Leadership is Passion:

Understanding the changing experiences of women student leaders

at a co-educational liberal arts institution

By

Aleena Paul

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ABSTRACT

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The traditional definition of leadership emphasizes the actions of individual leaders with culturally-ascribed masculine personality traits and behaviors who control all aspects of an organization. A new post-industrial paradigm, in contrast, defines leadership as interpersonal relationships. This evolving paradigm, with its emphasis on culturally-attributed feminine traits such as collaboration and participation, has allowed for a broader conceptualization of leadership that brings forth discussions on women leaders and their experiences. According to current research, while there is increasing involvement and empowerment of women leaders, their experiences continue to be hindered by gender stereotypes. This study attempts to explore the experiences of women student leaders at a co-educational liberal arts institution and to capture the changing conceptions and expectations for these women in the 2010s. The nine women interviewed equate leadership with passion; usually self-identify themselves as campus leaders after they have been identified as such by their peers; do not experience negative gender stereotypes during their collegiate years; but do foresee facing gender stereotypes and discrimination when exercising leadership once they have left the college setting and entered the workforce. The results of this study support and enhance the post-industrial paradigm, which emphasizes leadership as collaborative rather than individualistic.

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INTRODUCTION

For much of written history, men have held most of the positions of formal leadership. Early discussions of leadership precluded women as candidates for positions of influence; their experiences and contributions went unrecognized. In many organizations, the idea of a woman leader was a foreign concept. However, this is changing. In the 21st century, increasing numbers of women are visibly exercising leadership in government, workplaces, and in educational institutions.

This growth in the number of women attaining positions of leadership has occurred in parallel with a shift in the very conceptualization of leadership. Once defined as an individualistic endeavor stimulated by assertiveness and the ability to control and direct people, leadership is now conceptualized as interpersonal relationships among collaborators seeking mutual goals (Rost 1993). This new understanding of leadership values traits that have been culturally linked to women, and has been predicted to create a female advantage that provides women with the opportunities to reach positions of formal leadership in today's organizations (Kezar and Moriarty 2000).

However, even though progress has been made in the number of women attaining positions of leadership, and research has established the similar effectiveness of male and female leaders, men continue to hold a greater percentage of the top positions in almost every field. While the shift in the conceptualization of leadership has predicted a female advantage, women continue to rise very slowly into the ranks of formal leaders. The lack of women in positions of formal leadership is not limited to the government or the

workplace. Females are also underrepresented as student leaders on many co-educational college campuses (Whitt 1994).

The disproportional numbers of women student leaders has been attributed to negative stereotypical expectations of women leaders, the linking of leadership to masculine images, doubts about their leadership competency, and a lack of self-confidence in their leadership abilities (Whitt 1994). However, new analysis into the experiences of women student leaders has also pointed to the emergence of the alpha female type – a woman who is a strong, empowered female student leader on her college campus and who expresses high self confidence in her leadership abilities (Ward et al. 2009).

Current literature has thus produced contradictory results when discussing leadership on college campuses. In addition, most research conducted on the intersection of gender and leadership has been from a psychological perspective or under college development studies.

The present study attempts to elucidate the changing expectations and experiences of college women leaders studying at a co-educational liberal arts institution in the 2010s. By providing an improved understanding of the changing conceptualization of leadership in society, this study seeks to determine how society defines leadership in the context of gender, and discover the influence of socialization on individual's responses to female leaders. Most importantly, this study will analyze how female leaders are influenced by and challenge the gender roles and gender stereotypes that are imposed on them by society.

Women student leaders were identified and interviewed to gain an understanding of their achievements and challenges in exercising leadership on their college campus. This study analyzed the women leaders' self-evaluations of their current leadership experiences and their perspectives on how their peers and administrators view their leadership practices. Interview results were analyzed to determine the opportunities afforded to female students to exercise leadership, whether they continue to be challenged by negative gender stereotypes, and their outlooks for futures as leaders in society.

Chapter 1 of this study reviews prior research and literature on the topic of leadership. The chapter presents the changing conceptualizations of leadership and the current understandings of the intersection of gender and leadership experiences. The chapter concludes with an examination of the experiences and challenges of young female student leaders who are developing their leadership abilities in a co-educational setting. Following the literature review, Chapter 2 outlines the methodology used in this study, including descriptions of the sampling population and the research instruments. Chapter 3 presents the results from the study, along with a discussion analyzing the data in relation to the literature review. Chapter 4 concludes the study with a summary of the sociologically significant findings, practical implications of the results, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

The definition of leadership has evolved over the years from a focus on the actions of individual leaders with specified personality traits and behaviors to an emphasis on the leader's relationships with members. Early definitions of leadership described leaders as one or a few individuals within a group who controlled all processes, and commanded their followers to attain certain goals. Such a definition of leadership, categorized as the industrial paradigm, placed prominence on qualities that have culturally been ascribed to men. In addition, for much of written history, men have held most of the positions of formal leadership. As these positions formed the foundation of the leadership studies conducted in the industrial era, the experiences of female leaders were not provided the systemic analysis accorded to the experiences of male leaders. Women and their contributions were thus precluded from early discussions on leadership, and their experiences were relegated to behind the scenes.

The 21st century saw the emergence of a new paradigm for discussing leadership. Termed the post-industrial paradigm, leadership was now described as relational processes conducted by multiple individuals to reach a common goal. Leadership became a "process of persuasion or example" through which individuals could influence others in a group (Komives et al. 2007:41). The new paradigm, with its emphasis on culturally-ascribed feminine traits such as collaboration and participation, allowed for the discussion of women leaders and their experiences. This paradigm shift occurred concurrently with the increasing numbers of women visibly exercising leadership in organizations, workplaces, government, and in educational institutions.

While the presence of women in positions of leadership, as well as discussion about their experiences, has increased, women are still faced with stereotypes that equate leadership with masculinity. Women are provided fewer opportunities to showcase their leadership abilities, and doubts are often raised about their leadership competency (Eagly and Carli 2007:101). Such obstacles are particularly difficult for young female student leaders who are developing their leadership abilities in a co-educational setting. These female student leaders are challenged by negative stereotypes of women leaders, a lack of strong female role models, and a lack of confidence in their leadership abilities.

DEFINING LEADERSHIP

GREAT MAN APPROACHES

Early theories of leadership, especially those developed during the nineteenth century, were based on Darwinian ideology. Categorized as the great man theories, leadership was defined as a hereditary property that could be found in certain families, and passed on from father to son. The power and influence of a leader was considered to be a natural ability, a quality with which the individual was born. Such theories provided validity to the rule of sovereigns, and the passage of political power along familial lines. At the same time, these theories ignored the influences of female leaders like Cleopatra, Joan of Arc, or Catherine the Great; their authority was often dismissed as merely stemming from their influence on powerful men (Keohane 2010:122; Komives et al. 2007:46).

Research conducted during the early 1900s rejected the great man theory for what has come to be known as the trait approaches to discussing leadership. A 1935 study attempted to understand the leadership rankings assigned to a selected group of cadets at the United States Military Academic at West Point. Cadets were annually rated and ranked on their "qualities of leadership." The researchers sought to understand what constituted leadership at West Point, and attempted to correlate the leadership ranking of the cadets with their rankings in the factors of bearing and appearance, scholarship, tactics, athletics, and activities. Of these factors, the ratings received by the cadets in the area of bearing and appearance had the highest level of direct correlation to the ratings received for leadership. Referring to conduct deemed appropriate for a soldier rather than physical features, as well as a "standardized regard for personal neatness," bearing and appearance were qualities that were taught to the cadets. This factor measured capacities that were acquired through training in the West Point environment and were not a reflection of natural aptitude or inherited traits (Page 1935). Thus, according to the results of this study, the leaders at West Point were those cadets who successfully developed a highly-regarded quality through their training. Cadets who were leaders did not simply inherit leadership from their fathers. Thus, moving away from the idea of natural talents for leadership, trait approaches attempted to understand leadership based on the characteristics of those identified as leaders; these unique traits distinguished the leader from his or her followers.

Researchers studying leadership in the early 1900s sought to discern the specific traits that separated leaders from other individuals, with the idea that "if one could

produce an authentic list of such leadership traits, immediate and important theoretical and practical advances might be made in our understanding and control of human behavior" (Cowley 1928:144). Under the trait approaches, particular traits—including an attractive physical appearance, intelligence, high socioeconomic status, and confidence—were considered universal to all leaders. Leadership potential could thus be determined by simple observations; any individual who possessed these personal traits was guaranteed success as a leader (Komives et al. 2007:46; Moos and Koslin 1952:77).

In his 1938 study, Willis H. Reals studied the qualities of high school students identified as leaders by their principals and teachers. In this study, "leaders were defined as pupils who possessed certain traits of originality, personality, and perspective and who inspired confidence in others to the extent that they were able to carry others with them. Leaders were distinguished from mere holders of positions" (Reals 1938:523). The characteristics of students identified as leaders were compared to those of students considered to be non-leaders. The study concluded that student leaders were those who had better school attendance and health records; had "broadening experiences," including camp involvement and paid jobs; had better educated and cooperative parents; lived in highly rated neighborhoods; and were predominantly "only" children (Reals 1938).

In a similar fashion, William Fauquier and John Gilchrist (1942) analyzed leadership qualities in delinquent adolescent males living in an institutionalized setting. They observed their subjects for the presence of six traits considered to be common to leadership—"self-confidence, finality of judgment, motor impulsion, and speed of decision measured in three ways" (Fauquier and Gilchrist 1942:55). Leaders were identified through self-identification of certain adolescents as group leaders, through the

ratings of the institution's staff, and through questionnaires that asked the boys to name their peers who held the most importance, power, and influence. The researchers concluded that the leaders were older, taller, heavier, and had lived in the institution for a longer period of time (Fauquier and Gilchrist 1942:58). In addition, the leaders chosen by their peers and the staff were characterized as being "more alert, aggressive, cooperative with powers they recognize," and showed "considerably more impulsiveness, excitability, and desire to hold the center of attention" (Fauquier and Gilchrist 1942:60). The leaders were those adolescent boys who were cooperative with the institution's staff, but who maintained influence over their peers through aggressive, impulsive, and confident behaviors.

Trait approaches to leadership emphasized competencies and skills that leaders should possess. However, the inability of researchers to arrive at a universal list of personality characteristics and traits that guaranteed selection of effective and successful leaders quickly led to the rejection of the trait approaches. When hundreds of trait-based leadership research studies were analyzed and compared, there was no consensus on which traits, if any, permitted an individual to successfully engage in leadership activities (Stogdill 1948 as cited in Rost 1993:95). After analyzing over 124 American and German publications pre-1948 on leadership, Ralph Stoghill (1974) concluded that:

> The evidence suggests that leadership is a relation that exists between persons in a social situation, and that persons who are leaders in one situation may not necessarily be leaders in other situations...The authors conclude that these findings provide 'devastating evidence' against the concept of the operation of measurable traits in determining social interactions (Stogdill 1974 as cited in Greenwood 1996:5).

Research could not provide answers to the questions of who determined whether a certain quality was desirable or not; what specific traits leaders should possess; and whether or not leaders could authentically take on the traits associated with leadership while keeping their personalities intact. Citing trait approaches as "simplistic, unreliable and unproductive," leadership research shifted to the study of what behaviors leaders engage in rather than what qualities and traits distinguish leaders from followers (Rost 1993:93).

BEHAVIOR APPROACHES

When consideration of traits and characteristics was deemed an unsatisfactory explanation of leadership, attention shifted to leaders' behaviors and styles; emphasis was now placed on the specific conduct and the actions carried out by leaders who achieved successful outcomes. These behavior approaches promoted the idea that there existed one best way to lead. Many of the behavior models of leadership were developed through studies conducted on managers and administrators at various organizations. Research sought to identify how the behaviors of effective managers differed from ineffective managers. Studies centered on what managers did on their jobs, including an analysis of the managerial activities performed on a daily basis, and the responsibilities assigned to an individual in that specific position. Early criticisms that a few specific set of behaviors could not possibly explain the effectiveness of a leader was resolved through the addition of situational contingencies, which stated that leaders should vary their approach based on the specific situation (Komives et al. 2007:47,50).

