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An Examination of Self-Esteem's Impact on the Leadership Behaviors of Female Undergraduate Student Leaders

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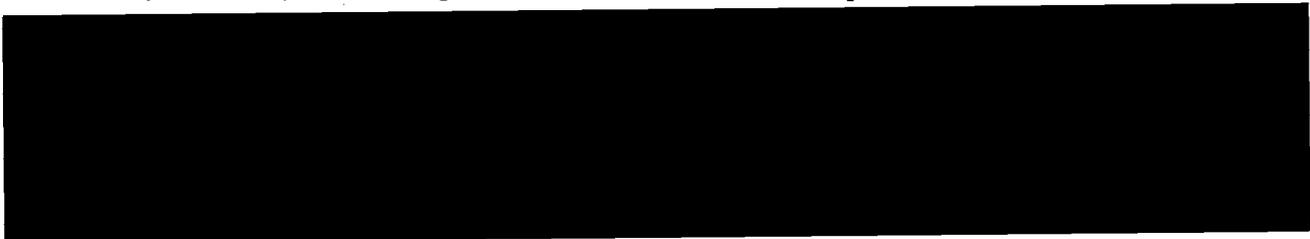
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Behaviors of Female Undergraduate Student Leaders

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Allison J. Moran

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An Examination of Self-Esteem's Impact on the Leadership Behaviors of Female

Undergraduate Student Leaders

Allison Moran

Eastern Illinois University

Abstract

Self-esteem and leadership behaviors vary from individual to individual. Previous research indicates that multiple external factors influence self-esteem. Results of this study indicate that levels of self-esteem have the potential to influence leadership behaviors. This study utilized qualitative research practices to explore levels of self-esteem and leadership behaviors among female college student leaders. Six female undergraduate students at a public, four-year, midsized institution located in the Midwest were interviewed for this study. Participants included two sorority presidents, two registered student organization presidents, and two athletic captains. Results of this study indicate that self-esteem can be categorized into three areas: high, low, and varying. This study concluded that varying levels of self-esteem are influenced by both internal and external factors. The results of this study suggest that levels of self-esteem have a connection to leadership behaviors displayed by female student leaders.

Dedication

I am who I am today because of two individuals: my mom and my dad. I have been blessed with two incredibly supportive parents who have never allowed me give up on my dreams. I grew up in a community where attending college was not necessarily an option, but rather more of an expectation of all high school graduates. I always knew I would attend college, but I attended with a deeply rooted fear that I would not be capable of surviving the rigorous academic expectations of higher education.

Growing up, my wildest dreams never included attending graduate school or writing a thesis. In fact, if someone had told me as a child that I would achieve those two things, I would have never believed them. The reason I would not have believed them is very clear: as a little girl, it was nearly impossible for me to read. I met or exceeded in all academic realms, with the one exception of reading. Every single year of my childhood included receiving the news that my reading level was significantly lower than my young peers. My parents were told multiple times that there was no explanation that could be provided for my reading deficit. My parents are among the very few people who know the depth of this hardship throughout my academic development.

Reading was always a priority in our home, and my parents provided any assistance they could to enhance my skills. They personally read with me every single night, arranged for me to receive assistance from a resource teacher, hired tutors, arranged for me to attend after school reading programs, provided at-home reading programs, and provided countless additional efforts. My struggles were never a reflection of lack of effort from my parents or myself.

My parents have taught me many lessons throughout my life; one of the most valuable lessons being perseverance. There have been many times throughout my life when this uncontrollable reading struggle has impacted my personal self-esteem. My parents taught me that in order to be successful, I needed to remember to always be the hardest working person in the room. They taught me to never give up hope or determination.

Writing a thesis is a journey within itself, and this thesis is a personal testament to my entire academic journey. My thesis is dedicated to my parents, teachers, and tutors that never gave up on me. The little girl who you were not sure would ever survive higher education has proved all odds wrong. I have you to thank for that. My education is the best gift you have ever given me.

Acknowledgments

The journey of writing this thesis was truly an enjoyable process. I was challenged and supported in numerous manners, and I proved to myself that I had the ability to achieve what I once perceived as the unimaginable. These achievements would not have been possible without the help of my many mentors, family members, and friends.

I would first and foremost like to thank my thesis committee chair, Dr. Dena Kniess. You have displayed the utmost amount of support throughout this thesis journey. Thank you for your guidance throughout this thesis process and throughout my entire experience in the graduate program. Your knowledge of higher education continues to amaze me. You truly are a role model for me as I begin my career in student affairs.

Secondly, I would like to thank the additional members of my thesis committee: Dr. Eric Davidson and Dr. Linda Scholz. I have been fortunate to have thesis committee members who are so knowledgeable about the subject matters studied in this thesis. Your passion has inspired me throughout this entire journey.

I would not be the professional I am today without the unwavering guidance from my graduate mentors and my undergraduate mentors at Eastern Illinois University. Throughout my time as a graduate student, I have been blessed to work as a graduate assistant in the Office of Student Standards. The women of this office have provided supervision and support to me professionally, academically, and personally. Dr. Heather Webb, Dr. Shawn Peoples, Jessica Ward, and Mackenzie Walker, I cannot thank you enough for everything you have taught me during my two years as a graduate assistant.

To my undergraduate mentors, thank you for your persistent encouragement to pursue a career in college student affairs. You have stood by my side and guided me through all aspects of my undergraduate experience and graduate experience. Kimberlie Moock, Cordy Love, and Brian Allen, thank you for your continuous support and guidance.

Thank you to my loved ones who have supported me the most throughout graduate school and this thesis journey. Mom, dad, Trenton, and Grandma Fredericks, you have provided an outpouring of love and support during the last six years as I pursued both my bachelor's degree and master's degree at Eastern Illinois University. You provided the foundation for my life, and you continue to be the most encouraging individuals in my life. Additionally, thank you to the friends who have inspired me through their academic and professional endeavors. Thank you for your steadfast support.

This thesis would not have been possible without the six women who participated in this study. Thank you for your honesty and enthusiasm while sharing your stories. You have helped me gain a better understanding of self-esteem and leadership behaviors, and your stories will help other women and student affairs professionals.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Self-esteem varies from individual to individual; there is no exception among college students. Student affairs professionals must be aware of the concerns associated with self-esteem, as well as be prepared to challenge and support students based on their varying levels of self-esteem. Self-esteem has the potential to impact physical and mental changes in an individual. Self-esteem can be impacted by many factors and can refer to many aspects including: how an individual feels about their social standing, racial or ethnic groups, physical features, body image, athletic skills, job or school performance (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003). Heatherton and Wyland (2003) stated, "Self-esteem is considered an overall self-attitude that permeates all aspects of peoples lives," (p. 223). Further, self-esteem can be viewed in three major categories: performance self-esteem, social self-esteem, and physical self-esteem (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991).

Self-esteem varies for males and females; the cause for the differences stems from the primary source of self-esteem (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003). Males tend to perceive their own worth based on their objective, or measurable, success. If men are doing well academically or in their career, they tend to have higher self-esteem. Females tend to perceive their own worth based off their relationships with family, friends, and significant others. If their relationships are harmonious, they tend to have higher self-esteem (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003).

From fraternity and sorority life, to athletics, to registered student organizations, student leaders are incorporated all across American colleges and universities. Just as self-esteem varies from individual to individual, so does leadership behavior. Along with

self-esteem differing based on gender, leadership behaviors also differ among men and women. Leadership behaviors, whether linked to self-esteem or not, differ among men and women. For example, Montgomery and Newman (2010) discovered that female student leaders tend to rate themselves higher in transformational and caring leadership, whereas male student leaders tend to rate themselves higher in passive leadership.

As previously stated, self-esteem can be limited to social self-esteem. Leadership can also be understood in a social capacity. The development of a leader and their leadership behavior is influenced by the individual's ability to fully understand themselves during their development (Wilson, 2009). Charles Bonnici (2011) outlined leadership behaviors that create an overall successful leadership style, which in turn affects the social behavior of the leader. The leadership behaviors outlined include: role modeling, defusing inevitable confrontations, listening to organization members, giving credit where credit is due, focusing on the members, being aware of issues, maximizing positives and minimizing negatives, communicating, and paying attention to details (Bonnici, 2011). The five leadership practices outlined by Kouzez and Posner (Northouse, 2010) assisted in guiding this study. The five leadership practices include: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart.

Student affairs professionals have an inevitable duty to understand how self-esteem has the ability to impact college students. This understanding is especially important for student affairs professionals who supervise student workers or student leaders. Technology and media impact the everyday lives of today's college students, including student leaders. It is virtually impossible for college students to avoid modern

media, which has a large impact on self-esteem among women (Koynuchu, Tok, Canpolat, & Cattikkas, 2010). This study will provide additional insight for student affairs professionals who work with or supervise female student leaders with varying self-esteem levels.

Purpose of Study

The purpose this study was to develop an understanding of self-esteem and leadership behaviors among female college student leaders. The purpose was to determine how self-esteem impacts the five leadership behaviors outlined by Kouzes and Posner (Northouse, 2010). Female students at a public, midsized, Midwest university were the subjects of the research. This study explored self-esteem and leadership behaviors among a variety of female student leaders from social sororities, athletic teams, and registered student organizations. The study examined self-esteem and leadership behavior among presidents and captains of these groups. Student leaders shared their personal experiences of being a successful leader and experiences of failing as a leader. Participants described their confidence level during the positive and negative incidents.

Research Questions

Due to student affairs professional's increasing interest in self-esteem among women, I would like to gain a better understanding of how self-esteem impacts leadership behaviors in women. This relationship will be explored by answering the following questions:

1. How do female student leaders describe leadership behaviors related to high self-esteem and leadership behaviors related to low self-esteem?

2. In what ways do female student leaders exemplify confidence?

3. In what ways do female student leaders struggle with low self-esteem?

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify and understand how self-esteem impacts leadership behavior among college women. The data was collected through a process of interviewing six female student leaders. This study was to help determine if female student leaders behave similarly or differently because of their individual self-esteem. Prior to this study, I believed it was possible that sorority presidents would describe similar behavior, athletic captains describe similar behavior, and registered student organization presidents describing similar behavior. For example, I anticipated that the gender of the organization's general members may impact their leadership behavior. Sorority presidents and athletic captains are leaders of all female groups. Knowing that women are vastly impacted by relationships, I knew it was possible that the decisions of the organization and its leaders were made based on emotions. I anticipated that this might be different for a registered student organization that has both male and female general members.

