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## You're Kind of Just Conditioned: Women and Female College Students' Defiance of Dominant Social Messages in the Development of Leader Self-Efficacy

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

“YOU’RE KIND OF JUST CONDITIONED”: WOMEN AND FEMALE COLLEGE  
STUDENTS’ DEFIANCE OF DOMINANT SOCIAL MESSAGES IN THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF LEADER SELF-EFFICACY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

BY

SHANNON DARRACOTT HOWES

CHICAGO, IL

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The primary reason that I applied for the Higher Education program was because of all that I hoped to learn from the experience. All of my expectations have been met or surpassed. While working full-time and sometimes serving as an adjunct faculty, I spent three years completing coursework, and two years conducting research and writing my dissertation. During this time, I have grown in so many ways as a scholar, educator, and practitioner (although I recognize that I still have much to learn). More importantly, I have been transformed as a person. I think more critically, and I have a deeper understanding of complex topics about which I have been passionate for a long time. I have also become a much stronger, more capable person than I would have believed was possible even a few years ago. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to be on this incredible journey.

All that said, it has not been easy. I felt I was always falling short in at least one area of my life – as a parent and partner, friend, professional, student, or adjunct faculty member. For a few years, I pushed myself so hard that I compromised my own wellness (particularly by trying to manage on unhealthy amounts of sleep). There were days when I did not think I was intelligent enough to be successful in the program and times when I was so exhausted that I doubted my ability to reach the finish line. I would not have been able to accomplish the goal of completing my degree without the support of so many amazing people. It will not be possible to thank all of them here. In the following

paragraphs, I will thank a number of people who deserve special recognition. Although words cannot adequately express how much I love and appreciate them all, I hope that everyone noted here understands how much their support has meant to me.

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## ABSTRACT

Researchers have consistently found that women have lower leader self-efficacy (LSE) than men, despite being equally capable as leaders. This is problematic because LSE is associated with many benefits that support the development and enactment of leadership. Despite the importance of LSE, there is a dearth of research on the construct, particularly in the higher education context. This grounded theory study utilized semi-structured interviews with 12 undergraduate students who identified as females or women to explore how they developed LSE. Findings were related with four core concepts that were woven throughout the various categories of themes that comprised the grounded theory. Those core tenets are: (a) throughout their lives, people receive messages about leaders and leadership from societal norms, institutions, experiences, and interactions; (b) people and experiences mediate the effects of these messages; (c) LSE is shaped by internal processes; and (d) multiple identities influence the development of LSE. Participants successfully built LSE through receiving encouragement and affirmation, and engaging in leadership development experiences. In addition, they were able to disrupt dominant narratives that had the potential to have a detrimental impact on their LSE.



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Statement of the Problem: Gender Gap in LSE**

I had been working professionally in a student leadership development department for two years when I read the 2007 report from the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL; Dugan & Komives, 2007). It was then that I first had words to describe a construct that had fascinated me since observing the ways in which it seemed to influence students' behavior: leader self-efficacy (LSE). LSE refers to people's internal beliefs in the likelihood that they will successfully achieve their goals as leaders (Anderson, Krajewski, Goffin, & Jackson, 2008; Paglis & Green, 2002).

The 2007 MSL report also affirmed that what I had been observing for years in my work with students was related to a larger issue. Findings from the MSL and additional studies have consistently shown that women university students have lower LSE than men throughout their time in college, despite scoring higher than men on capacity for leadership (i.e., one's knowledge, skills, and attitudes reflecting actual leadership ability), and having similar levels of experience with leadership roles (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; McCormick, Tanguma, & Lopez-Forment, 2002; Sax, 2008). This is concerning because LSE shapes people's motivation to assume leadership roles, and LSE helps them to more effectively manage challenges faced in these experiences (Bandura, 1997).

Gender inequities are “present in the educational pipelines purportedly designed to prepare women to assume successful leadership roles in their disciplines” (Dugan, Fath, Howes, Lavelle, & Polanin, 2013, p. 7), and oppression related to sex and gender is persistent and pervasive across contexts inside and outside of higher education (Allan, 2011; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Errington Nicholson & Pasque, 2011; hooks, 2000). Therefore, it is not surprising that a similar gender gap in LSE has also been found in studies on professionals, despite the fact that women are at least as effective as men when practicing leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007).

Women are underrepresented in leadership positions across multiple fields. For example, in the United States (US), women hold the top leadership role in 39% of federal regulatory agencies (Smith & Monaghan, 2013), and within the real estate, rental, and leasing sector, women hold only 9.5% of CEO positions, and 20.6% of senior-level managers (Catalyst, 2015). The numbers are even lower in the S&P 500 business companies, where only 4.6% of the CEOs and 25.1% of executive managers are women (Catalyst, 2015). Women are also underrepresented in management positions within bioscience and the healthcare industry (Catalyst, 2008), federal regulatory organizations (Smith & Monaghan, 2013), and government (both in congress and the U.S. cabinet; Catalyst, 2012).

The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions can result in women being less likely to aspire to leadership roles, doubting themselves as leaders, and having fewer opportunities to benefit from mentorship from a leader with whom they can relate

in terms of their gender identity (Allan 2011; Catalyst, 2008; Dominici, Fried, & Zeger, 2009; Hoyt, 2010; Kark & Eagly, 2010; Kinzie, Thomas, Palmer, & Umbach, 2007; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; von Hippel, Wiryakusuma, Bowden, & Schochet, 2011). Factors that constrain the development of women's LSE also include biases that result in women being evaluated more harshly as leaders (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Boatwright & Egidio, 2003; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Yoder, 2001). Further, societal assumptions and stereotypes make it more difficult for those who do not fit the traditional prototype of leaders in the U.S. (White, middle- or upper-class, heterosexual, cisgender men) to be perceived as leaders by themselves and others (Dugan, 2011a; Dugan & Komives, 2011; Hogg, 2001; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Therefore, it can be argued that the impact of these societal assumptions and stereotypes differ based on the multiple identities one holds in addition to gender.

### **Cultivating the LSE of Women Students in Higher Education**

Fortunately, LSE can mediate the effects of stereotype threat for women, making them less likely to underperform or internalize negative consequences as a result of being exposed to gender stereotypes related to leadership (Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007). For this reason, and because of the additional benefits of LSE that were previously mentioned, LSE may help women navigate the challenges and barriers that often affect their leadership development and enactment (Adams & Keim, 2000; Bandura, 1997). Therefore, it is important to cultivate LSE in women. An ideal time to do this is during college.

Many universities have recognized the importance of student leadership development, and stated that they are committed to preparing students to become engaged citizens who are dedicated to promoting positive social change (Council for the Advancement of Standards [CAS], 2009; Dugan & Komives, 2011; Sax, 2008). This commitment is reflected in the mission statements of numerous institutions of higher education, and the fact that the goal of fostering the development of socially responsible leadership for all students has become a stated outcome of higher education (Association of American Colleges & Universities [AAC&U], 2012; Astin & Astin, 2000; CAS, 2009).

Unfortunately, most leadership development efforts in higher education are designed to build students' capacity (by enhancing knowledge and skills), without cultivating students' internal beliefs in their abilities as leaders (Dugan, 2011a; Dugan 2011b; Dugan & Komives, 2010; Guthrie, Jones, Osteen, & Hu, 2013). An approach that fails to attend fully to the development of LSE is an insufficient way to enhance a holistic, life-long process such as leadership development (CAS, 2009; Dugan, 2011a; Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005; Lord & Hall, 2005). Such an approach may be particularly detrimental to women students who could benefit in unique ways from a more deliberate focus on the development of LSE to help counter the systemic sexism and genderism that may negatively affect their beliefs in their abilities to be successful as leaders (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; McCormick et al., 2002). Unless educators intentionally provide leadership development opportunities to build both capacity and LSE, women and female students may not realize their full

potential as leaders, and they subsequently will not be completely prepared to contribute to collective efforts for social change (Dugan, 2011a; Komives & Dugan, 2010).

### **The Need for Socially Responsible Leadership**

Today's globally interconnected world is plagued by complex social issues such as environmental concerns, the inequitable distribution of wealth and opportunity, violence and conflict around the world, and a growing lack of confidence in the political process (Astin & Astin, 2000; Heifetz, 1994; Komives & Wagner, 2009). These multi-faceted, constantly evolving, and interconnected challenges require innovative and comprehensive solutions (Astin & Astin, 2000; Heifetz, 1994; Komives & Wagner, 2009). Because groups that are diverse in terms of identities and life experiences bring a variety of perspectives that enhance creativity and contribute to critical thinking, they tend to be well equipped to employ the type of problem-solving approaches that are necessary to tackle complex social issues (De Dreu & West, 2001; Mitchell & Boyle, 2009). Due to the fact that women's perspectives often differ from those of men (who are currently overrepresented in leadership roles), and because women can play an important role by challenging gender biases in research and policy, when women are equitably represented in decision-making teams, problem-solving efforts are bound to be more successful (Eagly & Chin, 2010; Rosser, 2012; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Smith & Monaghan, 2013).

The potential of diverse teams is not realized simply by bringing together a group of people who differ from each other in various ways; in fact, heterogeneous groups may be more likely to experience conflicts (De Dreu & West, 2001; Mannix & Neale, 2005;

Mitchell & Boyle, 2009). Conflict can be mediated and problem-solving capabilities can be maximized by encouraging full participation from all members, fostering a learning orientation within the organization, and practicing transformational leadership (De Dreu & West, 2001; Jung, 2001; Mannix & Neale, 2005; Mitchell & Boyle, 2009; Shin & Zhou, 2003). Transformational leadership is characterized by a focus on values, emotions, and the holistic development of all members of a group (Jung, 2001; Northouse, 2010). Women are more likely than men to employ relational, transformational leadership styles, which are empirically linked with leadership effectiveness (Carli & Eagly, 2007; Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Eagly & Karau, 1991). Thus, women can support the processes that will enable diverse groups to be more successful.

Because of the perspectives they can offer, and the leadership approach they tend to employ, women are uniquely positioned to help meet the need for competent, emotionally intelligent leaders who can mobilize communities of people to address the root causes of the complex social issues that face today's interconnected world (Carli & Eagly, 2007; Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Rosser, 2012; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Smith & Monaghan, 2013). Thus, if the issue of women's leadership development receives the attention it deserves, the societal benefits could be significant.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Cultivating women's LSE has the potential to increase the overall number of individuals who are fully prepared to meet the growing need for socially responsible leaders to address the world's complex problems. Therefore, the overarching purpose of

this study is to create a theory that contributes to a deeper understanding of what educators can do to enhance women's LSE. The research question guiding this study is: How, if at all, do university students who identify as women or female develop LSE? When answering this question, I was intentional in considering how multiple identities may influence this process.

### **Definition of Terms**

#### **Leadership**

In this study, leadership is understood to be a relational, values-based process enacted for the purpose of creating positive social change (Astin & Astin, 2000; Cilente, 2009). This contemporary definition of leadership is often used in leadership development interventions in higher education (Owen, 2012). Certainly, there may be different perspectives in terms of what constitutes "positive social change." Definitions of "positive social change" may be influenced by power dynamics, context, and different perspectives based on life experiences (Komives & Wagner, 2009). For the purpose of this study, positive social change refers to efforts to address the root causes of social issues at a systemic level in a way that builds relationships and honors the dignity of all members of society (Komives & Wagner, 2009).

#### **Leadership Development**

Leadership development is a complex, on-going process that involves cognitive growth, capacity-building, and the application of knowledge and skills to the leadership process (CAS, 2009; Dugan, 2011a). Leadership development efforts must target the building of capacity, which refers to employing attitudes, acquiring knowledge, and

cultivating the ability to engage in leadership (Dugan, Kodama, Correia, & Associates, 2013). The process of leadership development also requires cultivating LSE (Dugan, 2011a).

### **Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy refers to internal beliefs in one's abilities to successfully take action to achieve one's goals within a certain domain (Bandura, 1997, 2001). Self-efficacy has been positively associated with motivation to pursue goal-related activities, the likelihood of employing an effective problem-solving approach, perseverance when faced with adversity, and stress management (Bandura, 1997; 2001; Bandura & Locke, 2003; Black & Earnest, 2009; Jex & Bliese, 1999).

### **Leader Self-Efficacy (LSE)**

LSE reflects internal perceptions of competence related to engaging in leadership (Anderson et al., 2008; Paglis & Green, 2002). LSE is positively related with leadership capacity as well as the likelihood that people will enact leadership (Dugan & Komives, 2010; McCormick et al., 2002; Paglis & Green, 2002; Shertzer & Schuh, 2004).

### **Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Race**

This study will primarily explore the influences of three identities on the development of LSE: gender, sexual orientation, and race. Although scholars have called for more research that considers the potential influence of various identities on leadership development (Arminio et al., 2000; Dugan, 2011b; Komives et al., 2009), in my research design and literature review, I focused on sexual orientation, and race, in addition to the primary consideration of gender. One reason for this is that it would be challenging to



recruit a sample that is diverse in terms of more than three identities given the relatively small sample size that is typical for qualitative studies (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Both race and sexual orientation were chosen because they are key sources of social stratification in U.S. society, and because there is a foundational base of literature to review on the relationships between these identities and leadership, albeit limited (Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Griffin, Hahn D'Errico, Harro, & Schiff, 2007; Lehavot & Lambert, 2007; Omi, & Winant, 1994; Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009).

General assumptions that shape the ways in which these (and other) identities are understood in this study include the following: (a) identities are socially constructed, fluid, and shaped by contextual elements such as time and place; (b) societal meanings of identities are influenced by various associations with social, political, and economic power in ways that impact the lived experiences of individuals and groups; and (c) individual, group, and societal perceptions affect personal meaning-making related to multiple identities (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007; Dugan, Kodama, & Gebhardt, 2012; Harro, 2013; Jones & Abes, 2013; Omi & Winant, 1986).

Because of the interrelations among them, constructs of “sex, gender, and sexuality are often confused and conflated” (Gentile, 1993; Griffin, 2007, p. 167). Biological sex refers to the physical, genetic features (such as reproductive organs, chromosomes, and hormones) that are used at birth to categorize individuals as male, female, or intersex (Gentile, 1993; Griffin, 2007; Person, 2005). The term “gender” is a social identity associated with the societal and cultural meanings related to identifying and expressing oneself as a boy, girl, man, woman, or as someone who does not relate

with binary notions of gender (Adams et al., 2007; Gentile, 1993; Griffin, 2007; Morrow & Messinger, 2006; Person, 2005).

Gender identity refers to a person's individual sense of their identity along a continuum of gender, which may include (but is not limited to) identifying as a man, or a woman (Adams et al., 2007; Levitt, Puckett, Ippolito, & Horne, 2012; Morrow & Messinger, 2006). The umbrella term "genderqueer" is often used to avoid binary conceptions of gender, sex, and sexual orientation (Adams et al., 2007). Gender expression refers to behaviors that express (or are perceived to express) people's gender, such as how they dress, and the language they use for themselves (Adams et al., 2007; Morrow & Messinger, 2006).

In the studies referenced in this literature review, participants were rarely offered opportunities to identify across a fluid continuum of gender identities and expressions, so the terminology used by the researchers will be used when referring to existing research. Most often, the term "women" was used by researchers, which is why that word is regularly used in the literature review. For my study, participants were recruited who identified as women or female, and I have used the term with which each participant self-identified. In addition, I have used the terms "sexism" and "genderism" whenever they were relevant to refer to beliefs and practices associated with oppression based on sex and gender, respectively, although the word "sexism" is often used in the literature to represent both constructs (Adams et al., 2007; Morrow & Messinger, 2006).

Sexual orientation refers to sexual and romantic attraction as it relates with sex and gender (Griffin, 2007). When referencing literature, I have used the terminology

employed by the researchers. Generally, in this study, participants are identified as: (a) heterosexual if they are attracted to individuals who identify as men; (b) lesbians if they are attracted to individuals who identify as women; and (c) bisexual or genderqueer if they are fluid in terms of gender and/or sexual orientation. To the best of my ability, I used the language chosen by the participants themselves. Heterosexism refers to the various manifestations of oppression based on sexual orientation (Adams et al., 2007; Levitt et al., 2012).

As is the case with all social identities, it is difficult to define race as a construct. This is due in part to the complicated relationships that exist between race and ethnicity, and also because of the societal associations linking race with phenotypical characteristics that portray race as a biological construct, despite the evidence that confirms that race is a socially constructed concept (Omi & Winant, 1986). In this study, race refers to the following demographic categories with which people are regularly asked to identify by researchers, and by institutions in U.S. society: Asian American/Asian Pacific Islander, Black/African American, Latino/Latina, Multiracial, Native American, and White. Racism is the term used to describe the ideological and institutionalized manifestations of oppression based on race (Adams et al., 2007; Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Omi & Winant, 1986).

### **Significance of the Study**

There are a number of reasons why this study is significant. The following sections describe each of them to create a compelling justification for the research, and to explain how it simultaneously advances the needs of women and females, as well as

societal goals.

### **Addressing a Gap in the Literature**

**Research on LSE.** Because LSE plays an important role in leadership development, and due to the surprising lack of literature that exists on this construct, scholars have articulated a need for more research on LSE (Dugan & Komives, 2010; Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011). In addition, more leadership studies that are situated and interpreted within higher education would help educators better understand how this context shapes student leadership development (Dugan, 2011b; Dugan & Komives, 2007). This study will address both needs by focusing on the development of LSE for women and female students in higher education. As I will further explain when writing about the methodology and methods that I used in this study, it is also significant that I used a qualitative approach. This was helpful in terms of contributing to a deeper understanding of the complex, developmental processes that influence LSE.

**Research on leadership and identities.** Scholars have also articulated a need for additional research that explores the relationship between leadership and multiple identities (Eagly & Chin, 2010; Komives et al., 2009). More specifically, researchers have referenced the need to focus on leadership and race (Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Rosette & Livingston, 2012; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010) as well as leadership and sexual orientation (Fassinger, Shullman, & Stevenson, 2010; Ostick, 2011; Renn, 2007; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005).

The identity that has received the most attention in the leadership literature is gender, but the body of literature on women and leadership has been criticized both for

reinforcing notions of a gender binary (Dugan, Kusel, & Simounet, 2012) and for a failure to consider the impact of additional identities on women's leadership experiences (Allan, 2011; Olesen, 2000). Further, the mere existence of research on women and leadership is not sufficient. Unless scholars employ a critical approach, this literature may not address the sexist oppression and genderism that causes inequities based on sex and gender, and may instead help to reinforce stereotypes. It is problematic that there is a dearth of research that is conducted through a feminist lens, particularly within higher education (Hart & Metcalfe, 2010; Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011; Yakaboski, 2011). This study will center the experiences of women, with consideration of multiple identities in addition to gender. I have approached the research from a multicultural feminist perspective, which is characterized by highlighting the diversity among women in terms of their multiple identities and experiences with various forms of oppression (Allan, 2011; Errington Nicholson & Pasque, 2011).

### **Implications Within and Beyond Higher Education**

As a result of the call for institutions of higher education to prepare students to become socially responsible leaders (AAC&U, 2012; Astin & Astin, 2000; CAS, 2009), there has been continuous growth in curricular and co-curricular leadership development programs since the 1980s (CAS, 2009; Guthrie et al., 2013; Komives, 2011; Posner, 2004, 2009). However, the mere existence of these programs does not necessarily mean that institutional goals regarding student leadership development are being met. There have been questions about whether (and in what ways) these programs may be influencing students (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006; Posner, 2004,

2009). This uncertainty can be attributed to: (a) a professional culture in higher education that has not required practice to be informed by research; (b) the limited number of leadership studies that have interpreted results within the context of higher education; (c) the fact that the growth of leadership development programs on college campuses has outpaced research on their effects; and (d) the insufficient professional preparation that most leadership educators receive prior to taking on such roles (Dugan, 2011b; Dugan, Bohle et al., 2011; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Owen, 2012; Posner, 2004, 2009).

For these and other reasons, it is insufficient to rely solely on formal leadership programs to achieve institutional goals related to student leadership development. Research has shown that gains in outcomes associated with leadership development are not restricted to participation in formal leadership programs (Dugan, Bohle et al., 2011; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Dugan, Kodama et al., 2013). In addition, because the majority of college students never participate in formal leadership programs, and almost half of these students have never had the opportunity to serve in a positional leadership role while in university (Dugan & Komives, 2007), any measure of the impact of higher education on student leadership development must not be limited to focusing only on students involved with these formal opportunities.

The main purpose of this study is to enhance theoretical understanding of the development of LSE, and subsequently to inform practice within various functional areas in institutions of higher education. By helping educators better understand how women and females develop LSE, this study can enhance efforts to support this important process in higher education, which should be given as much attention as building leadership

capacity (Dugan, 2011a; Dugan & Komives, 2011; Kodama & Dugan, 2013; McCormick et al., 2002).

This study will add to the limited body of research on collegiate experiences that are positively associated with gains in LSE (Astin, 1993; Dugan, Garland, Jacoby, & Gasiorowski, 2008; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kodama & Dugan, 2013). By considering the influence of multiple identities on the development of LSE, the study will also help educators to honor their obligation to provide inclusive opportunities that will meet the leadership development needs of student populations that are diverse in terms of social identities such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socio-economic class (CAS, 2009; Chang, Milem, & Antonio, 2010; Dugan, Kusel et al., 2012; Dugan, Kodama et al., 2013; Guthrie et al., 2013; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Kodama & Dugan, 2013; Munin & Dugan, 2011).

It is unfortunate that forms of sexist and gendered oppression can inhibit women from reaching their full potential, because women are capable of making valuable contributions in all aspects of society (Errington Nicholson, & Pasque, 2011; hooks, 1984, 2000; Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011). This study has potential to make an impact beyond the higher education context by contributing to the leadership development of women students who will subsequently be more likely to enact leadership in their personal lives and career fields after graduation. This will result in societal benefits, as there become more socially responsible leaders taking action to address complex problems in the world. Further, when leadership teams are comprised of people with diverse identities and experiences, they are more likely to be effective in their work

due to the benefits of involving diverse perspectives in problem-solving efforts (Eagly & Chin, 2010; De Dreu & West, 2001). Therefore, this study is valuable because it has resulted in insights that can support leadership development for women and female students who identify differently in terms of race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

### **Overview of Methodology and Methods**

It can be challenging to study a complex construct such as LSE, which is influenced by so many factors, and is so closely related to self-concept and identity (Dugan, 2011a; Dugan, Rossetti Morosini, & Beazley, 2011; Lord & Hall, 2005). A qualitative approach is well suited to a study that is designed with a purpose of better understanding the internal processes involved with the development of LSE, and the ways in which multiple identities may influence these processes (Bowleg, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Dugan, Kusel et al., 2012; Jones & Abes, 2013). Social constructivism is the philosophical approach with which I most closely relate, because I believe that multiple perspectives and unique experiences exist, and that research is not a values-free process (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Layered with this constructivist approach I have also employed a feminist lens to center the experiences of women, and critically examine the influences of oppression related to sex and gender (Allan, 2011; Errington Nicholson & Pasque, 2011; hooks, 2000).