Behavior approaches lost support for reasons very similar to those that led to the movement away from trait approaches. Research discovered that there is actually a range of diverse behaviors by leaders that leads to favorable outcomes. These behaviors are very situation and organization dependent, and may even be "contrary to the dictates of common wisdom or common sense, intuitive beliefs, and politically [sic] correctness" (Rost 1993:93). There is no set of known leader behaviors that can be taught to individuals to turn them into leaders and there is no guarantee that performing specific behaviors will lead to certain results. The lists of leadership behaviors that were developed have been found to be either too general for application to unique circumstances, or too specific to be put into practice in the many instances in which leadership will be required. Thus, these lists of behaviors were more appropriate to elucidate what people believed leaders should be doing rather than describing the tangible actions of a leader (Rost 1993:94-95). In addition, many of the studies that led to the development of the behavioral approaches to discussing leadership were based on the experiences of managers and administrators. As stated by Joseph Rost (1993:95) in his analysis of the development of leadership theories, management and administration does not automatically equate with leadership. Thus, these studies were criticized for not presenting an accurate portrayal of leadership. The rejection of such methods has resulted in a paradigm shift in how leadership is analyzed and discussed.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE INDUSTRIAL PARADIGM

Discussions about leadership in the 20th century revolved around the characteristics of the individual identified as the leader and leader's activities. Labeled as

the industrial paradigm of leadership, the great man, trait, and behavioral approaches collectively defined leadership as:

> great men and women with certain preferred traits influencing followers to do what the leaders wish in order to achieve group/organizational goals that reflect excellence defined as some kind of higher level effectiveness (Rost 1991:180 as cited in Rost 1993:97).

Thus, leadership has been equated solely with the leader, and the leader's behaviors and traits. By predominately studying managers and administrators to understand the concept of leadership, leaders have been equated with good managers, and leadership has become synonymous with good management and the pursuit of organizational goals (Rost 1993:97). However, this definition of leadership was not sufficient to explain all observations of how individuals practiced leadership.

In the late 20th century, discussions on leadership subsequently expanded to explore the connections between leaders and their followers. The interactional theory claimed that the identification of a leader is dependent on the extent to which followers are aware of the special qualities possessed by the leader. A group recognizes an individual as its leader only when the individual presents a plan for attaining the goals of the organization that requires the individual's specific set of qualities. Thus, the group's judgment of an individual's behavior affects whether that person is regarded as the leader (Moos and Koslin 1952). The reinforcement theory stated that people pick as their leaders those who have the perceived abilities to lead them to certain rewards. Leadership thus develops when one person is in a position to offer either rewards or punishments. When the rewards of success are higher, an individual with a greater ability to attain these

rewards for the entire group will be more highly valued by the group (Marak 1964). The developing focus on the relationship between leaders and their followers hinted at the emergence of a new scheme for discussing leadership.

FROM INDUSTRIAL TO POST-INDUSTRIAL: A PARADIGM SHIFT

The 21st century has seen the shift to a post-industrial paradigm of leadership that no longer focuses solely on the leader and the leader's traits and behaviors. In this paradigm, leadership is defined as "an influence relationship among leaders and their collaborators who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes" (Rost 1993:99). Leadership occurs when collaborators develop personal relationships with leaders that they chose. Leadership is no longer thought of as falling strictly along lines of authority; there is a movement away from stringent distinctions between leaders and followers. The post-industrial leadership paradigm does not discuss followership, but rather multiple actors who have differing levels of influence on each other. Leadership comes to be defined as a process that is distinct from management; people other than managers can be identified as leaders. The relationship between leaders and collaborators is based on influence; it is multidirectional, non-authoritarian and non-coercive, and persuasion is one of the main tools used to impact people. Leaders and collaborators use their relationships to pursue mutual purposes derived from common goals rather than just the leader's wishes; these goals are constantly changing and evolving with the development of the relationship. Leadership is also episodic; when an individual practices leadership, he or she is occupied in a process that is influenced by the persons involved, the specifics of the situation, the place, context, and other factors (Rost 1993:99-101). Thus, under the

post-industrial paradigm, "leadership is not what the leader does but what the leaders and collaborators do together to change the organization" (Rost 1993:101).

THE PRESENCE OF WOMEN

WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRIAL PARADIGM OF LEADERSHIP

Women and gender were not pertinent to the discussions of leadership under the industrial paradigm (Ely et al. 2003:153). The early emphasis on the great man theories, and the traits and behavior approaches to discussing leadership precluded women as candidates for positions of leadership and influence. These models were "derived from those traditionally in positions of power; that is, a mostly Caucasian, male, upper-middle-class orientation to leadership" (Kezar and Moriarty 2000:55). Early trait and behavior approaches focused on managers and administrators—positions that were male dominated in the 20th century. The high numbers of leadership positions that have traditionally been held by men have resulted in a social construction that makes the idea of a woman leader a foreign concept in some organizations.

In addition, the traits and behaviors valued for leaders under the industrial paradigm were considered to be gender-neutral, even though such qualities were seen predominantly in men. Men's leadership is often classified as "generic leadership uninfluenced by masculine gender and male experience" (Ely et al. 2003:154). This classification can lead to the evaluation of female leaders as ineffective because their leadership practices are measured against the presumed gender-neutral leadership espoused by men. Conventional expectations that a leader is "decisive, in charge, competitive, and self-reliant" links leadership with masculinity, excluding many

women—as well men who do not lead from such a perspective—from discussions on leadership (Komives et al. 2007:154). Thus, women leaders historically have only been seen as visible exceptions to the many men who sustained the association between masculinity and leadership (Keohane 2010:122).

Leadership under the industrial paradigm is presented in "idealized masculine images" and is linked to characteristics such as "individualism, assertive[ness], and courage" that have culturally been attributed to men (Ely et al. 2003:156). These models of leadership do not value the traits culturally linked to women—"collaboration, caring and support" (Ely et al. 2003:156). Women played a minimal role in the early discussions on leadership because they were not expected to be leaders, as they were not expected to have such male-ascribed traits. However, there is little empirical evidence that women are any less individualistic, assertive, or courageous than men, or that they are any more collaborative, caring, or supportive (Ely et al. 2003:156). The stereotypes and cultural assumptions about the leadership practices of men and women thus continue to affect the recognition received by women leaders.

Long-held stereotypes and ideas on gender roles have placed women in situations where they are labeled as inadequately feminine if they present themselves in the typical masculine leadership role, or are regarded as unsatisfactorily leader-like if they behave in a feminine fashion. Opinions on a woman's fitness as a leader is thus hindered by the "idealized masculinity of the prototypical leader," an image that is centered on the white, middle to upper-class, heterosexual male (Ely et al. 2003: 156). Whether or not women leaders express confidence in their leadership abilities, they are not accorded the same deference as male leaders. Women who take on leadership positions face the possibility

of being stereotyped as "bitchy, difficult or manly" or "bossy and domineering" (Rhode 2003 in Ely et al. 2003:162-163). Women who raise concerns about gender-related issues face chances of being labeled as feminists, disruptive, or difficult to work with (Rhode 2003 in Ely et al. 2003:171).

Consequently, while women have made significant contributions behind the scenes for much of recorded history, they have been excluded from positions of formal leadership and identification as leaders or have been perceived negatively if they do take on leadership roles (Keohane 2010:122,125). It is only recently that women have increasingly been found in formal leadership positions and included in discussions on leadership.

WOMEN IN THE POST-INDUSTRIAL PARADIGM OF LEADERSHIP

The shift to understanding leadership through a post-industrial paradigm has occurred at the same time as the growth in the number of women attaining positions of leadership. Between 1945 and 2008, more than 80 women were elected to the presidency or became prime minister across the world. Aided by increased acceptability and quotas in some regions, women currently have a stronger presence in state and national legislatures. When considering all types of organizations, women occupy 23 percent of chief executive positions in the United States (Eagly and Carli 2007:13 as cited in Keohane 2010:125).

The leadership paradigm shift places greater prominence on interpersonal traits such as "empathy, capacity for listening, [and] relational ability" that are often understood as feminine characteristics; these traits play an important role in the post-

industrial leadership model that emphasizes relationships and collaborations (Fletcher 2002 in Ely et al. 2003:205). Women's leadership has been linked to styles that are more participatory, relational, and interpersonal; to the conceptualization of leadership as a collective, and not individualistic, endeavor; to an emphasis on empowering collaborators; and to the deemphasizes of relationships that are based on hierarchies (Kezar and Moriarty 2000:55). The transformation of discussions on leadership to the post-industrial model has been predicted to create a "female advantage," providing increasing numbers of women with opportunities to reach formal leadership positions in today's organizational environments.

While women and men can vary in their styles of leading, a meta-analysis conducted by Eagly et al. (1995) provided evidence that female and male leaders did not differ in their effectiveness, where effectiveness was analyzed in terms of a "leader's facilitation of a group or organization's ability to meet its goals" (Eagly et al. 1995:125). This study represented the aggregation of data from multiple organizational and laboratory experimental studies in leader effectiveness and the impact of gender. While men and women do not vary in overall effectiveness, stereotypical gender roles continue to affect perceptions of a leader's efficiency. Men were considered to be more effective than women in positions that were defined using masculine terms such as requiring "considerable task ability, defined as the ability to direct and control people" (Eagly et al. 1995:137). Women were considered more effective than men in roles defined with feminine terminology such as requiring "considerable interpersonal ability, defined as the ability to cooperate and get along with other people" (Eagly et al. 1995:137). Even with these barriers, women who are able to attain positions of leadership have similar success

rates to their male counterparts. Neither sex possesses an effectiveness advantage, and "even if female leaders do behave somewhat differently than male leaders, they appear to be equally effective" (Eagly et al. 1995:137).

THE FEMALE ADVANTAGE HINDERED

Even with progress in the number of women attaining leadership positions, and the similar effectiveness of male and female leaders, men continue to enjoy a greater presence in positions of top authority in almost every field in every nation. According to a report from the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, the gender distribution of upper management in the United States in the mid-1990s consisted of males constituting "more than 95% of corporate executives and 85% of elected officeholders" (Rhode 1997:2 as cited in Keohane 2010:125). The distribution in 2007 revealed women making up "only 2 percent of Fortune 200 CEOs, 6 percent of top earners, 8 percent of top leadership positions, and 16% of board directors and corporate offices" (Rhode and Kellerman 2007:2 as cited in Keohane 2010:126). Therefore, while the more relational models of leadership predict a female advantage, women are still not rising rapidly into the ranks of formal leadership position holders.

Under the post-industrial paradigm, the specific gender identity of the individual is stated to be irrelevant to determining leadership potential because leadership stems from the personal relationships formed among collaborators. However, analyses of situations are always contextual and subjective; the gender of the individuals in question will influence how the situation will play out, including who attains a position of leadership (Fletcher 2002 as cited in Ely et al. 2003:207-208). A variety of social factors

influence the number of women in leadership positions. In most countries, women continue to be the primary, and at times the sole, homemaker and caretaker of children. Even women who are full-time employees are taking on a "second shift," simultaneously managing familial and professional responsibilities. Many countries lack workplace policies that promote family-friendly lifestyles. Women continue to face gender bias in the evaluation of their work. As there are few women in upper management positions, women entering the workforce are left without strong female role models to emulate. In addition, popular media and culture do not provide many examples of female leaders for impressionable young girls to follow. While it has been stated that women are not as interested as men in leadership positions in large organizations, such claims cannot be made until women can attain these positions without facing disproportionate sacrifices (Keohane 2010:126-127).

WOMEN LEADERS IN THE COLLEGE SETTING

The lack of women in positions of formal leadership is not limited to the sphere of management and career. In many co-educational college campuses, female students are underrepresented in positions of student leadership even though women make up more than half of the undergraduate population. The small presence of women in student leadership has been linked to a variety of factors including stereotypical expectations of women held by both male and female students, structural obstacles at the college that hinder female students from overcoming such stereotypes, and a lack of self confidence among the female students (Whitt 1994:199). Other researchers have suggested that male students may not value the collaborative leadership styles that are used by many women, inhibiting their election to a position of leadership, or affecting their effectiveness as a

leader. Female students may also choose not to run for office because they fear that they would alienate male students if they sought or held certain leadership positions (Guido-DiBrito and Batchelor 1988; Whitt 1994:199). Female students also do not have many role models in positions of leadership at their institutions; the lack of role models may cause female students to erroneously conclude that such positions are not open to them (Astin and Leland 1991). In addition, college environments do not have to be overtly hostile towards women for there to be negative effects on the aspirations of female students. Active discouragement is as damaging as the absence of encouragement, termed a null environment (Forrest et al. 1984 as cited in Whitt 1994:198-199).