By examining the discussed concepts, student affairs professionals will be able to better understand and support female student leaders. An understanding of self-esteem's impact on leadership can provide a foundation for student affairs professionals to more effectively advise student leaders and organizations. The findings provide an explanation to student affairs professionals for some of the motives behind student's actions, or lack of action, within their organization driven by their level of self-esteem. An understanding of a student's self-esteem can provide an avenue for an administrator or advisor to more effectively connect with a student.

Findings from this study can help student affairs professionals better understand and engage with female students as a whole. Career trends for women reflect the female leadership across college campuses. For example, Oakley (2000) describes that in the last two decades, the amount of women in management has grown rapidly. However, the majority of CEOs in large corporations are men. This indicates that while women are pursuing leadership in different ways, they are still not rising to the higher-level positions (Oakley, 2000). It is important for student affairs professionals to understand this concept in order to encourage and support female students in pursuing higher leadership positions.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations that impacted the results of this study. The first is that this study will be conducted at only one Midwest university. It is possible that results would differ at a smaller or larger institution. It is also possible that results would differ at a private institution as opposed to the public university examined in this study.

The second limitation in this study is that only a small sample of the population of female student leaders were examined. Examining two presidents of social sororities, two athletic captains, and two presidents from registered student organizations gave a glimpse at the overall concepts linked with female student leaders. The study does not include a representative from every organization at the university. It is possible that leadership behaviors, driven by self-esteem level, went unidentified because not all organizational presidents and athletic captains from the population were examined.

The third limitation is that this is a female-based study. The research findings are based only on the examination of women and not men. It is possible that male student

leaders would have different self-esteem levels and different behavioral reactions as a result of their self-esteem.

The fourth limitation of this study is the concept of the researcher as the instrument. There may have been unpredicted bias that arose during interviews and data analysis. I received a bachelor's degree from the university being studied, and I have previously interacted with almost all student organizations and athletic teams. My previous interactions with the organizations and teams may have caused the participants to respond to questions in the way that they think is most socially preferred (Krefting, 1990).

Definition of Terms

The following is a list of terms as they will be defined and conceptualized in the study:

Body image. "The internal representation of your own outer appearance; your own unique perception of your body" (Thompson et al., 1994, p.4)

Leader. "A leader is one or more people who selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more followers." (Wiston & Patterson, 2006, p.7).

Leadership. The act of selecting, training, and influencing one or more followers (Wiston & Patterson, 2006).

Registered Student Organization. A student organization that is established to contribute to the interests and development of college students (Eastern Illinois University, 2008).

Self-Confidence. An individuals view of themselves and their capabilities (Alias & Hafir, 2009).

Self-esteem. The evaluation of one's self that corresponds with their overall feeling worth (Baumeister, 1998).

Social Sorority. A national organization of women, built on friendship, service, and values. Organizations are self-sustaining on colleges and university campuses in the United States and Canada (Delta Zeta Enriching, n.d.)

Summary

This study examined how self-esteem impacts leadership behaviors among female college student leaders. An understanding of this concept can help student affairs professionals more effectively support and engage with female student leaders. Specifically, an understanding of this relationship will allow student affairs professionals to more effectively advise student leaders and organizations. Findings from this study may assist in explaining leadership behaviors. Chapter one provided an overview of the study, and chapter two will provide a literature review for the study.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

In order to better understand the various aspects of self-esteem and leadership, this section will explore related topics. Literature surrounding college transitions, self-esteem, leadership, college athletes, and sorority women will be reviewed. Carol Gilligans's Theory of Moral Development (1977) will provide the theoretical framework for this study and will be discussed.

College Transition

The National Women's History Museum works to educate individuals about the educational history of women. Historically, women have been excluded from higher education. Harvard, the oldest higher education institution in the United States, was established in 1636. Women were not admitted into colleges until about 200 years later, and the ratio of men and women did not become equal until the 1980's (*The history of women and education*, 2007). Catharine Beecher, Mary Lyon, and Emma Willard are credited with leading the Female Seminary Movement in the early 1800s (*The history of women and education*, 2007). Their goal was to offer an education for women that was equal to the education men received (*The history of women and education*, 2007). The existence of women in college has developed through many decades, and so have the transitions that college student's experience. The level of support contributed to those transitions in the late 1800's and into the 1900's, compared to how they are supported today can be credited towards student affairs departments. Support is visible through student services such as the admission process, orientation, financial aid, minority student

support, housing, student life, health education, student community service, athletics, fraternity and sorority programs, and other areas of student affairs.

Traditional college students experience many changes and transitions. Terenzini, Rendón, Upcraft, Millar, Allison, Gregg, and Jalomo (1994) examined the transition to college. The researchers interviewed 132 male and female college students in groups of one to eight students. The varying responses from each student interviewed indicated that the transition from high school to college is exceptionally complex (Terezini, et al, 1994). The researchers found that transition experience varies for students based on their social, family, and academic background. Other factors that impacted transitions included: personality, academic and career goals, the mission of the institution, friends, faculty and staff influence, and the interactions of these factors (Terezini et al, 1994). Hicks and Heastie (2008) examined the physical and psychological stressors that a first-year college student experiences. They surveyed 514 college students using the Health Behaviors, Self-Rated Health, and Quality of Life questionnaires. They found that significant transition stressors included: choice of roommate, housing assignment, illnesses, and injuries.

For many students, college may be their first taste of freedom. According to Harke (2010), "college is one of the biggest transitions a person will make. Therefore, it only makes sense to focus more attention on high school to college transition." (n.p.). Harke stated that students experience academic, personal, and social transitions when they attend college. The first of the transitions, and one of the biggest challenges, new students face are the rigorous academic expectations in college. Harke stated that the key to making this more of a seamless transition is realistic guidance from high school

counselors. Many colleges require their freshmen students to develop realistic expectations for themselves; an exercise that may be a new concept to many students (Harke, 2010).

Another transition that students should consider is how they will mentally and physically react to their new environment (Harke, 2010). They will most likely be living in a new city and in a completely new environment and culture. Many students will live on campus in a residence hall, and they will most likely have a roommate (Harke, 2010). Terenzini et al (1994) stated that compared to high school, college students experience a transition to "real learning" (p. 68). They live and learn in an environment where they are forced to learn about themselves, discover their personal strengths, and become more independent and self-reliant. Terezini et al (1994) found a consistent element with "real learning" was pride in achievement. Students who experienced this transition were proud of their accomplishments, and they ultimately developed new goals as a result. Students react differently to transitions; however, regardless of their reactions to the academic, personal, and social changes that a student will face, these transitions are almost inevitable. Student's reactions to transitions may be impacted by where they stand in their student development or their background. When studying college student leaders, especially various ages of college student leaders, it is important to consider how several transitions may impact an individual as a student and a leader. Each participant in this study will have similar previous transitions (e.g. transitioning from high school to college) and will also have unique previous and possibly current transitions. These differing transitions may affect the self-esteem of the individual.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is the attitude one has about themselves; it is impacted by beliefs

related to skills, abilities, social relationships, and future outcomes (Heatherton &

Wyland, 2003). Coopersmith (1967) created the classic definition of self-esteem:

> The evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard
> to himself: it expresses an attitude of approval and indicates the extent to which
> an individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful, and worthy.
> In short, self-esteem is a personal judgment of the worthiness that is expressed in
> the attitudes the individual holds towards himself. (p. 4-5)

Heatherton and Wyland (2003) indicated that it is important to distinguish the

phenomenon of self-esteem from the phenomenon of self-concept. They acknowledged

that these terms are often used interchangeably. However, they defined self-concept as,

"the totality of cognitive beliefs that people have about themselves; it is everything that is

known about the self, and includes things such as name, race, likes, dislikes, beliefs,

values, and appearance descriptions, such as height and weight" (p. 220). In turn, self-

esteem refers to the emotional response an individual feels while evaluating those

cognitive beliefs (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003). Self-esteem is influenced by the

components of self-concept, but they are not the same thing (Heatherton & Wyland,

2003).

As previously stated, self-esteem can be examined in a hierarchical format.

Heatherton and Polivy (1991) identified three major components of self-esteem:

performance, social, and physical. Each of these components included smaller

subcategories. Heatherton and Wyland (2003) defined performance self-esteem as, "one's

own sense of general competence and includes intellectual abilities, social performance,

self-regulatory capacities, self-confidence, efficacy, and agency" (p. 223). Individuals

who are smart and capable rank high in performance self-esteem. Heatherton and Wyland (2003) recognized social self-esteem as how an individual believes other people perceive them. Their perception is more critical than reality. Individuals experienced high social self-esteem when they believed others respected and valued their existence. Individuals who experienced low social self-esteem report having issues with anxiety and self-consciousness. The final major component, physical self-esteem, refers to how an individual perceived their physical body. This perception included athletic skills, body image, attractiveness, and feelings about race and ethnicity (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003).

Heatherton and Wyland (2003) discussed studies that suggested that males and females differ in their source of self-esteem. They acknowledged that males were influenced by measureable success and females are influenced by relationships. Heatherton and Wyland (2003) stated, "Overall, it appears that males gain self-esteem from getting ahead whereas females gain self-esteem from getting along" (p. 222). This self-esteem factor impacted future behavior. Men who experienced measureable success, and as a result had high self-esteem, were able to effectively participate in performance behaviors such as job skills. Women who experienced successful relationships, and as a result had high self-esteem, were able to effectively participate in social behaviors such as mingling with strangers (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003).

In addition to relationships impacting self-esteem in women, body image satisfaction is also a factor that impacts a woman's self-esteem throughout her life (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003). Heatherton (2001) reported that women were more likely than men to evaluate their body negatively, attempt weight loss, experience anxiety about

appearance, and have plastic surgery. Heatherton (2001) found that these reactions were caused by an individual's perception of weight, a component commonly linked with body image dissatisfaction. However, it is critical to understand that not all women have negative self-esteem or perceptions of their body image. For example, Goswami, Sachdeva, and Sachdeva (2012) found most female college students perceived their body image as fair, good, or excellent. Only a small percentage of participants were dissatisfied with their bodies. In addition to gender, race has been linked with body image satisfaction. Sanderson, Lupinski, and Moch (2013) conducted a survey on the body image perception of African American females. They surveyed 283 women from a historically Black college or university and 268 women from a predominantly White college. The study revealed that women at a HBCU were more personally satisfied with their bodies than women who attended a PWC (Sanderson, Lupinski, & Moch, 2013). Hebl and Heatherton (1998) also stated that Black women are more likely to be satisfied with their body image. They stated that Black women are less likely to consider themselves obese. The same women rated large Black body shapes more positively than White women rated large white body shapes (Hebl & Heatherton, 1998). These collections of research are parallel with the common idea that Black women are not always expected to be thin, but White women must be thin. Cheney (2010) studied 18 college women and examined how different races deal with societies' expectation of their bodies. She described White society as being obsessed with thinness. This description provides insight to the findings of Sanderson, Lupinski, and Moch (2013), as well as the findings of Hebl and Heatherton (1998).