Grounded theory methodology was chosen for this study because the approach is suitable for studying topics on which little research has been conducted, and because it can be used to center the experiences of people and communities that have been marginalized (Birks & Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2013). In addition, this



methodology is designed to result in the creation of a grounded theory that can be applied in practice (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), which I appreciate as an educator. Grounded theory methodology is characterized by memo-writing during the concurrent processes of data collection and analysis, the use of the constant comparative method of analysis, and various levels of coding data that lead to the creation of a theory (Birks & Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Schwandt, 2007). The methods that were employed were semi-structured interviews.

This study was conducted at an urban Catholic university in the Midwest, with a population of approximately 15,000 students. Staff in student affairs and academic affairs, and faculty were asked to share a flyer with information about the study with women and female students who they believed to have high LSE. The flyers included my contact information with an invitation for students to call or email me if they were interested in participating in the study. As I was contacted by students, I then invited them to complete a consent form (which included detailed information about the study), and an online information form. Information from the form was used to ensure that the students invited to participate fit the criteria for the study (which was to identify as a woman or female and to have high LSE). I began by interviewing five students who met these criteria, and later invited additional participants based on a desire to learn more about the themes emerging from the data. Throughout the sampling process, I was cognizant of the diversity of identities that were represented, particularly in relation to race, and sexual orientation. I also attempted to invite participants with a variety of leadership experiences. As is often the case in grounded theory studies, I employed a

variety of sampling strategies, which included theoretical sampling, intensity sampling, and maximum variation sampling (Birks & Mills, 2011; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007; Mertens, 2005).

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I shared some of the reasons that I became personally and professionally interested in the topic of this study. I provided background information that informed the study, including evidence that supports the existence of a gender gap in LSE, and research findings that confirm the importance of LSE. I explained that this study has value because it addresses gaps in the literature, and because the research question is of critical importance.

This study has the potential to contribute to the literature, and more importantly, to inform practice in higher education. In doing so, long-term societal benefits can be realized as well. By better understanding how university students who identify as women or female develop LSE, educators will be able to enhance this process, thus affecting women and females both during and after college. If more women believe in their abilities as leaders, it will increase the likelihood that they will be more motivated to pursue leadership roles, better equipped to engage in leadership, and more likely to persist in their leadership efforts when faced with adversity. When women are equitably represented in leadership roles, organizations and institutions stand to benefit from the presence of a greater diversity of perspectives, which can enhance problem-solving. As a result, as a society, we will be able to more effectively address the complex challenges that face our world.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The previous chapter articulated the importance of understanding how LSE develops in women and female undergraduate students, and the value of considering the potential influence of multiple identities on this process. In this chapter, I review relevant literature that informed the approach I used for data collection. Although grounded theory researchers are expected to allow a theory to emerge from the data without being biased by existing literature, the idea of conducting a study without being somewhat familiar with literature related to the research question(s) would be unrealistic and irresponsible (Birks & Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Therefore, sufficient literature was reviewed to give a foundational understanding of the concepts that were explored in the study.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (1977) served as a framework to organize the main concepts from relevant bodies of literature that informed this study. I will describe this model in further detail in a later section, and give a rationale for selecting it to frame this literature review. Prior to using this model to guide a thematic analysis of the literature, I will describe key areas of interest for this study, which include general self-efficacy, LSE, sources that inform efficacy beliefs, and benefits associated with the development of LSE (Bandura, 1997). Then, using the systems in Bronfenbrenner's (1977) model to organize the information, I will describe various

barriers that may constrain women's LSE. I will consider the ways in which multiple identities may influence these processes. I will conclude this chapter with a description of collegiate experiences and interventions that have been found to contribute to the development of LSE for women students.

### **Self-Efficacy and Associated Benefits**

Self-efficacy is one of the most important constructs within the framework of social cognitive theories, which are concerned with human agency (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy refers to internal beliefs regarding one's capacity to take action to successfully produce specific outcomes (Bandura, 1997, 2001). Although the terms are often used interchangeably, "self-efficacy" is considered to be a more precise term than "confidence," and the term "self-efficacy" is more commonly used in literature that is relevant to this study (Hannah, Avolio, Luthans, & Harms, 2008). Bandura (1997) clarified the distinction by stating that:

the construct of self-efficacy differs from the colloquial term "confidence." Confidence is a nondescript term that refers to strength of belief but does not necessarily specify what the certainty is about. I can be supremely confident that I will fail at an endeavor. Perceived self-efficacy refers to belief in one's agentic capabilities, that one can produce given levels of attainment. A self-efficacy assessment, therefore, includes both an affirmation of a capability level and the strength of that belief. (p. 382)

McCormick et al. (2002) described another way in which the concepts differ when they explained that confidence is often considered to be a fairly fixed trait, while self-efficacy beliefs are bound to change because they are related to specific capabilities.

Self-efficacy is also distinct from self-esteem, which is related to feelings of self-worth. However, the constructs tend to be related because people often develop their

abilities in activities that contribute positively to their self-esteem (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is also different from self-concept, which represents a comprehensive view of self that is based on experience and the evaluations of others (Bandura, 1997). While self-concept has been speculated to reflect generalized impressions of personal attributes and talents, self-efficacy is more closely tied to beliefs related to specific skill sets (Hannah et al., 2008). Self-efficacy has such a strong influence on behavior that “self-concept loses most, if not all, of its predictiveness when the influence of perceived efficacy is factored out” (Bandura, 1997, p. 11).

There are many benefits associated with self-efficacy. When individuals have high self-efficacy within specific areas, they are more motivated to pursue related activities, to set high expectations for themselves when engaging in certain tasks, and to persevere in their efforts despite encountering adverse circumstances (Bandura, 1997, 2001; Bandura & Locke, 2003). It is not surprising that self-efficacy is positively associated with ongoing personal development, given its relationship with adaptive thought patterns such as approaching challenges with a problem-solving mindset and attributing failure to factors that can be overcome (Bandura, 1997, 2001; Bandura & Locke, 2003; Black & Earnest, 2009). In addition to enhancing performance outcomes, self-efficacy helps individuals effectively cope with stress and reduces vulnerability to depression (Bandura, 1997; Bandura & Locke, 2003; Jex & Bliese, 1999). It is likely because of the many benefits associated with self-efficacy that “the efficacy construct is perhaps one of the most validated constructs in the behavioral sciences” (Hannah et al., 2008, p. 20).

### **Leader Self-Efficacy and Associated Benefits**

Although the application of transferable knowledge or skills to the performance of various tasks can contribute to the development of general self-efficacy, efficacy beliefs are typically understood to be domain-specific and context-bound (Bandura, 1997). For example, one may have high math efficacy but poor efficacy for learning languages and both may be shaped by the academic environment that exists within a school (Bandura, 1997). LSE broadly refers to one's internal beliefs in one's ability to successfully engage in activities associated with leadership. As will later be explained, there is a lack of consensus on a definition of leadership in the literature, which has contributed to the existence of multiple descriptions of LSE (Dugan, 2011b; Komives & Dugan, 2010; Paglis, 2010; Rost, 1993). The works of Paglis and Green (2002), and Anderson et al. (2008) illustrate two of the various conceptualizations of LSE that exist. While Paglis and Green (2002) stated that LSE was an aggregate construct comprised of efficacy beliefs related to a number of different facets (e.g., setting direction for a group, gaining commitment from others, and overcoming obstacles), Anderson et al. (2008) identified 18 distinct elements of LSE (e.g., efficacy to relate with others, to serve as a mentor, and to communicate) and suggested that "there may be several discrete types of LSE beliefs that comprise the LSE construct domain" (p. 605). Paglis (2010) argued that the lack of a consistent definition of LSE is appropriate given the complexity of the construct, and that the definitional ambiguity does not restrict the potential of research constructed in this area. However, care must be taken to pay attention to the definitions of LSE that are given in each study and to raise critical questions when a definition is not given.

Researchers who have studied LSE have identified a number of benefits, one of the most important of which is that LSE increases the likelihood that people will enact leadership (McCormick et al., 2002; Paglis & Green, 2002). For example, within the higher education context, Shertzer and Schuh (2004) found that students' decisions to pursue campus leadership positions were largely driven by their perceptions of their capabilities as leaders. In addition, LSE is a strong, positive predictor of students' capacity for socially responsible leadership (Dugan & Komives, 2010), and it supports students in the process of developing identities as leaders (Komives et al., 2009).

### **LSE as a Function of the Definition of Leadership**

Because self-efficacy is tied to the performance of specific tasks within certain behavioral skill sets or disciplines, it is important to define the domain being studied (Paglis, 2010). LSE is a function of how leadership is defined as a construct. The leadership literature has both shaped and reflected societal assumptions about leadership for approximately 100 years (Dugan & Komives, 2011). Until the mid-1900s, much of the literature involved the study of traits that were believed to be characteristic of leaders, and then the focus shifted to an exploration of leadership behaviors that could be learned and employed (Dugan & Komives, 2011; Kezar et al., 2006; Komives & Dugan, 2010; Northouse, 2012).

The models and theories that are reflective of early studies of literature are considered part of the industrial paradigm of leadership (Dugan & Komives, 2011; Komives & Dugan, 2010; Rost, 1993). Although scholars began to recognize that leaders had to be responsive to the needs of "followers" and the situational context, the

leadership approaches described in the literature remained hierarchical, leader-centric, task-focused, and prescriptive in nature until the latter half of the 20th century (Dugan & Komives, 2011; Komives & Dugan, 2010; Rost, 1993). The subjects of much of the leadership research leading up to this time were predominately White, economically privileged, cisgender, heterosexual men who were considered to be leaders because of the powerful positions they held in society. As will be explained in more detail later, this is problematic because people who identified differently were not considered to be leaders in dominant narratives that were presented about leadership.

Influenced by globalization, the civil rights and feminist movements, and the emergence of research paradigms such as social constructivism, in the late 1970s scholars increasingly began to conceptualize leadership as a values-based, collaborative, and transformative process with a purpose to enact positive social change (Dugan & Komives, 2011; Kezar et al., 2006; Rost, 1993). Theories and models that depict leadership in this way are considered to be part of the post-industrial paradigm of leadership (Dugan & Komives, 2011; Kezar et al., 2006; Rost, 1993). James MacGregor Burns's (1978) book, *Leadership*, has been credited with playing an important role in describing this paradigm shift (Dugan & Komives, 2011). However, this "shift" in conceptualizing leadership can be said to have occurred only for those who controlled the dominant narrative; post-industrial leadership approaches were not new to women, collectivist communities, and people of color (Dugan, 2011b; Komives & Dugan, 2010).

Despite the evolution in leadership definitions that has occurred for some groups, industrial approaches remain influential, and there is a lack of clarity on the definition of



the term “leadership” (Dugan, 2011b; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Rost, 1993). In fact, a major critique that has been made of the leadership literature is that scholars often fail to define leadership, making it difficult to know whether the construct they studied was reflective of a post-industrial understanding of leadership, or of an industrial notion of leadership that might now be better defined as management (Carli & Eagly, 2007; Dugan, 2011b; Rost, 1993). In addition, researchers often use the terms “management” and “leadership” interchangeably despite the fact that they are distinct constructs (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Moss Kanter, 2010; Rost, 1993). Similarly, scholars sometimes do not differentiate between LSE and efficacy for management (Hannah et al., 2008). While management is associated with task-oriented approaches designed to enhance efficiency in maintained systems, leadership refers to process-oriented efforts focused on development and change (Astin & Astin, 2000; Dugan, in press).

For the purpose of this literature review, leadership is defined “as a purposeful, collaborative, values-based process that results in positive social change” (Cilente, 2009, p. 50). This definition is congruent with the post-industrial approach, which is also characterized by a consideration of contextual influences, a recognition of the mutual development of all members of a leadership process, and an understanding of the complexity of the issues that leaders often face (Astin & Astin, 2000; Dugan & Komives, 2011; Kezar et al., 2006; Komives & Wagner, 2009). This conceptualization of leadership is frequently employed in academic and co-curricular leadership programs in colleges and universities (Owen, 2012), which makes it relevant to this study.

### **Differentiation Between Leader Self-Efficacy and Leadership Self-Efficacy**

Post-industrial leadership definitions depict leadership as a group process in which individuals participate. Therefore, it is important to study individuals' efficacy beliefs related to their competence as leaders (which is often tied to holding specific leadership roles) as well as their assessments of their abilities to contribute to leadership processes with others (Hannah et al., 2008). Unfortunately, there is a dearth of research on leader self-efficacy, and even less research on leadership self-efficacy (Hannah et al., 2008). In addition, there is a need for more research exploring the relationship between the two concepts (Day & Halpin, 2004; Hannah et al., 2008).

### **Differentiation Between Individual Self-Efficacy and Collective Efficacy**

A distinction must be made between individual LSE (as described in the previous section), and collective efficacy, which refers to beliefs in a group's ability to achieve their goals (Day & Halpin, 2004; Hannah et al., 2008). Efficacy beliefs operate in similar ways to affect both personal and collective agency (Bandura, 2000). However, although collective efficacy is built through group interaction, it exists in the minds of individuals who are part of a group (Bandura, 2000).

Among the factors that influence an individual's overall sense of efficacy for a task are internal resources such as knowledge, skills, and experience (Bandura, 2000, 2001). Because efficacy beliefs are also affected by access to external means such as resources, collaborative colleagues, and supportive structures, individual LSE may be influenced by the LSE of colleagues, and there is a reciprocal relationship between the personal efficacy of individuals and the collective efficacy of the groups in which they

function (Bandura, 2000; 2001; Ganz, 2010; Hannah et al., 2008). Collective efficacy may affect individuals because it has been found to moderate the effects of strain due to heavy workloads, and it is associated with greater job satisfaction (Jex & Bliese, 1999).

Although both collective and individual efficacy are important in leadership development and enactment, and there is a need to better understand the relationship between the constructs in theory and in practice (Bandura, 2000; Day & Halpin, 2004; Hannah et al., 2008; Komives & Dugan, 2010; Rost, 1993), this literature review focuses primarily on individual LSE. Unless otherwise noted, in this literature review, LSE refers to individual leader self-efficacy. I made this decision largely because individual LSE is considered to be a foundational element that fosters collective leadership (Day & Halpin, 2004; Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011). In addition, the limited availability of research on collective efficacy (Hannah et al., 2008) prohibits a greater focus on this construct in the literature review.

#### **Four Sources of Efficacy**

Little has been published on how to support the development of leader efficacy beliefs (Hannah et al., 2008). However, future research in this area can be grounded in the work of Bandura (1997), who identified four key factors that inform individuals' perceptions of their self-efficacy regardless of the specific domain (e.g., leadership efficacy, writing efficacy, public speaking efficacy): (a) personal experiences that allow people to master and assess their abilities; (b) vicarious experiences that give people opportunities to learn from (and compare themselves to) others; (c) affirmation and verbal persuasion from others related to their abilities; as well as (d) emotional and

physiological cues that influence internal perceptions of competence. I describe these general sources of efficacy information in the following section.

### **Mastery Experiences**

Most influential of the sources of efficacy information are experiences that allow people to practice, and then master, tasks related to goal achievement (Bandura, 1997). As people gain experience, they build cognitive scripts that allow them to monitor interactions differently, which enables them to process leadership challenges at a deeper level (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2012; Lord & Hall, 2005). As tasks become easier and people become more successful, LSE tends to increase. Experiences such as engaging in socio-cultural conversations with peers (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kodama & Dugan, 2013) and involvement in student organizations (Astin, 1993; Dugan & Komives, 2007) provide students with opportunities to practice various skill sets, and are positively associated with LSE. More information about these and other collegiate experiences will be shared later in the literature review.

### **Vicarious Experience**

People also evaluate their abilities by comparing their performance with that of others (Bandura, 1997; Lord & Hall, 2005). Vicarious experiences are likely to result in increased self-efficacy when people witness the successful completion of tasks by models with whom they can relate (Bandura, 1997; Brown & Innouye, 1978). Similarly, observations of such models failing to complete their goals despite making sincere efforts are likely to result in reduced self-efficacy for the observer (Brown & Innouye, 1978). When people watch confident models, they are more likely to persevere at the same task

and feel more capable of completing their goal than when they observe models who doubt themselves (Brown & Innouye, 1978; Zimmerman & Ringle, 1981). However, when models succeed at a task without seeming to have experienced any difficulty with it, observers may assume that the model is unusually talented. In situations like these, it is less likely that observers will relate with the model, and subsequently less likely that the vicarious experience will positively influence their self-efficacy for the task (Bandura, 1997). Similarly, when disproportionately few members of a group are seen as being successful in a performance domain, it can make it easier for those models to be dismissed as being atypical (Bandura, 1997).

When observers and models share attributes such as gender or race, it can increase the likelihood that the performance of the model will influence the observer's self-efficacy to achieve the same outcome (Bandura, 1997). The importance of an observer relating with the model will be revisited later in the literature review, when I write about the oppressive forces that have restricted the number of women (and particularly, women with multiple subordinate identities) in leadership roles from whom women can learn vicariously. Vicarious experience can be particularly critical in shaping efficacy beliefs for women, particularly in male-dominated environments (Bandura, 1997; Zeldin & Pajares, 2000), which makes the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles even more concerning.

### **Affirmation and Verbal Persuasion**

In addition to serving as models, people can inform the efficacy beliefs of others through offering direct feedback and affirmation (Bandura, 1997). Availability of

constructive feedback can minimize anxiety in uncertain circumstances, and it helps people persevere in challenging situations (DeRue & Wellman, 2009). Social affirmations of one's abilities can positively affect efficacy beliefs and encourage continued effort, particularly when the person giving feedback is perceived to have relevant expertise and credibility (Bandura, 1997; Lord & Hall, 2005). When positive feedback is not reflective of people's true capabilities, however, there is a risk that they will overestimate their level of competence and attempt tasks for which they are underprepared. This, in turn, could increase their chances of experiencing failure, and result in a subsequent loss in self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Ganz, 2010). Efficacy tends to increase when people are encouraged to engage in activities that will provide opportunities for growth with limited risk of failure, and when they are coached to evaluate themselves by focusing on improvement rather than purely measuring the outcomes of their efforts (Bandura, 1997; Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011). Later in this chapter, I will describe the importance of educators encouraging women to become involved in leadership activities and the value of providing positive affirmation to support the development of LSE for students.

### **Physiological and Emotional Cues**

In addition to providing affirmative messages, mentors (and other individuals) can support the growth of self-efficacy by helping people to make meaning of affective states in productive ways (Bandura, 1997). As I will explain later in the literature review, meaning-making is related with factors that are positively associated with the leadership development process, such as cognitive gains, and growth in self-awareness (Bandura,

1997; Komives et al., 2005; Owen, 2011; Wagner, 2011). Meaning-making is important because “it is not the sheer intensity of emotional and physical reactions that is important but rather how they are perceived and interpreted” (Bandura, 1997, p. 108). For example, if people interpret an increased heartbeat as an indication of anxiety, it could lead them to doubt their abilities to perform a task. In contrast, perceiving the same physical reaction as a sign of excitement may result in increased self-efficacy for the task. In addition, positive feelings that may be experienced after the successful completion of a task may reinforce efforts to engage in the task (Bandura, 1997).

Thus far, I have defined LSE as the beliefs people hold about their ability to act to successfully engage in leadership (Anderson et al., 2008; Paglis & Green, 2002), and I have noted some of the benefits associated with LSE, which include a greater likelihood that people will engage in leadership activities (McCormick et al, 2002; Paglis & Green, 2002), and that people have high leadership capacity (Dugan & Komives, 2010). I included a description of the four sources that inform efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997) in this chapter to demonstrate the various ways in which self-efficacy may be developed. These sources will be referenced again later in the literature review, given their relationship with specific collegiate experiences and interventions that appear to affect college students’ LSE.

### **A Conceptual Framework for Understanding the Literature**

Fostering efficacy is a complex process that is influenced by many different factors over the course of a lifetime, and this is particularly true for LSE (Bandura, 1997; Komives et al., 2005; Lord & Hall, 2005). Therefore, studying the development of LSE

requires the use of a comprehensive approach that considers a variety of potential influences. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems model describes nested systems that influence human development within multiple contexts over time, depicting a multifaceted way of organizing information about developmental processes. As such, it serves as the framework for this literature review, and as a conceptual framework for the study itself.

Bronfenbrenner (1977) proposed this model to challenge scholars to consider the limitations of research (particularly experimental research) that emphasizes rigor at the expense of relevance. Bronfenbrenner argued that the study of behavior was incomplete without considering the influences of formal and informal systems on human development, and the reciprocal effects of relationships that existed within those systems. The systems depicted in this model include (a) the macrosystem, which refers to societal ideologies and cultural beliefs (e.g., prototypes, stereotypes); (b) the exosystem, which encompasses structures and institutions that determine how immediate settings operate (e.g., educational systems, government agencies); and (c) the microsystem, which consists of individuals' interactions within immediate settings (e.g., school, workplace), as well as their experiences with roles (e.g., daughter, employee; Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). Bronfenbrenner's (1977) model also includes the mesosystem, which represents relationships among aspects of the microsystem. For example, an analysis at this level may focus on the interactions among the settings in which an individual is situated, such as school, the workplace, and the family. In this chapter, I excluded the mesosystem because this level of analysis was not



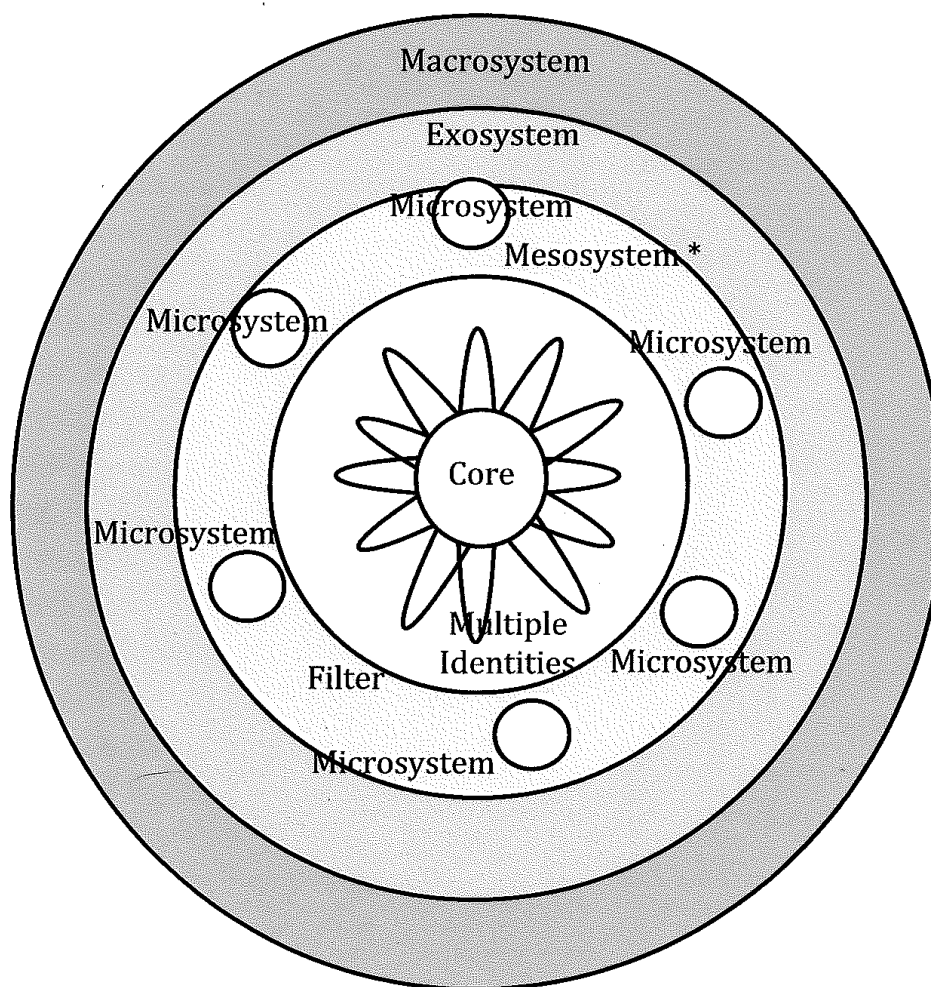
present in the literature that I reviewed.

