated, "When they did start taking me seriously, they were like, 'Oh, wow. She can really get stuff done.'" For her, even though she would be leaving next year and could not pursue the position, she felt good that she was perceived positively by her peers.

Tracey and Katherine also discussed how they felt a need to prove themselves worthy to their peers. When Tracey decided to run for her class presidency, she decided to run because of the potential to gain valuable leadership experiences. However, she also decided to run because

she was told since she was a woman she would automatically win and she wanted to test that theory. After the election, she set out on a path to prove herself as a valuable class president, but as she put it, she also wanted to send a message that “hey, girls can do this too.” Being on a male-dominated campus made her feel that, because she was a woman, she needed to prove herself and was not automatically seen as a leader. Katherine described the same feeling as she said, “That just took a huge weight off of me because I didn’t have all this work ahead to have to prove to someone that I was worth it.”

Through the interviews, the women of MPIT emphasized the importance of positional leadership. One way these women proved themselves on campus was through their leadership positions. For example, Jennifer talked openly about how important it was for her to become an SA and RA because of the impact she could make on first-year students. In regards to her position, she stated, “I don’t want to be the bad guy, as everyone thinks just because you’re the leader that’s what happens, but I don’t want to be that unless I have to be.” It was important for Jennifer to prove herself as a leader but also to make sure that the perception of her was a positive one.

More importantly, Jennifer’s experience within her sorority supports how positional leadership leads to an ability to demonstrate a woman’s worth as a leader at her institution. Jennifer said,

Sometimes it’s kind of upsetting because sometimes being in my sorority I don’t have an actual office, so sometimes I feel people overlook that fact that, yeah, I’m a junior and, yeah, they are freshman, but they have an office.

In Jennifer's eyes she was not gaining the respect she deserved because she did not have an officer position in her sorority. She alleged, "I feel like it happens just because, I don't know, . . . they have a role and they think they're in power."

Tracey also highlighted how her class presidency allowed her to make an impact and prove that she was able to be a woman leader on campus. As mentioned earlier, Tracey talked about how important it was after her election to prove to everyone that as a woman she could be as good a president as a man. She talked about how important that position was in getting her foot in the door to learn about MPIT. She stated,

Getting a position has allowed me to be on the inside of making decisions of allotting money to different activities of the school. Getting insight on how meetings need to be run for clubs and how clubs come together to get sponsored. She expressed that learning the way that her institution functions allowed her to be a better resource for her peers and in turn demonstrated her worth as a leader.

Claire at MPIT linked her ability to prove herself to the leadership positions she possessed. She alleged, "I'm kind of quiet at first but if I'm in a leadership position I'm a little more talkative." The positions allowed Claire to feel more comfortable using her voice because the position gave her power in her opinion. She also asserted that her sorority role was her "biggest leadership role"; this was the one organization in which she had a specified officer position. When asked if she believed she was a leader on campus, Claire acknowledged that she did but said, "I try to reach out to people and it is not necessarily in every club that I'm in because I'm not a top leader or anything." Claire's desire to make an impact and prove herself was strongly connected to the leadership position that others assign to her.

In contrast, the SCRC women lack the need to prove themselves worthy because, as Michelle put it, “we’re each a different piece of the puzzle.” The women of SCRC talked more about bringing their strengths to the group and often they needed others to balance the skills they were missing. The sense to prove themselves was not prevalent and instead the campus environment facilitated a sense of encouragement and everyone had the ability to be a leader without having to prove they could do it.

***Finding support with women.*** Another theme that emerged from the data was the different ways in which the participants connected with other women on campus. To begin, each participant discussed how important it was to feel connected to her institution and how important it was to have personal relationships with peers and professors, especially other women. When Joan talked about her involvements, she asserted, “I think really getting to know the members and being personable is really important.” She recognized that when she felt a connection to those she was working with she felt more invested and grateful to be active in the club. Additionally, Tracey highlighted that she enjoyed “being able to relate to people” and she has “been able to make some good bonds with the other girls,” which made her time at MPIT enjoyable.

Claire worked to develop relationships and connections with her peers by hosting dinners every week with her sorority sisters.

It’s a way for us to connect and be together without having it be about business.

And more for us to just grow together because I think it’s really important for people to really get along and do things outside of whatever they’re involved in.

So they have that personal connection and they get to know each other better and know how to work.

The connections made through the dinners were important to Claire's leadership position within her sorority as well as to her experience on campus. She considered it "important to people to have those personal connections because it makes it a lot easier to communicate that way." Other women felt the same way, which was demonstrated as they discussed "building those bonds and building those connections" (Sarah) as a vital aspect of their college experience.

However, the place in which those connections and support were created specifically with other women was different at each institution. At SCRC, the women did not have to seek out other women because they were constantly around them. They could find women to talk to in the classroom, in their organizations, at lunch, or in the residence hall where they live. For example, Sarah, when talking about how she felt attending an all-women's institution, said, "There still are the same amount of people being included in the conversation and then you look around and notice that it's all women." Joan said, "I just feel like I can really connect with everyone in the group and I think there's something about most women who really, like really want to connect with other women."

The SCRC woman talked extensively about how being surrounded by all women in their campus environment not only made them feel supported but also allowed them to take risks, facilitating their leadership development. The women participants from SCRC were highly encouraged to get involved on campus by their professors and staff, and more often than not their early involvements were based on the recommendation of someone else. As Sarah stated, "When you need a president of a class or a president of the student senate, it has to be a woman." These positions have to be accepted by women because men are not students on campus.

According to the participants from SCRC, this aspect of the institution allows students to feel more comfortable in their surroundings and take more risks to grow as individuals. Michelle

admitted, “So that makes me want to step out of my comfort zone and it makes me want to be involved with things.” She talked about how comfortable she felt because she believed individuals around her were invested in her future and in her growth process. Joan stated, “Our environment is one where taking risks is okay and it’s a very supportive environment.” She specifically highlighted that it encourages a “type of comfort level with being assertive.” Joan mentioned that she had seen some of the quieter students step outside of their comfort zones and try new things because they were surrounded by women to support them.

Sarah emphasized this point when she talked about the difference in dynamics when surrounded by all women. She said that because of the campus environment, it was okay “for women to step up and say, ‘I don’t agree with you and here’s why.’” Healthy disagreement was welcomed at SCRC, and it taught these women to tactfully disagree and speak their minds, especially as leaders. Michelle summarized her experiences and growth in the all-women’s atmosphere when she declared,

In the classroom at first I felt I noticed it more. . . . But I think at first it did allow me to speak up more and made me feel more comfortable with the things I said. I didn’t have to guard myself that I maybe did in high school. I can come to class in my pajamas, and . . . I don’t feel as judged. . . . I think the skills I learned in the classroom and feeling comfortable in the classroom helped me in my leadership positions because I wasn’t afraid to stand up, to speak up. I wasn’t worried that if I presented this idea, like even if people turned it down, at least I said something.

In being surrounded by women, Michelle recognized that she should not silence her voice but instead take a risk and be confident in her ability as a leader.

Tracey, a student at MPIT, reinforced this theme when she stated, “A lot of times I feel more comfortable stepping up to be a leader when it was with girls than when I’m with guys.” The comfortable setting that the all-women’s environment provided allowed SCRC women to naturally build relationships with one another and increase their leadership abilities. On the other hand, in the male-dominated setting, MPIT women needed to be very intentional in seeking out other women or creating an environment that felt comfortable and supportive.