Self-esteem, specifically body image, has the potential to impact physical and mental changes in an individual. Harring, Montgomery, and Hardin (2010) reported that women with incorrect body image perceptions were more likely to participate in unhealthy weight strategies and reported more depressive symptoms. The dissatisfaction that women feel about their body image and weight can often lead to eating disorders (Greenleaf, Petrie, Carter, & Reel, 2009). Eating disorders have been proven to be especially popular among college student athletes (Greenleaf, Petrie, Carter, & Reel, 2009). As opposed to binge eating, athletes control their weight with vomiting, dieting, laxatives, or excessive exercise (Greenleaf, Petrie, Carter, & Reel, 2009). Understanding how athletes are impacted by body image dissatisfaction will lead to a greater understanding of self-esteem levels in athletes.

Koyunchu, Tok, Canpolat, and Catikkas (2010) stated that modern media has a large impact on self-esteem among women. Several factors have been studied and shown to be associated with low self-esteem. For example, McClure, Tanski, and Sargent (2010) studied 6,522 male and female adolescents and measured their self-esteem through three questions. The questions assessed physical appearance and self-worth. It was suggested that self-esteem had an independent relationship with many factors including: females, obesity, sensation seeking, rebellion, and television hours watched daily. Individuals who reported the highest self-esteem were those who performed well in school or were involved in a sports team. Todd and Kent (2004) stated that leadership characteristics begin to surface during adolescence; especially for those involved in activities like student clubs and athletic teams. These developing leadership characteristics have been

linked to self-esteem, control, parenting styles, and academic success (Todd & Kent, 2004).

Fennell (2007) discussed low self-esteem in her book called the *Handbook of Homework Assignments in Psychotherapy*. She explained,

> ...the essence of low self-esteem is a negative perspective on the self, reflected in central beliefs. That is, self-esteem is at root a cognitive phenomenon- though its expression is many-faceted, coloring not only thinking but also emotions, body state, and behavior. (Fonnell, 2007, p. 297).

Self-esteem has been found to be low during a student's first college semester; however, many students experience a rise in their self-esteem as they progress through college (Chung, Robins, Tarzeniewski, Roberts, Noftle, & Widaman, 2014). Chung et al (2014) researched self-esteem emerging in adulthood and found that self-esteem changes in systematic ways over periods of time. The study found that self-esteem drops significantly during a college student's first semester. Self-esteem rebounded by the end of their first year, and then slowly increased over the remainder of their college career. This study also found that individuals with good grades tended to have higher levels of self-esteem. Individuals who did not attain their academic expectations showed high self-esteem when beginning college, but they showed low self-esteem throughout their first semester (Chung, Robins, Tarzeniewski, Roberts, Noftle, & Widaman, 2014). Although academics cannot account for the entire boost or deterioration of self-esteem, the factor must be considered when studying college students. Unlike other factors that influence self-esteem, academic satisfaction or dissatisfaction is a factor that will inevitably impact all of the student leaders examined in this study.

Leadership Behavior

Leadership has been defined many ways. Chelladuari (1999) acknowledged that all definitions imply three elements: "leadership is a behavioral process, leadership is interpersonal in nature, and leadership is aimed at influencing and motivating members toward group goals" (p. 160). Bennis (1989) stressed that leaders are responsible for effectiveness and integrity in organizations.

It is important that individuals understand their own personal leadership. In order to develop and sustain successful leadership positions, a leader must know their own leadership style as well as the strengths and weaknesses of that style. Furthermore, the leader must understand how to deal with individuals with leadership styles that are significantly different than their own (Hummell, 2007). Judge, Illies, Bono, and Gerhardt (2002) found that leadership styles have a relationship with the Big Five personality traits: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. All qualities showed significant correlation with leadership. However, extraversion showed the most correlation with leadership.

Research supports that there are differences in leadership behaviors of males and females. Haemmerlie and Newman (2010) examined gender differences in leadership. Students completed the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). On the MLQ, female students rated themselves highest in transformational and caring leadership. These leaders identify changes that need to be made and develop a plan of action. Male students rated themselves highest in passive leadership. These leaders were hands-off and waited to confront problems until they could no longer be overlooked (Haemmerlie & Newman, 2010). Todd and Kent (2004) studied the perception of role differentiation with 375

student athletes between the ages of 14 through 19. They found that female athletes care more than male athletes about their team leaders creating a warm and friendly culture.

Leadership may be altered depending on the type of group. Hummell (2007) evaluated a series of leadership groups and discovered similarities and differences between the groups. Hummell found that concerns from leaders typically related to decisions that would ultimately affect the larger group. This concept remained true even in voting disagreements. Ultimately, leaders acted ethically by voting and acting based off what they thought was best for the entire group they represented. Avey, Palanski, and Walumbwa (2011) examined the effects of ethical leadership in relation to organizational behavior and member deviant behavior. They sampled 191 adults who were affiliated with a large institution (e.g. alumni who were business owners, managers, large firm partners). They found that ethical leadership, or leading with integrity in decision-making, had a relationship with organizational behavior, but it does not have a relationship with deviance.

Vincer and Loughhead (2010) stressed the importance of leadership creating a sense of cohesion in a group or organization. Cohesion is defined as, "a dynamic process that is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member affective needs" (Carron, Brawley, & Widmeyer, 1998, p. 213). Examining this definition reveals that cohesion is viewed as an important variable in groups and has the potential to directly impact better group performance (Lott & Lott, 1965; Carron, Bray, & Eys, 2002). Leaders should reflect upon these factors when creating unity among a group; this

includes female leaders creating cohesion in sororities, athletic teams, and registered student organizations.

In another study, Folkman (2010) identified nine leadership behaviors that drive commitment. Folkman gathered data from 100,000 individuals and hundreds of different organizations. Participants were required to assess 49 behavioral items that evaluated 16 leadership skills. Folkman found that showing improvement in any leadership behavior could increase organizational commitment. However, he identified nine main behaviors that have the greatest impact on commitment. The nine most effective leadership behaviors were: inspire and motivate others, drive for results, strategic perspective, collaboration, being a role model, trust, developing and supporting others, building relationships, and courage (Folkman, 2010).

The questions used for this particular qualitative study were guided by the five leadership practices outlined by Kouzes and Pozner (Northouse, 2010). These leadership practices include: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. Each leadership practice is explained and defined. Kouzes and Posner's leadership model describes the 'Model the Way' leadership practice by saying,

> Leaders need to be clear about their own values and philosophy. They need to find their own choice and express it to others. Exemplary leaders set a personal example for others by their own behaviors. They also follow through on their promises and comments and affirm the common values they share with others (Northouse, p. 184).

Kouzes and Posner's leadership model describes the 'Inspire a Shared Vision' leadership practice by saying,

> Effective leaders create compelling visions that can guide people's behavior. They are able to visualize positive outcomes in the future and communicate them

to others. Leaders also listen to the dreams of others and show them how their dreams can be realized. Through inspiring visions, leaders challenge others to transcend the status quo to do something for others (Northouse, p. 184).

Kouzes and Posner's leadership model describes the 'Challenge the Process' leadership practice as,

> Being willing to challenge the status and step into the unknown. It includes being willing to innovate, grow, and improve. Exemplary leaders are like pioneers: They want to experiment and try new things. They are willing to take risks to make things better. When exemplary leaders take risks, they do it one step at a time, learning from their mistakes as they go (Northouse, p. 184).

Kouzes and Posner's leadership model describes the 'Enable Others to Act' leadership practice by saying,

> Outstanding leaders are effective at working with people. They build trust with others and promote collaboration. Teamwork and cooperation are highly valued by these leaders. They listen closely to diverse points of view and treat others with dignity and respect. They also allow others to make choices, and they support the decisions that others make. In short, they create environments where people can feel good about their work and how it contributes to the greater community (Northouse, p. 184).

Kouzes and Posner's leadership model describes the 'Encourage the Heart' leadership practice by saying,

> Leaders encourage the heart by rewarding others for accomplishments. It is natural for people to want support and to be recognized. Effective leaders are attentive to this need and are willing to give praise to workers for jobs well done. They use authentic celebrations and rituals to show appreciation and encouragement to others. The outcome of this kind of support is greater collective identity and community spirit (Northouse, p.184).

Focusing on this particular leadership model allowed for a more focused understanding of the behaviors of student leaders. An understanding of this leadership model was helpful in identifying leadership behaviors in the participants of this study.

College Athletes

Athletes often have a different college experience than non-athlete students. There are external and internal pressures on student athletes to be ambassadors for the university, perform well athletically, maintain good grades, and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Armstrong and Oomen-Early (2009) compared 227 college students, including athletes and non-athletes, to examine social connectedness, self-esteem, and depressive symptoms. The results indicated that athletes have higher levels of self-esteem and social connectedness than non-athletes. Athletes also had lower levels of depression than non-athletes.

Other studies have indicated that athletes have a higher focus on their weight and body perception than non-athletes. For example, a study by Greenleaf, Petrie, Carter, and Reel (2009) examined 204 student athletes from three universities and revealed that eating disorders were more prevalent among female college student athletes than most people realize. The majority of athletes reported that they used excessive exercising to control their weight. Other weight control methods included vomiting, dieting, and laxatives. This relates to subcomponents of self-esteem such as body image, physical features, and athletic performance.

Student-athletes are recognized as being role models on campus, in the local community, and sometimes nationally (Caulfield, 2011). An athlete often does not have the choice to be a role model or not; their idolization is usually created by the media (Caulfield, 2011). For that reason, researchers must take into consideration how media portrays athletes. Caulfield (2011) discussed that student-athletes are often recognized for their athletic performance alone, and they are not recognized for academic

accomplishments or their education. "It is unjust for the media to create role models for

our youth to idolize without taking into consideration the message they are

communicating" (Caulfield, 2011, p. 22).

Research dating back to the early 1990's stated that athletic teams needed one or

two athletes to motivate, direct, and lead a team (Gleen & Horn, 1993). However, further

research on athletic leadership has revealed that the phenomenon of athlete leadership

was more common among collegiate athletic teams (Loughead & Hardy, 2005).