The remaining sections of this chapter are organized according to the influences on LSE that exist at three levels of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems model. Within the macrosystem, influences include societal assumptions about leadership in the U.S., leader prototypes, and stereotypes related to gender and additional identities. At the structural level of the exosystem, I will consider how LSE is affected by the historical underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, the disproportionately low number of women serving as role models and mentors, and perceptions of institutional climate. The section on the microsystem will focus on collegiate experiences and roles that affect students' LSE. As the systems become closer to the individual at the center of the model, it is possible to concentrate on influences that more directly affect university women students. At each level, there is an additional influence of time, an element that Bronfenbrenner called the chronosystem (Evans et al., 2010). For example, within the microsystem, the influence of the chronosystem can be seen in the likelihood that long-term involvement with roles and organizations tends to have a greater impact on development than short-term involvement (Dugan & Komives, 2007). At the level of the macrosystem, the effects of the chronosystem can be seen as global events and evolving societal values that shape the contexts in which human development takes place (Evans et al., 2010).

The ecological systems model is an effective tool to use when organizing information about the developmental influences that surround the individual at various levels. However, on its own, the model is insufficient for conducting a full analysis of

literature about the development of LSE because it fails to consider the internal processes that influence LSE. Therefore, I will introduce the re-conceptualized model of multiple dimensions of identity (RMMDI; Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007) to frame this final level of analysis, which is focused on how individuals make meaning of the influence of broader systems on their identities, and their leadership development.

Although the RMMDI (Abes et al., 2007) focuses on many identities, and research should explore the influence of various identities on leadership development (Arminio et al., 2000; Dugan, 2011b; Komives et al., 2009), the scope of a literature review for a single study necessitates a more limited focus. Thus, although I made space for additional identities to emerge as being influential in the processes of data collection and analysis, the literature review for this study centers two identities (in addition to gender), both of which play major roles as organizing principles within U.S. society: race (Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Mills, 1999; Omi, & Winant, 1994; Taylor et al., 2009) and sexual orientation (Griffin et al., 2007; Lehavot & Lambert, 2007). Please see Figure 1 for a visual depiction of the RMMDI (Abes et al., 2007) at the center of a modified version of the ecological systems model that I used to frame this literature review (Evans et al., 2010).



\*Mesosystem not in Literature Review

Figure 1. Modified Version of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) Ecological Systems Model, which is blended with the RMMDI (Abes et al., 2007).

### **Macrosystem: The Influence of Societal Ideologies**

According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (1977), which was used to frame this literature review, the macrosystem is the most abstract, high-level system that influences human development. The macrosystem "refers not to the specific contexts affecting the life of a particular person but to general prototypes, existing in

the culture or subculture, that set the pattern for the structures and activities occurring at the concrete level” (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515; Evans et al., 2010). Despite the fact that people are not always consciously aware of the powerful ways in which cultural beliefs and ideologies operate, they can have a tremendous impact on people’s perceptions of themselves, others, and the world (Althusser, 1970; Bronfenbrenner, 1977). As illusions of reality that are maintained by those who hold power within systems, ideologies can influence behavior in significant ways, and they can reproduce inequities when accepted without question (Althusser, 1970).

Although there has been recent progress toward greater gender equity in leadership in the U.S., it must not be forgotten that leadership is a gendered process that operates in a societal context in which sexist and gendered oppression is persistent and pervasive (hooks, 2000; Yoder, 2001). In addition, because other forms of oppression, such as racism and heterosexism, are so strongly entrenched in societal beliefs and ideologies in the U.S., the leadership process is influenced by them as well (Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Griffin et al., 2007; Lehavot & Lambert, 2007; Mills, 1999; Omi, & Winant, 1994; Taylor et al., 2009).

### **Leader Prototypes and Stereotypes**

Societal beliefs that can affect the leadership development experiences of women may be informed by the leadership literature, and theoretical approaches to leadership. Although post-industrial leadership models have gained prominence, the industrial paradigm is still influential (Rost, 1993). Due to their emphasis on individual positional leaders, and their focus on simplistic, prescriptive approaches, industrial leadership

theories may help to reinforce leadership prototypes (Dugan, 2011b). Prototypes are cognitive schemas that influence people to associate a small set of typical behaviors and attributes with social categories, such as leaders (Hogg, 2001). Thus, people are more likely to follow individuals who closely match their implicit leadership theories, which reflect widely-held assumptions about leaders (Lord, De Vader, & Alliger, 1986).

Notions of prototypical leaders as White, middle- or upper-class, heterosexual, cisgender men remain a part of the dominant narrative in the U.S. (Dugan, 2011a; Dugan & Komives, 2011; McElowney, Bobrowski, & Gramberg, 2009; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010) making it more difficult for individuals who do not share these dominant identities to be perceived as leaders (Hogg, 2001; Hogg & Terry, 2000).

Similarly, gender role stereotypes influence the perceptions, expectations, and evaluations of leaders (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Yoder, 2001). Leadership is often associated with stereotypically masculine traits such as assertiveness, ambition, agency, and confidence (Carli & Eagly, 2007; Eagly, 2007; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). Because of these stereotypes, men are more likely than women to be given the benefit of the doubt as leaders, and they experience more freedom to practice leadership as they wish (Carli & Eagly, 2007). For example, when groups were given tasks to complete, men were more likely to be most influential when projects were both task-oriented and unspecified; women only emerged as leaders when projects were relational in nature (Eagly & Karau, 1991). This finding may be related to the fact that when differences have been found between the leadership styles of men and women, women were more likely to exhibit the relational and transformational leadership

approaches that are recommended by many leadership scholars; this appears to be the case both in the workplace (Carli & Eagly, 2007; Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Chin, 2010) and in student leadership roles on campus (Arminio et al., 2000; Romano, 1996).

Because stereotypically feminine characteristics such as warmth, helpfulness, diplomacy, and kindness are perceived to be incompatible with the industrial notions of leadership that are still influential (Rost, 1993), women leaders who display these traits tend to be evaluated negatively and are held to higher standards than men before they are considered to be competent as leaders (Carli & Eagly, 2007; Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). Women are not more emotional, indecisive, or irrational as leaders than men, although they are often evaluated as if they were (Astin & Leland, 1991). While women are often harshly judged when they conform to feminine stereotypes, they also face discrimination when they challenge gender stereotypes by demonstrating assertive and agentic traits that are often associated with leadership (and with men), which effectively places them in a “double bind” (Carli & Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; von Hippel et al., 2011; Yoder, 2001). This prejudice has been speculated to limit women’s access to leadership roles and to present obstacles to women who are in positions of leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007).

Scholars have also posited that “women may find it more difficult to develop self-views as leaders despite equivalent performance to men, because their leadership attempts may be less accepted” (Lord & Hall, 2005, p. 597). In addition, when people become fearful of confirming a negative stereotype about a group to which they belong,

this “stereotype threat” can result in people rating their abilities more harshly, underperforming, and being less confident that they will achieve their professional goals (Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007; Steele, 1997; von Hippel et al., 2011). Given that psychological and emotional states can inform efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997), it is not surprising that stereotype threat could lead to feelings of anxiety resulting in lower LSE. When collecting and analyzing data for this study, I was interested in finding out whether participants’ LSE had been influenced by stereotypes, and if so, what the impact had been.

**Discrimination and “double oppression.”** Operating in distinct ways but with some shared outcomes as gender stereotypes, racial stereotypes contribute to perceptions that people of color are less typical and less competent as leaders, which can result in harsher evaluations of their performance and may constrain the ways in which people of color enact leadership (Bandura, 1997; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Liang, Lee, & Ting, 2002; Rosette & Livingston, 2012). Reflective of an additive approach rather than an intersectional one, a number of scholars have used the terms “double oppression” or “double jeopardy” to refer to the racialized sexism that results in women of color being more vulnerable to stereotype threat (Sanchez-Hucles & Sanchez, 2007), needing to work twice as hard to be recognized (Vasquez & Comas-Diaz 2007), and experiencing additional challenges as leaders (Jean-Marie, Williams, & Sherman, 2009; Ospina & Foldy, 2009).

Women who are lesbians also face challenges such as a unique double bind. As explained by Fassinger et al. (2010), there exists a stereotype that a lesbian “cannot be

viewed as a ‘real’ woman, but as a woman, she cannot be viewed as a ‘real’ leader” (p. 210). In addition, due to the lack of a national anti-discrimination policy and additional inequities that results from heterosexual privilege, the visibility of lesbians in leadership roles “makes them vulnerable even if their sexual orientation is unknown” (Baker & Greene, 2007, p. 4). Due to the level of heterosexism in U.S. society, it can be argued that anyone who does not identify as heterosexual within the spectrum of sexual identities may experience similar vulnerability.

As a result of experiencing various forms of discrimination, women, people of color, and members of the LGBT community may feel pressured to conform to leadership styles associated with dominant cultural norms, and they may be less likely to be perceived as leaders by themselves or others (Allan, 2011; Arminio et al., 2000; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Jourian, 2014). Facing these stereotypes and threats related to their identities could negatively influence LSE. Therefore, better understanding what contributes to the development of LSE for people with one or more of these marginalized identities may be particularly important.

### **The Influence of Societal Ideologies on Women and Female Students**

As previously stated, multiple factors influence all aspects of the leadership development process over the course of an individual’s lifetime. Students typically come to institutions of higher education with certain perspectives related to leadership, which have been cultivated by a variety of people, events, and experiences throughout their lives (Arminio et al., 2000; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Heifetz, 2010; Komives et al., 2005). As university students, they continue to be shaped as leaders by experiences both



within and outside of the collegiate environment (Dugan et al., 2008; Dugan & Komives, 2007, 2010). Evidence that students have been influenced by industrial approaches to leadership can be found in students' tendencies to enter university defining leadership in positional, trait-based, and task-oriented ways that are consistent with this paradigm (Komives et al., 2005).

The industrial paradigm also tends to depict leaders as being prototypically male, and often associates stereotypically masculine characteristics with leaders (Dugan & Komives, 2011). Gender stereotypes related to leadership are so powerful that the more women students "considered themselves as fitting in with the traditional feminine gender stereotype, the less likely they were to report leadership aspirations" (Boatwright & Egidio, 2003, p. 661; Romano, 1996). Student leaders who are women of color appear to experience "double jeopardy" and have explicitly talked about feeling as if they have "two strikes against them" because they must navigate stereotypes related to both gender and race (Arminio et al., 2000, p. 504). Although heterosexual college students do not differ in LSE from students who identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB; Martinez, Ostick, Komives, & Dugan, 2007), "LGB students' levels of participation in the collegiate environment were relatively low" (Dugan & Yurman, 2011, p. 209). Among LGB students, women were less involved with campus organizations and held fewer positional leadership roles than men (Dugan & Yurman, 2011). Thus, it appears that women and females in the LGB community may also experience "double jeopardy."

A somewhat related critique of the relatively large body of literature on women and leadership is that the vast majority of these studies portray gender as a dichotomized

variable rather than recognizing gender as a complex, and multidimensional social construct (Ayman & Koarabik, 2010; Gentile, 1993; Person, 2005). Although only two articles were found that explored the experiences of transgender students, both noted the potential impact of gender stereotypes on leadership development. One article posed questions regarding the potential influence of a binary construction of gender on perceptions of transgender individuals as authentic leaders (Jourian, 2014). The other was a research study with interesting results. Dugan, Kusel et al. (2012) found that, within a population of transgender students, male to female (MtF) transgender students reported holding fewer leadership positions, comparatively lower leadership capacity, and lower LSE than female to male (FtM) students. Possible explanations for these findings were that MtF transgender students were conforming to socially imposed gender role stereotypes or that they were influenced by the structural and psychological barriers that often affect women pursuing leadership roles (Dugan, Kusel et al., 2012).

Fortunately, LSE appears to mediate the negative effects associated with gender-based stereotype threat, and particularly with stereotype activation related to the male leader prototype (Hoyt, 2005). After receiving messages that reinforced gender stereotypes, and then performing tasks, women university students with high LSE “perceive they perform better, are rated as performing better, become more identified with the domain of leadership, and have greater psychological well-being” (Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007, p. 611) than women with lower LSE. Therefore, the need for educators to focus on the development of LSE is supported both by the role that LSE plays in countering gender stereotypes as well as its contribution to the development of an identity

as a leader (Komives et al., 2009).

### **Exosystem: The Influence of Institutions and Systems**

Affecting human development in more direct ways than the ideologies and beliefs of the macrosystem are the institutions that represent the exosystem in the ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Evans et al., 2010). These formal and informal social structures operate primarily by actively reinforcing ideologies with the use of elements of repression to reproduce patterns of behavior in daily life that perpetuate forms of inequity (Althusser, 1970). Althusser used the term Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) to describe these institutions, which include religion, education, the family, the legal and political systems, communication, and cultural institutions. These systems function in concrete and covert ways to prevent women from achieving their full potential and from receiving the societal rights to which they are entitled (Errington Nicholson & Pasque, 2011; hooks, 2000; Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011).

### **Underrepresentation of Women in Professional Leadership Roles**

Women have historically been underrepresented in positional leadership roles in many fields and contexts (Dominici et al., 2009; Hoyt, 2010; Kark & Eagly, 2010; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; von Hippel et al., 2011), which may “serve as a chronic reminder of the stereotype that women are undervalued in the leadership domain” (von Hippel et al., 2011, p. 1321). Although feminist scholars have noted that the underrepresentation of women leaders may be due in part to narrowly defining leadership in positional terms (Astin & Leland, 1991), research based on this definition still provides valuable insights. Today, even when women occupy close to half

of the positions within a certain system or organization, they still tend to hold disproportionately low numbers of the top leadership roles, and they are especially underrepresented in fields associated with the greatest power, prestige, and financial rewards (Carli & Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007).

While people of color have also been under-represented in leadership roles, women of color have been disproportionately underrepresented relative to White women and men of color (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Due to the paucity of research on leadership and sexual orientation (Fassinger et al., 2010), it is difficult to know whether lesbians, pansexual, bisexual, and asexual women are underrepresented in leadership roles. However, already underrepresented as women, it may appear that there are even fewer lesbians in leadership roles than is actually the case given that fear of discrimination may prevent some people from disclosing their sexual orientation (Baker & Greene, 2007). If this is the case, perceptions of the availability of lesbian, pansexual, bisexual, and asexual women who can serve as leadership role models and mentors would be affected.

### **Role Models and Mentoring**

There are a number of reasons to be concerned about the shortage of women in certain fields and the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles. People are influenced by the ratio of men and women in an organization, and the ways in which leadership roles are understood (Eagly & Karau, 2002). When there are disproportionately more men in an organization and when contexts reinforce

stereotypically masculine behaviors, the salience of gender intensifies and the pressures to conform to gender role stereotypes are typically greater (Eagly & Carli 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Yoder, 2001). When fewer female role models exist within a field or organization, it limits women's opportunities to develop efficacy beliefs based on vicarious experience observing leaders with whom they can relate (Bandura, 1997), and it can be more difficult for women to perceive themselves as leaders (Steele, 1997).

A disproportionately lower number of women in leadership roles can also present problems when it comes to mentoring, which has been said to play a crucial role in developing leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Although women with limited access to female mentors may be advised to network with men, when men are uncomfortable filling the mentoring gap or when they are biased in favor of male protégés, women tend to be disproportionately excluded from mentoring and professional networks (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). This may also result in women missing out on opportunities to engage in direct experiences that build LSE if mentors who are partial to male mentees are not offering equal access to these special assignments.

Given that “the most effective mentoring relationships typically arise naturally among individuals who share important similarities, such as sex, race, ethnicity, background, and interests” (Rhode & Kellerman, 2007, p. 22) and that men hold relatively more leadership roles, women of color are more likely than White women or men of color to be excluded from professional mentoring and networks (Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Sanchez-Hucles & Sanchez,

2007). No research was found that examined women's mentoring experiences as they relate to sexual orientation.

### **The Influence of Institutions and Systems on Women Students**

Although students may be affected by the leadership experiences of professional women, it is also important to consider the role that the collegiate environment plays in their development. After all, student development is shaped both by external factors such as societal events, socio-cultural conditions (which include various forms of systemic oppression), as well as by students' perceptions of the campus climate (Chang et al., 2010; Jones & Abes, 2013). Of all of the ISAs, Althusser (1970) stated that education was the most dominant because of the amount of time individuals spend within educational institutions over the course of a lifetime and because of the degree to which education can directly and indirectly influence financial, occupational, and additional aspects of one's life.

Campus climate can be influenced by a number of dimensions, including: (a) the historical legacy of exclusion of the institution; (b) the compositional diversity of an institution's student population; (c) the psychological climate, which is based on students' perceptions of psychological safety and inclusion; and (d) the behavioral climate, which refers to the nature of intergroup relations and social interactions (Chang et al., 2010; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999). The next section of this literature review will focus on the ways in which some of these dimensions may influence the development of LSE for women students.

**Historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion.** In the field of higher education, institutions that were created by and for men still operate in ways that reflect the dominant, patriarchal culture (Allan, 2011; Kinzie et al., 2007; Yakaboski, 2011). In the past, women did not have access to attend universities, effectively preventing them from having the credentials to be considered to hold formal positions of leadership in many professional fields (Allan, 2011; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Pearson, Shavlik, & Touchton, 1989; Yakaboski, 2011). It took years of activism and the enactment of a number of laws since the 1960s to increase women's access to attend colleges and universities (Allan, 2011; Pearson et al., 1989). There is a history of exclusion for students of color as well (Hurtado et al., 1999). However, because the resistance to students of color gaining increased access to higher education was qualitatively different than the resistance experienced when (White) women gained access, the impact of this historical legacy cannot be assumed to be the same.

Within higher education today, inequity remains. Women are underrepresented in senior administrative and faculty positions (Allan 2011; Kinzie et al., 2007). Although there are relatively more female faculty members now than in the past, women faculty remain underrepresented in more prestigious institutions (such as research intensive universities and selective enrollment liberal arts colleges), and women are overrepresented in lower-paying, less secure roles such as non-tenure track and part-time faculty positions (Allan, 2011; Harper, Baldwin, Gansneder, & Chronister, 2001). One can argue that the lack of gender parity in leadership positions within higher education may result in women students questioning the likelihood that they will hold a similar

position in their chosen career field in the future, which could negatively affect their LSE.

For women students with additional identities that are associated with underrepresentation in leadership roles (i.e., women of color), the impact may be even greater. Faculty members of color are underrepresented relative to White faculty members (Follins, Paler, & Nanin, 2015; Hurtado et al., 1999; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999). Women of color are a particularly small group among faculty within the U.S., particularly among the higher academic ranks, and especially in prestigious and financially lucrative disciplines such as computer science, engineering, and physical sciences (Ford, 2011; Johnson, 2011; Perna, 2001).

LGB faculty are also underrepresented in higher education (LaSala, Jenkins, Wheeler, & Fredriksen-Goldsen, 2008). Scholars have articulated a need to recruit and retain more LGB faculty because students benefit from interacting with faculty who are diverse in terms of sexual orientation, and because LGB students would have additional LGB role models on campus (Follins et al., 2015; Orlov & Allen, 2014; Rankin, 2003). It is likely that LGB faculty are perceived to be fewer in number than actually may be the case because it is not uncommon for LGB faculty to refrain from sharing their sexual orientation due to fear of discrimination (Orlov & Allen, 2014; Rankin, 2003). Approximately three quarters of LGB faculty, staff, and students have rated their campuses as homophobic environments in which they experience harassment, and the fear of discrimination can limit their ability to fully participate in the academic community (Rankin, 2003, p. 12). Facing heterosexism as well as sexism prevents unique challenges for lesbian and bisexual women (LaSala et al., 2008; Rankin, 2003).



**Compositional diversity.** Although gender inequity persists in higher education (Allan, 2011; Kinzie et al., 2007; Sax, 2008), it has not prevented women students from being successful academically. Women students now outnumber men in terms of undergraduate enrollment, earn higher grade point averages, and have higher graduation rates than men (Allan, 2011; Kinzie et al., 2007; Sax, 2008; Wells, Seifert, Padgett, & Park, 2011). The educational attainment of women of all races (particularly women of color) is growing at a faster pace than that of men (King, 2006; King, 2011; Yakaboski, 2011). Despite concerns about the status of men in higher education that have resulted in calls for affirmative action for men, and in women being held to higher admissions standards than men (Allan, 2011; Yakaboski, 2011), relative to the proportion of White men in the national population “the percentage of all White men in the United States with a bachelor’s degree has increased” (King, 2006, p. 17). Therefore, the gender gap in enrollment and graduation rates can be attributed to higher education’s failure to successfully recruit and retain male students of color, rather than to women’s success coming at the expense of men.

The narrative about the success of women college students becomes more complex when one considers that women account for a higher proportion of students with lower-incomes (Allan, 2011), and students who are older than traditionally-aged college students (King, 2006). Although there are currently more women enrolled in higher education than men, because of their multiple identities, women students may still experience marginalization as members of groups such as students of color, and LGB students (Allan, 2011; Hurtado et al., 1999; Rankin, 2005; Tomlinson & Fassinger,

2003). Therefore, despite the statistics that indicate that women are achieving academic success overall, research on the experiences of women in higher education remains important, particularly when studies consider how students' multiple identities may shape their experiences in unique ways.

**Psychological climate.** Within higher education, certain contexts may be perceived to be especially hostile by women, including those associated with science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines (Allen, 2011; Alpay, Hari, Kambouri, & Alhearn, 2010; Fox, Sonnert, & Nikofova, 2009; Hill, Corbett, & St. Rose, 2010). Although women STEM majors enter college with the same level of academic capacity as their male peers (Hill et al., 2010; Zeldin, Britner, & Pajares, 2008), their academic efficacy decreases sharply in their first year, resulting in the departure of many women students from STEM majors (Brainard & Carlin, 1998; Micari, Pazos, & Hartmann, 2007; Seymour & Hewitt, 1997). In addition, the proportion of women faculty members is especially low in STEM fields, and the limited number of female mentors has been linked with women students in STEM having lower academic and career aspirations (Alpay et al., 2010; Hill et al., 2010; Rosser, 2012). All of these factors may help to explain why female STEM majors had lower LSE than their female peers in other majors (Dugan, Fath et al., 2013). Although there is a dearth of literature on women of color in STEM, scholars have found that women of color experience a chilly climate in STEM environments, and that women of color are underrepresented both as students and faculty members in these disciplines (Espinosa, 2011; Malcolm & Malcolm, 2011). No literature could be found on the experiences of LGBT students in STEM.