Women from MPIT had to create that atmosphere that was inherent in the SCRC environment. The women of MPIT, especially within the academic setting, were surrounded by men, so as was stated by Katherine, “I feel like the girls on this campus or at the school do a really good job of finding each other and staying connected.” Women used their extracurricular activities to find the support from other women that they believed they needed. Another participant also discussed women at MPIT and the subgroups that formed for even more specific support. Jennifer stated,

Varsity athletics for women is another example on campus where people, where girls can get together and be sports girls. They can be involved with athletics and then their school work, they know what each other is going through and understand each other a little bit better.

Each woman from MPIT had at least one involvement that was solely for women or would surround them with women. Claire, Jennifer, and Tracey were involved in a sorority and Katherine and Jennifer were RAs and SAs, which allowed them to be leaders for a floor of women. Furthermore, Tracey and Katherine played sports on an all-women’s team. As Claire stated, “It’s nice just to have that girl time and it’s nice to be able to grow as a woman. And be able to grow as a leader because there are lots of opportunities to grow as a leader in a sorority.”

In an academic setting that was uncontrollably male-dominant, the women at MPIT used their social environment as a way to connect and feel supported by other women. Tracey talked about her experiences on campus and said, “I guess living situations and in comfortable situations I was with girls, but then in the academic part of what goes on in the school is that I am surrounded by guys more.” Several of the women talked about how, in the academic setting, men had been known to overlook the women and often discredited their abilities within the classroom. Katherine pointed out, “One of my best friends . . . got dogged in one of her project groups. The guys were just double-checking everything that she did and nothing was ever good enough.” As a result of this, women found spaces where they could get what they need from other women. MPIT women searched for other women and created an environment that felt like the campus environment of SCRC.

*Gender versus experience.* The perceptions of women on each campus in terms of their leadership abilities were different. At SCRC, because women were everywhere, when looking for leaders the first consideration was not whether the candidate was a man or a woman, instead it was based on whether the candidate was qualified for the position. However, when a student at MPIT was considering candidacy for a leadership position, often the first consideration was whether the candidate was a man or a woman.

Tracey, from MPIT, was told if she ran for class president she would win because she was a woman:

I was like, this is really funny; they say only one girl wins and all the girls go for that girl and the guys’ votes are split. Okay this could be funny, I am going to decide the last minute and possibly win this.

In this case, instead of looking at the different candidates in terms of their experience, the candidates were looked at in terms of gender. At MPIT, women were in the minority so they tended to be more recognizable than the men on campus. Therefore, the women on campus, when attempting to take leadership positions, stood out more because of their gender. Jennifer also encountered this on campus when she ran for the “service chairman” for the RHA. When the election took place Jennifer was running against a man, and although she was not sure that her getting elected was entirely because of her gender, she could also not deny that it could have been a contributing factor.

The women of SCRC, however, did not experience this because all the students on campus are women. These individuals alternatively were selected into a leadership position because of their experience and because of their potential to be great leaders. For example, Michelle was recommended to be a history tutor because she had the skills to be successful. Joan was nudged into the presidency of her student organization because she had great ideas about how to make an active organization and move in a forward direction, not because she was a woman. Sarah, who was not only the junior class president but also the senior class president, was elected largely due to her experiences and personality and not her gender. Sarah also proclaimed that it was hard not to get involved on campus because everyone was constantly trying to give her more experience. As she claimed, “As far as leadership goes it’s forced upon you. So you have to take it.”

The data support that gender was not as salient of an identity for the SCRC campus environment because everyone was the same gender. However, the campus environment at MPIT placed more of an emphasis on gender, especially because the gender ratio was so unbalanced. On my visit to the MPIT campus, it was clear that there are such a limited number

of women on campus that when someone visits, the students know. As the campus is historically an all-men's college, women still struggle to be recognized for more than just their gender.

*Expectations for behavior.* In addition to the previous themes, one final theme developed from the data in this study. There were differences in the behavior expectations for the women on each campus. At SCRC, there was an expectation for students to be themselves and learn to use their own voices. However, at MPIT there was an expectation to behave in a particular manner to be accepted as a student on campus.

One of the sayings at SCRC was that students will “find their voice.” Finding their voice was the idea that students learn to speak for themselves in a confident way, whether that be in providing an opinion about an idea or speaking up to disagree with another perspective. Another participant, Michelle, said that finding voice means “you learn to speak on behalf of others.” As Sarah highlighted, finding their voice means “having the courage to step out and say ‘yes, but no,’” which means not being afraid to speak up to provide a different perspective.

Sarah gave an example of how she had used her voice as a student. As a member of the softball team, Sarah interacted with her coach on a regular basis. There was a day in which she was talking with her male coach and he made a comment that Saint Catherine's “really needs a strong male leader to lead all of those women.” Sarah, without hesitation, challenged her coach and pointed out that this mentality was “the opposite of our mission. . . . [SCRC] needs a female leader because we encourage female leadership.” The institutional culture encouraged women to be themselves and stand up for what they believe in and it was evident in the way that the women spoke. Furthermore, when students at SCRC used their voices they were perceived as great leaders and ones willing to learn.

This mentality, on the other hand, was not present with the participants from MPIT. MPIT had only recently admitted women. It was evident from the discussions that these women felt pressured to act in a traditionally masculine way. Katherine was talking about a tradition on campus called “naked laps”: in the event that someone loses a game and does not score a single point, they are expected to take a naked lap. This expectation included women because, as Katherine said, “if they get cornered into it they will offer baked goods or something. But the guys are like, that’s a part of life and they are like, ‘Okay, let’s do it.’”

Additionally, the perceptions of women still were very reserved. Therefore, instead of teaching a woman on campus to use her voice and not be afraid as a leader to express her opinion, her voice was silenced. Katherine stated that some women on campus “maybe are not getting a chance to speak up when they’re surrounded by guys.” Likewise, Claire said that in certain situations when men were being disrespectful she tried to “brush it off my shoulder and maybe laugh a little bit. Just ignoring it is the best and to keep being myself.”

The women of MPIT struggled finding a balance between being themselves and being accepted by their male peers on campus. In the academic setting these women were surrounded by men and typically were only one of a few women in the classroom. As Jennifer disclosed, within her organizations and residential life position she was “this bubbly crazy person,” but in class she “tends to be quiet and a little bit more reserved.” However, Jennifer did highlight that “I really enjoy when guys get you involved in it, they treat you the same as a guy, which is awesome.” It was clear from this statement that there was an expectation to act in a particular way to be accepted with the majority of campus, who were men. Instead of being accepted as a woman on campus, when Jennifer behaved in a particular way she was accepted by her peers and treated as an equal.

Each institutional environment produced and reinforced expectations for the ways students must act. At SCRC, the expectation was that women be themselves and try new experiences to grow as leaders and individuals. Conversely, the women of MPIT were expected to conform to the masculine traits that the campus environment reinforced. As a result, there was a difference in the expected behaviors of these women on campus.