Loughead et al (2006) defined athlete leadership as, "an athlete occupying a formal or

informal role within a team, who influences team members to achieve a common goal"

(p. 144). Athlete leadership involves formal leadership roles or informal leadership roles

(Loughead et al, 2006). An example of a formal leadership role is a team captain. An

example of informal leadership is interacting with members and developing a sense of

leadership on the team. Loughead and Hardy (2005) described athlete leadership as

leadership that is widespread across and entire team, and multiple leaders provide

leadership to the team. Leadership was integrated into the team culture rather than having

a few peer authority figures (Loughead and Hardy, 2005). Leadership is a characteristic

that is commonly found in athletic captains, sorority presidents, and registered student

organization presidents. These leadership components will aid in understanding the

leadership behavior of the individuals being studied.

Sorority Women

Alumni members of fraternities and sororities are often recognized for their

leadership attainment. The North-American Interfraternity Conference is an association

that oversees many national fraternities. Hevel, Martin, and Pascarella (2014) stated that

The North-American Interfraternity Conference reported that there are over 100 fraternity and sorority alumni that are currently serving in Congress, and 14 of the 17 United States presidents in the 20th century were fraternity alumni. They also reported that fraternity and sorority alumni have attained 15% of the current Fortune 100 CEO positions (Hevel, Martin, & Pascarella, 2014).

Fraternities and sororities would not survive without recruitment. Fraternity and sorority recruitment involves strategic plans, including recruiting members who demonstrate past leadership (Hevel, Martin, & Pascarella, 2014). They "recruit students who held leadership positions in high school, provide many leadership positions within the chapter, and encourage their members to seek prominent roles on campus, such as student government officers, orientation assistants, and campus programming board members" (Hevel, Martin, & Pascarella, 2014, p. 233). Fraternities and sororities have a long history of recruiting members who are prominent students and attain student leadership positions (Hevel, Martin, & Pascarella, 2014). Rudolph (1962) stated that even in the 19th century, fraternity and sorority members monopolized the student leadership positions in literary societies.

Bass, Wurster, Doll, and Clair (1953) suggested that leadership among sorority women must be evaluated in a variety of ways. They stated that successful leadership behaviors in women depended on three situations: sorority activities, discussions among representatives of all sororities at the institution, and non-sorority university activities. They recommended having the women rate themselves in three areas: self-esteem, motivation to attain university leadership, and motivation to attain sorority leadership.

Sororities are often labeled as being filled with women whose only concern is their appearance. Although this is not entirely true, it is true that sorority women typically care more about their appearances, including body weight, than women who are not in sororities. Schulken, Pinciaro, Sawyer, Jensen, and Hoban (1997) examined 627 sorority women using the Eating Disorder Inventory and the Body Mass Index Silhouettes Survey. They found that the sorority women had a fear of becoming obese, were concerned with dieting, had poor body image, and thin is was ideal body profile. They also found that the sorority women, both underweight and overweight women, had distorted perceptions of their actual body sizes (Schulken, Pinciaro, Sawyer, Jensen, Hoban, 1997).

Allison and Park (2003) examined disordered eating among sorority and non-sorority women. The study surveyed women during their first, second, and third years of undergraduate education. Self-esteem level did not differ before and after women joined a sorority. However, by their third year, women who joined a sorority reported higher eating disorder characteristics than non-sorority women. Findings showed that the standard level of disordered eating among sorority women was similar to non-sorority women. However, over the course of their undergraduate experience, sorority women maintained more severe behaviors and attitudes about dieting. These perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes must be considered when examining a sorority woman's self-esteem in comparison to an athlete's self-esteem or a registered student organization president's self-esteem because their leadership behavior could be potentially impacted.

Theoretical Framework

Carol Gilligan's Theory of Women's Moral Development (1977) will guide this study. The theory describes three levels that female leaders will fall into: orientation to individual survival, goodness of self-sacrifice, and morality of non-violence. Women who fall into level one, orientation individual survival, make decisions based off of what is best for them. They behave this way because they believe no one will take care of them, and this is the only way to survive. Individuals with lower self-esteem will most likely fall into this level. Level two, goodness of self-sacrifice, includes women who feel they must sacrifice their own wishes for others. They often do not say no to responsibilities because they believe saying yes makes them a good person. These women often get taken advantage of, and many younger leaders may fall into this level. Level three, morality of non-violence, involves women who maintain a balance of taking care of themselves and of others. Older student leaders may fall into level three (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). Carol Gilligan's Theory of Women's Moral Development (1977) provided additional guidance and understanding of behaviors among the women studied. The researcher categorized leaders into one of the three levels. This act of categorization assisted in explaining how self-esteem impacts leadership in women. Carol Gilligan's Theory of Women's Moral Development (1977) was also be used to develop interview questions for this study.

Summary

The studies presented above highlight several components for consideration when examining the relationship between self-esteem and leadership behaviors. Several studies focus on factors surrounding self-esteem and several focus on leadership. The highest

levels self-esteem can be found in individuals who perform well in school or are involved

in a sports team (McClure, Tanski, & Sargent, 2010). College women experience the

lowest levels of self-esteem during their first semester. However, the level slowly

increases as they progress through college (Chung, Robins, Tarzeniewski, Roberts,

Noftle, & Widaman, 2014). Leaders must first understand their own leadership style and

behavior before they can understand the styles of others (Hummell, 2007). Leadership

has a relationship with the Big Five personality traits: neuroticism, extraversion,

openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Judge, Illies, Bono, & Gerhardt, 2002).

Guided by Carol Gilligan's Theory of Women's Moral Development (1977), this study

provides an understanding of how self-esteem impacts leadership (Evans, Forney, Guido,

Patton, & Renn, 2010). Chapter two provided a literature review for the study, and

chapter three will present the methods of the study.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Data was collected and analyzed using qualitative research techniques. A qualitative approach was best suited for this study in order to develop a deep understanding of the leadership behavior among female student leaders with both high and low self-esteem. The following sections descriptively explain the qualitative research process for this study.

Design of the Study

Qualitative research practices were used to conduct this study in order to understand the phenomena of self-esteem and leadership behavior. A list of all sorority presidents was obtained from the Fraternity and Sorority Programs Office, a list of female athletic captains was obtained from athletic coaches through the Athletic Department, and a list of female registered student organization presidents was obtained from the Student Life Office. After obtaining these lists, the sample of participants was purposively selected based on the type of organization in which they lead. Purposive sampling is also known as selective sampling, and participants are selected based on the judgment of the researcher (*Purposive Sampling*, 2012). Participants were purposely selected in order to assure the study includes two sorority participants, two athletic participants, and two registered student organization participants (See figure 1).

Participant 1	Kelly	Sorority President	Senior
Participant 2	Kim	Sorority President	Senior
Participant 3	Isabelle	RSO President	Senior
Participant 4	Samantha	RSO President	Senior
Participant 5	Brooke	Athletic Captain	Senior
Participant 6	Molly	Athletic Captain	Senior

Figure 1. Design of study model for examining the relationship between self-esteem and leadership behavior among female college students.

Participates

Women at a public Midwest university were selected to participate in individual interviews for the study. Each participant was provided an informed consent, and I explained that they could withdraw from the interview at any time. The sample of this study had six female student leaders: two sorority presidents, two athletic captains, and two registered student organization presidents. The participants were all female, undergraduate students enrolled in academic courses, and they all currently hold a leadership position (e.g. president, captain). Participants were recommended through three of the university's departments: Fraternity and Sorority Programs, the Athletic Department, and the Student Life Office. The Director of Fraternity and Sorority Programs, the Director of the Athletic Academic Center, and the Director of the Student Life Office assisted in identifying participants for the study (see figure 2).

Pseoudymn	Self-Esteem Level	Ethnicity	Year	Organization	Time Served in Leadership Position (at the time of the interview)
Kelly	Varying	Caucasian	Senior	Sorority President	1 semester
Kim	Varying	Caucasian	Senior	Sorority President	1 semester
Isabelle	Varying	Caucasian; Black or African American	Senior	RSO President	2 months
Samantha	High	Asian/Pacific Islander	Senior	RSO President	1 year
Brooke	High	Caucasian	Senior	Athletic Captain	1 year
Molly	Low	Caucasian	Senior	Athletic Captain	2 years

Figure 2. Participants of the study.

Site

The study took place at a public, four-year, midsized institution in the Midwest. The university is located in a rural community and has an enrollment of approximately 9,000 students. The university currently offers 206 registered student organizations, 12 social sororities, and 10 NCAA sports for women. The female to male ratio at the institution is 59.7 percent female and 40.3 percent male.

Instrument

Six one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with female student leaders who attend a public Midwest university. The interviews were conducted separately and then transcribed in order to analyze similarities, differences, and themes. Each interview contained pre-determined, open-ended questions (see appendix A for

questions). Participants had an opportunity to share their challenges, successes, and

behaviors as a student leader. Each interview was conducted in the student union, located

on the university's campus. All interviews were audio recorded. Interviews were

transcribed during the week following the interview. In order to verify accuracy and

privacy, participants received a copy of the transcription from their individual interview.

This is known as member checking (Creswell, 2009). Another instrument used in this

qualitative study was the researcher. The study was qualitative and data collection was

composed of interviews; therefore, the researcher's findings determined the analysis of

data.

Laura Krefting (1990) explains that there is not a set length of time that research

data must be collected. The small number of participants allowed data to be collected

over the span of two months. Individual interviews were conducted during June and July

of 2015.

Role of the Researcher

Throughout my academic journey, I have always placed value on maintaining

involvement and leadership positions in extracurricular organizations. As an

undergraduate student, I held leadership positions and involvement in the three main

categories that the participants of this study are categorized: a national sorority, athletics,

and registered student organizations. I held the position of Vice President, as well as

multiple director and committee positions, within my sorority. I was the captain of the

Division I cheerleading squad for three of the four years that I cheered in college. I was

an orientation leader and student specialist for orientation. In addition, I was involved in

over five additional registered student organizations. My leadership involvement as an

undergraduate student sparked my interest in perusing a career in College Student

Affairs, which in turn sparked my interest in this topic.

I became more interested in the topic of self-esteem and leadership after

discussing student development theories in my graduate courses. My current involvement

as a sorority advisor, hearing officer, and involvement in graduate student registered

student organizations had an additional impact on my interest in this topic. I have worked

with countless female student leaders as an undergraduate student and a graduate student.