On college campuses, students of color, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students experience feelings of marginalization that threaten their psychological and physical safety and can prevent them “from achieving their full academic potential or participating fully in campus communities” (Rankin, 2005, p. 17; Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, & Tubbs, 2005; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado et al., 1999; Tomlinson & Fassinger, 2003). Multiracial, biracial, bisexual, and pansexual students also experience marginalization on campus and have unique needs to consider in terms of helping them feel a greater sense of belonging on campus (King, 2011). Unfortunately, although it is known that context plays an important role in the processes of leadership development and enactment (Holvino, 2010), few studies have explicitly explored the influence of context on the leadership experiences of diverse student populations (Guthrie et al., 2013). This is an area in which more research is needed.

### **Microsystem: The Influence of Experiences with Roles and Organizations**

Although there are various contexts within higher education that may constrain women’s leadership development, fortunately, there are also aspects that can enhance it. Among factors that contribute to leadership development are elements of campus climate that operate at the level of the microsystem, such as individual experiences with roles, organizations, and curricular and co-curricular experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Chang et al., 2010; Evans et al., 2010). A number of these experiences in the collegiate environment are described in the next section.

As beneficial as these experiences may be, however, simple prescriptions for individual interventions or behavioral changes have the potential to result in women

being blamed (and blaming themselves) for gender disparities in leadership, and they tend to offer little to no advice related to facing discrimination (Allan, 2011; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Yoder, 2001). When complemented by change at broader levels, however, “individual-focused potentialities offer women opportunities for self-determination and power enhancement as they work to ameliorate their context” (Yoder, 2001, p. 819). Addressing pervasive and persistent gender inequities requires comprehensive approaches that include systemic and institutional change as well as the empowerment of women at the level of the individual (Allan, 2011; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Yoder, 2001). Therefore, the impact of roles and organizations is valuable to consider.

### **The Influence of Experiences with Roles and Organizations on Women Students**

Despite the fact that quantitative data from a national study has shown there was significant, positive change between students’ LSE prior to college and their LSE in senior year, educators should not assume that students will naturally experience growth in LSE merely by being exposed to the collegiate context (Dugan & Komives, 2007). Although this section of the literature review will focus on experiences within the collegiate environment that can contribute to the development of LSE, students’ LSE may be also influenced by experiences off-campus. For example, engaging in community service has been positively associated with LSE for women (Dugan, Fath et al., 2013; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000) and for students of all genders who identified as African American/Black, Asian Pacific American, and multiracial (Kodama & Dugan, 2013). Positional leadership experiences in off-campus organizations positively predicted LSE

for White students, and membership in these groups predicted LSE for Latino students (Kodama & Dugan, 2013). Some off-campus experiences had negative relationships with LSE, such as employment off-campus during college for Latino and multiracial students (Kodama & Dugan, 2013).

In the collegiate environment, there are a number of experiences that have been positively associated with LSE, which include engaging in socio-cultural conversations (Dugan et al., 2008; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kodama & Dugan, 2013) and involvement with student organizations (Astin, 1993; Dugan & Komives, 2007). The potential that mentoring relationships have to affect LSE will also be discussed (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kodama & Dugan, 2013). Because leadership development processes vary for different student groups (Dugan, Kodama, & Gebhardt, 2012; Guthrie et al., 2013; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Kodama & Dugan, 2013; Munin & Dugan, 2011), research findings based on disaggregated data will be shared in the following sections whenever possible.

### **Socio-cultural Conversations**

Socio-cultural conversations include discussions about social issues and perspectives on multiculturalism as well as discussions with people who have different values, political views, or religious beliefs than one's own (Dugan & Komives, 2007). Engaging in socio-cultural conversations with peers is a high-impact practice that has strong, positive relationships with LSE, both for students in general (Dugan et al., 2008; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kodama & Dugan, 2013) and specifically for women students (Dugan, Fath et al., 2013). In addition, social relationships and conversations across difference are positively associated with: (a) the degree to which students value efforts to

enact social change (Astin, 1993; Sax, 2008); (b) cognitive shifts that support students' identity development as relational leaders (Komives et al., 2005); and (c) with LSE for women students (Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Sax, 2008). Researchers found that engaging in socio-cultural conversations more strongly predicted students' LSE than any other environmental factor that was measured (Dugan & Komives, 2007).

Because of the associated benefits, scholars have recommended that socio-cultural conversations “should be consistently integrated into leadership development programs” (Dugan, Kodama et al., 2013, p. 8). After reviewing exemplary programs that support the development of leader capacity and identity for diverse student populations, Guthrie et al. (2013) recommended that all students should be provided with opportunities to explore multiple identities, to learn about systems of power and privilege, and engage in reflection. Because these conversations can also be infused throughout the collegiate environment, they have the potential to address the goal of positively influencing leadership development for students in the broader student population, not all of whom will participate in formal leadership development programs (CAS, 2009; Dugan & Komives, 2007). For example, because commuters' schedules may prevent them from regularly engaging in formal leadership programs, finding other ways for them to participate in socio-cultural conversations would be beneficial, given that engaging in these conversations has a strong, positive relationship with LSE for commuter students (Dugan, Garland et al., 2008).

The positive influences of engaging in socio-cultural conversations with peers “span all racial groups, not just for those of privilege for whom exposure to differences

may afford unique learning opportunities” (Kodama & Dugan, 2012, p. 190; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012). For example, Kezar and Moriarty (2000) found that “socializing with someone of another racial or ethnic group” (p. 61) positively predicted self-ratings of leadership ability both for White women students as well for African-American women students. Therefore, there is value in finding ways to involve all students in these conversations.

### **Student Organizations**

Like engaging in socio-cultural conversations, active participation in student organizations has been found to be positively associated with students’ beliefs in their leadership abilities (Astin, 1993; Dugan & Komives, 2007), an orientation toward social activism (Sax, 2008), and the development of an identity as a leader (Komives et al., 2005). Although students may initially decide to join student organizations to make friends, or because they were encouraged to join by older peers, they later tend to realize additional benefits, such as the development of skills and access to role models (Komives et al., 2005; Romano, 1996). Demonstrating the power of mastery experiences (Bandura, 1997), initial involvement has been speculated to lead to further involvement, due to a reciprocal relationship between increased experience in campus leadership roles and a greater level of belief in one’s ability to engage in such opportunities (McCormick et al., 2002). Thus, it is not surprising that students with high LSE are more likely than students with low LSE to have held multiple leadership positions by the time they graduate (McCormick et al., 2002).

Within the category of student organizations, involvement with student

government has been specifically recognized as being positively associated with women's LSE (Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Romano, 1996; Sax, 2008). When data were disaggregated by race, this was found to be true both for White and African American women students (Kezar & Moriarty, 2000). Unfortunately, within this prestigious organization that gives students access to high-level administrators, and the power to speak and act on behalf of the general student population, there is a gender discrepancy in the top leadership positions (Astin, 1993; Miller & Kraus, 2004). For example, researchers conducting a study at 21 Midwest institutions found that women held almost 48% of the positions on student government, but less than 30% of the presidential and vice-presidential positions (Miller & Kraus, 2004). It is unfortunate that more current data are not available and that so little research on co-curricular involvement (other than that focused on athletics) considers students' gender (Allan, 2011).

In addition to serving as members of campus organizations, holding leadership positions in student groups is positively associated with LSE (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Dugan et al., 2008). Although holding positional leadership roles in student organizations is positively related with LSE for men and women, it has more predictive power for women (Dugan & Komives, 2007). When data were disaggregated by race, Kodama and Dugan (2013) found that holding leadership positions within student organizations positively predicted LSE for students who identified as African American/Black, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Latino, Multiracial, and White.

Literature on leadership development for LGB students is even less prevalent than that on leadership development for students of color, and scholars typically collapse all



LGB students in one category even though their experiences may differ (Dugan, Komives, & Segar, 2008; Dugan & Yurman 2011). Scholars have found that for LGB students, involvement with student organizations was positively associated with racial identity development, claiming an identity as a leader, and “developing a sense of confidence that comes from being open about their LGB identities while participating in leadership” (Renn, 2007; Renn & Bilodeau 2005, p. 354). Unfortunately, LGB students have been found to participate in clubs and organizations at only moderate levels, with female students in this population being less involved than their male peers, and holding few positional leadership roles (Dugan & Yurman 2011). Interestingly, unlike studies involving the general student population that have shown women to have lower LSE in comparison with men students, no difference in LSE was found based on gender among LGB students (Dugan & Yurman 2011).

**Student organizations as inclusive spaces.** Depending on their developmental needs (Kodama & Dugan, 2013), students may benefit from having a balance of depth and breadth of involvement that provides them with opportunities to connect with students from whom they are different as well as with peers with shared identities (Arminio et al., 2000; Guthrie et al., 2013; Owen Casper, 2004). Because students with one or more marginalized identities may experience discomfort or hostility within the overall campus environment, they often create or join identity-based student organizations that affirm their identities, provide them with opportunities to practice leadership, and contribute to the development of their identities as leaders (Dugan, Kodama et al., 2012; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005; Renn & Ozaki,

2010). When they are effectively supported on campus, identity-based student organizations benefit their members while helping institutions to give more “attention to the cultural strengths that racial, ethnic, and other underrepresented groups bring to the overall collegiate environment” (St. John, Rowley, & Hu, 2009, p. 26). Ideally, this attention will also help to create more inclusive campus climates.

It is concerning that students of color have reported feeling marginalized in predominantly White student groups, and in particular, within those organizations that they perceive to be “ideal,” such as student government (Arminio et al., 2000). These groups may be perceived as ideal because they have greater access to prestige, money, and support than identity-based student organizations. If identity-based groups are less influential on campus and have insufficient access to resources, they are likely to have lower efficacy for means, which refers to efficacy that “results from perceptions of an enabling and supportive context” (Hannah et al., 2008, p. 9). This could affect the individual LSE and collective efficacy of members of these groups. Student affairs staff should validate all student groups by seeking their feedback, providing support, and working with students in all organizations to promote more inclusive experiences (St. John et al., 2009). In addition, staff should review the policies and practices of student groups to help achieve closer congruency with the post-industrial leadership values that are often espoused and that may be more affirming for women, students of color, and people with collectivist cultural values (Arminio et al., 2000; Dugan & Komives, 2011).

## **Mentoring Relationships**

In addition to ensuring that transformative learning experiences are welcoming and beneficial for all students, staff members should support growth in students' LSE by affirming students' efforts and helping them make meaning of their experiences (Bandura, 1997). Despite the fact that mentoring relationships with faculty and with student affairs staff have been positively associated with gains in leadership capacity within an aggregate national dataset, no relationships were found between mentorship from faculty or staff and LSE (Campbell, Smith, Dugan, & Komives, 2012; Dugan & Komives, 2007, 2010). These findings reinforce the argument that educators in higher education tend to focus on capacity building without attending enough to additional elements in the leadership development process, such as building LSE (Kodama & Dugan, 2013).

Although mentorship from student affairs educators was unrelated to LSE in the broader dataset, when data were disaggregated by race, such mentorship was positively related with LSE for African American/Black students (Kodama & Dugan, 2013). Not only does this show the importance of disaggregating data, but it also demonstrates the need to better understand the specific ways in which mentoring relationships might affect LSE for various student populations. It should also be recognized that mentorship from employers has a strong, positive relationship with LSE (Dugan, Garland et al., 2008; Dugan & Komives, 2007). Because it is unclear to whom students were referring when they indicated that they were mentored by an employer, it is possible that some of the employers were university faculty and staff supervisors for students in on-campus

employment roles. Regardless, this finding points to the potential that exists to help build students' LSE when staff and faculty serve in supervisory roles.

### **Encouragement to Participate in Experiences that Build LSE**

Whether or not they are serving in a formal mentorship role, educators have a responsibility to actively encourage students to connect with learning opportunities that have the potential to contribute to their leadership development. Consciously persuading students in this way and accurately affirming their abilities provide students with information that can have a positive impact on their efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997). To encourage the involvement of students who may not see themselves as leaders, educators may need to foster LSE as a precursor to students' participation in these activities (Anderson et al., 2008). Efforts should be made to reach students early in their college careers because "once people develop a mind-set about their efficacy in given situations, they act on their established self-beliefs without further reappraising their capabilities" (Bandura, 1997, p. 18).

This intentional outreach may be especially important for students who have had few to no previous experiences with leadership development activities. Students who choose to pursue on-campus leadership roles have typically been encouraged to become involved with co-curricular activities by adult family members, teachers, and coaches prior to starting college (Arminio et al., 2000; Heifetz, 2010; Komives et al., 2005). Pre-college experiences have a tremendous influence on outcomes related to students' leadership development, and they tend to increase the likelihood that students will pursue collegiate involvement opportunities (Antonio, 2001; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kezar &

Moriarty, 2000; Shertzer & Schuh, 2004). For example, Shertzer and Schuh found that students in leadership positions differed greatly from disengaged students in terms of the support and encouragement they had received related to their leadership capabilities while growing up, which positively influenced their LSE and led them to seek out leadership roles. They also were more likely than disengaged students to have had access to co-curricular experiences prior to university (Shertzer & Schuh, 2004).

If educators are not intentional in their outreach efforts, they risk providing programs for a small group of students who self-select into formal leadership programs and who may be least likely to benefit from them (Astin & Astin, 2000; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Shertzer & Schuh, 2004). To increase participation in transformative leadership development experiences, educators should use inclusive approaches so all students feel invited and affirmed, regardless of their past experiences with leadership activities (Arminio et al., 2000; CAS, 2009; Dugan, Rossetti Morosini et al., 2011; Guthrie et al., 2013; Liang et al., 2002; Shertzer & Schuh, 2004). Students who come to university without previous involvement in co-curricular activities (whether because of lack of encouragement, limited access to such opportunities, or both) may be unlikely to pursue campus involvement unless staff clearly communicate the benefits of involvement so students know it is worth their time (Dugan, Garland et al., 2008).

Studies that only focus on students who are already connected with campus activities and leadership roles miss opportunities to learn about the experiences of students who had have not been, or are not currently involved. Without knowledge about this population of students, there is a risk that educators will be unable to effectively meet

the needs of these students. I had hoped to interview a number of students who were not actively involved on-campus, but this goal was not achieved. Because the pool of potential participants only included one student with limited involvement experiences on-campus (who I did interview), future studies will have to address this gap in the literature.

### **Supporting Cognitive Processing in Students**

As influential as involvement opportunities and mentoring relationships can be, they may not contribute at all to the development of LSE unless people are also intentionally processing the experiences (Bandura, 1997). After encouraging students to get involved, educators should help them to reflect on their experiences, while framing them as opportunities for growth and emphasizing the importance of on-going development. The reason for this is that people benefit from having a learning orientation and high learning self-efficacy, which can foster beliefs in their abilities to learn new skills and motivate them to employ the effort to do so even in challenging situations (DeRue & Wellman, 2009; Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011; Schunk, 1996). People with a strong learning orientation are more likely to attribute failure in their practice of leadership to a temporary deficit in knowledge or skills, rather than to personal limitations that cannot be overcome (Hannah & Avolio, 2010).

Helping students to establish adaptive thought patterns, gain self-regulatory skills, and develop cognitive complexity enhances their ability to work effectively in different contexts while supporting their leadership development (Bandura, 1997; Komives et al., 2005; Lord & Hall, 2005; Owen, 2011; Wagner, 2011). There are two cognitive meta-competencies that support continuous learning, and both are crucial to leadership

development. These meta-competencies are focused on the areas of adaptability and self-awareness (Day & Lance, 2004). Both are necessary to adequately address evolving challenges, and to enact change with intentionality (Day & Lance, 2004).

### **Beyond the Microsystem: The Influence of Meaning-Making**

Because self-awareness helps individuals better understand themselves and their relationships, it supports the interrelated processes of identity development and leader development (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Day & Halpin, 2004; Day et al., 2012; Hall, 2004; Komives & Wagner, 2009). Self-awareness and the cognitive process of meaning-making also influence the development of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). This section of the literature review will focus on how individuals make meaning of the influences of various systems on their LSE and their identities as leaders, processes that also appear to be influenced by their multiple social identities (Arminio et al., 2000; Komives et al., 2009).

Founded on student development theories, the RMMDI emphasizes the ways in which multiple socially constructed identities (e.g., gender, race, and sexual orientation) are influenced by evolving sociocultural contexts (Abes et al., 2007). The RMMDI (Abes et al., 2007) serves as an extension of the ecological systems model beyond the level of the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) to examine how people make meaning of messages they receive that can influence the development of LSE, and the development of their identities as leaders. At the center of the RMMDI is the core. The core represents the attributes, qualities, beliefs, and values that inform one's sense of self (Jones & Abes, 2013). Because leadership is a values-based process involving self-awareness and

commitment (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), a personal identity as a leader can be incorporated into one's core self-concept (Komives et al., 2005; Lord & Hall, 2005). When articulating the key elements that comprise their core, people may also include salient social identities because self-concept is often inextricably related to group membership (Deaux, 1993; Jones & Abes, 2013; Tajfel, 1982). In addition, even when aspects of the core are not social identities (such as an identity as a leader), they may be influenced by group membership.

As depicted in Figure 1, which shows the RMMDI surrounded by the systems in the ecological systems model, the core is surrounded by overlapping rings that represent multiple identities including class, culture, gender, race, religion, and sexual orientation (Jones & Abes, 2013). These identities vary in salience based on context and on their associations with privilege or oppression (Jones & Abes, 2013). To address some limitations of the original model of multiple dimensions of identity (MMDI; Jones & McEwen, 2000), Abes et al. (2007) developed the RMMDI by adding a meaning-making filter. The filter was influenced by Baxter Magolda's work on self-authorship, which considered the developmental role of increasingly complex cognitive processes and intrapersonal and interpersonal understanding (Jones & Abes, 2013; King & Baxter Magolda, 2010).

### **Leadership Development and Identity**

When studying the influence of multiple identities on leadership development, it is important to consider the ways in which both dominant and marginalized identities shape the process to avoid normalizing the experiences of students with privileged



identities and to better understand the developmental needs of all students. Students with multiple dominant identities may not have explored the meaning of privilege (Jones & Abes, 2013), which is significant because doing so contributes to ally development (Munin & Speight, 2010). Without this exploration, they may be ineffective in their efforts to operate in solidarity with communities that have been oppressed; or worse, they may be patronizing in their attempts and could cause harm (Edwards, 2006; Komives & Wagner, 2009). Student affairs staff who have already committed significant time to the on-going process of engaging in their own self-work in this area can support the leadership development of these students. This can happen when staff members engage students in conversations about systems of privilege and oppression that highlight “the experiences of marginalized groups without relying on members of those groups to provide all of the education” (Linder & Rodriguez, 2012, p. 396). In contrast, it may be difficult for students with marginalized identities to ignore systemic inequities, and they might benefit from receiving support to prevent the emotional exhaustion and burnout that could result from efforts to navigate and challenge injustice (Linder & Rodriguez, 2012).

LSE may be enhanced by affirming students’ multiple identities, and by encouraging students to make meaning of the influence of systems of oppression (Dugan, Rossetti Morosini et al., 2011). Given the importance of meaning-making (Bandura, 1997), it is not surprising that scores on the collective racial esteem (CRE) scale (which indicates students’ personal beliefs and perceptions of other’s beliefs regarding their racial group membership) were much better predictors of leadership outcomes than racial

categories alone (Dugan, Kodama et al., 2012). For students of color, high scores on private CRE were speculated to be “correlated with increased resilience, the ability to reject stereotype threat, and/or successful navigation of hostile climates” (Dugan, Kodama et al., 2012). Unfortunately, no literature could be found related to meaning-making and collective esteem for LGB students. The role of meaning-making in the development of LSE will be addressed in the final two chapters of this dissertation.

### **Agency, Advocacy, and Activism**

Although the idea that anyone can be a leader is appealing, it must be recognized that socially constructed systems of inequity make it more difficult (and in some cases, potentially dangerous) for members of some groups to engage in leadership (Dugan, 2011a; Dugan, Rossetti Morosini et al., 2011). There are risks involved with challenging the status quo, which include facing the “institutional barriers... social resistance from vested interests, and even coercive threats and punishments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 30) that tend to accompany efforts to challenge systems of oppression (Ganz, 2010; Hannah et al., 2008; Lord & Hall, 2005). Although engaging in this work is not easy for anyone, the risks people face often differ based on their multiple identities and their access to power.

LSE is among the psychological resources that are necessary to persist when faced with such adversity. Similarly, effective emotional regulation helps individuals manage the stress that can come from engaging in genuine work for the purpose of self-development and from enacting leadership (Bandura, 1997; Lord & Hall, 2005). When studying leadership within social change movements, Ganz (2010) found that the process was influenced both by debilitating emotions such as fear and self-doubt, as well as by

empowering feelings such as hope, which “in concert with self-efficacy (the feeling that you can make a difference) and solidarity (love, empathy), can move us to act” (p. 536). Thus, scholars would be well served not to focus solely on the ways in which emotions can constrain LSE without also attending to ways in which affective states can enhance LSE. For that reason, in this study, participants were asked to reflect on how they felt during experiences that increased their LSE, as well as during experiences that may have had a detrimental effect on their LSE.

Similarly, although one must acknowledge the systemic oppression that may hinder leadership development and enactment (Dugan, 2011a), it is imperative to focus on the resilience and agency of groups that have historically been oppressed (Eagly & Chin, 2010; Holvino, 2010). For example, often rendered invisible in the feminist movement (which was essentially co-opted by middle-class, White women), and in male-dominated movements focused on race (Doetsch-Kidder, 2012; Hall, Garrett-Akinsanya, & Hucles, 2007; Holvino, 2010; hooks, 2000), women of color tend to have leadership styles that are characterized by inclusive, collaborative approaches that are employed for the purpose of creating positive social change (Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Kawahara, Esnil, & Hsu, 2007). Students of color are likely influenced by this approach to leadership, and may be encouraged by family members to be actively engaged with advocacy efforts within their communities (Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; St. John et al., 2009). In addition, students of color are often motivated to become involved on-campus with activities promoting social justice, such as efforts to counter racism (Liang et al., 2002; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012).

The leadership experiences of lesbians have also been associated with social activism (Baker & Greene, 2007). For students, involvement with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) student organizations has been associated with understanding “leadership or activism as inseparable from LGBT or queer identity, and queer identity as inseparable from an imperative to create change through leadership” (Renn, 2007, p. 319). Engaging in and reflecting on activism related to their LGBT identities also encouraged the development of students’ identity as leaders (Renn & Bilodeau, 2005).