### **Summary**

Chapter 4 highlighted the data that were discovered during this study. The participants described their leadership abilities and how their campus environments influence their perceptions of leadership. Chapter 5 will provide an interpretation of the themes and how they connect with the research literature.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter 5 emphasizes the themes extracted from the data and builds a connection between those themes and previous research. Implications of this study for future research and suggestions for best practices on college campuses are included in the chapter.

Seven women were selected as participants for this study. The participants were asked a series of questions in a semi-structured interview to explore the idea of women's leadership and the influence of their campus environment on their experience. The research in this study searched for answers to the following research questions:

1. How do women students describe their leadership styles?
2. What influence does campus environment have on women's leadership experiences, their perceptions of their leadership skills, and how they perceive others view them as leaders?

The data revealed several different thematic findings in regards to these research questions. Overall, these women all believed they were leaders on campus and provided definitions and characteristics of their leadership. The participants stated that their campus environment was supportive and enabled their development, but they also presented a number of differences between their institutions.

### **Defining Leadership**

Participants were asked to describe their leadership experiences and characteristics of their own personal leadership styles. Participants were also asked to describe the leadership characteristics of individuals who they believed were good leaders. These definitions, although different, provided several themes that correlate and support previous research. Care for others, trustworthiness, and a strong presence were three themes that emerged from the data.

Each of these themes emphasized the personal side of the leadership as the relationships were the primary focus. In caring for others, these women wanted to be leaders that took away worry and took on more difficult tasks. It was their belief that caring for others would make them better leaders because it showed support and dedication to those they are leading. As they showed support and built personal relationships, the participants gained respect and became effective leaders.

Trust was a second theme that surfaced during the discussions about leadership definitions and characteristics. Many participants gained trust as leaders by building strong relationships with the ones they were leading. This trust was especially important when they were trying to make changes or present new and different perspectives. Many participants also recognized that a strong presence was important to be a successful leader. They described this presence as charisma or an “addicting aura” (Katherine) that leaders had. This presence made the leader they were describing someone whom they wanted to be led by, and it made them believe in that leader and his or her goals for the group. This strong presence also made the leader a role model and someone that the participants wanted to learn from and develop a relationship with.

The three primary characteristics that emerged from the data provide support for previous research on leadership styles and characteristics. Women described leadership characteristics that perpetuated gender stereotypes but also supported the research that women develop different leadership characteristics than men (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Haber, 2011; Park, 1996; Taleb, 2010). Trust, strong presence, and care for others are characteristics that correlate with the transformational and interpersonal-oriented leadership styles (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Haber, 2011; Park, 1996; Taleb, 2010).

These two leadership styles focus more on building personal relationships and “tending to others’ morale and welfare” (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 786), which is what the participants spoke of. The women highlighted characteristics about the people they were leading or working with rather than characteristics about the job and how to get the task done effectively. It was important for them, as leaders, to have connections and be able to do more than just work towards a goal. Gender socialization implies that women are more nurturing and care more about the emotions of others as compared to men (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Kimmel, 2000; West & Zimmerman, 1987), which supports the themes created.

The characteristics the participants described support that gender differences exist between leadership styles. Women are apt to develop leadership styles that reflect the transformational and interpersonal-oriented styles (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Haber, 2011; Park, 1996; Taleb, 2010), which maintain the socialized expectations of gender. The data confirm that women acquire leadership styles that are more nurturing and people-focused as the participants talked about their need to care for others, have a strong presence, and build trust with those they were leading. The qualities that the participants discussed verify the gender

stereotypes and support the research that women develop leadership styles based on those stereotypes.

**Leadership identity development.** The participants addressed their leadership development during college. Many of the women highlighted they had changed since coming to college and gained confidence in their own abilities. External and internal factors surfaced about how they viewed their own leadership abilities. The themes that emerged were the influence of role models, adult and peer affirmation, and the perceptions from others. As their leadership developed, the women in the study moved toward an internal definition, which created two more themes of confidence and initiative.

The external factors that defined these women were based on not only what others demonstrated through role modeling but also what others thought about the participants. The role models on each campus that the participants deemed as effective became influential in how the participants behaved as leaders. Joan talked about how she learned to be a leader on campus because leadership was constantly modeled by others who were just a few years older than she. Sarah mentioned how important it was for her to see other women successfully holding leadership positions, such as the institution's president. The role models shaped the behaviors that these women viewed as acceptable leadership and therefore were one external factor in their understanding of leadership.

The adult and peer affirmation was especially important to participants in their ability to be leaders. The women talked about professors, professionals, and other students who helped them establish their leadership. Michelle summarized her experience:

It feels good. And it's good for someone to reassure your abilities. I think the confidence comes from other people saying, and it's not like I feel like I need

gratification or anything, but once in a while it's nice to hear you're doing a good job.

Michelle's statement about others' reassurance is reflective of many other statements participants made about how affirmation from others influenced their leadership development. The peers and adults who surrounded the participants significantly impacted their perceptions and descriptions of their own leadership abilities and characteristics.

Others' perceptions of the participants also externally defined leadership for the women at the two institutions. How they believe they were being viewed affected their actions and behaviors. They wanted to be seen in a positive light and be viewed as leaders, so in certain situations they would change how they acted. The women chose not to drink, "hold back their personality" (Katherine), or "second-guess everything" (Sarah) before they did it, in order to maintain that positive perception from others. Others' viewpoints manipulated the way the participants became leaders and how they viewed themselves as leaders.

As they developed their leadership skills and gained more experience, the external factors that influenced the participants' definitions of their leadership diminished and the internal factors became more convincing. Their own confidence and desire to take initiative became the internal factors that the participants used to define their leadership. Not only did they feel more confident in their own abilities, but their confidence allowed them to feel more comfortable taking risks. The women tried new things in their organizations and challenged the traditions at their institutions.

This transition from external definition to internal definition supports the leadership identity development theory that Komives and her colleagues (2005) created. Many of the participants demonstrated a progression from a strong external definition of their leadership to a

more internal definition of their leadership. When they were externally defined, they were influenced by role models who helped build their confidence and belief in their own abilities.

In the beginning stages of the leadership identity development theory, individuals are externally defined by the surrounding people (Komives et al., 2005). “Adults [play] a key role as affirmers and sponsors. . . . They [encourage] the student to get involved and consider taking on more responsibility” (Komives et al., 2006, p. 406). Each of the women mentioned an adult or a peer who influenced her to get involved on campus. For Michelle, it was her professor who noticed she was great with history and encouraged her to become a tutor. For Joan, it was a club advisor who encouraged her to take on the presidency position for an organization. Claire discovered her study abroad program from a previous counselor. The participants used other individuals as role models and sources of affirmation to indicate how they should behave as leaders. After gaining an understanding of how they should behave, they sought the perceptions of others to determine whether they were accurately portraying those leadership behaviors, which supports the theory of leadership identity development (Komives et al., 2005, 2006).

As women progress in the development of a leadership identity, they move from an external definition to an internal definition (Komives et al., 2005, 2006); this progression is supported by the data from this study. In the theory, individuals recognized “that one could be a leader regardless of one’s role in the group [and] leadership identity began to be internalized” (Komives et al., 2005, p. 410). In this study, many of the participants discussed their increased confidence and certainty in their skills as a leader. With an internal definition of leadership, these women become less dependent on what others thought of them and more dependent on what they thought of themselves. Their ability to take risks and try new ideas within their organizations is an example of their internal definition. If the women were not internally

defined, they would not be willing to take risks and challenge the traditions because of the potential negative consequences.