Elizabeth Whitt (1994) observed the leadership experiences of female students at all-women colleges with the hope of understanding what factors could be improved in co-educational institutions. Whitt conducted qualitative interviews with about 200 students, faculty, administrators, and alumnae identified as leaders from three all-women colleges. Leaders were selected through a combination of status sampling and snowball sampling. Whitt discovered that student leaders considered their all-women institutions to be encouraging environments where female students were taken seriously within the study body, and allowed to make decisions impacting the institution itself. At these institutions, emphasis was placed on a post-industrial paradigm of leadership, highlighting participatory and collaborative decision making. The female students were given significant responsibilities—such as chairing faculty-student committees and enforcing Honor Codes—in which to develop their leadership abilities. The institutions had high expectations for student achievement and provided both student and faculty female role models. Many students commented that they decided to pursue leadership opportunities

following encouragement from a fellow student leader, and that students' aspirations to leadership were encouraged and supported (Whitt 1994).

On the contrary, the opportunities for leadership for female students are not as extensive at larger, co-educational facilities. Men tend to hold leadership positions in co-educational student organizations. While male students were often the student body presidents and held positions on the board of trustees and student judicial courts, women held "lower-level, less prestigious positions" (Howard 1978 as cited in Romano 1996:676).

A 2004 study by Miller and Kraus observed the underrepresentation of female students in student government positions. While women were elected as representatives to the student government, they were underrepresented in the positions of president and vice president. Within the 21 Midwestern universities studied, while female students held a mean of 47.9 percent of the student government positions, male students held 71.4 percent of the president positions and vice president positions. In addition, when analyzing the election of women over five years, the researchers learned that women students were elected to the presidency only 25.7 percent of the time. Thus, although women were interested in student politics—as indicated by their equal presence in student government—they did not achieve positions of leadership. Since the experience of holding a leadership position in student government has been correlated with desirable outcomes for the individual students, including the development of organizational and decision-making skills, female students are losing a valuable opportunity (Miller and Kraus 2004).

Miller and Kraus (2004) point to the lack of role models as one possible explanation for why female students are not attaining leadership positions. The women do not believe they have the qualifications to be the leaders of the student government; this explanation was tangentially supported through observations that there was a higher likelihood of a female vice president at schools where women faculty members served as student government advisors. This indicates that, where there is a lack of female leadership role models, female college students do not see themselves as having the abilities to lead an organization like the student government (Miller and Kraus 2004).

The researchers did not ask if and how often women ran for these leadership positions on student government. Thus, they were unable to determine whether "students simply were not willing to vote for female candidates for leadership positions or if women were just not very skilled at campaigning for such positions" (Miller and Kraus 2004). However, while female students may consider themselves to be deficient in certain qualifications for student government leadership roles, there is no evidence that student voters might not trust the abilities of women candidates. Data collected in the General Social Survey indicated that 77 percent of respondents disagreed with the belief that "women are not suited for politics" (Miller and Kraus 2004). In addition, 80 percent of individuals with either a junior college or bachelor's degree did not hold such negative beliefs about women's abilities (Miller and Kraus 2004).

Leadership activities in college have been linked to the development of greater self-confidence, self-esteem, and sense of competence among female students (Astin and Kent 1983 as cited in Whitt 1994:198). Romano (1996) interviewed fifteen women student leaders at large universities, heading co-educational organizations on campus.

The women leaders in this study used the post-industrial paradigm to describe their leadership experiences. Words such as interactive, accessible, and team-members were used to describe their relationship with their members. The women stressed the equality of the officers and members of their organization, stating that officers "simply had different responsibilities than the members did" (Romano 1996:679). These women also spoke highly of their role models, both from their family and from the university, who were important to their leadership development. These students discussed gains in self-confidence, self-awareness, and in a range of skills and knowledge, including public speaking and effective interpersonal communication, derived from their leadership experiences.

Research has thus shown that practical and interpersonal competence can develop in students who are engaged in leadership activities. Such activities provide for the advancement of skills that have been linked to successes in the workplace. Studies correlating a number of factors to business success have indicated that holding positions of leadership in college campus organizations is both a positive selection criterion for employing organizations and also a predictor of later success, as measured by organizational level of authority attained, degree of participation in guiding company-wide policies, and salary (Singleton 1978; Williams and Harrell 1964). With such benefits attached to involvement in leadership positions, it is necessary to understand the factors leading to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in both the college setting and in the professional environment.

Even with much evidence proving that women perform at least as effectively as men in positions of leadership, women are not accorded the presumption of competence that is provided to their male colleagues. A study by Linimon, Barron and Falbo (1984) showed that both men and women associated strong leadership skills with an authoritarian leadership style and weak leadership skills with a more democratic style. However, analysis of over a hundred studies involving the evaluations of leaders showed that women who taken on authoritative styles—a quality typically associated with men—received lower ratings, particularly if she was evaluated by men or was holding a role typically held by males (Rhode 2003 in Ely et al. 2003:162).

Women who are seeking positions of leadership thus continue to face double standards. Demands are placed on women to perform extraordinarily well, while men can be less concerned about proving their abilities (Eagly and Carli 2007:110). It is more difficult for women to establish credibility; many women professionals believe that they are held to higher standards, harsher scrutiny, and stricter requirements than their male counterparts. These women are vulnerable when they occupy leadership roles due to their heightened visibility. Any errors they make will be noticed and criticized sooner and more often (Kram and Hampton 1998 as cited in Ely et al. 2003:211-214). A study by Leonard and Sigall (1989) concluded that "women student leaders struggled with not being taken seriously, worked harder than men to gain respect, were intimidated by male competitiveness, and feared the loss of approval if they asserted themselves" (as cited in Romano 1996:676).

The preconceptions of women's experiences held by those seeking leadership positions can become self-fulfilling prophesies. Women have been shown to internalize the stereotypes they constantly faced; they often will not complain about lower rewards received for performances that are similar to that of men of equal positions, seeing themselves as less deserving of these rewards (Rhode 2003 in Ely et al. 2003:162-163).

The historical association of leadership with masculine traits and characteristics, the lack of role models and the continuing existence of stereotypes of women's leadership abilities have led to the development of women student leaders who are not confident in their qualifications to be the leaders on their campuses. A 1987 study by Geber concluded that women students considered leadership to be a male endeavor; research repeated by Boatwright and Egidio in 2003 suggested that women students still may consider leadership to be a masculine quality.

Researchers have observed the negative conceptions held by female students of their own leadership abilities. Kezar and Moriarty (2000) examined the impact of a range of college experiences on the development of leadership in a sample of 9,731 students at 352 institutions, based on data collected in the CIRP 1987 Freshman Survey and 1991 follow-up. The results indicated that male students rated themselves higher on leadership abilities than female students. Women student rated themselves lower than male students on the leadership-related skills of intellectual and social self-confidence, ability to influence others, and communication through public speaking. On average, women rated themselves 14 percent lower than men on leadership ability and 13 percent lower on

public speaking ability. Nearly 75 percent of the men in the study rated themselves above average, or in the top 10 percent, on leadership ability. Only around a half of women rated themselves similarly. Women also showed lower rates of change in the areas tested over the four college years. These results indicate male students enter college with the belief that they have substantial skills in the areas tested, and subsequently, take advantage of opportunities during their collegiate years to develop these skills (Kezar and Moriarty 2000).

Adams et al. (2000) examined leadership practices among Greek-affiliated male and female students in three Midwestern public universities. The researchers asked chapter presidents to evaluate themselves on their leadership effectiveness, including their ability to: develop strong feelings of cohesion and team spirit within the chapter; get members to care about the chapter's objectives; lead their members to meet the chapter's objectives; successfully represent the chapter to faculty, administrators, and alumni; and get the members to volunteer for events and responsibilities. Sorority women rated their chapter presidents higher than men did in these qualities. They also felt more strongly than the men that their presidents were effective leaders. However, women presidents consistently gave themselves lower ratings than those given to them by their constituents on these leadership qualities. Women presidents' self-perceptions in the areas of "Inspiring a Vision" and "Modeling the Way" were much lower than male presidents' self-perceptions. Fraternity presidents, on the other hand, rated themselves higher on their leadership effectiveness than the ratings given to them by their brothers. Thus, in this study, men believed they were doing better at the leadership skills than their followers perceived, and women believed that they were doing worse. This can indicate that male

student leaders are unrealistic about their capabilities while female student leaders are overly critical of their abilities (Adams et al. 2000).

A 2007 study by Dugan and Komives analyzed how students' experiences during their college years contributed to various leadership outcomes. The results of this study indicated that, under the post-industrial paradigm model, while women had higher measured leadership competence than men – as measured by the 68-item Socially Responsible Leadership Scale developed for this study – they also reported a lower level of self-confidence in their leadership abilities. Thus, there appears to be a gap between women's capacities for leadership, and their self-efficacy and self-confidence for leadership (Dugan and Komives 2007).

On a contradictory note, a recent study by Ward, DiPaolo and Popson (2009) has pointed to the emergence of a new type of female leader, characterized as the alpha female. An alpha female is a "strong and empowered female student [leader] on college campuses":

> who reports being a leader, having others seek her guidance, feeling a sense of superiority or dominance over other females, believing that males and females are equal, feeling driven, and feeling extroverted in social situations. Being an alpha female is related to high self confidence (Ward et al. 2009:100,102).

The interviews with female students identified as alpha females in this study hinted at the emergence of female leaders who are very confident in their abilities. Interviews with these students highlighted common themes such as importance given to strong relationships, strong parental—and especially maternal—support, and socialization that involved gender neutral or pro-feminist messages. These women characterized

themselves as extroverted and eagerly identified themselves as leaders. The alpha females expressed ease and empowerment in taking on a variety of leadership roles, including those that had been off-limits to young women. Some of these women saw themselves as "leaders of leaders, instead of just leaders" (Ward et al. 2009:110).

CHALLENGES STILL FACING WOMEN STUDENT LEADERS

While the college women in the Ward et al. (2009) study expressed great personal accomplishments and strong identities, they also reported being negatively labeled and stereotyped. The alpha female students have been called "bitchy," "stubborn," and "pushy." They state that they have been resented and that they have been forced to put up fronts so as to not appear weak at any point. The women expressed that such labels and stereotypes have come from "friends, other students, faculty and staff members" (Ward et al. 2009:111). In addition, these alpha females expressed feelings of inadequacy and fear in the area of intimate relationships, both romantic and non-romantic (Ward et al. 2009).

These discrepancies speak to the influence of the gender role stereotypes that continue to constrain the advancement of women. When individuals act on their stereotypical perceptions, women are denied leadership opportunities simply because leaders are often described using masculine characteristics. A female leader's individual unique skills are ignored when her actions are judged through comparisons with that of her male counterparts. This results in competent women leaders who are unsure of their abilities to lead. While the identification of the alpha female type suggests changing experiences for college age women who are practicing leadership, negative labeling and stereotyping continue to be a hindrance to their successes.

RESEARCH TO BE CONDUCTED

The research thus far conducted on leadership, and specifically on women student leaders, presents a view of increasing involvement and empowerment of female leaders, who are at the same time, hindered by gender stereotypes and the association of masculine images with the concept of leadership. In addition, the movement from the industrial paradigm to the post-industrial paradigm has created even more questions on how leadership is discussed and analyzed.

Research has observed the experiences of women student leaders at both women's colleges and at co-educational institutions, and has suggested that male and female students do not have equal experiences at co-educational universities. Even though women have been shown to be just as competent and effective leaders, studies have suggested that women student leaders have a negative conception of their leadership abilities. In addition, the emerging image of the alpha female speaks to the growing impact of female student leaders. However, the verbal insults and negative stereotypes faced by these women are indicative of the inconsistent standards for men and women that continue to exist. This new analysis into the alpha female type for the female student leader has thus produced contradictory results when discussing leadership on college campuses.

The present study attempts to elucidate the changing experiences of college women leaders studying at a co-educational liberal arts institution. The study will explore what aspects of leadership are important to today's college students, and especially to female students. This study will analyze whether female student leaders describe their

practices based on the industrial model which emphasizes the leader's individualistic achievements, or whether they align with the post-industrial paradigm that emphasizes personal relationships. The women leaders' self evaluations of their current leadership experiences will be analyzed, along with their perceptions of how other students view their leadership practices.

Methods will be developed to identify and interview women student leaders to gain an understanding of their challenges, achievements, and failures. This study will attempt to determine: whether women are more or less likely to be involved in campus-wide co-educational student leadership positions; how female students self-identify and self-evaluate themselves as leaders; whether they continue to experience negative stereotypes; their opinions on the concept of an "alpha female;" and their outlook for futures as leaders in the workplace. The results of this study will also contribute to an increased understanding of the evolving post-industrial paradigm, which emphasizes leadership as collaborative rather than individualistic.