Given the role of verbal affirmation in the process of building LSE (Bandura, 1997), educators may be able to enhance the LSE of women students, students of color, and LGBT students by validating activism and advocacy as crucial components of leadership. When educators define leadership in a way that is congruent with post-industrial, collaborative, change-oriented processes, leadership becomes something that more likely will resonate with a diverse student population (Arminio et al., 2000; Guthrie et al., 2013; Munin & Dugan, 2011). It is also important to note that postindustrial leadership styles “had long been present in the approaches to leadership of women, communities of color, and collectivist cultures [which suggests that the paradigm] shift was largely one for the dominant population (i.e., White, upper class, men)” (Dugan & Komives, 2011, p. 50). Without explicitly recognizing what was essentially a cultural co-opting, it may further marginalize the communities for whom this approach has been most characteristic (Dugan & Komives, 2011; Guthrie et al., 2013). At the same time, acknowledging the origins of this recommended leadership style may help women, students of color, and students with collectivist values to feel affirmed as leaders. This

appears to be true for women, who are more likely to see themselves as leaders when postindustrial leadership models are emphasized (Boatwright & Egidio, 2003; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Yoder, 2001). Although relational approaches to leadership may be associated with feminine stereotypes, they are neither exclusive to women, nor do they constrain the leadership enactment of men (Yoder, 2001).

As articulated in this section of the chapter, there is reason to believe that if educators intentionally use a post-industrial definition of leadership, affirm the leadership efforts of women students, and encourage them to be involved with experiences that build LSE, they may be able to contribute to the development of LSE for women university students. However, achieving this goal may not be as simple as it seems. As stated previously, efforts to encourage the development of students' LSE can be challenging because LSE is a complex construct that is influenced by multiple factors (Dugan, 2011a; Dugan, Rossetti Morosini et al., 2011; Lord & Hall, 2005). Only by considering the influence of systems of privilege and oppression on leadership development and enactment will educators embody the ideals of post-industrial leadership philosophies (Dugan & Komives, 2011; Komives & Wagner, 2009) and be able to support higher education's goals to prepare the next generation of socially responsible leaders (Dugan, Kodama et al., 2012; Kodama & Dugan, 2013). Inherent in this work is the "identification and deconstruction of efficacy-related barriers that constrain the development and enactment of leadership capacity" (Dugan, 2011a, p. 82).

## **Critiques and Further Questions**

### **Dearth of Research on Leadership and Identities**

To better understand how women students develop LSE, and how their multiple identities influence this process, gaps in the literature must be addressed. Within the general body of literature on women and leadership, not only do most studies reinforce binary notions of gender and fail to recognize the experiences of transgender individuals (Dugan, Kusel et al., 2012), but many of the findings cannot be generalized because studies “have examined a selected group of women leaders who have attained leadership positions by meeting the expectations of the majority” (Ayman & Korabik, 2010, p. 161). Therefore, the samples of women who have been studied likely represent a narrow segment of the population in terms of their leadership approaches; those whose leadership style (either intentionally or unintentionally) conformed to dominant expectations. There is also reason to believe that they are not representative of all women in U.S. society in terms of their multiple identities. Thus, the literature that informed this study may not speak to the experiences of all women, and may be insufficient to fulfill its intended purpose.

Scholars have articulated that there is a lack of research exploring the influence of race on leadership development, both for professionals (Eagly & Chin, 2010; Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Sanchez Hucles & Davis, 2010) as well as for university students (Arminio et al., 2000; Dugan, Komives, & Segar, 2008; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Kodama & Dugan, 2013). Within this small body of literature, there are groups that are virtually invisible in the literature that deserve attention, such as Native American students and

Middle Eastern students (Kodama & Dugan, 2013). Similarly, there is little research on leadership and sexual orientation both broadly (Fassinger et al., 2010) and specifically within the context of higher education (Ostick, 2011; Renn, 2007; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005).

In addition, although a small number of studies have found that leadership development is influenced by additional identities such as faith (Munin & Speight, 2011), disability (Banks & Mona, 2007; Hall & Belch, 2000; Huger, 2011; Romano, 1996), and socio-economic class (SES; St. John et al., 2009), so little literature exists on these topics that it is difficult to make conclusions. For example, despite the extensive body of literature on women and leadership, and the large number of people with disabilities in the general U.S. population, there is almost no literature focused on the leadership experiences of women with disabilities (Banks & Mona, 2007). Women may be reluctant to disclose that they have a disability due to stigma as well as the fact that people with known disabilities are sometimes discredited, or are not recognized as leaders even when they hold formal leadership positions (Banks & Mona, 2007; Romano, 1996). To support the involvement of students with disabilities in experiences to build their LSE, educators must work to reduce logistical obstacles to their participation (Hall & Belch, 2000; Huger, 2011; Romano, 1996). Barriers to involvement may also exist for students who have limited financial resources because their need to work may prevent them from taking advantage of leadership development opportunities that could increase their LSE (St. John et al., 2009). When groups of students are underrepresented in leadership roles, there is inequitable access to the social capital related to student involvement

opportunities (St. John et al., 2009) and a shortage of role models with shared identities from whom students can gain vicarious experience to help build LSE.

### **Definition of the Term “Leadership”**

Qualitative research may provide important insights into the perceptions that students have that affect their decisions to engage in collegiate experiences that could build their LSE. For some students, the term “leadership” has connotations of oppressive abuses of power (Arminio et al., 2000; Komives & Dugan, 2011), which may reduce the likelihood that they will participate in campus leadership development programs. This attention to terminology will be important not only for practitioners but also for scholars, who must be conscious of the ways in which research questions are phrased. Because of the lack of consensus in the literature on definitions of leadership (Dugan & Komives, 2010; Rost, 1993) and LSE (Anderson et al., 2008; Paglis & Green, 2002), researchers will also need to carefully examine definitions used and clearly articulate the constructs they are studying. This is something I have been conscious of doing throughout this study.

### **Consideration of Context**

Another topic on which more research is necessary is the role of context in developing LSE (Hannah et al., 2008; Paglis, 2010). Context has been found to play an important role in the leadership development process in general (Bandura, 1997; Day et al., 2009; Fassinger et al., 2010). Context has also been found to affect the development of LSE more specifically. For example, when people work in environments that are characterized by mutual support and belief in each other’s abilities, it can foster both



individual and collective efficacy (Hannah et al., 2008; Paglis, 2010). LSE appears to shape how people respond to various contexts, including those in which people experience resistance. In situations with “low environmental responsiveness... self-efficacious individuals will intensify their efforts, and if necessary, try to change inequitable social practices” (Bandura, 1997, p. 21). This finding is particularly relevant when leadership is understood to be a process enacted for the purpose of social change, as it is for this study.

### **Summary**

This literature review described LSE in further detail, and outlined the benefits associated with it. The benefits realized by people with high LSE include greater likelihoods that they will pursue leadership activities, and persevere with their efforts when faced with challenges. LSE is also positively related with capacity for socially responsible leadership. By articulating the importance of LSE, as well as the need to address the gender gap in LSE, I demonstrated the significance of the study.

Definitions of important terms were provided, and I described the four sources of efficacy information identified by Bandura (1997): (a) direct experience; (b) vicarious experience; (c) verbal persuasion and affirmation; and (d) physiological and emotional cues. I clarified that the study focuses on the development of individual leader self-efficacy, both because it is a foundational component of the collective process leadership, and because of the availability of research to inform a literature review. This focus influenced my decision to conduct individual interviews to collect data.

I described Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems model (1977), which was used

to organize the literature review as well as frame the presentation of findings in Chapter IV. This model was selected because LSE is influenced by messages that are received from, and by interactions that occur within three levels of systems (the macrosystem, exosystem, and microsystem). In addition, because of the important role played by meaning-making in the development of LSE, I added a level of internal processing, which was represented by the RMMDI (Abes et al., 2007). My awareness of the various influences on LSE informed the questions I used to collect data and my approach to analyzing data. The next chapter will focus on the methodology that was used in an effort to better understand what can both constrain and enhance the LSE of women and female students in higher education.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

In this chapter I describe the methodology that was employed in this study, which was designed to advance a deeper understanding of how women and female students develop LSE, and to explore the potential influences of multiple identities on that process. I describe the paradigm and theoretical perspectives that guided the study, and I outline the procedures I employed to collect and analyze data. I explain the limitations of the study, as well as the steps I took to ensure that the study was high in quality, based on criteria used to evaluate qualitative research (Birks & Mills, 2011; Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014; Mertens, 2005). Ethical considerations are addressed, and I also share how I incorporated reflexivity in the research process.

A qualitative inquiry approach was best suited for this study because of its focus on internal processes as well as the complexity associated with considering the influence of multiple identities on LSE (Creswell, 2013; Jones & Abes, 2013). Studying on-going, cognitive, and psychosocial processes required that I truly listen to the stories and experiences of participants to learn how they made meaning about the phenomenon in question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). A qualitative approach was selected not only because of its fit with the research questions, but also because I followed recommendations to choose a research approach that is aligned with my worldview (Mertens, 2005). Like many qualitative researchers, I believe that multiple, socially constructed interpretations

of reality exist, and that they are shaped by contextual factors (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

I selected grounded theory methodology in part because it is appropriate to use when little is known about a specific area of study (Birks & Mills, 2011; Creswell, 2013). In the case of this study, scholars have articulated a need for more research on LSE (Dugan & Komives, 2010; Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011), as well as on the influence of multiple identities on leadership development (Ayman & Koarabik, 2010; Komives et al., 2009; Rosette & Livingston, 2012; Sanchez-Hucles & Sanchez, 2007). Another reason for choosing this methodology is that I intended to generate a theory that could be applied in the work done by leadership educators. To increase the likelihood that the findings from this qualitative study will be considered transferable enough to inform practice, “there should be a grounding of method (e.g., grounded theory, phenomenology) beyond simple interviews” (Dugan, 2011b, p. 63); this need supported my decision to use grounded theory methodology.

### **Paradigm and Theoretical Perspectives**

It is important for researchers to articulate their philosophical approach before conducting a study to ensure transparency and to better understand factors that may influence their decision-making, perspectives, and interactions with participants during a study (Birks & Mills, 2011; Jones et al., 2014). “The net that contains the researcher’s epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises may be termed a paradigm, or an interpretive framework” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 19). These interrelated assumptions and beliefs about the nature of reality and the construction of knowledge are

based on researchers' worldviews, personal experiences, and the knowledge they have gained about a topic through academic and professional exposure (Jones et al., 2014).

### **Social Constructivist Paradigm**

This study is influenced by a paradigm of social constructivism, which (along with positivism, postpositivism, and critical theory) Lincoln and Guba (2000) considered to be one of the four main paradigms employed in social science research. Social constructivism is associated with an ontology of relativism (i.e., multiple realities are believed to exist) and a transactional, subjective epistemology (i.e., knowledge is co-created by researchers and respondents; Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Jones et al., 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Although multiple realities exist, knowledge can be viewed as “being both constructed and based on the reality of the world we experience and live in” (Greene, 2007, p. 83). In that sense, it is possible for patterns and shared experiences to emerge in the data that can inform recommendations for practice.

Within this paradigm, the aim of inquiry is to better understand complex phenomena in an evolving world, as well as the diverse ways in which people perceive and make meaning of these phenomena (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). One can argue that everyone constructs knowledge daily on a basic level, in that “we invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience, and we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience” (Schwandt, 2000, p. 197). In research done with a social constructivist lens, it is important to explore meanings beyond the surface level by

considering the influence of values and ideologies on both participants and researchers (Charmaz, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

Due to how unlikely it is for anyone to remain completely objective when conducting research, researchers should be conscious of the ways in which their values and biases may shape their work (Sandelowski, Voils, & Knafl, 2009; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010). Because “a general assumption of social constructivism is that knowledge is not disinterested, apolitical, and exclusive of affective and embodied aspects of human experience” (Schwandt, 2000, p. 198), it is not surprising that this paradigm is often associated with research that is conducted for the purpose of informing action (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Constructivist approaches are frequently used in grounded theory studies conducted in the context of higher education (Jones et al., 2014), a field in which recommendations from research should be applied in practice. Complemented with an emphasis on amplifying the voices and understanding the experiences of people who identify as members of groups that have historically been marginalized, grounded theory can inform practice in ways that can serve goals related to social justice (Charmaz, 2014).

### **Social Justice Theoretical Perspective**

Because the process of conducting research is not values-free (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), researchers should be conscious of the theoretical perspectives that influence their approach to their topic of study, and the way in which they choose to study it. Researchers may use theories and frameworks that are focused on issues of social justice when striving to create research that can support efforts for social change (Bell 1997;

Creswell, 2013). The two main social justice-oriented theoretical perspectives that were used to guide this study were feminism and intersectionality.

**Feminism.** Feminism has been described as “a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression” (hooks, 2000, p. viii). Key principles from feminist theory include the following: (a) as a result of pervasive and persistent oppression, women experience barriers to achieving their goals and accessing the societal rights to which they are entitled; (b) women can competently contribute to various aspects of society; and (c) addressing sexist oppression should be the concern of all citizens (Errington Nicholson, & Pasque, 2011; hooks, 1984, 2000; Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011). Despite the progress that has been made to address barriers that women and females have experienced in higher education, inequities remain (Hart & Metcalfe, 2010; Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011; Yakaboski, 2011). Therefore, “a critical and feminist examination of higher education is still very necessary” (Hart & Metcalfe, 2010, p. 158). Being critical means disrupting dominant narratives, and analyzing the influences of systems of power that often go unquestioned. Part of this critical examination involves recognizing that sex and gender is often used interchangeably, which is problematic because, despite the intersections that tend to exist between them, they are distinct concepts. To represent the thoughts and findings of scholars as accurately as possible, I have used the terminology used by authors of the literature cited, even though this sometimes means that I have failed to appropriately distinguish between the terms and have unwillingly reinforced notions of a gender binary.

Although feminist research includes a diverse range of increasingly complex,

evolving orientations, it shares a common characteristic of focusing on what is problematic about the situations and institutions that affect the experiences of women and females (Creswell, 2013; Jones et al., 2014; Olesen, 2000). Viewing sex and gender as foundational organizing principles that affect multiple aspects of life, feminist researchers advocate for the use of transformative research that leads to change in future research, policy, and other actions (Creswell, 2013; Olesen, 2000).

**Intersectionality.** Although some strands of feminist theory (such as multicultural feminism) explicitly stress the importance of considering the influence of multiple identities, in general, feminist research has been critiqued for not incorporating an intersectional lens more consistently (Allan, 2011; Olesen, 2000). Intersectional analyses emerged primarily through the work of women of color such as critical legal scholar Crenshaw (who is credited with first using the term “intersectionality”), social theorist Hill Collins, and additional scholars who believed that life experiences were influenced by multiple identities in complex, integrative ways, rather than in summative manners (Cole, 2009; Holvino 2010; Doetsch-Kidder, 2012; Jones & Abes, 2013). When I designed the study, I did so with the intention of exploring the potential influences of multiple identities on the development of LSE. I had hoped to create space for participants to reflect upon intersections of identity, but I did not want to be forceful in my approach, nor did I want to ask leading questions. Although I had no expectation of finding themes reflecting intersections of identity, they did emerge for a number of participants (typically among students with multiple identities associated with a history of



marginalization). For that reason, I have included a description of intersectionality in this chapter.

Research analyzed using an intersectional lens is characterized by its tendency to:

- (a) explore the complex meanings of interrelated individual and social group identities;
- (b) consider the influence of institutional structures and ideologies that reinforce inequities in power; and
- (c) advocate for the use of research to inform action to promote social change (Cole, 2009; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Doetsch-Kidder, 2012; Holvino 2010; Jones, & Abes, 2013).

The difficulty inherent in employing intersectional analyses in research (Bowleg, 2008; Cole, 2009; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012) helps to explain why “there is a paucity of literature on intersectionality from a methodological perspective” (Bowleg, 2008, p. 313), and why few leadership studies have considered the influence of intersections of identity, despite scholars’ calls to do so (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Sancez-Hucles & Davis, 2009). Because of its focus on asking open-ended questions to explore complex phenomenon, grounded theory methodology can be better suited than other methodologies to allow space for intersectional themes to emerge. Conducting multiple, in-depth, individual interviews also helps to provide space for these concepts to be considered. The reason that the literature review reflected a focus on multiple identities rather than on intersecting identities was because of the dearth of leadership literature that has used an intersectional approach.

## Methodology

“Stemming from a congruent philosophy, a methodology is a set of principles and ideas that inform the design of a research study” (Birks & Mills, 2011, p. 4). A distinction must be made between grounded theory as the methodology that was employed in this study, and the actual grounded theory that was developed as the outcome of this research. The goal of a grounded theory study is to identify distinct, interrelated conceptual themes that form a framework that can lead to better understanding of a certain phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Before grounded theory methodology was established, qualitative research had focused on various methodologies (i.e., life histories, case studies, and participant observation) without articulating consistent procedural strategies that should be employed within each approach (Charmaz, 2014). At a time when qualitative approaches were being criticized for their lack of rigor, and quantitative approaches were gaining prominence in various social science disciplines, sociologists Glaser and Strauss (1967) published their book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. This book “refocused qualitative inquiry on methods of analysis” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 7) and provided evidence that qualitative research could not only be credible, but that it could also serve a purpose beyond that of supplementing quantitative research (Charmaz, 2014).

Grounded theory methodology was heavily influenced by Glaser’s training in quantitative approaches, and is rigidly structured, relative to other qualitative methodologies (Creswell, 2013; Schwandt, 2007). Although it was initially developed in

part to counter the preponderance of quantitative research at the time, grounded theory methodology later became known for its rigidity and positivist assumptions (Charmaz, 2014). However, by the 1990s, after being influenced by the interpretations of various scholars, the methodology shifted back to its original constructivist roots and a focus on “notions of human agency, emergent processes, social and subjective meanings, [and] problem-solving practices” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 9).

A primary attribute of grounded theory methodology is that its purpose is to develop a theory grounded in qualitative data (Charmaz, 2014). This methodology is also characterized by the following: (a) concurrent data collection and analysis; (b) the use of constant comparison throughout the process, (c) memo-writing to support data analysis, (d) theoretical sampling, and (e) developing codes based on the data rather than searching for themes generated by existing theory (Charmaz, 2014).

Scholars are expected to let a theory emerge from the data during a grounded theory study rather than being influenced by existing literature in such a way that it could become constraining (Birks & Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). However, because it is unrealistic to expect that someone would study a topic with which they had little to no prior experience, scholars are encouraged to do a limited review of the literature, while focusing on topics related to their research question, rather than conducting no literature review at all (Birks & Mills, 2011). A foundational familiarity with the literature can help researchers develop good questions, make informed decisions, and confirm findings (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I strove to not let the literature drive data collection and analysis by keeping interview questions broad, remaining focused on the

research question rather than what I anticipated I might find, and by constantly referring to evidence from the data when themes started to emerge.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The overarching purpose of this study was to better understand the complex processes that contribute to the development of LSE for university students who identify as females or women. In alignment with grounded theory methodology, a related goal was to develop a theory that could inform practice (Charmaz, 2014). The research question is: How do university students who identify as women or females develop LSE, if at all? When exploring this question, I was particularly interested in learning how meaning-making related to multiple identities might influence the development of LSE.

To develop a theory to explain the process through which women and females develop LSE, I employed theoretical sensitivity, which is the “the ability to recognize and extract from the data elements that have relevance for [my] emerging theory” (Birks & Mills, 2011, p. 59). Influenced in part through my personal and professional experiences with the topic, my theoretical sensitivity increased both through the use of certain techniques, and over time as my research progressed, as is common for qualitative researchers (Birks & Mills, 2011).

### **Methods**

Methods are the strategies and procedures that are employed to collect and analyze data (Birks & Mills, 2011). “Grounded theory methods offer a set of general principles, guidelines, strategies, and heuristic devices rather than formulaic prescriptions” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 3). For this study, I used interviews as the method with

which to gather data. Although somewhat similar to informational interviewing (which is used to collect facts), and investigative interviewing (the purpose of which is to uncover concealed thoughts or behaviors), intensive interviewing is distinct because of its “emphasis on understanding the research participant’s perspective, meanings, and experience” (p. 56). When conducting intensive interviews, I was conscious of establishing relationships with participants while guiding the process (rather than controlling it), listening actively, and reading the emotional cues of participants so I could better understand their perspectives and experiences (Charmaz, 2000; Creswell, 2013; Jones et al., 2014).

### **Sampling Strategies and Criteria**

Sampling refers to the ways in which people, things, or concepts are selected to serve as sources of data (Mertens, 2005). Because it is not possible to know before a grounded theory study begins exactly how many participants will be needed, researchers should focus instead on covering the topic appropriately (Birks & Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2014). A researcher knows that a sample is sufficient when the core category offers “considerable depth and breadth of understanding about a phenomenon, and relationships to other categories have been made clear” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 149). Finding repetition in themes does not necessarily mean that there was an adequate sample; categories must be robust, multiple perspectives need to be included, and there must be rich description in the data that demonstrates change in processes over time (Charmaz, 2014). It is acceptable in grounded theory studies to use more than one sampling strategy (Mertens, 2005). The four strategies that I used will be described in this section, followed

by more specific information about how they were employed in this study. To secure an appropriate sample, the following strategies were used: (a) intensity sampling, (b) snowball sampling, (c) theoretical sampling, and (d) maximum variation sampling.

Intensity sampling is designed to ensure that the participants who are selected will have experiences with the phenomena of interest (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007; Mertens, 2005). For this study, this meant ensuring that participants were students who identified as women or female who had high LSE (and therefore, were likely to be able to speak about how their LSE was developed). Two questions on the information form were used to determine if potential participants met this criteria. Students selected to participate described themselves as being confident in their abilities as leaders.

Participants were asked to share information about the study with students they knew who they believed had high LSE, and to encourage them to consider participating. This approach is reflective of snowball sampling, which involves starting with a small group of participants and continually adding participants based on referrals over time (Mertens, 2005). It is uncertain whether this strategy resulted in recruiting participants for this study.

In addition to intensity sampling and snowball sampling, theoretical sampling was used in this study. Theoretical sampling is a common strategy for grounded theory studies (Birks & Mills, 2011; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). “This responsive approach makes sampling open and flexible. Concepts are derived from data during analysis and questions about those concepts drive the next round of data collection” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.

144). After collecting and analyzing data from the first few interviews, theoretical sampling allows researchers to strategically invite additional participants who have the potential to provide rich data that will address gaps and saturate certain categories (Birks & Mills, 2011). Rather than sampling people, theoretical sampling in this sense is more focused on sampling based on concepts that may be explored through interviews with certain participants. For example, to better understand the influence of various experiences on the development of LSE, I attempted to include students in the sample who I believed had the potential to share information that could contribute to the emerging categories, based on their on-campus and off-campus involvement.

When research is focused on a certain group (i.e., women students) it is important not to assume homogeneity within that group (Allan, 2011). Maximum variation sampling involves strategically choosing participants based on the diversity they would bring to the group (Mertens, 2005). For this study, efforts were made to have a sample of participants that was diverse in terms of their racial identities and sexual orientations. By recruiting participants who identified as women or female, I had hoped to interview participants who were categorized as female at birth (regardless of how they currently identified in terms of gender or sex), as well as participants who may not have been so assigned at birth but who identified as women at the time of the study.