At times, it has been obvious when a leader allows her self-esteem and confidence to

influence her leadership. However, this factor is not always obvious while working with

leaders. Throughout this thesis process, I made a conscious effort to not make any

assumptions or draw conclusions that were not articulated by the participants of the

study.

Data Analysis

Each individual interview was transcribed during the week following the

interview. The transcriptions were then coded and analyzed for common self-esteem and

leadership behavioral themes. The themes included a word or short phrase that

symbolizes a larger pattern. The transcriptions were analyzed and categorized using

Verbal Exchange Coding. Verbal Exchange Coding includes analyzing and interpreting

meaning in the verbal exchange between individuals in a conversation. The goal of

Verbal Exchange Coding was to create an accurate representation of the experience of the

participant (Saldaña, 2013).

Treatment of the Data

Data was collected and analyzed through demographic questionnaires, interview transcriptions, audio recordings, and researcher notes. All questionnaires, transcriptions, recordings, and notes are stored electronically on one password protected flash drive. As IRB policy states, all data will be kept for three years after the research is finished. At the completion of the three years, the interview transcripts will be destroyed.

Summary

The data for this study was collected using qualitative research approaches. Six participants were purposely selected because of their involvement as a sorority president, athletic captain, or registered student organization president. Each participant participated in a one-on-one semi-structured interview. Chapter IV will provide the findings of the interviews.

Chapter IV

Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify and understand the impact of self-esteem on leadership behavior among college women. Participants answered questions in regards to their leadership behaviors, self-esteem, and confidence. Carol Gilligan's Theory of Women's Moral Development (1977) guided this study, and the five leadership practices outlined by Kouzes and Posner (Northouse, 2010) assisted in guiding the interview questions. Themes that emerged from participant responses provided answers to the following research questions:

1. How do female student leaders describe leadership behaviors related to high self-esteem and leadership behaviors related to low self-esteem?

2. In what ways do female student leaders exemplify confidence?

3. In what ways do female student leaders struggle with low self-esteem?

Self-Esteem

Participants defined their personal self-esteem level during the individual interviews. Three themes emerged from their responses: high self-esteem, low self-esteem, and varying levels of self-esteem. Two participants, Samantha and Brooke, both stated that they have high self-esteem. Molly stated that she has low self-esteem. Kelly, Kim and Isabelle all stated that their self-esteem varies based on different situations.

High Self-Esteem. Samantha and Brooke both identified themselves as having high self-esteem. Samantha used numbers to give a visual to her confidence and self-esteem levels. She identified her confidence by rating it as an 8.5 on a scale of 10, and she defined her self-esteem by rating it as a 7 on a scale of 10. Samantha is an

international student, and she credits her increasing self-esteem to two life experiences:

living in the United States and participating in academic courses at the institution. She

explained that when she first came to the American institution, she was much more

comfortable among other international students because they shared similar experiences.

She was reluctant to admit to American students that she often times did not understand

what they were referencing because of their cultural differences. Her self-esteem has

increased throughout her college years, and she is much more comfortable admitting that

she does not always understand American references.

Brooke stated that she has high self-esteem, but she also admitted that she feels

self-doubt when she does not meet the high expectations and goals she sets for herself.

She stated,

> I think I have pretty high self-esteem. In comparison to most people, I wouldn't
> say that it's the highest because I definitely have a lot of self-doubt because I
> want so much for myself. I kind of set too high of expectations and then I get
> really upset when I don't meet them, you know, on the very first day. I might
> meet them eventually, but by then they've probably changed to be even higher.
> Sometimes I'm just unrealistic with myself; that's probably my biggest downfall.

Brooke constantly increases the expectations of herself, and if she does not meet those

expectations, she feels self-doubt. It is evident that Brooke bases her self-esteem on

setting goals and attaining those goals.

Low Self-Esteem. Molly identified her level self-esteem as low. She stated that

she is the most confident and has the highest level of self-esteem when she is engaging in

athletic competition. She mentioned multiple times throughout the interview how much

she dislikes when people are too confident or have big egos. When asked to define her

self-esteem, she stated,

I'd like to think that I have good self-esteem. I don't know. The reality of it is I just think I'm like a normal person. Like I said, I don't like people who have big egos. I guess I could have better self-esteem. I've thought about this before.

In addition, Molly explained, "I think honestly my self-esteem is like a roller coaster. Sometimes I feel great, you know, and then other times I'm just in a pit. I probably have lower than high." It is evident that Molly's self-esteem is directly related to how she feels in the moment. In moments of happiness, she would inevitably feel her self-esteem rise, and in moments of sadness or frustration, she would inevitably feel her self-esteem drop. The relationship is suggested in her description of self-esteem as "a roller coaster" and "in a pit."

Varying Levels of Self-Esteem. Kelly, Kim, and Isabelle stated that their self-esteem varies based on different situations. Kelly stated that her self-esteem depends on the day. She stated,

I think there are highs and lows. There are some days where you know, maybe I woke up late and didn't put on makeup and just felt crummy, and those are low self-esteem days. When I get a good grade on a test or worked hard and it paid off or got a good cup of coffee in me that day, you know, high self-esteem. It just depends. Usually I fall in the middle, which is good. I don't mind. I don't like to bring a lot of attention to myself.

Based on this self-esteem description from Kelly, her self-esteem is dependent on three variables: how she performs, how she looks, and how she feels. These variables are indicators for the feeling of varying self-esteem. Kelly would most likely experience a feeling of high self-esteem when she gets a good grade on a test, feels particularly confident in her appearance, does not oversleep, and engages in activities that bring her joy such as drinking coffee. On the contrary, she would most likely experience low self-esteem when she gets a bad grade on a test, is not confident in her appearance, or does not achieve her goals.

Kim initially identified as having high self-esteem. However, she credited her

moments of lower self-esteem towards being female. She stated,

> In my organization I have great self-esteem. I know that I'm respected and I know
> that I earned it. In Greek life, I have good self-esteem. In the world, I feel really
> confident knowing what I've been doing. I have an internship, I have a 4.0, but I
> still feel like if I went against a male for a job, who maybe didn't have those
> leadership positions or grade point average, that he would get it just because he
> was a guy. So I have self-esteem issues just because I'm a girl.

Based on Kim's description of her self-esteem, it is evident that her level of self-esteem is

derived from her gender and how others feel about her. She experiences high self-esteem

while leading her organization; an organization comprised of all women. She feels

respected, and therefore her level of self-esteem is increased. She stated that she feels

confident in other aspects of her life, specifically in her career. However, she feels uneasy

when she is compared to a male in a job situation.

Isabelle explained that she struggled with self-esteem as a freshman and

sophomore in college. As she became more involved in her organization and academic

department, she became happier and her self-esteem increased. She stated,

> Just the further I've gotten the happier I've gotten with what I'm doing and I'm
> more content with who I am as a person. Now I know where I fit and what I want
> to do, and I can just try to get better about that. I think the amount that I care
> about it makes me feel a lot better about myself because I know that I'm working
> hard for it.

It is evident that Isabelle bases her level of self-esteem on her performance,

improvement, and dedication. When she feels she has performed well or feels moments

of honest dedication, she experiences high self-esteem.

How do female student leaders describe leadership behaviors related to high self-esteem and leadership behaviors related to low self-esteem?

Leadership Related to High Self-Esteem. Samantha and Brooke both identified their level of self-esteem as high. They described their leadership behaviors in response to various interview questions. It is possible that these similar leadership behaviors could be associated with their high levels of self-esteem. Both Samantha and Brooke described their dedication to the individuals in their organizations. Samantha described her efforts to make the members well rounded by hosting events to gain involvement with the local community. She also described her goal to help members fully understand the organization's bylaws. Brooke described creating an environment where everyone feels comfortable and respected. She also described her goal of welcoming younger members and her efforts to increase team spirit among all members. Both participants' leadership behaviors indicate that they have a dedication to the improvement of the members of their organization. However, there are differences in the specific techniques of these two leaders' goals. This may be an indication that their high level of self-esteem allows them to be specific and particular about their goals and techniques that focus on the improvement of members.

Brooke tends to lead by encouraging members individually. She said, "I focus on everyone else and make sure that they know how they did awesome. I'm sorry I wasn't there for you, I'm sorry that I couldn't be as much of a contribution, but you stepped up to the plate and you did what needed to be done." Brooke stated that giving compliments and recognition comes easy to her. She believes she learned these encouraging and recognizing practices from her parents. Her parents serve as a big support system and guidance in her life. She said, "My parents have always been very giving of praise to me,

they just have always supported me and really told me to just go for what I wanted. They

really praise me when I've done something well."

Creating an environment where everyone feels comfortable and everyone feels

respected is a priority for Brooke. She stated,

> I need to be open and establish a relationship with everyone and make sure that
> they know that they can come and talk to me. We can all be happy, we can all be
> working together, we can all be close knit, and work hard together.

Brooke creates an environment where members can seek her companionship. She

believes this provides the groundwork for members of the organization to feel happy,

experience a team bond, and work together. Creating this type of environment contributes

to the organization as a whole and to the members individually.

Brooke shared that she has set an example to the entire organization by making

conscious efforts to welcome and help younger members. She shared an incident when

she welcomed and helped a younger member when other teammates refused. She stated,

> There were a couple of people who we thought were going to be great and fit in
> awesome, and they didn't fit in quite as well. It took everyone a while to kind of
> grasp the fact that they were not really fitting in. As a captain, you have to step up
> and kind of bring that person in and make sure that things are going well. So, I
> just took this person or two under my wing and just made them feel really
> comfortable and really at home; then everyone else kind of followed suit.

Displaying this type of leadership relates back to her goal of creating an environment

where people feel comfortable and respected. This reinforces her desire for teammates to

seek her companionship, create a team bond, and work together.

Brooke shared throughout her interview that she has a very open line of

communication with her coach. She is particularly diligent about communicating the

team's level of team spirit to her coach. She stated she believes it is one of her

responsibilities as a leader to assess where the team's level of spirit is at and guide it

accordingly. Brooke works with her coach to inspire members and boost morale when

needed. She stated,

> I just try to stay really positive pretty much all of the time whenever I'm around
> my team as a whole. If I'm with individual people I can kind of let my guard
> down and talk about some real things. Whenever we're at practice, especially at a
> meet, traveling, at a team gathering, or anything like that, I just try and stay really
> positive and keep people pumped up and building those relationships.

To further her vision of a healthy level of team spirit, Brooke and her coach organize

events outside of the athletic competitions to build the team bond and motivate

individuals. One of the main programs they have implemented were mentor groups.