The current literature on the experiences of women student leaders is limited to a few studies interviewing small sample sizes of female students. In addition, much of the research into the leadership practices of female college students has been done from a social psychology standpoint and under college development studies. This study will therefore add to the existing knowledge on the experiences of women student leaders and capture the changing expectations for women student leaders from a sociological perspective.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of women student leaders and to capture the changing conceptions and expectations for these women in the 2010s. This study specifically analyzed how gender influences the leadership experiences and behaviors of female undergraduate students. The study explored what aspects of leadership are important to today's college students and especially to female students. This included an analysis of the women leaders' self evaluations of their current leadership experiences, as well as their perceptions of how other students viewed their leadership practices. This work sought to understand how female students self-identify and self-evaluate themselves as leaders, whether they continue to experience negative stereotypes as the literature outlines, their opinions on the concept of an "alpha female" (Ward et al. 2009:102), and their outlook for their futures as leaders in the workplace.

POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The subjects for this study were female undergraduate students at a private, co-educational liberal arts college in the Northeast. The participants for the study were enlisted through status sampling. The college Student Activities Office's list of the heads of various clubs and organizations on campus was used to identify female students who could potentially be considered campus leaders. Their participation was solicited either face-to-face or through emails describing the study and asking for an interview. Potential subjects were informed that participation in this study was voluntary and confidential,

and that there would be no repercussions if they declined to participate in this study. Appointments for interviews were made with those who agreed to participate.

INFORMED CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Research methods for this study involved interviews with women student leaders to gain an understanding of the challenges, achievements, and difficulties faced in their leadership roles. Informed consent was obtained by explaining to all participants the purpose of the study, how interviews would be conducted, and that all data collected would be kept confidential. Participants were not told which other women were also being interviewed. Participants were ensured that they could decline to answer any questions or end the interview if they wished to do so. The face-to-face interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 90 minutes, and were held in a public place as long as the respondent felt comfortable, or were held in private at the participant's request. Permission was obtained to tape record the interviews; participants were informed that they could ask to stop the tape recorder at any point in the interview. The interviewees' names were not included on the recordings. All participants were only identified by number, and the list of correspondent numbers and respondent names were kept in a secure location. Access to the transcriptions of the interviews was limited to the researcher and the research advisor. The names of the individuals interviewed did not appear on the transcriptions; individuals were identified solely by number on the transcriptions as well. All interview tapes, transcripts, notes, and any other material collected in the course of the research were maintained in a secure location.

Participants were asked to sign the interview consent form (Appendix A), emphasizing the voluntary nature of this study, and complete the demographics sheet (Appendix B) before the interview proceeded. No deception of any kind was used in this study. At the end of the interview, the participants were debriefed with a more detailed explanation of the purposes of this study. Any identifiable characteristics of the participants, including characteristics of the organizations they led, were suppressed in the written and oral reports of this study.

DEMOGRAPHICS SHEET

The demographics sheet, which was approved by Union College's Human Subjects Review Committee, asked for the participants' age, class year, and race or ethnicity. Participants were asked to state the number of leadership activities in which they were involved, both during their high school and undergraduate careers, in order to gauge their level of involvement prior to attending college and during college. The interviewees were asked to identify the types of organizations in which they had taken on leadership roles during their college years. This question was aimed at understanding the range of activities in which these women were involved. Finally, the demographics sheet asked the women whether they had participated in any leadership courses. This question was asked in order to determine the women's experiences with discussing leadership as well as to identify any factors that could have influenced their views on leadership.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

The open-ended interview questions were approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee (Appendix C). In order to elucidate currently held conceptions about

leadership, the initial interview questions asked the participants to comment on what the words "leader" and "leadership" meant to them. The women were asked to define what they thought made a leader successful, and to remark on commonly held misconceptions about leadership. These questions were aimed at understanding the conceptual frameworks in which these student leaders thought about leadership, i.e. whether their views on leadership aligned with the industrial (Rost 1991:180 as cited in Rost 1993:97) or post-industrial paradigms (Rost 1993:99). The participants were also asked to comment on the general motivations of undergraduate students to become leaders on campus; this question sought to discern the participants' own motivations for becoming active leaders in their campus community. The students who had participated in leadership courses were asked to expand on what they were taught at the courses they attended to gauge the effect of such coursework on their actions as student leaders.

The women's self-identification as leaders and evaluations of their leadership abilities were obtained through the next series of questions. The participants were asked to remark on whether they considered themselves to be leaders on campus, as well as whether other individuals considered them to be campus leaders. The interviewees were then asked to discuss the overall role that leadership played in their undergraduate experience. In order to better understand the experiences of these student leaders, the participants were asked to describe their leadership roles in various organizations, and to address why they pursued these roles. They were asked about their goals for their leadership positions, as well as their achievements and challenges in leading their organizations.

The subsequent set of questions aimed to discern the women's perceptions of how other students viewed their leadership practices. The participants were asked to describe their interactions with members of their organization, and the reactions that they have received to their leadership. They were then asked to reflect on whether they believe that people had certain expectations of them as leaders, and whether these expectations impacted the way they chose to lead. The women then discussed their leadership styles or approaches, as well as whether they believed that all aspects of their leadership style had been successful. They also commented on the skills or abilities they believed they possess that allowed them to exercise leadership. These questions were aimed at understanding whether the women's leadership practices aligned with the post-industrial paradigm.

The interview questions that followed dealt with the effect of gender on leadership practices. The participants in the study were asked whether gender roles or expectations had impacted the way that they exercised leadership. They were asked to comment on the influence that gender has had on their achievements and challenges as campus leaders, including the role that gender played in the way others responded to their leadership. As current research shows that gender based stereotypes continue to affect women leaders (Rhode 2003 as cited in Ely et al. 2003:162-163), the participants were asked whether they faced any gender based stereotypes during their time as a campus leaders. In addition, the women were asked whether they felt that female student leaders received equal recognition to male student leaders, and whether they felt that male and female student leaders had similar experiences during their campus leadership careers. The women then discussed the influence of female role models on their leadership practices. The participants were read the definition of an alpha female (Ward et al.

2009:102) and asked to remark on whether they considered themselves to be an alpha female and whether they knew of any female campus leaders who fit this definition. The interview ended with questions aimed at determining the women's expectations for leadership opportunities once they leave the college environment, and for potential hardships in the workforce due to their gender.

ANALYZING DATA

The data collected in the interviews were qualitatively analyzed for common themes and unique experiences among the participants. The results were then analyzed for alignment with the concepts and ideas presented in the literature review. The data were examined to understand the women leaders' self evaluations of their current leadership experiences, as well as their perceptions of how other students view their leadership practices. In particular, the results were evaluated for insights into the influence of gender.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

DEMOGRAPHICS

In-depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted with nine female student leaders. The women all held multiple leadership positions across a variety of organizations and groups on campus. Most identified their race as non-Hispanic White. The women were then asked to self-report the number of leadership activities/roles they had held during both their high school and collegiate careers. Three of the women reported that they had held 1-2 leadership roles in high school, five of the women expressed that they had 3-4 leadership roles, and one woman stated that she was involved with more than six leadership activities in high school. In terms of number of leadership activities involved in during their undergraduate careers, most of the women have held five or more leadership positions. Combined, the nine women have held or currently hold positions as leaders in all of the different types of organizations listed on the demographics sheet. In addition, seven out of the nine women reported that they had previously participated in a leadership course.

INTERVIEW RESULTS

The insights gathered from the interviews with these nine women provide a framework for understanding the changing experiences and expectations for female student leaders. The interviews were analyzed to determine whether the results confirmed, contradicted, or extended the current literature on the intersection of leadership and gender in the collegiate setting.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE POST-INDUSTRIAL PARADIGM

DEFINING LEADERSHIP

The introductory questions in the interviews were aimed at gaining an understanding of the women's beliefs and perspectives on leadership. The women student leaders were asked to comment on what the words "leader" and "leadership" meant to them, on what makes leaders successful, and on common misconceptions about leadership.

The women's definitions of "leader" and "leadership" closely aligned with the post-industrial paradigm of leadership. This paradigm characterizes leadership as "an influence relationship among leaders and their collaborators who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes" (Rost 1993:99). The women described leadership as a collaborative effort, and not as an individualistic endeavor. Their descriptions of leaders were not based on trait-based characteristics, features typically associated with the industrial paradigm of leadership, which defines leadership as:

> great men and women with certain preferred traits influencing followers to
> do what the leaders wish in order to achieve group/organizational goals
> that reflect excellence defined as some kind of higher level effectiveness
> (Rost 1991:180 as cited in Rost 1993:97).

Rather, the women interviewed in this study defined leaders based on their behaviors, and specifically in reference to their interpersonal relationships. According to these women, leaders are those who are guiding the organization; they are not making decisions solely by themselves or dictating the actions of their followers. As stated by an interviewee, leaders are those who can "effectively organize and unite people under a certain cause." Leaders were defined as role models who set an example for other

members of their organization. While they take responsibility for the decisions made by the group, they are willing to delegate. Effective leaders have found the balance between "having control of things, but also letting people – other people – take control of things." The term leadership was described using very similar sentiments, and, in fact, most interviewees did not make a clear distinction between the words leader and leadership. Effective leadership was considered to occur whenever effective leaders had the right environment in which to work. These reflections are consistent with a post-industrial leadership model that emphasizes personal relationships between the leaders and the followers, as well as portrays leaders as those possessing culturally-ascribed feminine traits such as "collaboration, caring and support" (Ely et al. 2003:156).

The participants' descriptions of successful leaders also aligned with the post-industrial paradigm; success was ascribed to those individual leaders who have the vision and drive to be organizers and uniters of people from a variety of backgrounds. These leaders were depicted as easily adaptable to changing environments, situations, and constituents. They have "good interpersonal skills" and are able to "understand people's situations." They work well with the members of their organization, are able to delegate tasks, and take constructive criticism. Successful leaders observe and learn from the achievements and failures of the leaders that came before them. Many of the interviewees expressed the sentiment that the leaders who succeed are those who really understand "keeping a good balance, making sure that everyone gets credit where credit is due, everyone is working together, and they are holding everyone accountable, especially themselves."

When asked to describe some common misconceptions about leadership, many of the participants referenced the industrial model for determining leadership. The most commonly cited misconception about leadership by these women was that there is only one type of leader or way to lead, or that one needs to meet a certain set of requirements to be a considered a leader. One of the women commented that, "Leadership comes in different forms, and even helping a main leader is a form of leadership." By linking leadership to balancing relationships rather than to specific characteristics of the leaders, the women interviewed rejected the trait and behavior approaches that were used under the industrial paradigm to discuss leadership (Rost 1991:180 as cited in Rost 1993:97).

In their responses to the question of common misconceptions of leadership, the participants reiterated that leadership is a collaborative process. In their opinion, leadership can be misaligned with dictatorship, bossiness, taking control of absolutely everything, or Type A personalities who will "step on top of everyone to get to that higher position." One of the women interviewed indicated that it is a misconception "that leaders can do it on their own and that they don't need the help." These sentiments reject conventional expectations that have linked leadership to masculinity by describing leaders as "decisive, in charge, competitive, and self-reliant" (Komives et al. 2007:154). The women did not see characteristics that have been culturally-attributed to men – for example, individualism and assertiveness (Ely et al. 2003:156) – as reflective of either successful leadership or their own styles of leading.

When asked about their leadership practices – their style, approach, abilities, etc. – many of the characteristics used by the women to describe their leadership approaches fall under the post-industrial paradigm of collaboration and teamwork (Rost 1993:99). One woman described her style of leading as open; she is willing to share opinions or ideas, is talkative, and tried to get to know as many people as possible on campus. Another woman suggested that her style was that she did not need to have control over everything, but that she did need to know what was happening in the organization, because in the end, she was responsible for the actions of the members. Another interviewee, who states that she is less naturally outspoken than others, describes her style as: "using a very compassionate way of carrying myself, because I know how I myself could be intimidated by someone in a leadership position if they are very harsh or demanding."

When describing their daily interactions with the members of their organizations, these women leaders spoke of the need to separate friendships and personal lives from their business roles. Multiple women spoke about a style that balances being a friend and being the leader. One woman described this style of leadership as, "I try to be a friend as long as I can, until someone isn't doing their job and I have to step in." Another leader stated, "I try my best to keep the friend aspect in normal social interactions and the [leadership] aspect just in meetings and events." The women felt that it was important to have friendly relationships with their members, stay in touch with them, and ensure that everyone felt appreciated. An interviewee commented that,

I try to let them know that just because I have this position, because I am leader, does not make me any better than them. It might make me more involved, might make me more knowledgeable, but it doesn't make me better….I can't do it alone. I can try, and I would fail. So for all of the organizations I am in, community is super important.