### **Research Setting**

Participants were recruited from a private, Catholic university in the Midwest with a total of over 15,000 students enrolled as of October 2014. Within the Carnegie classification of institutions of higher education, the university is a doctoral-degree

granting institution with high research activity. The multi-campus institution is located in a large city. The most recent demographic information available was from the 2012-2013 academic year, at which point 63% of the undergraduate student population identified as women with the rest identifying as men (although it should be noted that respondents were only given these two options in terms of gender identification). Out of a total of 9,465 undergraduate students, approximately 63% identified as White, 12% as Hispanic, 10% as Asian, 5% as multi-racial, and almost 4% identified as Black or African American. No information can be found from the institutional research office about the number of students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or intersex. This institution was chosen because I am currently employed there, which I thought would make it easier to obtain Institutional Research Board (IRB) approval, and to recruit and interview participants. However, I had to be aware that my role at the university might have influenced the way in which participants interacted with me.

### **Identifying Participants**

After receiving IRB approval, I asked faculty, and staff members in the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Development to share information about the study with potential participants. I sent these key informants an email in which I defined LSE (see Appendix A), so they were familiar with the concept, and so they could nominate students who met the criteria of having high LSE. I also gave them a flyer that they could share with students who might be interested in participating in the study (see Appendix B). In this way, I employed intensity sampling to ensure that the participants who were



selected had experiences with the phenomena of interest (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007; Mertens, 2005).

In addition to faculty, at least one key informant was selected from each of the following departments, all of which provide students with leadership development opportunities: Athletics, Campus Ministry, Campus Recreation, the Center for Community Service & Action, the Center for Experiential Learning, First and Second Year Advising, First Year Experience, Off-Campus Life, Residence Life, Student Activities & Greek Affairs, Student Diversity & Multicultural Affairs, and the Women's Center. Because each of these areas works with large numbers of students in similar roles, I was able to reference some of students' general involvements in chapter 4 without compromising their confidentiality. In addition, because involvement with these areas often incorporates experiences that are positively associated with LSE (such as holding positional leadership roles in student organizations, engaging in socio-cultural conversations with peers, and doing community service; Dugan et al., 2013; Dugan & Komives, 2010; Komives & Dugan 2007), selecting students who have engaged in these experiences likely increased my chances of finding students with high LSE to serve as participants. Students who contacted me to express interest in participating in the study did not always indicate how they learned about it, but those who did said they found about the study from faculty, and from staff in all of the areas listed above except for the Center for Community Service and Action, and First Year Experience.

Key informants were asked to not to limit their nominations to students who were involved in collegiate experiences that are typically associated with leadership

development. This was likely easier to do for staff in certain areas. For example, both Residence Life and Campus Recreation employ a large number of students who work at reception desks and support building operations; these roles are not typically perceived to be leadership experiences. Residence Life staff have opportunities to interact with many students who are not involved on campus at all. Similarly, each First and Second Year Advisor teaches approximately nine sections of a first-year seminar, allowing them to get to know students with a variety of levels of involvement on campus. The Center for Experiential Learning reaches students in a variety of ways, such as through academic internships, undergraduate research, and service-learning classes.

Over a six-week time period, 89 students contacted me to express interest in participating in the study. As they contacted me, I sent each of them an individual email about the study with a link to an online consent form, and online information form. (Please see Appendix C for the email template, Appendix D for the consent form, and Appendix E for the participant information form.) The information form asked students to provide their contact information, and to answer some questions about their confidence in themselves as leaders, their involvement(s) on- and off-campus, how they spend their time outside of classes, and their multiple identities. There were 55 students who completed the online forms. Of that group, the answers of eight students indicated that they did not have high LSE, so they were not invited to participate. There were eight additional students who I would not consider interviewing because they were students who I already knew through their involvement with my department's programs, or their membership in an organization that I advised.

I waited until over 20 students had completed the information form before I started inviting students to participate in interviews. Using a maximum variation sampling strategy (Mertens, 2005), the information provided by students helped me to select an initial group of five students to interview who had various types of involvement to increase the diversity of the sample in terms of their experiences. Elena was one of the first students I contacted because she was the only student with few campus involvements. Emily was part of this initial group because I wanted to include an orientation leader, and of the three orientation leaders in the group, her responses were the most reflective. I also considered students' multiple identities in this process. All but six of the 55 students identified as being heterosexual, and all but 23 of the 55 students identified as White or Caucasian. When I started inviting students to participate, Danielle and Annie were the only two students who did not identify as being heterosexual, which influenced my decision to invite them to participate. Ashley was among the first women of color to complete the information form, and I was interested in hearing about her experiences with a sorority (an experience few students listed). As I continued to invite students to participate in the study, my goal was to have a sample that was as diverse as possible in terms of the identities I was centering, and in terms of various leadership experiences.

Although I asked participants to encourage students they knew to contact me if they were interested in participating in the study, I am not sure if any of these referrals resulted in people expressing interest in participating. None of the students indicated in the online form or in interviews that they had received information about the study from a

participant. Right from the start, I noticed that almost all of the potential participants were heavily involved on campus. I was intentional in asking participants if they knew students who appeared to be confident in their abilities as leaders who were not actively involved. No participants could think of anyone when we spoke during the interviews, but some said they would think about it and would later encourage anyone to participate who may fit that description.

It would not have been possible to strategically invite participants who represented all possible dimensions of identity, nor would it have been feasible to ask interview questions about every possible intersection of identities (Bowleg, 2008). As stated previously, I chose to interview a group of women and female university students who differ in terms of their identities related to race and sexual orientation because these two identities are major stratifications in society (Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Griffin et al., 2007; Lehavot & Lambert, 2007; Mills, 1999; Omi, & Winant, 1994; Taylor et al., 2009). In addition, albeit limited, there exists some research on student leadership development that explores the influence of race (Arminio et al., 2000; Balon, 2004; Dugan, Komives et al., 2008; Kodama & Dugan, 2013) and sexual orientation (Dugan, Komives et al., 2008; Martinez et al., 2007; Renn, 2007; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005; Renn & Ozaki, 2010). It was helpful to consider this research after I identified themes in the data to learn whether other scholars have found similar themes. Although I centered sexual orientation and race in the sampling process, as I had anticipated, additional social identities also emerged as being influential during data collection and analysis. Fortunately, within the group of 55 students who completed the online consent form and information form, there was

diversity in identities related to race and sexual orientation. Unfortunately, there was not much diversity in terms of sex and gender. Of the 55 potential participants, in the open text space where they could use their own words to identify their gender, all but two used the word “female” (one student wrote “woman,” and another wrote “Female/feminine.”). When I noticed this pattern after around 20 students submitted their information, I asked staff in the Student Diversity and Multicultural Affairs office to reach out to students who may not identify as cisgender females, but this did not change anything.

Throughout the process, as I identified students who met the criteria who I wanted to interview, I used the email template found in Appendix F to invite them to participate in the study, and the email template in Appendix G to confirm the date and time for the first interview. Appendix H shows the email I sent to students who were not selected to participate. After conducting interviews with an initial group of five or six students (while analyzing the data concurrently), I identified concepts that I wanted to further explore. I then sought additional participants using a combination of theoretical sampling (which focuses on sampling based on concepts rather than people) and snowball sampling (which involves asking key informants and participants to recommend additional people to invite to be participants; Mertens, 2005). I knew I reached saturation when I was able to create robust codes from the data that lead to higher-order themes that could be used to build a theory (Charmaz, 2014).

Similar to other grounded theory studies that explored leadership development and/or identity development (Edwards, 2007; Komives et al., 2005; Ostick, 2011), I conducted multiple interviews with each student. This approach allowed participants the

opportunity to reflect between the first and second interviews. It also gave me a chance to explore emerging themes from each phase of data collection to inform the next phase. I shared with every participant the transcripts from their own interviews as a way to engage in member checking (Jones et al., 2014; Mertens, 2005). I shared the transcript from the first interview prior to the second interview taking place, and sent them the transcript from the second interview shortly after the interview had taken place. When doing so, I asked participants to let me know if there were inaccuracies or concepts on which they wished to further elaborate. Nobody had anything to change or add after reviewing the transcripts. I had been prepared to conduct a third individual interview with each participant or a focus group if the need had arisen. However, there was sufficient data collected during the total of 24 interviews that there was no need to do so.

### **Data Collection**

Directly before each interview began, participants signed a copy of a written consent form and were offered a printed copy of the form for their records (see Appendix I). The consent form used simple, non-threatening language to explain the purpose of the study as well as the potential risks and benefits of participating (Charmaz, 2014). Possible risks included experiencing distress or discomfort due to the sensitive nature of some of the topics included in the interview protocol. Potential benefits for the participants included spending intentional time reflecting on their leadership development journeys, which had the potential to contribute to continued growth in this area, and might result in participants feeling a sense of accomplishment. I conducted two interviews with each participant. I offered a \$25 gift card for participation in each

interview, to act as an incentive to participate in both interviews. I paid for the gift cards personally. I made it clear that I would give each participant a gift card at the end of every interview regardless of whether or not they answered every question, and regardless of how long the interview lasted. By doing so, my hope was to reduce the likelihood that participants would feel pressured to answer all questions and to talk for more time than they were comfortable doing.

Participants were also asked for consent to be audio-taped during the interview. With support from the Graduate School for some of the costs, I used a professional service to transcribe the interviews (the remaining costs were covered with my personal funds). Interview transcriptions were stored securely, and all identifying features were removed so participants could retain their anonymity. Each participant also chose their own pseudonym. Because interviews were transcribed, during the interviews, I was able to take field notes about non-verbal communication and note when words and phrases seem to provoke certain emotional reactions in participants, which is a recommended practice (Charmaz, 2014).

### **Interview Protocol**

Although unstructured interviews are often used by grounded theory researchers (Jones et al., 2014), due to my inexperience as a researcher (which could make it more difficult to use a less structured strategy), and the increased likelihood that a semi-structured approach would be considered less risky than an unstructured approach by an IRB, I submitted semi-structured interview protocols for the first and second interviews (see Appendices J and K). The interview protocols offered some flexibility through the

use of open-ended questions and provided some room to deviate from the script through the use of follow-up prompts. Before submitting the interview protocol to the IRB, I conducted mock interviews with four women to practice asking questions and learn what kind of responses they might solicit. I interviewed both of my sisters (neither of whom had been involved on-campus when in university), a neighbor who had recently graduated from college, and a graduate student from an institution other than the one where the study took place. This student had been involved on-campus as an undergraduate student. If there had been some changes to the protocol after having conducted and analyzed the first few interviews (which there were not), I would have submitted an amendment to the original IRB proposal, which would have been consistent with this methodological practice (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Each interview started with an effort to build rapport with the participant by asking some general questions about how they were doing, and why they had expressed interest in being involved with the study. This gave me some time to get to know the participants a little bit, so I could better let them set the pace and the tone for the interview (Charmaz, 2014). It was important to build trust, and to listen attentively to what was shared from the participants' point of view so I could be ready to adjust my approach, and so I could better understand their experiences (Charmaz, 2014). Consistent with best practice, the interviews moved from simple, low-risk questions to more complex, sensitive questions before I concluded and discussed next steps in the process (Charmaz, 2014; Jones et al., 2014). When developing the interview protocol, I considered the following types of questions that were described by Strauss and Corbin



(1998): (a) sensitizing questions that could help me better understand the meaning of what the participants are saying; (b) theoretical questions that could help me see relationships among concepts being discussed; (c) practical questions that could inform later steps in the research process; and (d) guiding questions that could influence how I approach the interviews and data analysis.

Although the interview protocol served as my guide, I was ready to ask additional prompting questions whenever I needed more information (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). When asking about more sensitive topics, it was beneficial to remind participants that they could decline to respond (Charmaz, 2014). For the first interview, the main questions focused on students' definitions of leadership, factors that shaped their understanding of leadership over time, their LSE, and experiences that shaped their LSE. To view the full interview protocol, please see Appendix J. Appendix K is the template email reminder for the second interview, Appendix L is the protocol for the second interview. During this interview, students were asked to complete a diagram based on the RMMDI (Abes et al., 2007) to reflect on their multiple identities before I asked questions about how these identities may have influenced their LSE (if at all). While explaining the diagram, I shared a diagram that I had completed myself. I did this to show participants an example, and also in an effort to develop trust by sharing about myself. Please see Appendix M for this diagram. Initially, I used only the term "Race" on the diagram to more closely model the RMMDI (Abes et al., 2007), but enough participants articulated that it was difficult to separate race and ethnicity that after a few interviews, I changed

the diagram's label to "Race/Ethnicity." After the second interview, I sent the transcript to participants to review, using the email template shown in Appendix N.

### **Memo-Writing**

I created on-going records of my thoughts, feelings, insights, the procedures I followed, and the decisions I made throughout the processes of data collection, analysis, and theory construction (Birks & Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2013). Memo-writing is not only part of the analytic process, but it is an important factor contributing to the quality of a grounded theory study (Birks & Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2014). Memos were labeled to reflect whether they were observational notes that described events, theoretical notes, or methodological notes about research procedures (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I dated each memo, and reviewed them throughout the process. A few times, memos were written about earlier memos, which can be considered to be data (Birks & Mills, 2011). A general template for my memos can be found in Appendix O.

In addition to the memos, I kept an audit trail of a number of files, including a spreadsheet with data from the online information forms, a spreadsheet with a schedule and information about the interviews conducted, communication with key informants and participants, consent forms, gift card receipt forms, and audio recordings (which were deleted once I reviewed transcripts for accuracy). All files with identifying information (the audio recordings, online information form, and consent forms) were saved on an external hard drive kept in a locked location. Other files were stored in password-protected DropBox folders accessible only to me. To share transcripts with participants, I

sent a link to special password-protected DropBox folders created for each participant, and the link expired within 30 days of when it was sent.

### **Data Analysis**

Just as memo-writing occurred throughout the concurrent processes of data collection and analysis, so too did the use of the constant comparative method of analysis (Birks & Mills, 2011; Creswell, 2013). Constant comparison is “the analytic process of comparing different pieces of data for similarities and differences” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 65). I reviewed excerpts multiple times when creating codes and themes, and often revisited transcripts, memos, and notes taken during interviews. Using inductive logic, I continued to compare data at increasingly complex levels of analysis until higher order themes emerged, which eventually resulted in the creation of a theory that links concepts through relationships (Birks & Mills, 2011).

### **Coding**

After exploring software such as NVivo and Dedoose, I chose to use Excel spreadsheets to organize data. I had not considered doing this until I spoke with a colleague who said that he liked using Excel for his dissertation because it was cost effective, and it helped him to become intimate with the data. I appreciated not having to take time learning how to fully operate a software system with which I was not overly familiar. I also liked being able to have a better record of my process than I believed would have been possible if I had used a more tangible procedure such as arranging excerpts printed on individual pieces of paper.

Having excerpts all in one place helped me to be relatively efficient with coding.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated that the purposes of coding procedures are to:

- Build rather than test theory.
- Provide researchers with analytic tools for handling masses of raw data.
- Help analysts to consider alternative meanings of phenomena.
- Be systematic and creative simultaneously.
- Identify, develop, and relate the concepts that are the building blocks of theory. (p. 13)

When conducting a grounded theory study as “tentative answers to questions are developed and concepts are constructed, these constructions are verified through further data collection” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 131). Therefore, data analysis began immediately after the first interview had been conducted, as recommended by methodologists (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Schwandt, 2007).

In the initial phase of data analysis, I identified many incidents, which are patterns of concepts, phrases, actions, situations, or explanations that I continued to find among the data. Although a variety of terms are used in the literature, this process is often referred to as open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Open coding can be defined as “breaking apart data and delineating concepts to stand for blocks of raw data. At the same time, one is qualifying those concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 195). I coded by incident, rather than line-by-line (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I choose to use *in vivo* codes, which are groups of words (often verbatim) found in the data that are used as labels themselves (Birks & Mills, 2011; Creswell, 2013). I did this by copying and pasting excerpts from the transcripts that illustrated one or more concepts I thought were relevant. It has been suggested that coding by actions is helpful because it “curbs our

tendencies to make conceptual leaps and to adopt extant theories before we have done the necessary analytic work” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 117). It should be noted that the process is not as linear as it may appear when describing it here (Charmaz, 2014).

Next, I linked together initial codes to establish sub-categories called intermediate or axial codes (Birks & Mills, 2011; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2013). Categories are formed by groups of codes that represent higher order concepts until saturation is reached. I had to be reflexive in this process so I interpreted the data rather than forcing preconceptions on it based on what I knew from existing theory (Charmaz, 2014). I also had to be conscious of coding at an appropriate level of depth, and using codes to analyze data rather than merely summarizing them (Charmaz, 2014). Throughout the coding process, I needed to be mindful of the potential influence of the context or conditions on the experiences of the participants. “Context not only grounds concepts, but also minimizes the chances of distorting meaning and/or misrepresenting intent” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 57). A list of the main codes can be found in Appendix P.

### **Theoretical Integration**

Finally, higher-level theoretical codes (which are also known as selective codes) were employed to build a theory (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2013). The first step in the process of integrating concepts to form a theory is the identification of a core or central category that will form the basis of the storyline connecting the other concepts (Birks & Mills, 2011; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A central (or core) category appears often in the data, is abstract enough to be of interest in other areas of research, and relates with a variety of concepts in logical ways (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Memos can be reviewed as a reflective tool to help identify the ways in which concepts are tied together (Birks & Mills, 2011), which is something I did. I had read that it can be helpful to use a diagram at this stage of the research process to allow me to gain distance from the details of the data, to help me focus on higher order concepts and the relationships among them (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). A diagram was created, which is included with the findings in Chapter IV.

Using a methodology in which theory is intended to emerge from the data, in this stage of the process, “the place of prior knowledge becomes ambiguous” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 150). Although grounded theory researchers should not use their familiarity with the literature to force findings to fit existing theories, they can use their prior knowledge to guide their approach to data analysis, enhance their sensitivity to distinctions among concepts, and to confirm or refine findings during the writing process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Due to the consideration of the influence of contexts, I decided during the data analysis process that it would be beneficial to organize information according to the ecological systems model that was previously described (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

I did my best to use a feminist framework by designing interview protocols that allowed participants to reflect on how their experiences may have been shaped by their sex and gender, and by being open to finding themes related to the influence of systems of power on their identities and leadership development. Although I did not explicitly talk about intersections of multiple identities, the inclusion of the diagram activity in the second interview helped to foster a space that resulted in a number of the participants making those connections (even in the first interview, a few participants shared talked

about intersectionality with no prompting from me). While attempting not to influence the ways in which participants responded, I collected and analyzed data with an openness to finding themes related to intersectionality.

### **Ensuring the Quality of the Study**

Both quantitative and qualitative research approaches share some general guidelines of quality, such as the need for researchers to have familiarity with the topic, and the importance of there being a good fit between the research questions and the methodology (Jones et al., 2014). However, within qualitative studies, “terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability replace the usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 21). Although these criteria can be considered to be parallel across quantitative and qualitative approaches, they are distinct in subtle ways that match the paradigm in which they are situated (Mertens, 2005). A term that is often associated with confidence in the judgment of quality of qualitative research is trustworthiness (Jones et al., 2014).

Within qualitative research approaches, there are specific measures of quality for various methodologies (Jones et al., 2014). Corbin and Strauss (2008) identified a number of factors that they believed were important contributors to the quality of grounded theory research: methodological consistency, a clear purpose for the study, and a self-aware, well-trained researcher who is willing to work hard out of a desire to do research for its own sake. These factors were among Birks and Mills’ (2011) list of quality processes in grounded theory, in addition to procedural precision, and the use of logic. Ultimately, for a methodology that is used with the goal of creating a theory that

can influence practice, the criteria that are often used to judge its quality include: the clarity and applicability of the findings, the comprehensiveness of the concepts and the theory itself, and the sensitivity of the researcher to the participants and the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In the rest of this section, I will describe the actions I took to address the various criteria for high-quality qualitative research that were described by Mertens (2005) and other scholars.

### **Credibility**

Credibility can be earned through prolonged, substantial engagement in the field (Jones et al., 2014; Mertens, 2005). In addition to planning to spend a significant amount of time conducting interviews, I have had almost ten years of professional experience working with co-curricular student leadership development programs, which can bring a certain level of credibility to my work. Another way to achieve credibility is to use other people to confirm findings. I did this by asking participants to provide feedback on the interview transcripts to ensure that they accurately reflected what they said (this is an example of member checking; Jones et al., 2014; Mertens, 2005).

In addition, I asked two colleagues who are familiar with the leadership literature to serve as peer debriefers. One person was a doctoral student in Loyola University Chicago's Higher Education program at the time of the study, and the other was a recent graduate of the same program. Unfortunately, due to unexpected circumstances, one of the reviewers became unable to serve in this role. The reviewer who did provide feedback identifies as a Black, cis-gender heterosexual woman, a scholar who employs critical frameworks in her research, and a doctoral student whose own research centers the voice



of women of color in the conversation of leadership development. Because the reviewer has had life experiences and has some identities that differ from mine, I believe she considered the data with a different perspective than I did. There is value in having peer debriefers who can share unique perspectives during the processes of data collection, analysis, and when interpreting findings in an effort to build a theory (Jones et al., 2014; Mertens, 2005).

### **Dependability**

Similar to the criteria of reliability that are employed in research conducted from a positivist paradigm is the concept of dependability (Mertens, 2005). Studies are deemed to be high in dependability when procedures are explicitly explained in detail, and when what is written matches what actually occurs during the study (Jones et al., 2014). I believe I described the research procedures well enough that an audit would be easy to conduct to ensure that the inquiry process was appropriate and effectively implemented (Mertens, 2005).

### **Confirmability and Transferability**

Another key strategy to support quality in a grounded theory study is to create a detailed audit trail that includes the interview transcriptions, notes, and other artifacts (Birks & Mills, 2011; Mertens, 2005). To achieve confirmability, I create this chain of evidence so other researchers would have the necessary procedural information to be able to re-create my study if they wish to do so (Birks & Mills, 2011; Mertens, 2005). However, as would be the case with any study, the same procedures and interview protocol could be used with different participants and not result in exactly the same

findings. New insights might be gained because of the lens employed by a different research, and the unique experiences shared by participants.

A distinct, but related concept to confirmability is that of transferability. Where confirmability refers to detailed notes that would allow another researcher to conduct a similar study, transferability refers to the use of thick description and multiple data sources to provide sufficient information about the topic in question that someone may be able to apply the theory to practice in a context other than where the study took place (Mertens, 2005). Through my use of thick description and the inclusion of many direct quotations from participants in Chapter IV, I believe my study has a high degree of transferability.

### **Authenticity**

This criterion is not only concerned with fairness related to using the research to amplify women's voices without exploiting or distorting them (Olesen, 2000), it is also related to "deliberate attempts to prevent marginalization, to act affirmatively with respect to inclusion, and to act with energy to ensure that all voices in the inquiry effort had a chance to... have their stories treated fairly and with balance" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 180; Mertens, 2005). I tried to achieve authenticity by treating participants respectfully in my interactions with them, maintaining confidentiality, giving them opportunities to use their own language related to their identities, including their own words as much as possible in my presentation of findings, and asking participants to confirm the accuracy of transcripts. Achieving authenticity and fairness were primary concerns of mine throughout the process, not only because doing so is important to me

personally, but also because it is consistent with using theoretical perspectives aligned with the goal of promotion of social justice. To assist me with this, I was sure to consider a variety of questions related to ethics.