These groups consist of one older member and about three younger members.

Samantha focuses on the organization's members by being intentional about

planning events that involve the members of the organization, the campus community,

and the local community. By planning those events, the organization's members have the

benefit of interacting with other international students, as well as a variety of American

students and community members. In addition to the community events, she encourages

other executive members to collaborate and plan social events for international students.

She stated, "I always say I'm open to ideas. So it's not like only I'm only speaking. If you

guys have anything, just let me know, we will do it." This allows the leaders of the

organization to create an environment that contributes to the greater community of

international students. Not only do they focus on the members of the organization, but

they are also focus on opportunities for the entire body of international students.

Samantha has worked through her presidency to improve the organization's

attention to the bylaws. During her first year serving as president, the members of the

organization felt bad electing only one member to each particular executive position. As a

result, the organization ended up with an executive board of 16 individuals. Samantha

expressed that an executive board that large brought about many challenges and

frustrations. She concluded that their action of electing multiple people per position was

technically against the bylaws. She allowed the organization to continue with the large

executive board through the remainder of the semester, and she implemented changes for

the following semester. Rather than electing multiple people per position, she

implemented the concept of electing one executive member and then creating a

committee for the roles and responsibilities of that position. As a leader, Samantha

stepped into the unknown by allowing 16 individuals on the executive board. She learned

from the mistake and implemented change moving forward. She initially experienced

self-doubt from her decision to allow the organization to elect such a large executive

board. Her efforts to create committees and communicate election expectations to the

organization can be credited for her stable self-esteem that she has within the

organization.

Leadership Related to Low Self-Esteem. Molly identified her level of self-

esteem as low. She described her leadership behaviors in response to various interview

questions. Her leadership behaviors tended to focus on the athletic components of her

role, and the described behaviors rarely moved beyond that focus. She indicated that she

feels confident when leading her organization athletically, but it is possible that her

athletic focused leadership behaviors could be associated with her overall low level of

self-esteem.

Molly shared that she makes an effort to set an example to her teammates. She

stated that the practice and games are the times when she strives to set a positive

example. She stated that she feels it is her responsibility as a leader to step up and

volunteer first for difficult drills during practice, and she feels it is her responsibility to

boost the team's morale during difficult games. She stated,

> During games, we're a team that is very either high or low all the time. So
> whenever we're low, it's a constant struggle to make it back even and be able to
> play consistently at a high level. I think that's one of the hardest things to be able
> to do, especially because I'm still on the court, I'm still in there when things are
> going bad.

Molly has observed many leaders through her years of athletics, including

competitive club leaders and collegiate leaders. She described the leadership at the

competitive club level as, "Everyone would get on each other and yell at each other, but it

worked. So I came in with that attitude that I can yell at you and you'll be okay, but

everyone doesn't work like that. So that definitely had to change." Molly has worked to

improve the way she approaches her teammates during practice and games. She has

worked to alter how she responds to people, and she tailors her approach towards each

person individually.

Molly described her desire to set an example for her teammates and work to

improve her approach to various situations. However, she indicated that these goals are

confined to practice and games. She made no indication that these same goals are

consistent off the court or in the personal lives of her teammates.

Leadership Related to Varying Levels of Self-Esteem. Kelly, Kim, and Isabelle

all stated that their level of self-esteem varies. The reasoning for the varying levels of

self-esteem is different for each individual. Despite those differences, the three

participants identified similar leadership behaviors in response to interview questions.

They encourage members to be actively involved in their organizations and on campus,

they recognize the efforts and achievements of members, and they tend to lead by setting an example for the entire organization.

Isabelle encourages members who are shy and quiet to get involved within the organization. She shared that the members of her organization have praised her efforts in this area. She stated, "When members aren't necessarily being involved because they are shy or quiet or whatever, I try to get them involved heavily and I think that's probably the thing I've been told most often that I'm good at." She encourages all members to volunteer to help with theatre productions, and she wants the organization to provide opportunities for members to learn professional skills. Isabelle not only challenges the members to be more involved within the organization, but she also challenges them to be more involved in their academic department. She shared that she noticed immediately when she joined the organization that there was an opportunity to step up and become more helpful within the academic department. Isabelle personally provided an opportunity for members to become involved in these areas by producing a brand new musical within her academic department. She encouraged organization members to participate in this production she directed and designed at the university. She shared that her motive for bringing the musical to campus was to give students the skills to run production; skills they will need post graduation. She stated that her main goal as President is to motivate and inspire the organization's members. Isabelle stated,

> A lot of what I want to press for is motivating other students; just think about
> what you're doing in the future. Because if you don't do anything in college,
> you're not going to know how to do anything when you get into the real world.

This was the first time the department produced a show of this kind. By doing this, she set an example of the expectations for students in the department and leaders in the organization.

Isabelle hopes to design more of these opportunities through the rest of her time as president. She stated that she wants the organization, "to be able to give opportunities and experiences to learn the skills that they are going to need once they graduate."

Kim also encouraged younger members to take on leadership roles within the organization. She shared that she took younger members under her wing and talked with them about the leadership qualities and potential she sees in them. As a result, those younger members became heavily involved within the organization.

Kelly feels proud when the members of her organization are actively involved on campus at the university. She stated, "We have a lot of girls who are very involved on campus. Very involved academically and with RSOs and sports and stuff, so whenever they do really well I feel really proud of them." Kelly implemented rewarding incentives during chapter meetings in order to recognize members for their efforts in the organization, on campus, and in the community. She stated,

> I've been trying to improve attendance I'm doing that by rewarding incentives during chapter meetings. Giving shout-outs for people doing well during the week, and 'you got a good grade on that test, way to go! You helped your sister out, thanks for that!' I try to boost morale that way.

Kelly noted the importance in taking a minute to say thank you to members for their hard work. She likes to thank people because she knows they are going out of their way for the organization while also juggling school, work, the sorority, and everything else in between. She stated, "I like to let people know I am thinking of them and they are doing great."

Kim has also designated time during chapter meetings to recognize members and

praise them for their efforts. During her president report, she recognizes and shows

appreciation to people who have done extraordinary things that week. She also takes that

time to open the floor for other members to recognize and show appreciation to anyone in

the organization.

Kim stated that her goal during her presidency is to implement forgiveness among

members. This is an example of leadership that is clear about values and personal

philosophy. At the beginning of her term, Kim was able to visualize positive outcomes

that she wanted to achieve through the implementation of forgiveness. Her

encouragement to the members of her organization to forgive one another was an effort to

guide the behavior of the larger group. She acknowledged that this goal can be

challenging at times, but in the end it is always rewarding. Kim shared,

> As President of an organization of 90-100 girls, a lot of times there's things that
> not everyone agrees on, or there's beef, or something goes down where girls will
> hold a grudge for a long, long time. So my main goal as president was to
> implement forgiveness.

Kim noted the importance of setting an example of forgiveness by personally forgiving

members for various incidents. She particularly uses the implementation of forgiveness

when there is conflict among members. When dealing with conflict, Kim meets with the

executive board, the chapter standards board, and the alleged member. At the end of most

meetings, she tells the member that she has completely forgiven them and she encourages

other members to do the same. She shared that she feels pride in her organization when

she can see her example of showing forgiveness trickling down through members.

Although Kim perceives her self-esteem as high, others could perceive her

implementation of forgiveness as a sign of low self-esteem. It is possible that her

forgiveness initiative is derived from conflict avoidance, which could in turn indicate a

low level of self-esteem.

Kim and Isabelle also set examples to all members by making an effort to help

younger members. Isabelle stated that her simple efforts of participating in volunteer

events or eating meals with the first-year members allows her to collaborate and

encourage additional older members to do the same. Isabelle has set an example to all

members by actively assisting two freshmen members with recruitment for the

organization.

In what ways do female student leaders exemplify confidence?

Four of the six participants credit their confidence level towards their involvement

in their organization. Kelly stated that she was not confident in high school. She preferred

to wear baggy clothes in an effort to not draw any attention towards her. She stated that

she gained more confidence when she came to college and got involved academically and

socially. Kelly stated, "I've gotten more confident in myself, which is unreal to me

thinking of 13-year-old me, which I don't like thinking about."

Kim stated she credits her organization for times when she feels very confidant,

but that credit of confidence does not go without a continuous effort on her behalf. In an

effort to protect her confidence in her personal life, she makes a conscious effort to

separate herself personally and herself as the organization president. When she makes

tough or unpopular decisions, she makes a conscious effort to remind herself that she has

to make those decisions in order to make the organization stronger. Kim believes that

those conscious efforts keep her confidence high and that she has a really healthy

confidence level.

Brooke and Molly credited their confidence towards athletic competition. Brooke

stated that she is confident in her leadership abilities and her athletic abilities. She

credited this confidence towards simply being on her athletic team, the support she feels

from her team, and the support she feels from her parents. Molly stated that she is not

over confident in life, but she is the most confident when placed in an athletic

competition. She said, "I personally hate when people have too much confidence. I think

that has really humbled me." Brooke credited her confidence in athletic competitions to

her competitive nature. It is evident that Brooke and Molly both experience situational

confidence. They feel confident in athletic competitions or situations that mock a

competitive atmosphere, but they do not always experience this level of confidence in all

areas of their lives.

Much like her explanation of her self-esteem, Isabelle stated that her confidence

depends on the setting. She explained,

> I think for me it depends on the setting. If I am in a leadership role, if I'm
> teaching someone how to do something, right off the bat fine talk to them. When I
> go to a party or something, or if I'm out in public, I'm not good at going up to
> people and saying 'Hi'. So I think it just depends on the setting. If I'm in a place
> where I'm someone in charge, or I know what I'm doing and I'm comfortable
> there, then I'm a lot better off than if I'm randomly in public and don't know the
> people around me. I can't do that; I don't know how to go up to strangers.

Samantha discussed that her identity as an international student prompted a fear

that other students would tease her for her English speaking abilities. When asked about

her confidence, she stated,

> I would say I would rate it 8.5 on a scale of 10. I mean it was not like bad, but
> ever since I came to The States, I got involved in so many different things, and I

met so many people. I was always scared that people would make fun of my English, or different things, there were so many things. I learned a lot. I feel the more I talk to people, the more I learn, and it just grows my knowledge. Now I am not afraid to talk during life.

In what ways do female student leaders struggle with low self-esteem?