For these women, it was important to emphasize the team aspect of their organizations; they try to get to know everyone personally and look to what direction their members want to take the organization. Some of the women also spoke about respecting others' time and opinions, and giving people a chance to learn from their mistakes. The women also interacted often with other student leaders. These interactions were considered to be easier as, "they know what they want when they are leading, and so they reciprocate and give that back to me as well." The women's leadership styles thus align with the participatory, relational, and interpersonal styles linked to female leaders in the literature under the post-industrial paradigm (Kezar and Moriarty 2000:55).

While they stated that they have not received much direct feedback, the women student leaders all claim positive reactions to their leadership. They have seen their enthusiasm being "transmitted to and sparked in" other members of the organization. They are open to constructive criticism and feedback from their peers. In addition, some of the women spoke of instances where those who were opposed to their leadership in the beginning were now supportive. In describing the skills and abilities they possess that have allowed them to exercise leadership, many of the women referred to their organizational and interpersonal skills. For example, one participant described her skills and abilities as,

I think being non-judgmental of others really….Just being understanding of all the differences – we all have our strengths and weakness. I have my

own strengths and weaknesses, and being able to recognize that in others.
… It makes people comfortable around me, and from what I perceive at
least, by not being as harsh or judgmental as other leaders tend to be, I
build their trust instead of building their fear.

These women thus exercise a mode of leadership that emphasizes empowering their
members rather than creating hierarchical relationships (Kezar and Moriarty 2000:55).

LEADERSHIP AS PASSION

The most frequently used word to describe the terms "leader" and "leadership"
was passion. Leaders are portrayed as those who are passionate about the organizations in
which they are involved; they are taking active roles in activities that they are truly
interested in. According to one of the participants, "The best leaders aren't doing
something just because they can, or because it will look good. The best leaders are doing
something because they have feelings about it. They are passionate about it."

Passion for certain activities was cited as a major motivator for pursing certain
leadership positions. According to one of the participants, part of the motivation for
taking on leadership roles is the:

coming of age that we have as undergraduates. Finding out who you are
and what your passions are. And once you are passionate about something
and you have the means to pursue it, oftentimes leadership does emerge
from that.

Leadership can be derived from both continuing what one has previously been interested
in and from exploration – trying something new and finding a new passion. The use of
passion to describe leadership was surprising; the terms passion and leadership have not
been linked in the literature on either the industrial paradigm or the post-industrial
paradigm reviewed for this study.

Unique to this study was the participants' responses to the questions that attempted to elucidate their motivations for becoming campus leaders. When the women were asked to comment on what generally motivated undergraduate students to become leaders on their college campuses, many of the participants made distinctions between those individuals who are taking on leadership roles because it is something they are passionate about or find meaning in, and those who are taking on positions because it looks good to do so.

The women claimed résumé building to be a motivation for many individuals. However, this was not considered to be a positive motivation by many of the women interviewed. One participant stated, "A huge part of it is probably résumé building – kind of unfortunately. It's something that we are taught very early on, going into high school, that your résumé needs to have certain things you are involved in." Another participant expressed that, "if they want to be a leader just because it looks good, they are not the most successful of leaders." For these women, altruistic motivations for pursuing leadership included a desire to collaborate with individuals of similar interests and to contribute to the campus community.

For some women, their current positions were a "natural progression" of their interests, and the result of a "drive to become more involved and expand my interests and my involvement in the campus community." Many of the women leaders stated that involvement in leadership activities is often motivated by a desire to meet people of similar passions. In addition, the women believed that leadership is also motivated by

seeing a need on campus, and seeking "to change the campus so it better reflects what they would like it to be." Describing this motivation as "the most pure reason for getting into something," one participant stated that some of her leadership roles:

> started off as a complaint, or seeing a void in the campus and seeing a need to fill it, and either nobody was doing it or nobody was doing a good job at it – or at least what I considered a good job at least.

These women have stepped up and taken a leadership position because no one else was doing so, and the position needed to be filled. An interviewee commented:

> I've had a bunch of different positions, but I haven't necessarily wanted all of those positions. It's been a situation where they need someone, and it's not like it's something they can skip over. They need to have someone in this chair, in this position, and there isn't anyone willing to step up. And I step up. That's actually one thing about myself that I really like….I'm dependable and I'll get it done.

"Stepping up" also included taking on leadership roles in an organization or club that was faltering, and that needed someone to ensure its sustainability. Taking on such roles allowed these women to leave a legacy at the college by making certain these struggling organizations survived.

The interview continued with questions aimed at understanding why these women decided to pursue their specific leadership positions on campus. Many of these women pursued leadership roles based on the recommendations and encouragement of previous leaders. One participant decided to pursue a more active role because the president at the time suggested that she would be good for the position. She stated, "Her recommendation, just knowing that someone who had done it in the past thinks I could, made me want pursue it." This finding corroborates research conducted by Elizabeth

Whitt in 1994 on the leadership experiences of female students at all-women colleges. The students interviewed by Whitt indicated that their leadership aspirations were derived from the encouragement of fellow student leaders. This study extends Whitt's results to a co-educational college setting. Therefore, whether students are attending an all-women or a co-educational facility, their leadership ambitions are encouraged by the support of their peer leaders.

The motivations espoused by these women add to the current literature that exists on the predictors of college women's aspirations for leadership roles. Previous studies have primarily focused on internal psychological factors, including a need to create meaningful connections with others and build self-esteem (Boatwright and Egidio 2003). The results of this study present the external factors that also motivate leadership aspirations, such as the recommendations of their peers and the perceived need for individuals to step up to leadership positions. These women believe that they have embraced opportunities to contribute positively to the campus community through their leadership.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES OF THE STUDENT LEADER

The participants were asked to comment on their goals going into their leadership positions, and subsequently, their success and challenges in achieving those goals.

Most of the women did not go into a position with a set list of goals that they wished to accomplish. Rather, they wished to keep many things the same while changing the aspects of the organization that needed to be improved. As stated by one of the participants:

In general, I don't approach it with goals as much as I approach it with the opportunity. Where have things worked out in the past, and where have things not worked out in the past. Where am I, where do I have my strong points, what can I bring to the table, what can I help with here.

The goals held by some of these women for their organizations were not easily quantifiable – they sought to gain more involvement in the organization, increase enthusiasm among the members, build pride in the group, and contribute to the campus community. The women leaders responded that they have been successful in achieving their goals of getting people more active in their organization and making the changes that needed to be made in their organizations. Interestingly, these women did not cite their personal strengths as the reason for the success of their goals. Rather, they pointed to members as important collaborators in achieving their goals.

A few of the women did express the sentiment that a leader cannot always fully reach everything that she wants to achieve when coming into a new position due to: over-committing herself to various tasks; time constraints during the school year; or issues that come up during the year. As stated by one of the participants:

You always come in saying I'm going to do this and this….All those things seemed like such attainable goals, and then, you get to the end, and you've had all these issues and problems that took so much of your time that you didn't have as much time to change things as you wanted.

Many of the challenges encountered by these women leaders centered on the balancing of personal relationships while in leadership roles. As leaders on a college campus, these women are interacting on a daily basis with individuals who are their peers, and often, their friends. One participant spoke about friends who have asked for

special favors from her because of her position; these friends did not understand the responsibilities and limitations of her position.

A challenge faced by almost every leader interviewed was the difficulty in meshing the various ideas of the members of an organization without isolating anyone. The women were also challenged by having to reprimand their peers when, as one participant said, a member "did something against our rules. That's hard. That's a hard thing to do." Other challenges included dealing with bureaucracy and with individuals who do not take their ideas seriously because "it's too hard, there isn't enough time, or because it's failed before." In such a situation, the women had to work even harder to promote their vision for the organization.

The women all spoke of their leadership as collaborative, supportive, and emphasizing interpersonal relationships. The women rejected conceptualizations of leadership that would have fallen within the industrial paradigm, with its focus on "idealized masculine images" that linked leadership to characteristics such as "individualism, assertive[ness], and courage" (Ely et al. 2003:156). The results of these interviews support the post-industrial paradigm as acceptable for discussing the leadership experiences of today's female college students. In opposition to current research, it is important to note that gender stereotypes and expectations were not cited as challenges by the women interviewed.

THE IMPACT OF GENDER

The shift in discussions on leadership to the post-industrial model was predicted to be advantageous to women; this paradigm favors traits and behaviors that have been

ascribed to women. With this new conceptualization of leadership, women's contributions should be recognized and women leaders should now be identified as leaders. However, according to current research, women leaders have not achieved equal standing to male leaders. In a co-educational collegiate setting, research indicates that female students have fewer opportunities for leadership, and continue to face stereotypical expectations for their leadership. The female student leaders interviewed in this study were thus asked questions that sought to understand the impact of gender on their daily leadership practices.

STEREOTYPICAL EXPECTATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP

These women had a variety of responses to the question of whether their leadership practices were influenced by their gender. One participant shared that she never felt discriminated against or felt any pressure because of her gender. However, understanding that there are possibilities for prejudices "made me realize that as a leader, I don't want people to feel that way, to feel that they have to hold onto one aspect of themselves. We are all equal under the organization that I'm involved in."

Most of the women acknowledged that there were some differences depending on whether one was leading a co-ed group, or a group that is predominantly of one gender. The women spoke about differences in how they presented information, and especially bad news, to male and female members of their group. One participant felt she had "to be a lot more careful about the way you say things" to females. She felt that male peers were more direct with her if they did not agree with her decision; however, with female peers, "if you say something to girls in the wrong way, they'll get upset, talk to other people.

They might not come straight to you and say that they have a problem. You'll hear from five other people along the line that they have a problem." In contrast, another participant stated that this difference in how one presents information is not based solely on gender differences; rather, one has to present information to people based on their personalities.

When asked to compare the success and challenges of male and female student leaders, these women said that it was difficult to define these differences because they did not have a clear idea of the experiences of male student leaders on campus. According to one interviewee, "A lot of females talk to you about their challenges, and I don't know if it's because I'm a female or they feel like we relate on that level. But I never really had a lot of males tell me about the challenges that they go through in their leadership positions."

While these women expressed that their own gender did play a role in some of their personal interactions with different members of their organization, the women also stated that they have not faced any gender stereotypes during their time on this campus. Rather, any stereotypes that they have encountered were based on the expectations or stereotypes that exist about the members of a certain group or organization. As stated by one participant:

> if you are a leader in that [a specific organization], then all of the connotations and notions that go along with that gets put upon you….So people will take you more or less seriously depending on their knowledge of the organization you are a part of, and not necessarily based off of the person you are.

During the interviews, most of the women stated that gender did not influence their achievements or challenges as a student leader. One participant stated, "I don't feel

judged because I am a woman. I don't feel judged because I am a woman in a leadership position."

In contrast, another interviewee did respond that she strongly believed that gender roles had impacted the way she led: she made a conscious effort to separate herself from any stereotypical images that could arise. She sees herself as equally capable as male peer leaders and is not reluctant to express this attitude. She states, "As for my leadership positions – I would say that maybe I have a stronger personality when I am going up against a man….I don't think I do this consciously, but I exude a powerful woman leadership role; I'm not a quiet leader by any means."

A related reaction came from another participant, who spoke about the place of gender roles in her predominantly female organization. "You'd think that it would play out different than it does. You'd think that gender would not be an issue, but…gender is even more of an issue." According to this participant, the women in her organization do struggle daily with their gender; however, their struggles only surface when they are in the presence of other female leaders. She stated,

> But they are women, and they all struggle with that every day, and they are in situations where they feel powerless or oppressed….You've got a lot of power in that room, a lot of powerful women, a lot of powerful voices…Does that always work out? No. This does lead to some tensions that I think are gender based. You take people who are used to having to fight to have their voices heard and you put them in a situation where they don't. They shouldn't have to fight to have their voices heard, but everyone is talking at once. Everyone is used to fighting. … You would think that they would finally be able to relax, and stop the fighting.

This was a unique perspective as other participants who were involved with predominately female organizations did not reveal a similar phenomena happening in their groups.

The women's responses to these questions about gender stereotypes contradict the current literature, which associates the small presence of women student leaders to the stereotypical images and expectations of leadership that are held by both their male and female peers (Whitt 1994:199). Research suggests that there are female students, in addition to male students, who consider leadership to be a masculine characteristic (Boatwright and Egidio 2003). The words bitchy, difficult, manly, bossy, and domineering have appeared in previous literature as examples of the stereotyped characterizations of female leaders (Rhode 2003 in Ely et al. 2003). In contrast to the literature, the women interviewed in this study could not point to any gender stereotypes that they have had to overcome in order to achieve their current leadership status.