### **Ethics**

In my study, I followed the procedures explained in this chapter (and in the consent forms shared with participants) in an effort to collect and interpret data as accurately and ethically as possible. The informed consent form can be reviewed in Appendix E. Deception will not be part of the study. In terms of addressing guidelines related to privacy and confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for participants and identifying characteristics were removed from the dissertation. In addition, although participants were given the option to choose the location in which interviews would take place, they were asked to choose locations that allowed for confidentiality (e.g., an office or closed meeting room would be better interview locations than a coffee shop). All interviews ended up taking place in a meeting room in the student center that allowed both the researcher and participant to sit to one side of the glass door so it was difficult for people to see who was in the room. Because the vast majority of the interviews took place during evenings in the summer months, when traffic in the student center was extremely low, the chances that anyone unrelated with the study was aware that interviews were taking place was small. Documents and transcripts were saved securely and will be disposed of after the study according to institutional policies.

Although conducting the study at the same institution where I work “may raise issues of power and risk to the researcher, the participants, and the site” (Creswell, 2013,

p. 150), I took actions to reduce or prevent these risks. For example, I did not interview students with whom I have (or have had) a supervisory or mentoring relationship. In fact, I did not interview any students who I had ever met before (as far as I can recall). Due to the professional relationships I have with key informants, who were likely mentors and supervisors of participants, I reminded students of my commitment to maintaining confidentiality so they would not fear me sharing information with any of my colleagues who might know them. Although I had no recollection of ever having met any of the participants prior to interviewing them, some of them said during the interview that the person who encouraged them to participate in the study said good things about me, which may have helped me to establish trust.

I needed to be aware of a number of ways in which power dynamics could have shaped the study (Birks & Mills, 2011). For example, as a university staff member, students may have perceived me as having a certain level of status, which could have affected their responses. Although I was honest about my role at the university, I spent very little time talking about it (only sharing the information in written communication under my name, and when introducing myself in the first interview).

Because I have a number of identities associated with privilege (as a White, heterosexual, middle-class, cisgender individual who is temporarily without any disabilities), I tried to always be conscious of how my intersecting identities might influence my interactions with participants, particularly those who had one or more social identities that differed from mine (Birks & Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2014; Jones et al., 2014). When it came to the presentation of my findings, I am aware that “going beyond

the question of whether or not a member of a dominant group can legitimately study the experiences of an oppressed group lies the ethical issues of who can speak for another” (Mertens, 2005; p. 248). By using thick description and including direct quotations from participants, I tried to share findings as authentically as possible, without silencing participants’ voices, or essentializing their experiences (Birks & Mills, 2011; Fine et al., 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Mertens, 2005). When analyzing data, I also remembered that “it is not the researcher’s perception of an event that matters. Rather, it is what participants are saying or doing that is important” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 33).

Because I hoped to do more than merely avoid causing harm to the participants, I was dedicated to developing trusting relationships with the participants that would result in mutual benefits (Birks & Mills, 2011). It was reassuring when most of the participants expressed (without prompting) that they had enjoyed being involved with the interviews. I strove to establish a balanced sharing of power by scheduling interviews at times and locations based on participants’ preferences, using a flexible approach in interviews so participants could guide the process, member-checking to ensure that I was representing participants’ stories accurately, and being open to answering questions and sharing information about the study with participants (Birks & Mills, 2011). I attempted to begin this study having done as much work as possible educating myself about multiple identities and intersectionality. Prior to conducting this study, I have been engaged in an on-going process of self-work to explore aspects of my identity that are associated with a history of privilege, and those linked with marginalization.

### **Researcher Reflexivity and Positionality**

The quality of this study could have been jeopardized if I had not been constantly engaging in reflexivity, which is “the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher” (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 183). This meant understanding what it means for a researcher to serve as the key instrument for data collection and analysis, as well as being aware of the biases and assumptions I brought to the study (Charmaz 2014; Jones et al., 2014; Merriam, 2009; Mertens, 2005). As a qualitative researcher, I was expected to share my values, perspectives, and the personal investment I have in exploring this particular question. Being honest about these things should help readers to better understand and critically evaluate the study (Schwandt, 2007). I believe that my professional and personal experiences helped me better appreciate the nuances in the data, without having preconceived notions about what I would find.

I began this study having worked professionally in higher education since 2001, and having been a staff member in a leadership development office since 2005. When I was in graduate school, no leadership classes were offered within our program. After earning my Master’s degree, while working as a residence director, I had a number of opportunities to collaborate with the student leadership development department. Through these interactions, I first became familiar with literature on leadership. My familiarity with this body of literature increased when I started working in that department a few years later. I remember being inspired by depictions of leadership as a collaborative process for the purpose of positive social change and starting to identify more strongly as a leader as a result. As an educator, I continually find that many students

relate positively with this leadership approach as well. In particular, I have noticed that students who identified as cisgender women, and as students of color have said that it was only when framing leadership in this way that they began to identify as leaders themselves.

Something else I have observed, both in my work with students, and in my personal life, is that cisgender men tend to be much more likely than cisgender women to express that they believe in their abilities as leaders. When speaking about my own experiences in this section, I have only mentioned what I have observed among cisgender individuals. I do not wish to discount the experiences of trans\* gender people. I only am able to note general patterns of behavior that I have observed among cisgender people.

I have witnessed many men students confidently claim they already had strong leadership skills, and then state that the reason they chose to participate in a leadership development certificate program was to recognize their strengths more officially. In contrast, more often than not, women students told me that they were participating in the program to further develop their skills, in hopes of one day feeling comfortable enough to apply to hold a leadership role on campus. I also have known a disproportionate number of women colleagues who downplayed their strengths when asked to consider taking on leadership roles, and I have women friends who doubted themselves so much that they would not even apply for promotions at work. Saddened by observing talented, bright, passionate women underestimate their competence as leaders, I often found myself wondering what (if any) specific actions I could take to address the issue.

The question of how to help women and females believe in their leadership ability

has become even more important to me since the birth of my first child nine years ago. Now, as the mother of two daughters, I constantly wonder what I can do to help them to believe in themselves as leaders. I am aware that my children have many identities associated with privilege; they are White, middle-class, U.S. citizens who speak English in a country with English as its official language, they currently have no significant disabilities, and (as far as I know at this time) they are cisgender. Although I understand that their privilege will shape the way they experience life, I also think about how various forms of oppression related to their sex and gender may affect them. I try to be conscious of all of the messages my children receive that could affect how they perceive themselves, and what they believe they are capable of doing. I try to provide opportunities for my children that can build their leadership skills, and I affirm their efforts in all they do. When I talk with my daughters about leadership, I present the concept as a collaborative process for positive change in hopes that this definition will resonate with them as it did for me. I believe they can become individuals who will positively affect change in the world, and I do not want anything to stand in the way of them realizing their full potential.

Through my work, my experience in Loyola University Chicago's Higher Education doctoral program, as well as through my role as a mother of two daughters, I have become increasingly interested in how women and females develop LSE. After completing this study, I am committed to further exploring the influences of multiple identities, power, and privilege on the development of LSE because of my personal values, which are aligned with the social justice mission at the institution where I work



and study. As is often the case for scholars, while I selected my research question in part due to a gap in the literature, I also chose it because of my personal and professional interests (Creswell, 2013).

How I experience my life has certainly been influenced by all of my multiple identities, particularly those associated with privilege. I must constantly be conscious of the ways in which my privilege has shaped my biases, assumptions, the way I approach my work, and how I conducted this study. For example, I noticed after the first few interviews that the shortest interviews were with two students who identified as being Hispanic. I was concerned that these two participants may not have been feeling as comfortable as me as other participants were, and wondered if it had anything to do with identities of theirs that differed from mine (I thought most about our identities related to race and socio-economic status). This could have compromised the trustworthiness of the study, and raised concerns about whether I was helping participants to feel as comfortable as possible. In interviews that followed, I was even more conscious of trying to take time at the beginning of the interview to establish rapport. My concern decreased when the second interviews with both participants were longer than the first, and I noticed that interviews with the other participants who identified as women of color were similar in length to the interviews with White participants. I also was pleased to realize that even the shortest of the interviews had a lot of substance, and that the person with the shortest interview ended it thanking me for the “nice” time she had talking with me.

In a final point about reflexivity, while it is appropriate and understandable that I was personally and emotionally affected by the stories I heard in the interviews, I had to

be aware of not letting my feelings interfere with my ability to be an effective researcher (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I had to remain relatively consistent in the ways in which I interacted with participants, regardless of feeling a stronger personal connection with some of them than others. I also had to find a way to demonstrate that I heard and understood what participants said without over-identifying with their stories, or becoming distracted from my goal of focusing on collecting data relevant to my study. I had to remain attentive to the role I was playing as a researcher, and not speak with participants as I would in my role as a leadership educator and student affairs professional. For example, there was a time when one of the participants shared a difficult experience she had as a student leader, and I found myself consciously reminding myself that our conversation was not meant to be focused on exploring various ways in which she might want to approach conversations with peers and supervisors from that point forward to help manage the tensions that appeared to be experienced by all parties. I was not a mentor or advisor at that point in time, but someone conducting an interview.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I described grounded theory methodology, as well as the social constructivist paradigm and the social justice-oriented theoretical perspectives that influenced my approach. I explained why this methodology was appropriate for my research question, and outlined the procedures I used to answer this question. Information about the research context was given. I shared the ways in which participants were recruited, selected, and compensated for participating.

By conducting interviews with 12 participants, and using the constant comparative method while coding data, I collected and analyzed data concurrently. I searched for conceptual themes and relationships among them to create a grounded theory, which will be described in the next chapter. Finally, I shared the limitations of the study, as well as the ways in which I strove to produce high quality research. In the next chapter, I will share my findings and the emerging theory that resulted from the data analysis process.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

I designed this grounded theory study to better understand how university students who identify as women or female develop LSE, with a focus on the ways in which multiple identities might influence this process. Throughout the process of conducting two interviews with each of the 12 participants in this study, and analyzing the data, I probed for meaning to ensure that when participants talked about their “confidence” in themselves as leaders, they were actually referring to LSE. As previously stated, although the word confidence has been used in studies on self-efficacy because it is a similar, and more familiar term, confidence and self-efficacy are distinct constructs (Bandura, 1997; Hannah et al., 2008; McCormick et al., 2002). While confidence indicates the strength of one’s general belief in oneself, self-efficacy refers to the internal evaluation of one’s abilities to be successful in a specific domain (Bandura, 1997).

I used the constant comparison method to concurrently collect and analyze data. First, I coded each interview transcript by concepts, with some excerpts being related with multiple codes. I coded excerpts in an Excel spreadsheet, which ultimately included over 600 codes. I grouped codes into major categories, each of which had certain characteristics and a range of dimensions. Some of the main categories had two or more sub-categories. The major categories were: industrial notions of leadership, judgments of women leaders, underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, encouragement,

affirmation, direct experiences, relating with post-industrial notions of leadership, and overcoming self-doubt. I organized major categories by the levels of systems previously explained in the literature review (i.e., the macrosystem, exosystem, microsystem, and internal processes), which were based on a combination of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (1977) and the RMMDI (Abes et al., 2007).

In this chapter, I introduce the participants, provide an overview of the emerging theory, then discuss in detail the themes that emerged by using multiple quotations and providing thick description. The emerging theory describes how participants developed LSE, and also refers to factors that had a negative impact on LSE. The core tenets of the emerging theory are as follows: (a) messages about leaders and leadership are received from layers of ecological systems; (b) people and experiences mediate the effects of early messages; (c) internal processes play an important role shaping LSE; and (d) multiple identities influence LSE.

### **Introduction of Participants**

In Table 1, I listed each participant's pseudonym along with the social identities with which they identified. I included the terms used by participants in the online information form for gender, race, and sexual orientation. In addition to completing the information form, during the second interview I asked participants to complete a diagram based on the RMMDI (Abes et al., 2007) after showing them a similar diagram that I had already completed myself, which served as an example. In the subsequent participant descriptions, I also included (in parentheses) the terms used by participants on the diagram they completed whenever terms differed from those used on the information

form. Also included in the participant descriptions are participants' involvements and the leadership positions they hold or have held. To prevent participants from being identified, I did not note specific organizations or positions that are unique.

As displayed in Table 1, all participants initially identified as female (although some changed to identify as "women," "cisgender," or "gender-fluid" on the diagram). Almost all of the students described themselves as middle class, although, based on the stories shared by participants, I perceived that there was more variation in SES than their shared identification may indicate. Other than gender and SES, there was variation in the sample (especially considering its small size) based on race and sexual orientation due to the use of maximum variation sampling technique.

The identities that were most often discussed were gender, race (which for some participants was combined with ethnicity), sexual orientation, and religion. Race was salient for all of the students of color, and sexual orientation was salient for most of the students who identified as lesbians or bisexual. Unfortunately, information about some identities is missing from this study. The challenge of recruiting a small group of participants with diverse identities across all aspects of social identity resulted in my decision to focus on race and sexual orientation. A limitation of my study is that information about some identities (such as ability) was not explicitly solicited through the online information form or the diagram that students were asked to complete as part of the second interview. Although I focused the sampling strategy for practical purposes, I should have intentionally asked about all identities, because they all matter. Even among identities about which I asked questions, information may be incomplete because students

tended to combine race and ethnicity, and little (if anything) was added for “culture” on the diagram. I only mentioned what was written in that section of the diagram when participants added a comment.

I asked participants to consider whether there were any perceived relationships with negative influences on their LSE and one or more of their identities. Almost all of the participants mentioned gender, and a number of people talked about race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and faith/religious identity. The only other identity mentioned was socio-economic class, which was noted by two participants as a negative influence on LSE because a lack of wealth can prevent students from fully engaging in leadership activities on-campus, and it could prevent someone from having a successful career as a political leader. Unlike race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and faith, SES was not linked with gender or any other identity. It was rare for participants to talk about identities associated with privilege. A few Christian and Catholic students discussed how women were excluded from leadership roles in their churches, and Annie said that because she was middle-class and White, she may not be accepted as a leader in communities where members differed from her in terms of race and SES.

Table 1. Participants' Social Identities

Participants	Gender	Race -Ethnicity	Sexual Orientation	Religion	Socio- Economic Status
Adenne	Female	African- American	Heterosexual	Atheist	Working class
Annie	Female	White	Lesbian	Agnostic	Middle Class
Ashley	Female	Hispanic	Heterosexual	Catholic	Middle Class
Brooke	Female	White	Straight	Lutheran	Middle Class
Danielle	Female	Caucasian	Lesbian	Catholic	Middle Class
Elena	Female	Pakistani/ South Asian	Straight	Muslim	Middle Class
Hunter	Female	White	Bisexual	Agnostic	Middle Class
Jessica	Female	Hispanic	Straight	Catholic	Middle Class
Lilly	Female	Caucasian	Heterosexual	Catholic	Middle Class
M.I.T.	Female	Indian/ South Asian	Heterosexual	Jain	Middle Class
Sally	Female	Mixed/ Puerto Rican & Chinese	Bisexual	Agnostic	Middle Class
Sarah	Female	Caucasian	Heterosexual	Catholic	Middle Class

### Participant Descriptions

#### Adenne

Adenne is a female (cisgender female), African-American (Black/“African-American”), heterosexual, atheist, working class, fourth-year student. Adenne’s main on-campus involvement is as a Resident Assistant (RA), and she has served in that role for multiple years. Adenne also holds an executive board position in a sorority, and is a member of a cultural student organization. Adenne has volunteered off-campus. From ages 10 through 17, Adenne was involved with the Civil Air Patrol, a military training program for people aged 18 years or younger.



**Annie**

Annie is a female (cisgender woman), White (White/Caucasian), lesbian, middle class student who identified as agnostic during the interview, but spoke a great deal about growing up in a Catholic family. Annie has been involved with and held an executive position within a student organization. She served regularly in a university-supported program in partnership with a local elementary public school. Annie participated in an alternative break immersion (ABI) and spent a summer working with a program for underserved youth. Annie played sports growing up, and was a member of her high school's student government. A third-year, undergraduate student, Annie talked about future plans to work in politics or business.

**Ashley**

Ashley is a female (woman), Hispanic, heterosexual, Catholic, middle class student. On her diagram, she described her culture as "modern American Hispanic." Although she identifies as middle-class, Ashley shared stories that seemed to reflect that her family was (at least during some points in time) lower-class. Ashley is a member of a sorority, and holds executive positions in a cultural student organization and an honor society. Ashley has had a number of off-campus work experiences, such as working in a legal office. Prior to university, Ashley held an internship with a state representative. Ashley is in her fourth-year and preparing to take the LSAT to pursue a career in criminal law. Discouraged at the corruption that exists, she chose this path to make positive change in the legal system.

### **Brooke**

Brooke identified as a female (woman), White (American), straight (heterosexual), Lutheran, middle class, fourth-year student who has always been involved with sports. Brooke is a student athlete, and retreat leader with Campus Ministry. She has coached sports off-campus, and worked in a human resources internship along with volunteering for a number of one-time events. Brooke changed majors within the business school so she could pursue a career in human resources.

### **Danielle**

Danielle is a female (woman/gender fluid), Caucasian, lesbian, Catholic, middle class student. Danielle has been an RA, a member of residence hall council, an executive board member for a club sports team, and holds various jobs with on-campus offices. Growing up, Danielle was involved with sports and high school student government. A fourth-year student, Danielle has held a number of internships in prestigious financial institutions.

### **Elena**

Elena identifies as a female (cisgender female), Pakistani/South Asian, straight (heterosexual), middle class student. In terms of her culture, Elena talked about being part Pakistani and part American; she spent some of her early childhood in Pakistan before moving to the USA. Elena was the only student who expressed interest in participating in the study who did not list multiple on-campus involvement experiences. Elena is a student employee in a campus department but is not otherwise involved. In high school, Elena was involved with a service organization. Off-campus, Elena has been involved in

rallies related to her religion and had experience working with non-profit organizations.

Elena is a third-year student who initially wanted to go into politics. However, because of her perception that politics are full of corruption, she recently decided to pursue a career in non-profit organizations, or as an anti-terrorism researcher.

### **Hunter**

Hunter is a female, White, bisexual, agnostic, middle class, fourth-year undergraduate student. Hunter was a student athlete in her first year in university and coached high school athletes while in college. On-campus, Hunter had been an RA and a student facilitator for a campus department. In high school, experiences that were important to Hunter included her role as an athlete and a volunteer at a nature preserve. Hunter plans to work as an environmental science professor.

### **Jessica**

Jessica is a female (woman), Hispanic, straight (heterosexual), Catholic, middle class, second-year undergraduate student. Although she identified as being middle class on the diagram she completed, in a number of the stories she shared about growing up, she referred to having a lower-class background. Jessica is actively involved on-campus with a community service program and works as an administrative student employee in a campus department. Jessica has been involved with service off-campus since her childhood. Jessica has had a number of internships as part of her experience in a Cristo Rey high school, and remained connected with the network as a mentor for high school students. Jessica hopes to someday open a health clinic for people who are homeless.

### **Lilly**

Lilly is a female, Caucasian (White), heterosexual, Catholic, middle class third-year student. Lilly identified as “southern” culturally, because of the manners with which she was raised. Lilly’s on-campus involvements include working as a campus tour guide, being an executive member of residence hall council, an active member of a sorority, and holding a team leader position with campus activities. Lilly listed a number of off-campus work experiences, such as babysitting, and working at a restaurant. Lilly volunteered through her church and was involved with a youth group as a child.

### **M.I.T.**

M.I.T. is a female, Indian/South Asian, heterosexual, middle class student who is a member of the Jain religious community. Because of her musical interests, M.I.T. described herself as being influenced by “Indian and Arab culture.” On-campus, M.I.T. holds an executive position in a cultural acapella student organization, and was a member of a community service organization, a religious student organization, and an interfaith group. A fourth-year student, M.I.T. discussed her hope to work for an international non-profit in the future.

### **Sally**

Sally is a female, bisexual, agnostic, middle class student who described her racial/ethnic identity as “mixed (Puerto Rican and Chinese).” A second-year student, Sally is an active member of two environmental student organizations, an executive member of a film club, and involved with a mentorship program for women of color. Sally spent part of her childhood in Puerto Rico, where she was involved in a student

organization for empowering girls, engaged in service and philanthropy, and involved with a rally.

### **Sarah**

Sarah is a female (woman/female), Caucasian (White), heterosexual, Catholic, middle-class student. Sarah's main campus involvement has been as an orientation leader, a peer mentor, a campus tour guide, and a member of a Christian faith sharing group. Prior to university, Sarah was engaged in community service. A fourth-year student, Sarah is in school to become a teacher.

### **Core Tenets of the Emerging Theory**

Core tenets are key concepts that are relevant across categories. The four core tenets that I describe below are higher order concepts that are woven throughout the emerging theory. The core tenets of the emerging theory from this study are as follows: (a) messages are received from layers of ecological systems; (b) people and experiences mediate the effects of early messages; (c) internal processes play an important role in shaping LSE; and (d) multiple identities influence the development of LSE throughout all aspects of the process. Each of these tenets is described below, and then covered in detail in the sections that follow.

### **Messages are Received from Layers of Ecological Systems**

At multiple levels of systems (i.e., societal, institutional, and interpersonal), participants received messages that influenced how they understand leadership, as well as their LSE. Messages had largely negative effects on LSE. At the broader societal level, as well as the institutional level, participants predominantly received messages that

reinforced dominant narratives about the male leader prototype and notions of leadership that were aligned with the industrial paradigm (an approach to leadership with which few participants could personally relate). As result, in their early childhoods, many participants described having relatively low LSE.

### **People and Experiences Mediate the Effects of Early Messages**

Participants received messages about leaders and leadership as early as they could recall in their childhood memories. These messages largely determined their initial LSE when participants started to directly engage in leadership development activities, which typically happened in late elementary school for some and in high school for others. At this point, participants encountered people and experiences that either encouraged growth in their LSE or had a detrimental effect. Anything that disrupted messages from the dominant narrative tended to contribute to growth in LSE and help participants become more likely to identify as leaders.

### **Internal Processes Play an Important Role Shaping LSE**

Participants cognitively filtered messages that could affect their LSE. Meta-cognition was an advanced cognitive tactic employed by students to recognize and reflect upon the validity of dominant narratives, interpret the impact that these assumptions had on them, and then consciously change their thought patterns. Participants sometimes talked about intentionally employing strategies to help counter factors that had the potential to negatively influence their LSE. One such approach was to engage in leadership development experiences with a learning orientation. The other was to recognize and try to disrupt stereotypes.

### **Multiple Identities Influence LSE**

Throughout the levels of systems described above (i.e., societal, organizational and interpersonal, and internal) there was evidence that multiple identities influenced the development of LSE. There were also times when some participants spoke about the intersections of two or more identities (i.e., gender and race; gender, faith and sexual orientation; or gender, race, culture, and faith). Findings from this study hint at further understanding the development of LSE through an intersectional lens, although information about this relationship was incomplete and not garnered from all participants. Insights about the impact of intersecting identities on LSE were largely shared by participants who positioned inextricable links among various identities that were associated with a history of marginalization.