The participants' personal definitions of leadership provide support for the leadership identity development theory (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). The themes that emerged surrounding role models, peer and adult affirmation, perceptions of others, confidence, and initiative, demonstrate the progression from an externally defined idea of leadership to an internally defined idea of leadership.

**Women's development.** The themes regarding how individuals define their leadership also relate to the how these participants developed as women. The cognitive development theory created by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) explains the development of the women in this study.

The theory comprises different perspectives on how women make meaning and how they understand and know the world (Belenky et al., 1986). There are five perspectives that women progress through as they develop their self, voice, and mind: silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge (Belenky et al., 1986). Overall, the theory states that women progress from a perspective of solely listening to others to a perspective of listening to others but with the ability to listen to their own voices and then make decisions (Belenky et al., 1986).

Silence is the first perspective that women experience, and it is a time when women "find meaning in the words of others [and] they see authority as the all-powerful" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 27). Silence is not really a stage of knowing but rather a stage of not knowing (Belenky et al., 1986). As women begin to develop a different perspective, they progress to received knowing, which is a state of mind that believes in one truth, and "they learn by listening"

(Belenky et al., 1986, p. 37). The difference between silence and received knowing lies in who can actually carry out an action (Belenky et al., 1986). With silence, individuals rely strictly on others to carry out actions, but with received knowing individuals have the ability to learn how to do something from an authority figure and carry it out for themselves (Belenky et al., 1986).

Subjective knowing follows this perspective and is a dramatic shift when women begin to understand they have their own voices and selves (Belenky et al., 1986). “For many of the women, the move away from silence and externally oriented perspective on knowledge and truth eventuates in a new conception of truth as personal, private, and subjectively known” (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 54). During the subjective knowing perspective individuals can become blind to others perspectives and only listen to their inner voice (Belenky et al., 1986).

Following subjective knowing, women transition into procedural knowing; this way of knowing focuses not on what people know but how they know it and form an opinion about it (Belenky et al., 1986). Women from this perspective focus on a “more objective [rather] than subjective knowledge” (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 98). The final way of knowing is constructed knowing (Belenky et al., 1986). In this perspective there is an “effort to reclaim the self by attempting to integrate knowledge that they felt intuitively was personally important with knowledge they learned from others” (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 134). Women with this viewpoint are able to understand that with knowledge comes ambiguity and occasional internal conflict and there is acceptance of this aspect (Belenky et al., 1986).

The participants provided support for the cognitive development theory as they spoke about their college experience. The emphasis on role models and importance of others’ perceptions that emerged from the data demonstrate how they used the voices of others instead their own. Many of the participants discussed listening to professors, counselors, or coaches

because they provided a direction for them and helped them find the right path. Katherine relied on her coach to tell her when it was appropriate for her to step up and guide the team, rather than Katherine trusting her voice initially as the captain. Her perspective at this point relied heavily on an authority figure, and she depended on her coach to provide knowledge about appropriate behavior as the captain. Katherine progressed, however, to finding her own voice, and she gradually started to make her own decisions for the team. This example supports the theory of Belenky and her colleagues (1986), because of Katherine's transition from dependence on others to being able to use her own inner voice, with occasional assistance from others, to make decisions and gain more knowledge.

Many of the participants also discussed their increased confidence as they spent time in college and how that confidence allowed them to take more risks. This confidence in their own ability relates to the development of the inner voice, as it relates to the theory (Belenky et al., 1986). As they gained confidence and started to stand up for themselves and initiate change, they transitioned into another perspective that allowed them to see that there is not always just one truth or answer (Belenky et al., 1986). In understanding that knowledge can be more relative, the women began to challenge the regular way of doing things on their campus. Sarah challenged an old tradition regarding an annual event at SCRC and, despite receiving some negative feedback, she did not change her mind and believed in her own voice and perspective.

The majority of the participants also discussed their transition from depending on others for guidance and knowledge to being able to build this knowledge on their own with some help. The women reflect the theory as they not only moved from external defining themselves to internally defining themselves, but they also demonstrated an understanding that knowledge is relative and sometimes there is not just one right answer.

## **Campus Environment**

In exploring the answer to the second research question about how the campus environment influences women's leadership development, I found a similarity in how the participants described their campuses. The participants described feeling supported within their campus environments and discussed how the campus environment had facilitated their success.

The women all spoke positively about the campus environment at their institutions. They described the environment as a "family atmosphere" (Jennifer) and many of them mentioned that during their campus visits it was the campus environment that helped them make the final decision to attend that school. Each woman sought out a campus that would enable her to feel connected but at the same time not feel that "everyone knows you or that everyone's in your business" (Katherine). The participants emphasized the importance of a connection not only with other students but also with the faculty and staff on campus.

The students lacked a competitive feel and a number of them attributed that to their success as students. Instead of focusing on being better than the persons sitting next to them in classes, they felt comfortable asking questions and seeking out the assistance of their professors. Acknowledgement of the campus size was also discussed by the participants. These individuals recognized that both the small number of people on campus and the physical size of the campus facilitated great relationships and their ability to be successful.

Previous research by Strange and Banning (2001) supports the findings about the campus environments and their influence on students. The human aggregate environment highlights the importance of individuals within an environment (Astin, 1968; Moos, 1976; Strange & Banning, 2001). In fact, Strange and Banning (2001) noted that "human characteristics influence the degree to which people are attracted to, satisfied with, and retained by those environments" (p.

35). All of the women talked about how connected they felt to their campuses and many of them identified ways that they try to contribute to the environment. The data offer evidence of the importance of the human aggregate because of the weight that was placed on the relationships at each institution. Without the relationships these women may not have continued to pursue degrees or try new experiences and become leaders.

The conversations about the noncompetitive atmosphere also factors into the human aggregate on the college campus. "I don't feel like I'm competing against the person sitting next to me. We are working together," affirmed Claire. This demonstrated Moos's (1976) point that the "character of an environment is implicitly dependent on the typical characteristics of its members" (p. 286). The individuals in their campus environments demonstrated support and encouragement, and, as a result, the campus environment reflected that for each participant.

The physical environment at the institutions also had a large impact on the students' experiences. As they spoke about the small physical size of the institution, it was apparent that it influenced their experiences in the environment. Katherine spoke about her residence hall and everyone keeping the doors open and hanging out in each other's rooms. The residence hall configuration in this situation allowed for students to constantly be interacting with one another and promoted the welcoming atmosphere that these women talked about.

The data in this study support the importance of having an environment where students feel comfortable and welcomed. The previous research regarding campus environments and their influences on students is supported from the findings in this research. The influence in this case was positive and it demonstrated that, despite the gender imbalance at these two institutions, there is still some consistency in how the individuals view their campus.

### Self-Perceptions Through Language

A difference emerged in the terminology the women at the two institutions used to describe themselves and their classmates in relation to gender. The women at MPIT remarked more often they were *girls* and their classmates were *boys* and *girls*. Additionally, the participants also utilized the word *kids* when describing others. Conversely, the women from SCRC when speaking about others and their gender stated the words *women* and *men* more often. They also used *individual* or *people* to describe others or a group when not identifying gender.