While the women denied being hindered by gender stereotypes, many did express the idea that their members' responses to their leadership were affected by personality differences among the individual members. One of the participants believed that individuals' upbringings and what they have been taught to think about women played more of a role in how these individuals responded to her leadership then any gender based behaviors on her part. She stated:

> there are some people in the world who feel more comfortable around men, and some people who feel more comfortable around women…I think that influences how others see me. And whether they are brought up to hold women to lower regard then do men, or whether they're more often able to see people as equal. I think that's really more of the influence than me specifically.

It is interesting to note that many of the women pointed to their members' personalities and upbringings as the reasons behind any differences in how individual members responded to their leadership. Thus, these women may not be facing the stereotypes that are outlined in the literature because of an increased recognition and acceptance of gender differences in leadership. As summarized in the post-industrial paradigm, successful leadership does not have to be defined according to a stringent set of characteristics or behaviors. According to the social role theory, beliefs that people hold about the abilities of each gender are "derived from observations of the role performances of men and women and thus reflect the sexual division of labor and gender hierarchy of the society" (Eckes and Trautner 2000:124). In addition, the social role theory "argues that any differences can be accounted for by socialization of the individual leader and his/her subordinates, each then coming to the table with their own set of expectations for themselves and each other depending upon gender" (Careless 1998 as cited in Stelter 2002). As women slowly make their presence felt in various positions of leadership, young men and women will no longer see men solely in the workplace and women solely in the domestic sphere. As conversations on the intersection of gender and leadership become more commonplace, and women make inroads into previously male only positions, social role theory indicates that people's perceptions about the capabilities of each gender will also shift.

ROLE OF GENDER IN THE RECOGNITION OF LEADERSHIP

A variety of sentiments were expressed when these leaders were asked if they believed that male and female student leaders on this campus received equal recognition. Many of the women felt that the top leaders are recognized equally by both

administration and other students, regardless of gender. One of the participants felt that the student body had a lack of recognition for its leaders in general. She reflected, "This campus has so many leadership positions available through all the different organizations that students almost don't appreciate it. But all of these positions require a lot of time and a lot of effort. … I don't think students realize it." According to another participant, while there are many student leaders, she felt as if the student body does focus on the males who lead one of the larger organizations on campus. Another woman agreed saying, "Women recognize women, and women recognize men. But I don't think that many men recognize women leaders because maybe they don't think what they are leading – say a sorority – they don't think that is actually important." Another stated,

> If you don't have enough positions open to women, you don't have enough opportunities to be leaders, you can't be recognized. I feel as if in general, the top of the top student leaders are recognized. They do get the recognition they deserve. But every so often, you have one who slips through the cracks, or you've got someone who just needed the opportunity to shine and didn't get it, and I feel as those people are usually women.

An explanation for why women might be slipping through the cracks was provided by another participant. She shared that she thought it was more difficult for women to obtain certain positions on this campus because there "were usually more qualified and ambitious female applicants then there were positions." Thus, there was more competition among women for certain leadership roles on campus. When asked why this might be occurring, the participant responded:

> Part of it is that the positions of power and leadership appeal more to women because they might not have had that opportunity before. They might see it as a way to have their voices heard, and they might be more ambitious about it…. I see it as a reflection of something that starts in high

school and even before with women. You're going to have a tougher time; you have to make yourself stronger, [and] make yourself look better.

This comment extends the point made in the literature that women do not have enough opportunities for leadership on college campuses (Howard 1978 as cited in Romano 1996:676). According to the comments of the women interviewed, the problem is not that there are not enough leadership opportunities for women. Rather, there are many more women interested in and qualified to take on leadership roles than there are positions. At co-educational campuses especially, equal opportunities are given to both male and female students to pursue certain positions. However, the need to maintain a gender balance in these positions can result in competent women not being able to obtain said positions.

In addition, the women touched upon an interesting phenomenon when discussing exactly which students were heavily involved in leadership roles. One difference noted by a few women was in the number of activities in which male and female leaders were involved. As stated by one of the women, "Whoever the female leaders are, they are never just involved with one thing. But the males tend to be devoted to one or two things." This suggests that women who obtain a certain position will subsequently gain further leadership roles. One of the women indicated that such a situation was very real, stating "once people see you that way [as a campus leader], then they know they can rely on you to do more." Another woman repeated this reaction, commenting on the existence of a college radar. "If you are not on the [college] radar, you go to class, you might be doing well within the department, but I don't think the administration would even know you by name…But people like us [student leaders], they see us in and out of their offices all the time." Supporting this opinion is the leadership activities of the interviewees

themselves; seven out of the nine women stated that they were involved with five or more activities.

SELF EVALUATION OF LEADERSHIP

The interviewees were then asked questions that sought to understand whether they self identified as leaders, how they perceived others' evaluations of their leadership, and how their leadership roles influenced their collegiate experience. The literature proposes that women have negative evaluations of their leadership abilities because they have internalized certain gender stereotypes. For example, many female students interviewed in these previous studies expressed lower self confidence than their male counterparts when exercising leadership (Astin and Leland 1991, Dugan and Komives 2007 and Whitt 1994). However, the women in the present study claimed that they are not being hindered by gender stereotypes.

THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES

For these female students, their leadership experiences defined their college careers – personally, socially, academically, and professionally. They believe that their leadership roles made them more "open and talkative." Their leadership roles have been fulfilling, giving them the opportunity to meet and interact with new people on a daily basis, as well as develop close friendships with other student leaders and the members of their organizations. Their positions have readied them for their future professional careers by providing them with networking opportunities, as well as the chance to handle difficult situations.

The women had a mix of responses to the question of whether they considered themselves to be leaders on campus. One of the women stated that while she has held various leadership roles, she does not know if she is a leader on campus, saying, "I don't change the campus. I deal with small parts, but I don't really deal with that big of a role on campus." In contrast, two of the women interviewed readily identified themselves as leaders, referring to their various leadership positions on campus. One of these women stated that "I feel like I've done good things for the parts of it [campus] that I'm involved in. And I think people recognize that."

Another woman stated that she could only align herself with certain definitions of leadership. She considers herself to be a leader on campus if leadership is specifically defined through the "credentials" of holding leadership positions. She does not consider herself to be a leader in the sense of an individual who everyone in her grade looks up to as a leader or "is an exemplar for the group."

A different interviewee stated that she has not always considered herself to be a leader. She just ends up taking on leadership positions because she is pursuing her interests and goals, and she enjoys uniting people under a singular purpose. She never pursued a position as "any form of being superior at anything." As her final answer to the question of whether she considered herself to be a campus leader, this woman responded, "In the end when I look back, I can say that I was a leader, but it wasn't for any other purpose other than pursuing my passions and trying to allow others to see the merit of my goals." A similar sentiment was expressed by another participant. She stated that she did

not originally think of herself as a leader, but just as "a passionate person who is involved." But during her campus career, and as she became more involved on campus, she began to define herself as a leader. She stated:

> I've started to come to terms with the fact that I am leader. It was never something that I looked for myself, never something that I sought, but it was something that I felt obligated to become, because that's the type of person that I am. I will be there whenever they need someone.

Other women also responded that they never sought to gain the distinction of being a campus leader. Rather, they only began defining themselves as leaders once they had been labeled as a leader by members of the administration or by the student body. As stated by an interviewee, "The fact that others consider me a leader is what made me consider myself a leader." This sentiment was echoed by one of the other women, who responded:

> I would say yes and no. In the eyes of some people, I'm considered a leader…. All these people are telling me I'm a leader. I guess so. I consider myself a leader, but there are definitely other ways of leading other than the way I go about doing it. Some of them are probably better than the way I lead. I am a leader, but I'm still learning….It's something that is very bound to how everyone else feels about me.

Another participant stated that she would have not considered herself to be a leader, but now she "cannot not consider myself to be a leader because it has been said to me so many times." She feels as if her position has become attached to the end of her name; whenever she is introduced, her leadership position is included in the introduction. She also stated that leadership is not dependent on holding a position, saying:

> You don't have to be a president of something or hold a position in a club to be a leader. But if someone is coming to you for advice, they're valuing

your opinions, valuing what you do, and while they may or may not be following your footsteps, they are hoping to follow your advice.

RECOGNITION OF LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

When the women were asked to comment on whether other individuals consider them to be leaders on campus, they unanimously answered yes. According to these leaders, other individuals – administration, faculty, and fellow students – are aware of the positions that these women hold, see their drive, and recognize that they are genuinely passionate about the activities in which they are involved. One participant claimed that others are "able to distinguish a leader from a follower from within the campus community, and identify those people who really have that passion." Other students "see the shifts that good leaders have made" and this "invigorates others and makes them enthusiastic to get involved as well." These women also know that they are recognized as leaders because other students seek their guidance and ask them questions. One of the participants described being approached by her peers for guidance even when she was not the head of the specific organization:

> Even if I am not the head of something, even if I am not in charge of something, I am the person who gets the questions because people know that I will have the answers. So I'm a person that people feel comfortable going to when they've got those questions or they need direction. And that to me to me speaks more than anything else could because that says to me that there are people acknowledging that I have a position, even I am not necessarily aware of it.

As the women's self-identification as student leaders is closely associated to how they are evaluated by their members, the participants were asked to reflect on any expectations that influenced their leadership practices. The women believed that as leaders, they were held to higher standards. They are expected to be accountable, knowledgeable, and on top of their jobs. One participant believed that while leaders were not treated differently if they failed or made a mistake, their failures were more public. While these women do not know if these are "expectations that people have of me, or expectations that I expect people to have of me," their leadership practices are impacted by these factors.

The women stated that they respond to both the pressure they put on themselves, and to the pressure they perceived is being put on them by others. The women believe that they are expected to be model students. Thus, they are conscious of their behaviors and actions. An interviewee stated that, "Sometimes, I think further about how I'm going to do certain things or how I'm going to present myself at meetings, what I'm actually going to step up and say, just because I am in that position." To meet expectations, the women try to lead by example. Since their members expect them to have a wealth of knowledge about topics pertinent to the organization, the women will honestly admit to not knowing if they do not have all the details. One participant felt that people's expectations of her leadership practices have made her "more understanding of people in general, [and] to be compassionate when speaking to people."

The participants were also asked to consider how other individuals would define successful leadership, and whether these definitions had an impact on how they chose to lead. One participant claimed, "I don't let other people's definitions define the way that I lead, am led, or want to be led. I think I lead the way I hope I would be led." Another participant stated that while her own definition of successful leaders rests on passion, she has heard leaders being described as those who "can command a situation, who are great speakers, great thinkers, who are smart, who are quick, who will get a job done, who will run things efficiently, who will delegate." This participant continued to state that:

> Sometimes the standard expectations that people have of leaders, or the way people think of leaders, are some of the reasons why I don't always see myself as a leader. I don't necessarily group myself with those people… I am comfortable speaking to large group, I'm comfortable delegating, but that doesn't mean that I automatically think that I have these qualities that makes me a leader. However, that doesn't mean that I don't see them in other people. So I see those qualities in other people, and I can say that person is a leader, but it just doesn't reflect back on myself necessarily.

Some of the other interviewees expressed the sentiment that "knowing those standards or those projections that people have of leaders impact the way that I project my own self." Since leaders may be expected to have charisma, one participant uses this expectation to give her the strength to project herself as a strong leader in situations where she may feel intimidated. Since successful leaders are expected to accomplish their goals, another participant stated that she sets realistic goals that she and her organization can meet. In addition, a different interviewee commented that "whenever I make a decision now, I think about who will oppose it, how they will oppose it, and how I can defend my decisions based on the opposition I might possibly get." She also mentioned that she tries

to make her decision process as open as possible, providing enough information so that everyone understood how she was reaching her decisions.

These women strongly vocalized the opportunities and success they have had in their leadership roles. They were not hindered by gender stereotypes or generalizations. Rather, they were motivated by the reactions of their members, peers, and administrators to their leadership.

EVALUATION AS AN ALPHA FEMALE

Through their expression of dedication and excitement for their organizations, the women in this study expressed their comfort with their roles as student leaders. These women did align their personalities with many parts of the definition of the alpha female. According to the definition, an alpha female is a:

> woman who reports being a leader, having others seek her guidance, feeling a sense of superiority or dominance over other females, believing that males and females are equal, feeling driven, and feeling extroverted in social situations. Being an alpha female is related to high self confidence (Ward et al. 2009:102).

When the interviewees were asked to provide reactions to the definition, most of the women readily identified with many aspects. They noticed that others do seek their guidance, and that they are driven and confident in their abilities. The women strongly believed that they were equal to their male counterparts. In addition, they suggested that they could identify other alpha females on this campus. However, all the interviewees reacted negatively to the part of the definition that stated that alpha females were women who reported "feeling a sense of superiority or dominance over other females." They believed that this portion of the definition was not a true reflection of their leadership

practices; they try to treat all individuals – males and females – as equals. The women's rejection of the clause in the definition espousing "superiority and dominance" was expected as their leadership is structured around collaboration and mutual support.