Although only one participant identified as having low self-esteem, many participants described situational self-esteem. For example, participants described situational self-esteem when they were in their comfort zone verses being out of their comfort zone. They described situational self-esteem when working with other women verses competing with a man for a position, and they again described this concept when crediting their self-esteem level towards how they feel about their appearance. The three main variables for situational self-esteem are as follows: comfort zone, male competition, and physical appearance.

Brooke and Molly both described situational self-esteem when comparing how they feel in athletic competitions verses how they feel in other environments of their lives. Brooke identified as having overall high self-esteem in her life, and Molly identified as having overall low self-esteem in her life. Despite the difference in their overall self-esteem levels, they both shared that they feel best about themselves when they are in the comfort zone of athletic practices or competitions.

Kim described situational self-esteem when comparing how she feels working with her organization of all women verses how she feels about competing against or working with men. She stated that she feels the best about herself and feels the most respected when working with her organization of all women. She also stated that she believes she has to work harder than men to obtain similar accomplishments. For example, she stated that she believes a man with equal or less leadership experiences and

GPA is likely to get chosen for a job before she would get chosen for the same job. She credits feelings of low self-esteem and low confidence to these examples of being a woman going against a man.

Kelly discussed situational self-esteem when describing how her overall level of self-esteem sometimes varies every day. She stated that she feels the best about herself when she drinks a good cup of coffee in the morning or when she gets fully dressed and ready for the day. She does not feel good about herself if she oversleeps in the morning. Kelly said this causes her to feel low self-esteem because she in turn does not have time for a morning coffee and she does not have time to get herself fully ready for the day.

Summary

Different themes emerged through the participant's responses to interview questions. Themes were related to self-esteem level, confidence, and leadership behaviors. Participants described their level of self-esteem as high, low, or varying. Participants have different leadership behaviors that are credited toward their level of self-esteem. In addition to experiencing varying levels of self-esteem in their lives, participants also experience situational confidence and situational self-esteem. The three main variables for situational self-esteem are as follows: comfort zone, male competition, and physical appearance. Chapter V will analyze the findings related to the literature, provide recommendations for professionals, and provide suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER V

Discussion, Recommendations, & Conclusion

The current study used qualitative research techniques to determine how self-esteem and leadership behaviors are similar and different among college female student leaders. The following three research questions guided the study: (1) How do female student leaders describe leadership behaviors related to high self-esteem and leadership behaviors related to low self-esteem? (2) In what ways do female student leaders exemplify confidence? (3) In what ways do female student leaders struggle with low self-esteem? Chapter V discusses the findings of the study, provides recommendations for Student Affairs professionals, and provides recommendations for future research.

Discussion

Themes emerged while exploring each research questions, and the themes were related to self-esteem level, confidence, and leadership behaviors. Each participant defined her overall level of self-esteem as high, low, or varying. Many concepts that emerged through this study align with the previous research of Heatherton and Wyland (2003). This discussion will focus on how previous literature, including Heatherton and Wyland (2003), compares or does not compare to what was found in this study.

How do female student leaders describe leadership behaviors related to high self-esteem and leadership behaviors related to low self-esteem? Two of the six participants of this study are athletic captains. One athletic captain, Brooke, identified her self-esteem as high, while the other athletic captain, Molly, identified her self-esteem as low. Their varying levels of self-esteem provide a point of comparison of leadership behaviors from an individual with high self-esteem to an individual with low self-esteem.

As previously mentioned, this study was inspired and data was analyzed using the classic definition of self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967):

> The evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself; it expresses an attitude of approval and indicates the extent to which an individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful, and worthy. In short, self-esteem is a personal judgment of the worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds towards himself (p. 4-5).

Molly and Brooke described very different team cultures and very different bonds with their coaches. According to Coppersmith's definition of self-esteem, these varying team cultures and varying coach to athlete bonds may play a vital role in the leaders' feelings of worth.

Heatherton and Polivy (1991) identified three major components of self-esteem: performance, social, and physical. Throughout her interview, Molly described a toxic team culture among the team that she leads. She discussed team conflict and discussed their inability to bond. She stated that the team has the ability to work together during athletic competition, but they are personally very separated outside of practice and games. Molly stated that many of the conflicts and issues are handled among the team members without the help of their coach. Molly's description of the team bond is related to social self-esteem. Heatherton and Wyland (2003) stated that social self-esteem focuses how the individual believes other people perceive them. In this case, Molly believes that the team perceives her as a strong athlete and leader in athletic abilities. However, she believes that the team as a whole perceives themselves as filled with conflict and unable to bond.

Unlike Molly, Brooke described a team culture that is supportive and has a strong team bond. Rather than focusing on social self-esteem, Brooke tends to focus on

performance self-esteem. Heatherton and Wyland (2003) defined performance self-esteem as, "one's own sense of general competence and includes intellectual abilities, social performance, self-regulatory capacities, self-confidence, efficacy, and agency" (p. 223). Brooke discussed her healthy relationship with her coach, stating that her coach has helped her to create a mentor program and other team bonding initiatives. Her coach also intervenes to assist with any conflict that occurs among team members. Brooke and her coach have created a supportive team culture. This culture allows Brooke to feel competent and confident in leading the team both in and out of athletic competition.

The two athletes focus on two different component of self-esteem: social self-esteem and physical self-esteem (Heatherton and Wyland, 2003). Although it was not confirmed in this study, it is very possible that varying levels of self-esteem could be attributed to team cultures. It was not determined if their varying levels and focuses of self-esteem attribute to the different team cultures or if the existing team cultures attribute to the different self-esteem levels and focuses. Perhaps having a high self-esteem is helpful in creating a supportive team culture and having a low self-esteem adds to creating a toxic team culture. A supportive team culture may allow the team captain to feel supported and therefore experience high self-esteem and the opposite for low self-esteem.

In addition, it is possible that Molly's role as a leader fills a positional leadership role. This would indicate that she is thought of as a leader because of her participation in athletics. She is perceived as a leader because she is perceived as an athlete. It is possible that Molly's low self-esteem has created a fear of rejection within her leadership

behaviors. She may fear being rejected or risk her teammates disagreeing with her decisions if she encourages team bonding or includes her coach during times of conflict.

Looking at the leadership behaviors of the high self-esteem participants can also assist in understanding positional leadership. Participants with high self-esteem have moved past positional leadership. The other members of their organizations allow them to lead, and they do not question all of their behaviors as a leader. These leaders who have moved past positional leadership do not place all of their focus on their own leadership development. These leaders instead assist younger members and teammates with their leadership development.

In what ways do female student leaders exemplify confidence? Participants credited their confidence to measures of success. For example, Kim stated that she feels good about herself because she has maintained a 4.0 GPA in college. She said she feels less good about herself when she competes against a male for a position. As stated in the literature review, it is common for individuals to allow their skills and abilities to impact their feelings of themselves. (Heatherton and Wyland, 2003). Rather than just being confident and satisfied with being themselves, participants needed measures of success. Without these measures of success, participants were less confident in their abilities. Therefore, this perception aligns with Heatherton and Wyland's statement that personal feeling of ones-self is often based on skills and abilities. However, this contradicts the statement that measures of success attribute to men feeling good about themselves and successful relationships attribute to women feeling good about themselves (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003). Based off this study, it can be determined that it is equally true that women need measures of success, just as much as men do, in order to feel successful.

This component relates back to situational confidence and situational self-esteem. The leaders stated that they feel most comfortable while among other women and developing relationships. However, situationally, they also need measures of success in order to feel comfortable.

Molly, one of the athlete participants, mentioned many times in her interview that she believes over-confidence is a bad quality. Molly is the only participant who expressed this belief, and she is also the only participant who identified as having low self-esteem. This connection could not go unnoted. Perhaps Molly's low self-esteem has impacted her perception of confidence among other people. As stated in the literature review, modern media has had a large impact on self-esteem among women (Koyunchu, Tok, Canpolat, & Catikkas, 2010). Simply being a college student in today's world implies that Molly would have a connection to modern media. Therefore, it is highly possible that modern media has deterred Molly's self-esteem. This perception of her own self-esteem could contribute to her perception of over-confident people as being boastful. Molly's low self-esteem could cause her to perceive an individual with an average level of confidence as an over-confident person.

It is possible that Molly was taught to have this opinion about confidence because she is a woman. Whether it was done intentionally or unintentionally, her parents, coaches, or modern media could have taught her that being an over-confident woman was bad.

In what ways do female student leaders struggle with low self-esteem? The concepts of situational confidence and situational self-esteem emerged through the findings of this study. Chapter IV identified three main aspects for situational self-

esteem: comfort zone, male competition, and physical appearance. Participants described feeling good about themselves when in the comfort zone of an athletic competition or when among the members of all female organizations. They described feeling less confident about themselves outside of those comfort zones when they are faced with the everyday environments of their lives. Everyday environments that participants commonly face outside of their organization are being in a classroom or at work. One participant particularly described feeling good about herself and feeling respected when she was among women. This aligns with the concept of women gaining and measuring self-esteem from successful relationships (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003). When the leaders are among their teams and organizations, they are among successful and reassuring relationships. Being in those environments with successful relationships leads to why they feel more confident and have higher self-esteem (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003). The same participant who described feeling respected when among women also described feeling less confident and does not feel good about herself when she competes against or works with men.

In addition to relationships impacting self-esteem among women, Heatheron and Wyland (2003) found that body image is an important factor of self-esteem. Participants of this study described feeling good about themselves when they are satisfied with their physical appearance. They directly related their perception of their physical appearance to their internal feelings about themselves. This relationship of their external physical appearance and their internal feelings aligns with the study conducted by Heatherton (2001) that concluded women were likely to evaluate their bodies negatively and experience anxiety about their physical appearance.

Theoretical Frameworks. Carol Gilligan's Theory of Women's Moral

Development (1997) includes three developmental levels for women: orientation to

individual survival, goodness of self-sacrifice, and morality of non-violence. Women in

level one, orientation to individual survival, make decisions based off of what is best for

them. Molly, the athlete who identified with having low self-esteem, showed signs of

being in this first level. She does not feel support from her teammates in any aspect of her

life except for in athletic competition. She attempts to deal with the team's multiple

conflicts without consulting or informing her coach. Her idea of being a good leader is to

perform well athletically. She believes no one else will take care of her. Women in level

two, goodness of self-sacrifice, feel they must sacrifice their own wishes for others. The

women with varying self-esteem showed signs of being in this second level. Kim, Kelly,

and Isabelle had also been in their leadership position for only a few months at the time

of the interviews. They all shared how they try to be a listening ear for everyone in the

organization and they shared that they take on the role of setting an example of how to

welcome new members. These types of leaders often get taken advantage of by members

of the organization. Other members may take advantage of their time for meetings or

resources for the organization. Their varying levels of self-esteem and their tendency to

sacrifice their own wishes for others could be contributing factors to why they are in this

level. Women in level three, morality of non-violence, maintain a balance of taking care

of themselves and of others. Samantha and Brooke both identified with having high self-

esteem, and their leadership behaviors indicate that they are in level three. Both discussed

the importance of having their advisor or coach involved in the decision making of the

organization or team. Both discussed being a support system for their teammates,

accepting responsibility for their mistakes, asking for a group effort of fixing mistakes, and the importance of maintaining their academics. Their high self-esteem and years of experience in their leadership position could be contributing factors to why they are in this level.