This difference in language maintains a difference in self-perception. Individuals within the American society learn what appropriate behaviors are as a result of gender socialization and individuals learn how to perceive themselves as a particular gender (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Barry et al., 1957; Bem, 1981; Bem & Lenney, 1976; Kimmel, 2000; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Every person is assigned a sex at birth but develops a gender identity based on their surrounding environment (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Barry et al., 1957; Bem, 1981; Bem & Lenney, 1976; Kimmel, 2000; West & Zimmerman, 1987). As Aulette and Wittner (2012) mentioned, “socialization [involves] internalizing social norms as expectations about how to feel, think, and behave in social roles they inhabited” (p. 69).

A societal difference exists between a man and a woman and a boy and a girl and this study provides evidence that there is an additional difference between girl and woman and boy and man. In a society that uses the word *girl* to describe a female adolescent who is not mature (Aulette & Winner, 2012; Kimmel, 2000), the MPIT women demonstrate the difference in the impact of gender socialization on their campus. The participants from SCRC view themselves as more mature and as adults, compared to MPIT participants who potentially still view themselves as *girls* or in a younger way. These two words imply a very different development and maturity

level and the campus environment influences the self-perceptions of these women and how they describe themselves as well as how they view their leadership.

### **Demonstration of Worth**

A difference between the MPIT and SCRC environment was the need or desire that the participants felt to prove themselves worthy as women and as leaders. Women attending MPIT talked about their need to prove themselves much more than the women from SCRC. Claire, Katherine, Jennifer, and Tracey discussed a need to establish themselves, and some specifically identified the need to prove themselves as women. In her class president position, Tracey talked about how important it was for her to show that women can be as successful as men. It was important for each of these women to prove that they have the same abilities as their male counterparts.

Research has demonstrated that women struggle more than men when holding leadership positions, especially when not conforming to the expected gender behaviors (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Montgomery & Newman, 2010). The participants at MPIT discussed the need to prove themselves, because the men on campus perceive the women as less favorable than other men. The participants from SCRC did not express the same pressure to prove themselves, because they are constantly surrounded by other women. Gender is less important in that environment, and therefore they do not need to demonstrate their worth as leaders.

Additionally, examining the population of students at MPIT compared to SCRC, the women at MPIT were all in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. Women within STEM fields report facing a number of challenges as they are largely outnumbered by men (Beede et al., 2011; Glass & Minnotte, 2010; Rosenthal, London, Levy, & Lobel, 2011;

Shapiro & Williams, 2012). According to an Economics and Statistics Administration brief, women comprise only 24% of the STEM jobs in the country (Beede et al., 2011). As a result of this underrepresentation, women often face discrimination (Glass & Minnotte, 2010; Rosenthal, et al., 2011; Shapiro & Williams, 2012).

The campus environment at MPIT reflects the STEM field career environment, and research in STEM fields supports how the women in this study feel on their campus. When only 21% of these students are women, individuals encounter challenges because they are so outnumbered. One of these challenges is the need to prove one's worth as a woman on a male-dominated campus.

The women at MPIT indicated the need to prove themselves worthy of being treated as equals. Previous research about disproving the stereotypes that exist about women in STEM fields supports the theme (Glass & Minnotte, 2010; Shapiro & Williams, 2012). Shapiro and Williams (2012) highlighted stereotype threats that exist for women in STEM fields. Stereotype threats are "a concern or anxiety that one's performance or actions can be seen through the lens of negative stereotype" (Shapiro & Williams, 2012, p. 175).

It was evident as the participants spoke about their positions that they were working to prove the stereotypes wrong. Tracey made the comment that her class presidency was a way for her to say, "Hey, girls can do this too." The desire for the women of MPIT to prove themselves worthy and prove themselves to be on an equal playing field with their male counterparts was evident. They strove to demonstrate to others on campus that the stereotypes about them were not true, which relates to the research on women in the STEM fields.

The SCRC campus environment provided a very different atmosphere for students. The participants at SCRC did not feel the need to establish their worth, but rather they knew that they

were bringing something unique to the groups they were working with. Everyone at SCRC is “a different piece of the puzzle” (Michelle), meaning they had different experiences that were needed for the success of everyone. The SCRC environment was also different because students were pursuing degrees in a variety of fields. MPIT is focused in the STEM fields and SCRC is open to science, education, and the humanities, which provides a very different environment. These two campus environments offer a difference in how individuals perceive their worth or usefulness, which affects their perceptions of their leadership.

### **Finding Support With Women**

The culture of women supporting women was different between MPIT and SCRC as a result of the gender ratios. The women at SCRC discussed the feelings of support they have on campus and how important the support has been to their development. The women of MPIT also discussed the support that they felt on campus, but these students demonstrated a specific difference of finding support among other women. At SCRC, the students were surrounded by other women because those were the only students living on campus and attending classes. However, the participants at MPIT needed to find other women and intentionally involve themselves in activities, because otherwise they were outnumbered and surrounded by men.

The data for this emerging theme support the research about counterspaces on college campuses. Counterspaces are defined as places where students can feel safe and comfortable to be themselves; this space can either be a physical structure or created with a group of people (Case & Hunter, 2012). The women of MPIT, especially within the academic setting, are outnumbered by men. The MPIT women in this study were involved in a variety of activities, but they had at least one involvement that is entirely women. Three of the four women were

involved in a sorority and two were resident assistants or sophomore advisors for all-women's floors in the residences halls.

The ability to be around women offered a different type of support that others were not able to provide. Claire confirmed this notion when she stated,

It's nice just to have that girl time and it's nice to be able to grow as a woman.

And be able to grow as a leader because there are lots of opportunities to grow as a leader in a sorority.

The research states, and this study supports, that counterspaces are created not only to provide a safe space for the group of people but also to “promote positive self-concepts . . . [and where] proactive attempts are made to ensure that patterns of oppression in the larger societal context are not reproduced” (Case & Hunter, 2012, p. 5). Claire, and the other women at MPIT, needed sources of encouragement and understanding, and other women provided these needs. Only other women are going to understand what it is like to be a woman in a STEM field and attending MPIT.

“I feel like the girls on this campus or at the school do a really good job of finding each other and staying connected” (Katherine)—this supports that women on campus were discovering counterspaces to help them thrive in the environment. In relation to leadership, being able to be a leader within a designated counterspace was very different than a situation that was surrounded by men. The women spoke of the difference and felt more comfortable being a leader when they were with other women.

Alternatively, the women at SCRC were constantly surrounded by other women to provide support and affirmation both in the classroom and with their outside involvements. Sarah stated,

When you need a president of a class or a president of student senate, it has to be a woman in order to fill that. I find that super empowering, that's a really special and awesome thing we have here.

The participants from SCRC were surrounded by women as part of their everyday lives and did not have to look for counterspaces like the women of MPIT.

In regards to their leadership perspectives, MPIT counterspaces allowed the women not to be held to the stereotypes and fight the oppression they had felt otherwise. The campus environment at SCRC naturally allowed for space on campus to be supportive of women and the space at MPIT needed to be created. This idea of counterspace, or a place for women to call their own, is an important aspect of the MPIT environment and a difference between the two institutional campus environments in this study.