EVALUATING THE NEED FOR LEADERSHIP TRAINING

The participants who had indicated that they participated in a leadership training program were asked to provide further information on these experiences. This question sought to gain an understanding of prior leadership training that could have influenced how these women reflected on their own leadership practices. According to the women, these workshops or seminars oftentimes focused on what it meant to be a leader, and the traits and abilities associated with leadership. However, the women did not find these lectures to be particularly valuable.

Rather, the women who had leadership training valued the opportunity to discuss and share ideas with other student leaders. The informative portions of the training were the sessions in which the women learned how to handle difficult situations based on the experiences of other student leaders. Thus, the women believed that they derived the most benefit from opportunities to converse with other student leaders and share their experiences, regardless of whether such occasions were part of a formal training program. As expressed by one of the participants, it was not the leadership trainings "that necessarily made me the leader that I am today, or even the person I am today. It is more the everyday interactions, seeing the successful leaders, seeing the not so successful leaders, that showed me the way."

Since leadership opportunities during the college years have been linked to a student's self-efficacy, civic engagement, character development, academic performance, and personal development, leadership development in students has consequently become a prominent theme and objective of higher education. As of 2004, it is estimated that over 1,000 such programs exist across college campuses (Dugan and Komives 2007). Based on the results of this study, these leadership development training programs would be most beneficial if they provide student leaders with the opportunity to converse and share ideas with their peers. Education on the characteristics or traits of successful leaders would not be valuable; the women leaders interviewed for this study have already established the post-industrial paradigm of leadership and its emphasis on collaboration as successful.

EVALUATING THE NEED FOR FEMALE ROLE MODELS

Current literature points to a lack of female role models as a reason for the difficulties that female students face in obtaining and succeeding in their leadership positions. However, when asked about female role models who impacted their leadership practices, most of the women did not mention any professionals or public figures. Rather, their role models were their mothers and their female peers. The women reflected that they looked to other campus leaders and to prior leaders of their organization for inspiration on how to lead. According to one participant, "seeing someone my age doing it…seeing them being able to handle it made me more capable of handling it. And I know that with one of my friends…she was my role model, I was her role model, and we would play off each other, each becoming a stronger leader." This feature indicates the need for

student leaders to have the opportunity to discuss and learn from each other's leadership experiences.

LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

All of the women interviewed expressed that they would be seeking leadership roles once they left campus. They want to push themselves to the top of whatever field they pursue. They will seek leadership positions as long as it is in something that they care about.

Surprisingly, the women unanimously expressed feeling that they would face gender stereotypes and gender discrimination once they entered the workforce. Many see their future fields as male-dominated, and having a much greater chance of gender biases. One participant stated, "I think gender will play a role in how people perceive my leadership and in the way that it will impact my leadership. I'll probably have to be stronger than I normally am because people are looking at me as a female. So I'll probably have to be actively as dominant as I would naturally be." Another participant believes that "I might have to work harder to get respect. I'm thinking I'd have to work hard to get the respect that I got easier here." The women stated that their education and experiences as campus leaders have given them strength to face the discrimination when it occurs.

This unanimous acceptance of the negative effects of their gender once they entered their careers was unexpected. During their time on campus, these women have built up impressive résumés as leaders of multiple organizations on campus. They have gained the skills and abilities to manage and collaborate with a diverse group of

individuals. They have gained the respect and admiration of their peers, and of the faculty and administration of the campus. Their gender has not been limiting; neither their achievements nor challenges were stated as being unduly influenced by gender. The women are using their experiences as campus leaders to ready themselves for a world in which they expect to face gender stereotypes and discrimination. This indicates that while women are enjoying equal opportunities on their college campus, they believe that their prospects for gender equality once they leave college are still dubious.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study have shown that the experiences of women student leaders fit into the post-industrial paradigm. For these women, their gender has not been a hindrance to their ability to exercise leadership. The women do self-identify themselves as campus leaders and even as fitting many portions of the definition of an "alpha female." This self-identification usually does follow recognition as a leader by their peers. In evaluating whether there is need for increased leadership training and for role models for these leaders, the women expressed wanting only greater opportunities to share their experiences with other student leaders. Surprisingly, even with their achievements and growth in leadership qualifications during their college years, the women foresee their gender being a limiting factor once they are in the workforce.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS

The present study was aimed at understanding the changing experiences of women student leaders in the 2010s through in-depth interviews with women studying at a co-educational liberal arts institution. The study explored what aspects of leadership were important in defining the college experiences of these female students. The women's experiences were hypothesized to be congruent with the post-industrial paradigm of leadership, which emphasizes interpersonal relationships and collaboration. As current literature points to the existence of gender stereotypes and masculine images of leadership that prevent women leaders from exercising their leadership to their full potential, the interview results of this study were, in particular, analyzed for insights into the influence of gender on leadership experiences.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

The results of this study support and enhance a sociological understanding of the post-industrial paradigm, which emphasizes leadership as collaborative rather than individualistic. This study extends the research thus far conducted on the motivators that inspire students to seek leadership roles to include the influence of community and interpersonal relationships. The data collected in this study captures society's changing conceptions and expectations for women leaders, and suggests that there is increased recognition and acceptance of gender differences in leadership among undergraduate students. At the same time, the students interviewed for this study believe that society's acceptance of women student leaders has not extended to the workplace, as they foresee facing gender biases once they graduate from the collegiate setting.

The post-industrial paradigm is a recent addition to society's discussions and explanations of leadership. It is an evolving paradigm, which allows for broader conceptualizations that move beyond the limited definition of leaders as individuals who have control over the processes of a group and who can command their followers to attain certain goals. The results of this study lend support to and provide extensions to the post-industrial definition that "leadership is not what the leader does but what the leaders and collaborators do together to change the organization" (Rost 1993:101).

The female students interviewed all defined leadership with terminology that aligned with the post-industrial paradigm of leadership. They consider leadership to be a collaborative effort rather than an individualistic endeavor. The women did not use trait-based characteristics to define leadership. Rather, the women focused on the building of personal relationships with the members of their organizations. Leaders were defined as those who guide, rather than dictate, the actions of constituents of the organization. Leaders are role models who set an example for the rest of the organization; they work well with members of the organization to achieve mutually determined goals. Successful leaders were characterized as those who can balance difficult relationships. The participants in this study described their leadership style as open and communicative. They emphasized the team aspect of their organizations and fostered participation and active involvement among their members. Their leadership emphasized empowering their members to become collaborators.

The women who participated in this study repeatedly characterized leadership as passion. The use of passion to describe leadership was surprising; the terms passion and leadership have not been previously linked in the literature on the post-industrial paradigm. The women interviewed in this study believed passion to be a primary motivator for influencing students to pursue leadership roles. For many students, their leadership positions were a natural progression resulting from increased involvement in an organization or activity about which they were passionate. Leadership as understood through the post-industrial paradigm can thus include the characterization of passion as an important component of leadership.

This study has provided a greater, in-depth look into the motivations of undergraduate students who chose to pursue leadership positions. The motivations espoused by these women add to the current literature that exists on the predictors of college women's aspirations for leadership roles. The motivations for leadership in these women are rooted in the pursuit of new passions as well as stepping up to fill a void in the campus community. This study suggests that these female student leaders are not motivated solely by internal psychological factors (Boatwright and Egidio 2003). These women did not pursue their positions in order to build self-esteem, to look good, or to build up their résumés. Rather, they sought to positively contribute to the campus community by stepping up when no one else was doing so, or by taking on the challenge of stimulating a struggling club or organization. This indicates the existence of unselfish motivators for pursuing positions of leadership, and further suggests that these women are cognizant of the needs of the campus community in which they lead. These women value the relationships that they have build with the members of their organizations. They

were willing to step up and take on certain roles – even if they do not necessarily want these positions – because they consider themselves to be dependable. Under the post-industrial paradigm, the importance placed on interpersonal relationships explains the women's desires to ensure that members were not disappointed in their experiences with the organization. The women were not motivated by arrogance or feelings of superiority over their members; rather, they recognized that they had the skills and abilities to contribute positively to the community, and then chose to so.

THE INTERSECTION OF GENDER AND LEADERSHIP

An important aspect of this study was the analysis of female students' self-identification and evaluation as campus leaders. Literature has indicated that the traditional association between leadership and culturally-ascribed masculine traits such as individualism and assertiveness has prevented discussions of the experiences of women leaders. Female student leaders were found to have lower self confidence in their leadership qualifications and abilities in prior research (Dugan and Komives 2007). This sentiment was contradicted by the results of this study. The women interviewed are confident that they have led their organizations well, and that they have contributed to making positive changes in their organizations and on campus.

However, many of the women did indicate that they only began seeing themselves as campus leaders once they had been identified and called a "leader" by their peers or administration. While a few of the women did readily identify themselves as campus leaders based on their positions and titles, most of the participants did not immediately do

so. However, this lack of immediate self-identification is not reflective of a lack of self-confidence or of devaluations of their leadership abilities.

Based on the results of these interviews, the terms leader and leadership are not regularly reflected upon by these women as they carry out their day to day leadership activities. Their actions as leaders stem from a desire to contribute to organizations that they felt passionate about; they are not actively seeking to be labeled as campus leaders. Their leadership positions can be seen as natural progressions of their passions. Their titles were obtained as they followed their passions, tried to unite their peers under one purpose, or strove to make a meaningful contribution to the campus community. And because they are so passionate about the activities in which they are involved, these women would probably be contributing to their organizations even if they did not have a leadership title or position.

The women's self-identification as campus leaders was not limited by gender stereotypes nor by the traditional association of leadership with masculinity, as proposed in the literature (Boatwright and Egidio 2003). On the contrary, the women not readily calling themselves leaders can be seen as a reflection of the post-industrial paradigm in which they exercise leadership. For these women, their successes as leaders are tied to the achievements of their peer collaborators. Since they do not see the progress of their organizations as individual successes, they are just as likely to give credit to their members as to themselves for a triumph. As their leadership styles emphasize interpersonal relationships, these women do not need to constantly self-identify as campus leaders. They are confident in their abilities and in the aptitudes of their

collaborators. These women can effectively evaluate their leadership and make changes to better fit the personalities and needs of their constituents.

The women placed great importance on the opinions and evaluations of their peer student leaders and the members of their organizations. Recognizing that their successes develop from the accomplishments of their followers, many of these women did not self-identify as campus leaders until they had been called so by their peers. The support that these women received for their leadership decisions from their peers is what eventually led to the women identifying themselves as campus leaders.

These sentiments were supported by the interviewees' identification with the definition of the alpha female (Ward et al. 2009:102). The nine women who participated in this study saw themselves – and other female leaders on campus – as individuals who were driven and self-confident. These women believe in the equality of male and female student leaders. Due to their focus on equality, the women did not identify with one specific portion of the definition of the alpha female that suggested that alpha females were superior to or dominant to other females. They believed that all individual members of their organizations – male and female – should be treated equally.

In co-educational settings, prior research has indicated that female students have fewer opportunities to take on leadership roles (Howard 1978 as cited in Romano 1996:676). In contrast, the participants of this study expressed the sentiment that most male and female students receive equal opportunities to take on leadership roles, and that male and female leaders were equally recognized by their peers and administration. At the same time, some of the women did feel that it was more difficult for female students

to obtain certain positions due to a pool of very highly qualified women leaders. Thus, the problem as cited by the interviewees is not that there are not enough leadership opportunities for women. Rather, there are many more women interested in and qualified to take on leadership roles than there are positions. This implies that the need to maintain a gender balance in various leadership positions on co-educational campuses can result in competent women not being able to obtain said positions. Furthermore, the women indicated that those who obtain a certain leadership role on campus subsequently gain further positions. This can be seen in the involvement of the interviewees themselves; seven out of the nine women were involved in five or more leadership activities. This situation indicates that sufficient effort is not being made to discover and develop leadership potential in all members of an undergraduate institution. Rather, only those students who make it onto the "college radar" are provided with the opportunities to further their leadership abilities.