The questions used for this qualitative study were guided by the five leadership practices outlined by Kouzes and Posner (Northouse, 2010). The five leadership practices include: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. All six participants discussed times when they have set examples for the other members of their organization. When setting these examples, they displayed the first two leadership practices: Model the Way and Inspire a Shared Vision. Kouzes and Posner state, "Exemplary leaders set a personal example for others by their own behaviors" (Northouse, p. 184). In reference to inspiring visions, Kouzes and Pozner state, "Effective leaders create compelling visions that can guide people behavior" (Northouse, p. 184). These leadership practices could be seen in Kim who has made it a personal goal for her organization to implement the value of forgiveness. She sets an example of forgiveness during times of conflict in her organization. These leadership practices could also be seen in Molly who makes an effort to always step up and be the first one to try tough drills during her athletic practices. She stated that she feels it is her duty to set an example of enthusiasm at all times during practices and games. Kelly, Kim, Isabelle, and Brooke all discussed their conscious effort to welcome the newest members of the organization. They make an effort to befriend the new members, and they stated that their efforts have encouraged other members to do the same. The sorority presidents stated that it encouraged older pledge classes to have dinner with new members and get

to know them better. The athletic captain stated that it encouraged her teammates to be nicer to the new members and include them in team bonding efforts. The registered student organization president stated that it helped the new members develop in their own leadership roles.

All six participants displayed the fifth leadership practice: Encourage the Heart. Kouzes and Pozner state, "Leaders encourage the heart by rewarding others for accomplishments" (Northouse, p. 184). Some participants displayed this leadership practice in a structured manner, and some participants displayed this leadership practice in a less structured manner. This leadership practice was less structured with the two athletic captains, Brooke and Molly. They both stated that they make an effort to tell their teammates that they played a good game. They feel that their teammates' efforts should be recognized. Isabelle, one of the registered student organization presidents, also recognizes members' efforts in this type of less structured manner. The other registered student organization president, Samantha, is more structured with her approach. She organizes an executive board retreat at the beginning of every semester. The retreat includes an opportunity to discuss expectations and goals for the upcoming semester. She stated she often times refers back to those expectations and goals throughout the semester. The sorority presidents, Kelly and Kim, both display a structured form of this leadership behavior. They both discussed that they have specific time worked into their chapter meetings for recognizing and rewarding the efforts and accomplishments of the members. They also allow general members to recognize accomplishments during this specific time of the chapter meeting.

Recommendations for Student Affairs Professionals

It is important for student affairs professionals to be aware of the aspects that affect students' self-esteem levels. This study can assist professionals in better understanding female leaders that they supervise or work with on a regular basis. Student affairs professionals should note of the concepts of situational confidence and situational self-esteem that participants of this study described.

In order to inspire self-esteem and confidence, it is important for professionals to have genuine and honest conversations with female student leaders. Although it is important to discuss the organization or sport in which the leader is a member, it is also important to have conversations about more than just the organization or sport. These efforts could include impromptu conversations, daily or weekly check-ins, organization bonding, or a structured mentor relationship. Fostering these conversations has the potential to inspire self-esteem and confidence in many aspects of the leader's life. The impromptu conversations, check-ins, organization bonding, or structured mentoring could lead the student to a more holistic feeling of self-esteem and confidence. These efforts have the potential to inspire the student to move away from situational self-esteem and situational confidence.

In order to create a culture of continuous support, professionals should consider mentoring student leaders. Two participants in particular spoke very highly of the mentorship they feel with their organization advisor or coach. The mentors allow the student leader to develop autonomy within the organization, and they provide additional assistance during times of conflict. Mentors should be mindful of the fact that the student

leader is supporting the executive board and the entire organization, and they need to be active in supporting the leader.

To further the effort of fostering conversations that inspire self-esteem and confidence, professionals should consider organized programming for female student leaders. A women's conference could be held with women of all levels. The conference could include university faculty, university staff, local business owners, female legislators, and other women in various levels of leadership. Conference break-out sessions could include presentations regarding leadership and self-esteem in association with race, ethnicity, and sexuality. The conference would provide a means for women to come together and discuss important topics such as leadership styles, self-esteem in the work place, maintaining confidence when competing against men, and dealing with both situational self-esteem and situational confidence.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although the research gave a wide range of information about six leaders and their leadership practices, it may be beneficial for future researchers to narrow the focus of the research. For example, a future researcher could focus only on interviewing sorority presidents, only focus on interviewing athletic captains, or only focus on interviewing registered student organization presidents. This would give them a more specific insight to how those leaders differ.

When examining the information provided by the two athlete participants, the concept of self-esteem influencers was formed. Self-esteem influencers refers to the possibility of team culture attributing to self-esteem. Their vastly different levels of self-esteem and team cultures formed this concept. I recommend that future research attempt

to determine if the leader's existing self-esteem impacts the culture of the organization or if the existing culture of the organization impacts the leader's self-esteem.

This research questions were inspired by the leadership practices outlined by Kouzes and Posner (2002). Future research could be inspired through the many other leadership theories. This would give a new direction to the examination of the leadership practices rather than limiting the examination to the five practices outlined by Kouzes and Posner.

The interviews for this research were conducted during the summer. For future research, I would recommend interviewing students during the middle of a semester. That would hopefully eliminate the leaders doubt in their leadership capabilities. Regardless if the organization elects positions based on the academic year or the calendar year, conducting interviews in the middle of the semester would ensure that all participants have been in their position for a good amount of time.

Conclusion

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings of the study compared to the findings or previous literature. The concepts associated with self-esteem, confidence, and leadership are compared. Leadership behaviors related to high self-esteem are compared to leadership behaviors related to low self-esteem. The various ways female student leaders exemplify confidence are discussed. In addition, the various ways some female student leaders struggle with low self-esteem are discussed. The theoretical frameworks of Carol Gilligan, as well as Kouzes and Posner, are examined and applied to the findings of the study. This chapter provides recommendations for student affairs professionals and recommendations for future research.

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Appendix A

Demographics

Name:_____

Email: _____

Phone number: _____

1. What is your gender?
   Male
   Female
   Other

2. Please choose which description best describes your ethnic background.
   Caucasian
   Black or African-American
   Hispanic
   Asian/Pacific Islander
   Native American or American Indian
   Other (please specify)

3. What is your current year in school?
   Freshman
   Sophomore
   Junior
   Senior

4. What is your major? _____

5. What organization are you a member/leader of?
   Sorority
   Athletic team
   Registered Student Organization

6. What is your current leadership position?
   President
   Captain
   Other (Please explain) _____

7. How long have you served in this leadership position? _____

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about your experiences in your organization.

2. What are your roles and responsibilities in your leadership position?

3. Tell me about a time you felt really successful or proud of yourself in your organization. Why?

4. Tell me about a challenging or failing time you had in your organization. What made it challenging and how did you get through it?

5. What are some changes or improvements that you made for your organization during your term? [Challenging the process]

6. How do you motivate members of your organization? [Encouraging the heart, Inspire, Model the way]

7. How do you promote collaboration among your organization and the individual members? [Enable others to act]

8. How do you resolve conflict in your organization?

9. If I asked members of your organization about your leadership, would they tell me that you lead by setting an example, by inspiring, by challenging them, by promoting collaboration, or by rewarding/recognizing accomplishments? [all 5]

10. Has there been a time when you felt marginalized or oppressed as a member or leader of your organization?

11. How would you define your confidence?

12. Tell me about a time when you felt really confident and a time when you did not feel confident.

13. Do you feel supported by the members of your organization?

14. How would you define your self-esteem?

Appendix C

Email Invitaition to Participate

Hello [participant name],

My name is Allie Moran, and I am a graduate student in the College Student Affairs program at EIU. I am contacting you today because your [insert name of supervisor or coach] recommended you as a participant for my graduate research.

I will be conducting 15-30 minute interviews with six female student leaders at EIU. The leaders include athletic captains, registered student organization presidents, and sorority presidents. You were recommended to participate in one of these interviews because of your leadership as the [insert leadership role].

The purpose of my graduate thesis research study is to examine the leadership behaviors of female student leaders and try to find commonalities among those leadership behaviors. I will be conducting interviews during the summer, if possible, and the fall semester. I would like to schedule a time to meet with you.

If you are able to participate in a one-time, 15-30 minute interview, please reply to this email with your schedule availability.

I look forward to hearing from you! Have a wonderful day!

Best,
Allie Moran

Appendix D

IRB Approval

May 5, 2015

Allison Moran
Counseling and Student Development

Thank you for submitting the research protocol titled, "An Examination of Self-esteem's Impact on Leadership Behavior in College Women" for review by the Eastern Illinois University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has approved this research protocol following an expedited review procedure. IRB review has determined that the protocol involves no more than minimal risk to subjects and satisfies all of the criteria for approval of research.

This protocol has been given the IRB number 15-062. You may proceed with this study from 5/5/2015 to 5/4/2016. You must submit Form E, Continuation Request, to the IRB by 4/4/2016 if you wish to continue the project beyond the approval expiration date. Upon completion of your research project, please submit Form G, Completion of Research Activities, to the IRB, c/o the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

This approval is valid only for the research activities, timeline, and subjects described in the above named protocol. IRB policy requires that any changes to this protocol be reported to, and approved by, the IRB before being implemented. You are also required to inform the IRB immediately of any problems encountered that could adversely affect the health or welfare of the subjects in this study. Please contact me, or the Compliance Coordinator at 581-8576, in the event of an emergency. All correspondence should be sent to:

Institutional Review Board
c/o Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
Telephone: 581-8576
Fax: 217-581-7181
Email: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

Thank you for your assistance, and the best of success with your research.

Richard Cavanaugh, Chairperson
Institutional Review Board
Telephone: 581-6205
Email: recavanaugh@eiu.edu