### **Gender Versus Experience**

There was a difference in the value of gender and experience at the two institutions. At MPIT there was a focus on gender when women were in the classroom and in leadership positions. However, at SCRC the students were seen more for their experiences when holding leadership positions or participating in other opportunities, rather than their gender. As the MPIT women only comprised 21% of an already small campus, they were very recognizable by others, compared to SCRC which was all the same. At MPIT, women were more noticeable than men, so they were recognized more and they were seen for their gender first. The idea of tokenism is supported in this study and is happening on the MPIT campus. Tokenism is the idea that within an organization there is a small representation of one group and as a result they are seen as different from the majority (Folge & Merrill, 1986).

One aspect of tokenism is heightened visibility, which “refers to the disproportionately large share of attention given to the token group members” (Floge & Merrill, 1986, p. 926). Participants from MPIT stated on multiple occasions how they stand out on campus and often are treated differently because they are women. A study by Floge and Merrill (1986) examined the tokenism phenomenon in a hospital setting. They looked at the effect of male nurses and female physicians because those are typically seen as gender inappropriate positions (Floge & Merrill, 1986). The study found that both the male nurses and the female physicians were more recognizable than their counterparts, meaning that if they were in the minority others were more aware of names, shifts worked, and personal life experiences (Floge & Merrill, 1986). The women at MPIT have similar experiences because without much effort these women stand out from the men on campus.

Students at SCRC did not experience the same effects because the gender imbalance worked in their favor. Joan, Sarah, and Michelle each discussed how positive their experiences have been at the all-women’s institution. Michelle highlighted not feeling judged by the people around her but rather supported and encouraged. Women were selected for their involvements because of their ability and past experiences and because being surrounded by women allowed the students at SCRC the freedom not to be identified by their gender first. As everyone was a woman on campus it was not unusual for women to be candidates for leadership positions. SCRC students did not face tokenism like the women at MPIT.

Evidence from this study supports that gender at MPIT was more salient than at SCRC, and MPIT women were treated as tokens because they had heightened levels of visibility within the environment. The women of SCRC did not face the same challenge in relation to gender because women were in the majority and did not stand out because of their gender.

## **Expectations for Behavior**

Expectations for behavior between the two campus environments varied for the participants. The women at SCRC did not have specific behaviors that they needed to follow; rather, there was an expectation that they be themselves and “find their own voice.” On the other hand, the women at MPIT felt the expectation to act in a particular way to be accepted as students on campus. The expectations for behavior at MPIT reflected what gender socialization has deemed as more masculine traits. Although these women described their own personal leadership characteristics in a feminine way, as dictated by gender socialization (Aulette & Winner, 2012; Kimmel, 2000), the expectations for them as students at MPIT were different. The expectations for behavior and acceptance as MPIT students reflected a more masculine way of thinking and behaving. Therefore, the women needed to change their behavior to make connections with male students. For the MPIT women, it was a delicate balance between meeting the expectations of campus and being themselves.

One explanation for this finding is that the women at MPIT conform to the majority population because they have no individuals to model different leadership behaviors. When asked about whom they recognized as great leaders, the SCRC participants mentioned more women in their lives than the MPIT participants. Although both groups of women mentioned celebrities and general groups of people, women from SCRC mentioned more women they had direct interaction with. Female professors and supervisors were mentioned by SCRC women, in addition to mothers; at MPIT, women mentioned more male figures in their lives, such as brothers, male supervisors, and pastors.

Previous research supports this finding by highlighting that gendered role models are important to leadership development success in students (Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Haber,

2011). If individuals have gendered leaders they are more likely to develop positive perceptions of leadership and their own ability as leaders (Montgomery & Newman, 2010; Whitt, 1993).

Sarah, from SCRC, mentioned the president of her institution and affirmed,

We also have great role models: . . . our president who has gone through the steps of faculty member and vice president as interim and now president. . . . You can watch other leaders do it and go through the steps of starting low and going high.

The women of SCRC saw other women being leaders and being successful in their positions and it allowed them to believe they could do the same thing. It helped them understand that they did not have to act in a particular way because they were women and wanted to be leaders.

Limited by the number of female role models present not only at their institution but in their field of study, the MPIT participants felt conflicted about what the expectations were for their behavior. Society emphasizes that women should be nurturing and collaborative (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Kimmel, 2000), but within their institution and field of study, there is a different expectation. Within the classroom they tended to behave very differently than outside of the classroom. Jennifer stated that in the classroom she was more reserved and tended not to speak up, but when she left the classroom and went to her involvements she was more vocal and encouraging. With the lack of gendered role models, these women were not sure how to respond and demonstrate their ability, which supports the findings from previous research (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Haber, 2011; Taleb, 2010).

This study also supports the research about organizational leadership. Researchers identified that although gender socialization influences individuals in their leadership development, sometimes the organization and its culture is more important and determines the type of leaders that people become (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson,

1990; Haber, 2011; Taleb, 2010). Although the participants at MPIT described some characteristics that are generalized to be feminine, their perception was that men thought that women could not be as successful as them in a STEM field or at the college. As a result, they tried to not act like stereotypical women and instead blended in with the culture of MPIT. As Eagly and Johnson (1990) stated, “sex differences in leadership style are less stereotypic in organizational settings” (p. 242) and there are “fairly clear guidelines about the conduct of behaviors” (p. 234). In relating to MPIT, the women needed to act like men in this organizational setting to be accepted. This was confirmed by Jennifer’s statement, “I really enjoy when guys get you involved in it; they treated me the same as a guy.”

From a slightly different perspective, the women of SCRC also demonstrated that organizational leadership can be more influential than gendered leadership. As the research established, individuals who were in a same-sex environment could focus less on their gender and more on their own leadership style because there were no restrictions that normally gender socialization provided (Bressler & Wendell, 1980; Kolb, 1999; Whitt, 1993). The women at SCRC talked extensively about “finding their voice” and how important it was for them to do that while a student. This voice allowed them to build their own confidence and stand up for what they believed in without hesitation. They developed their own leadership styles and opinions without the influences of what society expected of their gender.

The campus environment was very influential not only on the type of leaders women become but also on the expectations of them as leaders. The participants in the all-women’s environment felt more freedom in becoming the types of leaders they felt fit their personalities, whereas the participants from MPIT felt the need to meet the expectations of others in order to be accepted as leaders on campus.

## **Implications**

From this data analysis and comparison to the previous research, there are a number of different implications both for future practice in higher education and for future research. As a practicing student affairs professional, it is essential to know how research can be applied to students in the campus environment and how research can be improved for the future.

### **Implications for Practice**

The first implication for practice is the need for a more intentional leadership development program for women. The women in this study described characteristics of their own leadership styles and the leadership styles of others, but their knowledge about leadership was limited. Research verifies that a number of leadership styles exist and those styles have names and specific characteristics that describe them. However, none of these women was able to give her leadership style a name or solid definition. These participants depended more on the external definitions of others compared to their own internal definitions of their leadership. In developing a leadership program for women, ideally they will learn some of the important terms that come with developing a leadership identity and they will discover a way to define their own leadership with fewer external influences. The program can purposefully assist women in developing strong internal definitions and teach them how to balance the external expectations and factors.

The data strongly support the need for space on campus for women to gather and empower one another. An example of this would be to create a women's center on MPIT's campus. Although the MPIT participants discovered counterspaces to find support at MPIT, from an institutional standpoint a women's center may serve to provide more support than these women can create themselves. If institutional administrators make a space specifically for the

women, they also demonstrate support for the population and recognize that gendered support is necessary for the success of students on their campus.