Previous research has also indicated that when female students do take on leadership positions, they are negatively affected by gender stereotypes (Rhode 2003 in Ely et al. 2003). In contradiction, the women in this study indicated that they have not faced any gender biases during their time as campus leaders. They do not believe that their gender has impacted either their achievements or their challenges. At the same time, the women did indicate that their gender has been a factor in how individual members have responded to their leadership. This study brought up the interesting point that differences in the personality and upbringing of individual members could affect their relationships with the leader of an organization. Due to differences in socialization, members enter an organization with varying standards or projections of the

characteristics of a successful leader. Social role theory indicates that these socialized beliefs can influence how an individual reacts to the leadership of a male versus the leadership of a female (Careless 1998 as cited in Stelter 2002). A member may expect his/her leader to be authoritative, assertive and decisive – qualities traditionally associated with male leaders. Another member can view successful leadership as collaborative, non-hierarchical and participatory – qualities traditionally associated with female leaders. Thus, while effective leaders have varying styles of leading – and while individual male and female leaders may not ascribe to the traditionally male or female leadership qualities – the opinions and conceptualizations of the organization's members can greatly impact whether a leader is considered to be successful.

One of the most significant findings of this study was the women student leaders' outlook on their leadership opportunities once they leave the college setting. As expected, all of the women indicated a desire to take on leadership roles in activities and organizations about which they are passionate. Surprisingly, the women unanimously indicated that they expected to face gender stereotypes and gender discrimination once they enter the workforce. The women indicated that they will be using the skills and abilities gained during their time as leaders on their college campus to strengthen them to face a world in which their gender will prove to be a challenge. These comments indicate that these female students are cognizant of the lack of women in many upper management positions, as well as the lack of examples of female leaders in popular media and culture. In addition, they realize that many full-time female employees are simultaneously managing professional and familial responsibilities, without the support of workplace policies promoting family-friendly lifestyles (Keohane 2010:126-127). The

interviewees indicated that they are confident in their abilities to take on leadership roles once they enter their desired fields. However, these women expect to be hindered by the biased mentalities of those currently in positions of leadership and authority in the workplace. As the social role theory suggests that a person's leadership potential is evaluated based on the socialization of his/her peers, it is possible that an increase in the number of individuals in the workforce who consider leadership to be gender-neutral will decrease the existing gender biases (Eckes and Trautner 2000).

STUDY CONTRIBUTIONS

This study has contributed details that enrich the understanding and use of the post-industrial model to explain leadership. It confirms the notion that the post-industrial paradigm is acceptable for describing and explaining the day to day interactions and relationships between leaders and their followers. The participants' descriptions of their leadership experiences support the belief that a shift away from the industrial paradigm has occurred in society. The consensus with which these women defined successful leadership is indicative of the strength of the post-industrial in explaining the greater value that society places on collaboration and the development of interpersonal relationships in organizations. In addition, this study has extended aspects of the evolving post-industrial paradigm. This study has elucidated the important link that exists between passion and leadership. It has also showcases the variety of altruistic motivators that influence individuals to take on leadership roles.

The results of this project provide an understanding of the influence of gender on leadership experiences that is contradictory to the current literature. The female student

leaders interviewed do not feel constrained by any gender stereotypes on their college campus. They believe that they have had the opportunity to use their skills and talents to better their organizations and campus. This study has also provided an interesting corollary to how individuals self identify as leaders. The women in this study did not seek to be labeled as campus leaders; they were not motivated by the prestige that often accompanies recognition as a campus leader. These women based their evaluations of their success on the relationships that they build with their members, and on their abilities to provide their members with a good experience in the organization. These women did not label their success in awards won or on goals reached. Rather, they based their successes as leaders on their abilities to foster a collaborative and supportive community within their organization. Interestingly, even with these positive experiences, these women expect to be hindered by their gender once they enter the workforce.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

An issue to be addressed is the women's foreseen lack of gender equality once they enter the workforce. It is possible that, while the women's post-industrial paradigm of leadership is effective in a college setting, this model could be less effective in the workforce setting. The workforce settings in many fields may still be operating under the traditional, industrial, hierarchical leadership model. As these women are entering the workforce with the skills and abilities to be effective and successful leaders, steps need to be taken to increase discussion of gender inequality issues in the workforce. This can include initiatives aimed at addressing early gender socialization and presenting leadership as a gender-neutral concept. In addition, initiatives can be implemented to empower young women, and to discover and nurture their leadership potential. This can

include leadership training experiences that "recognize budding aspirations, identify opportunities for women in progressive organizations that honor the worth of relational leadership and prepare women to anticipate and counteract social obstacles to acting on their leadership aspirations" (Boatwright and Egidio 2003:666). Furthermore, there needs to be increased conversations in popular culture and mass media that promote gender equality in the workplace and that present positive female leaders as role models. Shifts in workplaces policies to those that promote family-friendly lifestyles can also be beneficial to equalizing the experiences of male and female leaders in the workplace. Women leaders should also be given the opportunity to discuss their leadership experiences openly on a regular basis so that issues of inequality can be addressed, and so that they are more visible to younger, aspiring females. Women who aspire to leadership positions should be provided with support systems consisting of both peers and older female role models.

This study indicates the need for practical changes to the development and structure of leadership training courses. Recognizing the growing importance of developing leadership within the college setting, many institutions have been implementing leadership training courses. However, training courses that focus on the traits and abilities associated with leadership are not considered to be valuable to student leaders. Rather, student leaders seek leadership training that emphasizes situational scenarios and the opportunity to discuss decision making among their peers. Student leaders see their peers as their strongest role models and believe that they will gain the most value from conversing with peers. In addition, many of the women interviewed indicated that they pursued leadership roles based on the recommendations of their peers

and of other female leaders. Thus effective training modules would provide young leaders with the opportunity to converse with peers about their experiences, achievements, and challenges in leading various organizations. Leadership training courses are also often aimed primarily at individuals who have been identified as campus leaders. Instead of designing training workshops solely for women who are already aspiring for leadership roles, opportunities should be provided that encourage all women to seek their leadership potential.

LIMITATIONS

While the interviews conducted were in-depth, this study only conducted interviews with nine women from one co-educational college in the Northeast region. Because of the limited number of interviews, the results of this study cannot be generalized to the larger population. In addition, eight of the nine women were non-Hispanic White. Thus, the intersection of race and gender on exercising leadership has not been indicated in this study, and the generalizability of the findings to women of different racial and ethnic backgrounds is severely limited. A more representative sample of a campus or of the national student population could provide crucial information that was not provided in this study. This study used fully self reported data on leadership practices. Additional sources, such as the members in an organization, other student leaders, or even administration or faculty, can provide another perspective into these women's leadership. The women interviewed were all leaders in established clubs and organizations on campus and their experiences thus cannot be generalized to women who are members of grassroots organizations or early stage activism movements. Finally, most of the women in this study were at a similar point in their college educational

career. A sample that is more representative would include women from different points in their college career. Such a sample would also allow one to identify patterns in the development of leadership aspirations across the four undergraduate years.

POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The women in this study unanimously indicated that they expected to face gender discrimination once they entered their various fields. A future study should take a closer look at what factors are causing women student leaders to feel this way about their futures; what the actual gender equality situation is in the workforce; what can be done to ensure gender equality in the workforce; and how today's female student leaders can be prepared for their entry into the workforce. In addition, the women in this study indicated that they are preparing themselves for the expected gender biases in their workplaces through their leadership experiences on the college campus. This raises questions of the experiences of women who are not considered to be campus leaders, and specifically, questions of whether these women will face increased levels of gender inequality and discrimination in the workforce. Thus, another potential future research study can look at the similarities and differences in the workplace experiences of women who did and who did not hold leadership positions during their collegiate years.

Another area of future research is the intersection of leadership and gender with other sociological factors such as race, class, and socioeconomic status. Patricia Hill Collins's intersectionality theory states that gender, race, class, and other factors work in concert to shape the experiences of an individual in society. These forces also work together to create inequality; no singular force is the cause of injustices that exist in

society (Collins 2009). As the present study only explored the experiences of mostly non-Hispanic White women, and also did not evaluate for the influences of class, socioeconomic status or other factors, future research could seek to understand the influence of these additional factors on women's leadership experiences.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

I, _____, consent to participate in this interview about the experiences of women student leaders conducted by Aleena Paul, the sociology thesis project researcher who is under the direction of Professor Melinda Goldner in the sociology department. Aleena Paul has explained the purposes of her study, including how the interviews will be conducted and how the data I provide will be analyzed and reported, the expected duration of my participation, and that there are no foreseen risks to me if I participate.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw my participation from this interview at any time without any repercussions. I understand that I can decline to answer any interview questions I do not wish to answer. I understand that my participation in this study will be kept confidential.

I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions that I have about this study, and I have received satisfactory answers. I understand that even though all details of this study may not be fully explained before beforehand (e.g., the entire purpose of the study), during the debriefing session I will be given more detailed information and will have the opportunity to ask further questions.

I have read and fully understand the contents of this consent form. I sign this consent form freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form will be given to me upon my request.

_____   _____

Signature of participant   Date

_____

Print name of participant

_____   _____

Signature of researcher   Date

APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHICS

Interview ID # _____   Date of Interview _____

Age: _____   Class year: _____

Race or ethnicity (circle all that apply):
   a. White, not Hispanic
   b. Black
   c. Hispanic
   d. Native American
   e. Asian or Pacific Islander
   f. Other (specify) _____

How many leadership activities (held leadership positions in clubs, committees, organizations, teams etc.) were you involved with during **your high school career**?
   a. None
   b. 1-2 activities
   c. 3-4 activities
   d. 5-6 activities
   e. More than 6 activities

How many leadership activities (held leadership positions in clubs, committees, organizations, teams etc.) are/have you been involved with during **your undergraduate career**?
   a. None
   b. 1-2 activities
   c. 3-4 activities
   d. 5-6 activities
   e. More than 6 activities

In what types of organizations do you hold / have you held a leadership position / role during your undergraduate career (circle all that apply)?

   a. Academic or Pre-Professional
   b. Activism or Awareness
   c. Athletics
   d. Campus Government
   e. Campus or Community Service
   f. Creative and Performing Arts
   g. Greek Life
   h. Media
   i. Minerva
   j. Religious
   k. Residential Life
   l. Other (specify) _____

Have you participated in any leadership courses (training, seminars, workshops)?

   a.   No
   b.   Yes. If yes, when and where did you take this course?

   _____

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Conceptions about leadership

What do the words leader and leadership mean to you?

What makes a leader successful?

What are common misconceptions about leadership?

What do you believe motivates undergraduate students to become leaders on their campus?

Have you participated in any leadership courses (training, seminars, workshops)?

Self-identification and evaluation of leadership

Do you consider yourself a leader on campus? Why or why not?

Do other individuals consider you to be a leader? How do you know?

What organizations are you/have you been involved with during your time at Union College?

What leadership roles do you now hold or have held in these organizations?

What role has leadership played in your experience at Union?

Can you tell me more about your positions as <title of position> in <organization name>?

    How did you attain this position? Why did you pursue this position?

What are / were some of your goals for the position you hold / have held in <organization name>?

    Do you believe you were successful in achieving these goals?

What challenges have you faced in your role as a student leader?

Perceptions of others

Can you describe your interactions with members of your organization?

How have members of your organization reacted to your leadership?

Do you think people have certain expectations of you as a leader?

    What impact have these expectations had on the way you lead?

How do people describe successful leaders?

Have these descriptions impacted your leadership practices? If so, how have they influenced you?

Gender

Please describe your leadership style, approach, or strategy.

Do you believe all aspects of your style have been successful? Why or why not?

What skills or abilities do you possess that have allowed you to practice leadership?

Have gender roles or expectations impacted the way you exercise leadership? Please explain.

Do you believe gender has influenced your achievements or challenges as a campus leader? Please explain.

Are there female role models who have impacted your leadership practices? If so, how have they influenced you?

Have you faced any stereotypes during your role as a campus leader? Please explain.

Do you believe gender has played a role in how others respond to your leadership? Please explain.

Do you believe women student leaders on this campus receive equal recognition as male student leaders? Please explain.

How do the experiences/success/challenges of male student leaders on this campus compare to that of female student leaders?

The Alpha female

A 2009 study pointed to the emergence of alpha females at college campuses.

The alpha female is defined as a "woman who reports being a leader, having others seek her guidance, feeling a sense of superiority or dominance over other females, believing that males and females are equal, feeling driven, and feeling extroverted in social situations. Being an alpha female is related to high self confidence" (Ward et al. 2009:102).

Do you believe that the term alpha female applies to the women leaders you know? Please explain.

Would you consider yourself to be an alpha female? Why or why not?

Future

Do you see yourself taking on leadership roles once you leave Union / enter the workforce? Please explain.

If so, do you believe your gender will play a role in how you practice leadership in the future? Please explain.

Conclusion

Is there anything you would like add on the topic of your experience as a woman student leader on this campus?

Can you suggest other female students who you consider to be campus leaders, and should be included in this study?