Another implication for practice would be to provide training for professional staff on campus. The importance of role models is clear not only from the previous research but also from the findings of this study. Therefore, it is important for professional staff to be trained in leadership theories and gain knowledge about how gender influences leadership. Training the professional staff can provide support for women on campus and also provide tools and resources to help them be successful. In gender-unbalanced environments, it is essential that professional staff understand the implications for their students. Specifically, professionals need to know how to educate women on college campuses about their leadership and how gender socialization and the campus environment influences leadership development.

### **Implications for Future Research**

In addition to the implications for practice, this study generated implications for future research. The first consideration for future research is in regards to the cultural overlay of the two campus characteristics of religious affiliation and the STEM culture and their influence on students. This study was conducted at two colleges that have very specific cultural environments. Further research should examine the influence of these cultural expectations on how leadership develops. The women at MPIT were all pursuing degrees in STEM fields, but the women at SCRC were not. The influence of these major differences in career choice is important to consider for future research. The STEM field environment may influence women's leadership development at institutions with gender ratios that are more balanced in a different way than was presented in this study. Additionally, the religious affiliation of an institution

could also affect the way in which the campus environment influences women's leadership development and should be considered for future research.

The pre-college characteristics that students may have prior to attending college may be another influence in their leadership development. Personality characteristics and interest in particular careers could be influential in the type of college environment that individuals choose to attend, which may then affect their future leadership development.

Consideration for leadership development was restricted in this study to the current college experience of the women in this study. However, in conducting additional research on this topic attention should be given to the post-college environment these students will be entering. The campus environment that influences their leadership development could be reflective of the post-college experience for these women and therefore important for the career success. The women in STEM majors will enter a career that is male-dominated, so a campus environment that reflects that atmosphere could provide good preparation for the challenges they could face after college. Future research could demonstrate the degree to which the campus environment effectively prepares women's leadership for post-college life.

The importance of same-gender role models was supported in this study, but future research could explore the influence of different-gender role models who are gender conscious. If individuals are aware of the influence that gender has within society then the gender of the role model could potentially be less important than a same-gender role model who is not gender conscious. Future research could explore the impact of role models and their awareness of how gender influences individuals, specifically with their leadership development.

The organizational expectations of an environment are an important thought for supplementary research. The extent to which the organizational culture is more important than

the gender-preferred expectations is important to explore. The campus environment proved to be influential in this study and additional research can examine how much the organizational context can outweigh the gender socialized expectations.

This research was conducted in a Midwest town in which both institutions were located, and it is important to consider the geographic implications. The city is midsized and is a more conservative population with some variation on each campus. However, the students who were interviewed for this study lacked diversity in their hometowns, ages, and ethnicities. For the purposes of this study, requirements were put in place for participants to provide some consistency, but in conducting future research, it is important to expand the population of students who are interviewed. Future research with consideration for geographic implications can present additional factors that are important to women's leadership development.

Future research should consider the implications of examining gender in terms of dichotomies. Gender is often seen as a dichotomy, meaning two extremes of identifying as either a woman or a man; however, this is not always the case as some individuals choose to identify as transgender or gender queer (Doan, 2010). Gender is on a spectrum, and the research that examines only men and women may be limiting the perspective (Doan, 2010). Future research should explore how the spectrum of gender identity would impact the perception of the campus environment, gender socialization, and leadership development.

### **Limitations**

As with any study, a few limitations exist with the research presented. The first limitation is the restricted amount of time to complete this research. Because this is a master's thesis, the research time was limited, and, as a result, some of the aspects of the research may have been compromised. Some of these aspects of the research that may not have been fully

developed are the interview protocol, training myself as a successful interviewer, and the limited time to analyze the data. As this was my first large research experience, a restriction of this study is my limited experience as an interviewer. I completed pilot interviews in an effort to minimize this limitation; however, I may not be as sophisticated an interviewer as may have been needed.

The two institutions of this study are similar in that both are small private institutions; however, each possesses very unique qualities that may not represent the broader concerns of other institutions. Some of these unique qualities, aside from the gender imbalance, are the institution's religious connection at SCRC and the STEM culture at MPIT. These two unique characteristics could influence the type of student the colleges attracted, which would influence the results of this study.

Considering the applicability of the results to different institutions, some conclusions may be restricted to this study. Both institutions are at an extreme end of the spectrum when considering the gender ratios on campus, one being entirely female and the other being predominantly male. This study is limited in its applicability to larger institutions as well as institutions that have gender ratios that are more equal between men and women.

Only a small number of individuals for this study were interviewed. The group of women who were interviewed were not diverse as a result of the restricted geographic location. Additionally, the number of different majors and career interests was limited in this study. The participants at MPIT were all in the STEM field, but the participants at SCRC were humanities focused and did not have any women interested in STEM. This creates a limitation because there could be other environmental factors that influenced these women that were not thoroughly

researched. By interviewing only a handful of individuals at each institution, the full range of the student experience is restricted.

However, despite the limitations that exist in this research, the results provided a new perspective on the impact that gender ratios and other campus factors play in motivating women to develop leadership. Furthermore, this research provided an opportunity to understand how women perceive themselves as leaders.

### **Conclusion**

This study supported that there was a connection between women's leadership development, the campus environment, and gender socialization. In describing their leadership characteristics it was evident that perceptions of their leadership were influenced not only by external factors, such as role models, adult and peer affirmation, and the perceptions of others, but also by internal factors. As to the effect of the campus environment, although all participants identified the feelings of support, there were several differences that affected their leadership development as women. The themes that emerged regarding the campus environmental differences were (a) self-perceptions through language, (b) demonstration of worth, (c) gender versus environment, and (d) expectations for behavior.

Each of these themes provided support for previous research that had been conducted and also provided some avenues for future research. From this study, one can conclude that leadership dichotomies exist and they are influenced by environments and gender socialization. Depending on the environment, the influence of gender socialization can be increased or decreased.

Overall, the all-women's institutional environment was more flexible and less dependent on gender socialization than the male-dominated institutional environment. More importantly,

from this research study, student affairs professionals can begin to understand how the campus environment influences women's leadership development and strive to create an environment that is supportive, challenging, and empowering to further women's understanding and perceptions of leadership.

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## APPENDIX A: EMAIL TO POTENTIALCAMPUS CONTACTS

Good Afternoon,

My name is Kasie Weina and I am a current graduate student at Indiana State University, studying Student Affairs and Higher Education. In addition to my program requirements, I have chosen to also write a thesis to gain knowledge on a more specific topic. I have a passion for leadership, in particular women's leadership, so the focus of my thesis is centered on this topic.

In particular, this study will examine through one-on-one interviews, women's leadership development and the campus environment influence. This study will not only explore the amount and type of leadership opportunities that are available to students on campus, but also how the different gender ratios on campus affect women's leadership styles and perceptions.

I am emailing you today to ask if you would be willing to help me with my thesis by serving as a contact person between students at SCRC/MPIT and myself. The role would involve assisting in identifying students that would qualify for this study, as well as forward on emails from me to the students.

Additionally, after the data collection and my analysis is complete, I will share my findings with you to share with your campus.

If this is an opportunity that is of interest to you, please send me an email to formally state that you will take on this role. Lastly, if I can answer any questions or provide any additional information, please let me know.

Thanks so much,

Kasie Weina

## APPENDIX B: EMAIL FROM INVESTIGATOR TO STUDENTS

Good afternoon,

My name is Kasie Weina and I am a graduate student at Indiana State University, studying Student Affairs and Higher Education. I am currently in the process of completing a thesis relating to women's leadership.

I am emailing you today to see if you would be interested in participating in my study. Below I have provided a summary of the focus of my research, as well as some eligibility requirements to participate. If you are interested in participating, please contact me at [kweina@sycamores.indstate.edu](mailto:kweina@sycamores.indstate.edu).

### *Summary of the Study*

This study focuses on women's leadership development and the campus environment influence. This study will not only explore the amount and type of leadership opportunities that are available to students on campus, but also how the different gender ratios on campus affect women's leadership styles and perceptions. To examine these differences, two institutions have been selected with very different gender ratios and campus environments. Saint Catherine of the Rose College and Midwest Polytechnic Institute of Technology are two institutions with drastically different gender ratios, which therefore make these campuses ideal places to research this topic. Additionally, while each institution is a small private institution, the campus climate has its differences.

As a result, I am interested in interviewing women, like you, at each of these two institutions in order to further understand the institutional differences and similarities. These interviews would be approximately one hour and would involve answering a list of questions about your experience at Saint Catherine of the Rose College/Midwest Polytechnic Institute of Technology. For these interviews, I will be visiting your campus and would meet at a location that would be best for you.

### *Eligibility to Participate*

To be eligible for this study, you must meet each of the qualifications below.

- Identify as a women
- Attending Saint Catherine of the Rose College/Midwest Polytechnic Institute of Technology for all of your college career (i.e. not a transfer student)
- Be at least a second semester freshman
- Be a full-time student
- Live on campus within the residence halls

- Between the ages of 18 and 22
- Have at least one involvement outside of the classroom experience (i.e. a student organization, a student staff member, etc.)

Again, if you are interested in assisting me with my research, which I would greatly appreciate, I ask that you contact me stating your interest at [kweina@sycamores.indstate.edu](mailto:kweina@sycamores.indstate.edu).

Additionally, if you have any questions, please feel free to email or call me.

Thanks,

Kasie Weina

## APPENDIX C: EMAIL TO STUDENTS INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING

Hello [insert name],

Thank you for your email and interest in participating in my study about women's leadership. From here, we need to schedule a time that is convenient for you to interview with me, as well as have you complete the informed consent.

Please take a moment and look at the times and dates that I will be available to be on your campus and see if you are available. If you are, please let me know what time would work best if your schedule. Otherwise, if these times do not work in your schedule, propose a time that would be most convenient. Additionally, please let me know what location would be best for you. Ideally, this location should be quiet and a location in which the two of us will not be interrupted by others.

[Insert available times and dates here]

I look forward to hearing the dates and times that you are available. Again, if you have any questions, please let me know.

Thanks,

Kasie Weina

## APPENDIX D: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Kasie Weina and Denise Collins, Ph.D. from the Educational Leadership Department at Indiana State University. This study is for a Master's thesis in Student Affairs and Higher Education. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a woman obtaining an undergraduate degree from a small private institution in the Midwest. Additionally, you have been asked to participate in this study because you meet each of the eligibility qualities below.

- Attended your institution for all of your college career (i.e. not a transfer student)
- At least a second semester freshman
- A full-time student
- Living on campus within the residence halls
- Between the ages of 18 and 22
- Have at least one involvement outside of the classroom experience (i.e. a student organization, a student staff member, etc.)

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of factors within the institutional environment on women's leadership. More specifically, this study will explore the influence that the campus environment has on women's leadership styles and perceptions of their leadership abilities.

- **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

Participate in a one-hour (60 minute) interview with Kasie Weina. The interview will consist of questions about your personal leadership experiences, as well as your perceptions of women's leadership. The interview will be digitally audio recorded using a digital recorder. The interview will take place on your campus at a location of your choosing. Additionally, upon completion of the interview, our conversation will be transcribed from the digital recorder and you will be sent a copy via e-mail, asking you to verify the accuracy. After signing this form, your identity will be protected by being assigned a pseudonym, which will be the only identifier for the remainder of the study.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There could some be risk or discomfort associated with this study because of the audio recording. You may decline to answer any question or end the interview at any time.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

. For society, this study may generate knowledge about the development of women's leadership in particular campus environments and how student affairs professionals can be more effective in assisting these students in having positive experiences.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of password protecting audio files and transcription documents. Transcripts collected in the interviews will be accessible to the principal investigator and faculty sponsor only.

All interviews will be digitally recorded and the digital file will be stored on a password protected computer and a password protected external hard drive. Additionally, all documents related to this study, such as the interview transcriptions, will be password protected files. A transcription of the interview will be written out with a pseudonym to ensure that you, as the participant, will not be connected with it. The transcriptions will also be stored electronically, again, on the password protected computer and external hard drive, as well as password protected files. Your individual responses as a participant will not be shared, but rather a composite of the data from all participants will be provided. If this information would be presented or published, the pseudonym you choose for yourself or the one selected by the principal investigator will be used. Additionally, a pseudonym will be used for your institution's name. Finally, all records, documents, and recordings for this research will be kept for three years and then destroyed.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether or not to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

- **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact Kasie Weina, Principal Investigator, at [kweina@sycamores.indstate.edu](mailto:kweina@sycamores.indstate.edu) or 812.237.4286; or Denise Collins, Ph.D., faculty sponsor, [Denise.Collins@indstate.edu](mailto:Denise.Collins@indstate.edu), 812.237.2918, or the Bayh College of Education, Terre Haute, IN 47809.

- **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by mail at Indiana State University, Office of Sponsored Programs, Terre Haute, IN 47809, by phone at (812) 237-8217, or e-mail the IRB at [irb@indstate.edu](mailto:irb@indstate.edu). You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about

your rights as a research participant with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with ISU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

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I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Personal Leadership:

- What is it about MPIT/SCRC that made you come here?
- Tell me about your involvement here on campus?
  - What makes you a leader? What does not make you a leader?
- Are you a leader?
  - Why? Or why do you not use that term?
  - What does it mean to call yourself a leader?
- How do you think you are perceived by others as a leader?
  - How is that important to you?
  - How does that effect how you see yourself?

### General Leadership:

- How do you define leadership?
- What are some important characteristics of leaders?
- Who are three people you know that you believe demonstrate good leadership abilities?
- What makes them effective leaders?

### Campus Leadership:

- How does your institution promote or value leadership development?
- What opportunities are available for you to be a leader?
- What is it about being at MPIT/SCRC that affects your leadership?
  - How does the gender balance affect your leadership?

### Gender and Leadership:

- How do you feel gender affects leadership development?
  - How is being on this campus different than being on other campuses?
  - What do you wish was different about your leadership experiences here?
  - Who has the potential to be a better leader: men or women?
  - What are certain leadership positions can a man do better than a woman? What leadership positions can a woman do better than a man?

- Questions within the second level of bullet points are potential probing questions based upon the response of interviewees. Not all questions in this level may be asked.