### **Key Categories of the Emerging Theory**

I organized the emerging theory based on the modified version of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model presented in the literature review, which featured the macrosystem, exosystem, microsystem, and an additional layer of systems at the level of internal processing. In this section, I describe in detail the categories and themes that contribute to the theory, as organized by levels of systems, starting with the macrosystem. When describing the elements of the emerging theory, I will note the relationships that exist between and among categories. Figure 2 outlines the categories and themes as organized by the framework of nested systems that was previously described.

## Macrosystem

Participants spoke about the societal ideologies, beliefs, and cultural norms that influenced them at the level of the macrosystem. One of the main themes related to conceptualizations of leadership that were aligned with the industrial paradigm. When students talked about being exposed to industrial notions of leadership, they rarely referenced a specific source. For example, without clarifying who these people were, Annie stated that:

Just with growing up, I've kind of gotten those messages. People are always saying to be a leader and to take charge, and I feel like that's always just kind of an implied, or even, I feel like, directly said - it's like, just being one person in charge.

Although most of the time, participants spoke about receiving messages from the social system in a vague sense, they sometimes implied that their families or school systems reinforced these assumptions while growing up. Sarah hinted at the influence of the education system when she said that “growing up, especially at a young age, probably like elementary or middle school... leadership would often be focused on in the sense of having one person leading all the others.” Thus, here one can see the interaction between the category of the presence of industrial notions of leadership and the core tenet focused on receiving messages from various levels of systems.

The other theme found at the level of the macrosystem was related to ways in which leaders who are women are judged differently than leaders who are men. Participants talked about gender-based stereotypes that influence how women are perceived as leaders. Although these messages were sometimes attributed to the media, personal experiences in the classroom, and involvements, like the previous theme, most



of the comments related to women leaders being harshly judged without referencing a source. As the data included below demonstrate, at the level of the macrosystem the vast majority of influences tended to have a negative impact on participants' LSE.

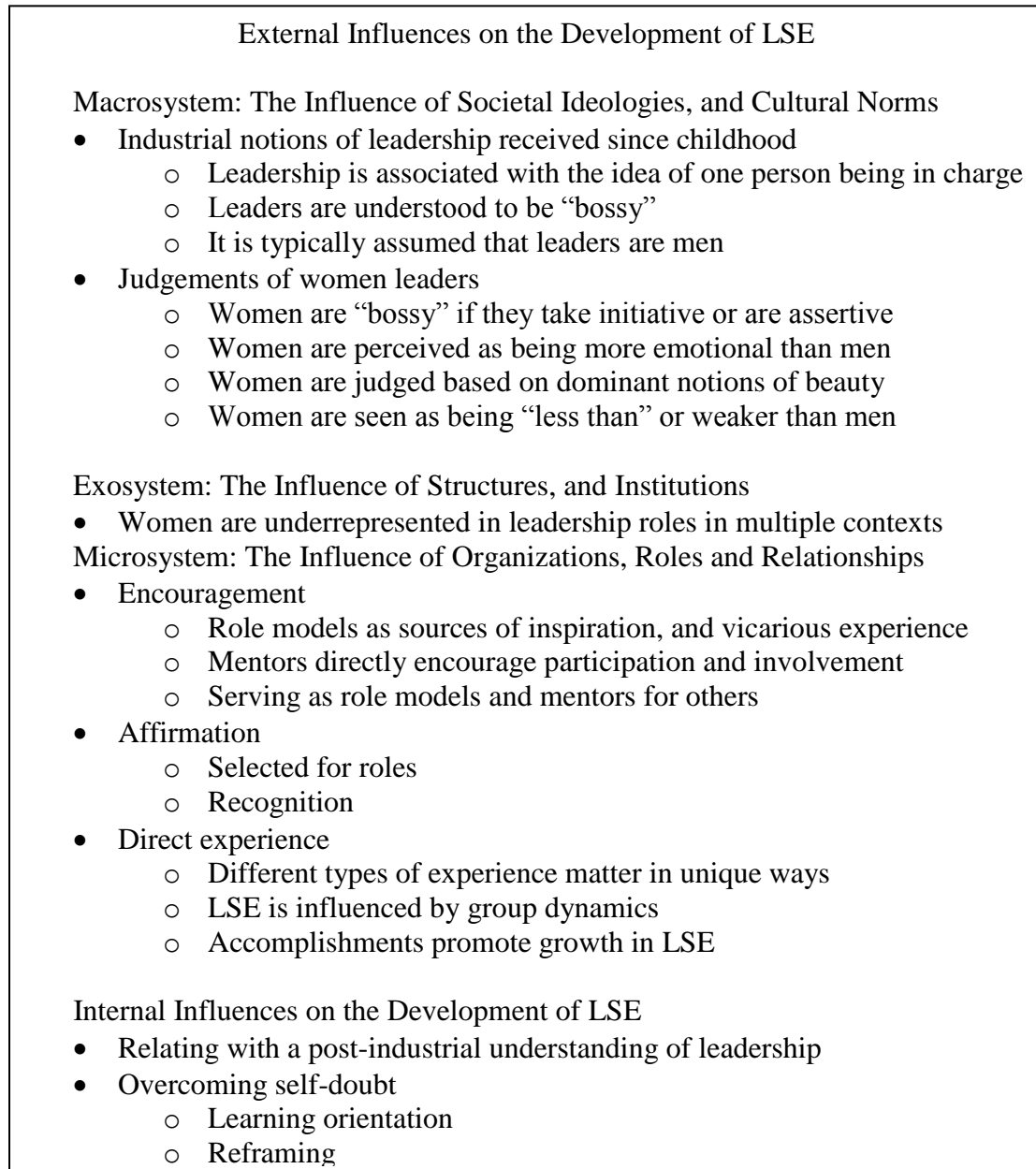


Figure 2. Grounded Theory of LSE Development for College Women and Females

**Industrial notions of leadership.** When I asked participants about messages they had received about leadership throughout their lives, their comments overwhelmingly reflected concepts that were characteristic of leadership theories related with the industrial paradigm. These themes included: (a) leadership being associated with the idea of one person being in charge; (b) leaders being seen as “bossy;” and (c) assumptions that leaders are typically men. A number of times, participants communicated that these assumptions about leaders and leadership were widely held, although they personally did not believe that these norms reflected the ways in which they acted as leaders themselves. The implications of this incongruence between widely perceived beliefs and participants’ own leadership styles will be further discussed in the section on internal processes.

***One in charge.*** Almost all of the participants recalled that while they were growing up people talked about leadership as if it was equated with one person being in charge of a group. Sarah said, “leadership would often be focused on in the sense of having one person leading all the others.” When participants talked about messages they had received, leadership was frequently associated with people holding specific positions of authority, such as being a president, politician, CEO, sports coach, or school principal. A number of times, participants used images such as one person standing on a stage or at a podium to mobilize a large group of people, as M.I.T. expressed:

I know that there's different kinds of leaders, but I guess in a traditional sense some of the most powerful people will mobilize everyone else through that kind of image I guess, or sometimes they actually do that. They're on a stage, they're mobilizing people by talking to a mass, to a crowd. And I do better in the smaller sense, I just talk to people individually.

Although M.I.T. was not alone in recognizing that different leadership styles existed, it was not uncommon for participants to have heard trait-based definitions of leaders that were narrow in scope, and that portrayed leaders as individuals in the spotlight. For example, Jessica said:

When I was younger I probably thought, like I said earlier, leadership was like, there's always like Type A, Type B kind of people. So I think that was the vision that I had, like there's always those people who are natural-born leaders, who kind of just always step up to the plate. Who don't mind having the spotlight on them, things like that. I think I always saw that but since I was never really that person, I didn't think I was a leader at all.

Sally also referred to expectations that leaders had “Type A” personalities, and other participants referenced the concept of there being people who were “naturally born leaders” with certain characteristics. Participants sometimes mentioned a lack of alignment between the idea of leaders being remotely in charge of a group and their own style of leadership. For example, Jessica stated that she is not like people in the spotlight who are portrayed as leaders, and M.I.T. commented that she is more successful as a leader by forming relationships rather than being a singular person in charge who mobilizes a group from a podium. This disconnect contributed to participants distancing themselves from the concept of leadership, and failing to see themselves as leaders.

***Bossy.*** Participants’ conceptualizations of leaders being the one person in charge of a group were related with ideas about leaders being bossy. Most of the participants talked about leaders being directive and having control over group processes, but more than half specifically used the word “bossy” to describe leaders. Sometimes, participants shared childhood stories to illustrate the associations in their minds between “leaders” and “bossiness.” For example, Brooke’s mother told her Brooke was a leader from an

early age because she was bossy when interacting with her younger siblings. Without clarifying the source of this assumption, Lilly stated that students who were perceived to be leaders were those who told others what to do:

I think definitely when I was younger, middle school age... leadership then wasn't in a real "working together" sense - it was more of a "there's a leader and there's a bunch of people who do what they say."

Other examples of leaders being seen as bossy were more general in nature, and unrelated to personal experiences. Although the term seemed to have negative connotations, a number of participants appeared to believe that it was often necessary for someone in a group to act in this way. This appears to reflect students' internalization of the dominant narrative of hierarchical, positional leaders in charge of a group. Annie said that it may not be desirable to be "the person who bosses everyone around or takes charge, but someone needs to do it."

Only a few participants articulated a clear distinction between being a boss and being a leader, such as Brooke, who said that "leading is more than bossing people around," and instead felt that leadership is about "getting in there doing stuff with other people to get to a common goal." Adenne used a particular image to describe this concept, one to which she had been exposed through the Civil Air Patrol.

A boss is someone who, and they show it all the time with a little image. It's stereotypically a man sitting in a chair and the chair is perched on top of the backs of other men that are trying to slowly get from point A to point B. And that's the boss. The boss is someone who directs without really having anything at stake. A leader in the picture that accompanies is someone who is helping to carry the chair. A leader is someone who leads from the front. They also have a stake in what it is that they're asking you to do. They would never ask you to do anything that they wouldn't be willing to do themselves.

Although this image of leaders is more collaborative in nature, it remains leader-centric, and reinforces a singular person in a recognized role within the group. It also is limiting in that those depicted as being involved with leadership are all men.

*Prototype of male leaders.* It was early in the first interview when I asked participants to tell me about the messages they had received about leaders and leadership over their lifetimes. This was prior to me asking any questions prompting them to think about potential relationships between multiple identities and leadership (although the topic of the study had been discussed by then and may have influenced responses related to gender). Dominant societal portrayals of the prototypical male leader were shared by multiple participants, including Annie, who said:

You're kind of just conditioned, not in a malicious way, but it's just not what you see, and so you don't typically put those two things together as, like, women in a very high leadership position or that sort of thing.

Although Annie stated that she was not explicitly told that “a leader was just one person or that I couldn't be a leader,” she acknowledged that she did receive messages that reinforced the idea that leaders were men. When participants were younger, they appeared to internalize these assumptions without question, as Sally did:

I know for a fact when I was a kid, leaders were politicians, or the president, or, the headmaster of my school I thought was a leader... I didn't even think of female politicians. There were mostly just, like, the dudes over in the government, not much else. I thought of doctors, but never female doctors either.

As these participants aged, however, they realized that whenever leaders were discussed, the examples given were typically men. They started to question this implicit assumption linking maleness to leaders, in part because of exposure to more women who were indeed in leadership roles.

Some participants said that they believed U.S. society was slowly changing, and that women were starting to be recognized more often as leaders. Both Sally and Annie noted that when Hilary Clinton first ran as a presidential candidate, she seemed to encounter resistance based on her gender, which they do not believe she is facing now. Annie even recalled that years ago, she (Annie) had questioned whether or not a woman was right for the role of president of the United States. When recalling this, Annie appeared to experience a level of dissonance, as her comments alternated between acknowledging women's continued underrepresentation in leadership roles in various fields and her belief that today, "you'd be hard pressed to find somebody who doesn't think that a woman could hold a leadership position." Annie's comments and Sally's remark about not even considering women as leaders both reveal the powerful impact of internalized messages on women.

Danielle recognized that the historical exclusion of women from leadership roles still has an effect on women today when she stated that because "leadership was always seen as men... it takes a lot more for women to gain those leadership positions or like feel worthy of them." This demonstrates how hegemonic norms can negatively affect both the attainment of leadership positions for women as well as women's LSE once they are in these roles. Internal processes that enable people to recognize and then disrupt the male leader prototype seem to increase the acceptance and recognition of women leaders, which in turn contributes to gains in LSE for women leaders along with those observing them as role models.

**Judgments of women leaders.** Discussing the pervasiveness of industrial notions of leaders and leadership often resulted in participants talking about the ways in which they believed women were perceived or judged as leaders. Hunter stated that because people often expect leaders to be men, women who are leaders are held to “male standards” of behavior. Everyone except Jessica and M.I.T. shared examples of ways in which women in leadership roles are judged more harshly than men. The main themes related to this category were that, relative to men who were leaders, women who were leaders (a) tended to be called “bossy” if they took initiative or were assertive; (b) were perceived as being more emotional; (c) were more likely to be judged based on dominant notions of beauty; and (d) were often unaccepted or seen as being “less than” or weaker, particularly if they had multiple marginalized identities.

**Bossy.** Participants used the word “bossy” in two ways. First, as previously explained, the term was sometimes employed as a characteristic of leaders in general. However, these “general” portrayals of leaders were regularly associated with the male leader prototype, so it is reasonable to question participants’ conceptualizations of leaders when using the term “bossy” in this way. In “general” cases, the word was often accompanied with a sentiment that there are occasions when leaders *must* be somewhat “bossy” to achieve their goals with groups. Although the term that participants used in this sense was “bossy,” the context surrounding the word tended to imply that what students meant was a word such as “directive.”

The second way in which participants talked about the word “bossy” was while reflecting on how the term had been used to describe themselves as leaders, or to label

other women leaders. In these instances, the term shifted from being portrayed as a necessary element of leadership to being perceived negatively when linked with women leaders. Despite stating that leaders sometimes needed to be assertive, when Ashley shared her strengths as a leader, she was careful to say that she was “really good at giving direction and not necessarily being bossy.” Both Lilly and Adenne talked about being “bossy” when they were younger, but then changing their approach. Adenne found that being angry and domineering did not serve her well when group members did not follow through with their responsibilities. Lilly talked about being a confident kid who rarely considered the opinions of others until friends became frustrated with her. She said “they called me bossy and all these things, and those were things I didn't want to be associated with.” Eventually, she “learned how to tell, not tell people what to do, not be bossy, but be just the right amount of leadership to get the task done and do it well.” Although she did not want to be seen as bossy when she was a child, as a college student, Elena embraced the term “bossy” as a way to describe herself during university.

I love this movement of women stepping up and being ‘who cares if I'm bossy?’ I'm going to be the boss. I love being the leader. I like being in leadership roles and I'm the type of person who is like that.

Conscious that women leaders are evaluated differently than men leaders, Elena was unique in embracing the term “bossy.” She spoke with such enthusiasm about wanting to be “bossy” that it made me think she was trying to reclaim the word as a source of pride. I believe that Elena wanted to display the same assertive behavior for which men would likely be praised, challenge people to label her according to the dominant ideology (by



daring them to call her “bossy”), and then disrupt this narrative by raising awareness of its existence.

Most of the participants used the word “bossy” to describe how women leaders are generally perceived when they take initiative or are assertive. Participants stated that men who acted in similar ways were not labeled the same way, and noted that the term was associated with negative implications when applied to women. For example, Sally talked about the importance of fostering environments that are more supportive of women embracing their leadership approaches because without doing so, women

get these awful connotations or insults of how you're greedy or bitchy or controlling... we're really bossy. When a guy does it, he's just being a good boss or a great leader, etc. When a woman does it, it's like, oh, she's just a straight-up bitch, and it's like, really, is that okay? It's like the devil - damned if I do, damned if I don't, and that's the worst part.

Sally was frustrated that people (including other women) tended to judge women leaders more harshly than men leaders. She hates that women and leadership are not seen as being “cohesive,” stating that because leadership operates like a “boy’s club,” women do much of the work without being recognized as leaders. Similarly, Annie said that “if a boy takes initiative or something, he is a leader, but then a girl is often called bossy... That was definitely something that I didn't want to be called.” As a result, fear of being perceived as being “bossy” had a negative impact on her LSE because she was always worried about what other people would think of her and would hold back from taking leadership roles.

Brooke did not explicitly speak about a personal connection with being labeled “bossy,” but she believed that because the same behavior is judged more harshly when

exhibited by women leaders than when it is displayed by men, that it is “very difficult for women to step into leadership roles.” She also stated that “developing confidence is something that is difficult for women to do,” in part because of having to counter biased evaluations of women leaders. This implicit connection between concepts makes evident the omnipresence and impact of dominant ideologies on LSE.

***Emotions.*** In addition to talking about women leaders being perceived as being bossy, participants also spoke about women being seen as overly emotional when engaged in leadership. Some shared stories of women leaders who they respected for being unaffected. For example, Brooke said this about her older women teammates: “I looked up to them so much... They never allowed their emotions to take over. I think that's a big thing as a leader.” By not playing into the stereotype that portrays women as being emotive, Brooke’s teammates earned her respect. They also disrupted the dominant narrative in a subtle way, albeit by assimilating into the archetype of the emotionless leader. Sarah talked about a woman staff member who she thinks is widely appreciated on-campus. She said that the supervisor’s behavior challenges gender stereotypes about women being too emotional because she always keeps calm. When talking about this staff member, Sarah said “the way that she is a leader helps some people to move past thinking of her as a female leader.” Because the supervisor did not reinforce gender stereotypes through her actions, Sarah believed that people were more likely to fully recognize this person as a leader. Thus, the observation of a successful role model who conforms to stereotypically “masculine” behaviors seemed to foster LSE in the observer, while simultaneously fortifying hegemonic norms.

Conversely, both Adenne and Danielle were upset when people appeared to think that it was inappropriate for leaders to express emotions. Adenne talked about two experiences when she expressed frustration with RAs on her staff whose failure to fulfil job expectations resulted in other team members having to do more work. In both situations, her concerns were dismissed, and she felt that people perceived her as the stereotypical “angry Black woman” who was overreacting. In her performance evaluation, Adenne was told: “people feel like they need to walk on eggshells around you. You need to adapt to fit the team.” Adenne’s experience not only exemplifies the consequences of failing to comply with gendered dominant norms regarding leaders’ expressions of emotions; it also demonstrates the influence of multiple identities. Adenne’s identity as a Black woman shaped how others reacted to her as dominant norms extended beyond sexism or genderism to infuse racism as well. Although Adenne did not explicitly make a connection between this situation and LSE, she stated that during this experience she “didn’t feel valued at all” in her leadership role, which likely had an impact on her assessment of her ability to be successful as a leader working with this team.

Danielle also believed that it is natural for people to be passionate about their leadership activities. Danielle was distressed when someone recently told her that “if you’re in the work force and you want to just start crying in the middle of a tough conversation, they’re not going to value you as much of a woman leader.” Danielle values being authentic, and worried that if she had to hide her emotions, she would not be able to be her best self, which would impact how well she felt she could perform as a leader.

This experience offers an example of the risk that this type of dissonance will be internalized by Danielle to the detriment of her LSE.

*Judgments based on dominant notions of beauty.* Danielle shared a specific example of a time when her LSE suffered as a result of feeling that she was unable to be authentic. When working at her summer internship with a “conservative Christian company” in a small town, she felt pressured to “buy more girly clothes because I felt like I needed to do that in order to fit into the work place,” even though she usually preferred to wear pants and a “guy’s V-neck sweater.” Although gender expression should not be conflated with sexual orientation, Danielle spoke about the intersection of her identities as someone who identifies as “gender-fluid” and a lesbian and shared that she felt she had to hide both of these aspects of herself in this context. As a result, Danielle felt less efficacious, held herself back, and started questioning her decision-making. In contrast, at a different internship site where Danielle felt she could be herself, she felt very capable and saw herself as a leader for her peers at the same site.

Sarah also shared a concern about women being judged based on appearance and gave a personal example from some of her involvement experiences:

There have been many times when I've also had members of a team limit women in ways that they don't think they are. So, maybe, looking at women in a way that's more like sexualized rather than doing that for everyone on the team. When I've seen that, I think is a perceived weakness. Because rather than seeing the women on staff as being on the same playing field, I think sexualizing women in a different way than the entire staff is creating a barrier between the two sexes.

Sarah related this to women being taken less seriously, valued less on teams, and being perceived as being weaker. As a result, she felt that sometimes women are unnecessarily challenged when trying to achieve their goals as leaders.

Hunter believes that attractive people receive more respect in general. She stated that this was especially true for women, who often seemed to be judged more on their appearance than on qualities that were relevant to the leadership positions they held. Hunter specifically mentioned the media's focus on the physical appearance of politicians such as Sarah Palin and Hilary Clinton, stating that women "have so much pressure to look a certain way." Brooke said that she has noticed people listen more to her friends who are beautiful and remembers being told in a class that attractive people tend to get more attention. As someone who described herself as being "plain-looking," Brooke felt that she may not have the same ability to influence people when acting in a leadership role, reflecting a belief that limited her LSE.

Conversely, two participants talked about their physical appearance having a positive influence on their LSE. Ashley recalled being in beauty pageants since she was very young and believed that being comfortable in front of a crowd contributed to her believing in her abilities to be successful as a leader. After having been bullied as a child, Hunter's confidence started to grow when she became involved with sports, and was not "the fat middle-schooler anymore." Because a coach believed in her, she started to feel good about herself, which helped her become the captain and "main leader" of a high school team, a role for which she was positively recognized. By better complying with dominant norms related to appearance, these students gained greater acceptance, which translated to their beliefs that they would be more successful in social relationships associated with leadership.

Regardless of whether the impact was positive or negative, these examples illustrate the significant impact that hegemonic norms have over leader prototypes, which not only prescribe how leaders should behave but also how leaders should look. This in turn shapes how efficacy can sometimes be built through compliance/assimilation to dominant norms and at other times through disruption/rejection of those same norms. This reflects a relationship between a category (judgments based on dominant notions of beauty) and one of the core tenets of the theory (multiple identities influence the development of LSE). This also demonstrates an interaction between norms associated with leaders, and societal expectations for women in general.

***Less than.*** The idea of women being less valued than men came up a number of times. For example, Ashley mentioned messages she received (particularly within the legal field) that communicated to her that women are seen as “subpar,” which have made her feel that she had to work extra hard to prove people wrong. During one of her internships, Brooke observed that the supervisor of the team with which she worked never sought out the opinions of women in the group, even though some of the top salespeople were women. Both Brooke and Danielle spoke about the pay gap that exists because women are paid less than men for the same work.

Elena offered further complexity about notions of being “less than” by stressing that the wage gap is even greater for women of color. Elena’s identity as a woman of color (and more specifically, as a Pakistani woman living in America) was very salient to her. Elena talked about how racist and sexist biases can make:

it really hard for people to do anything, even apart from leadership. That's been a blow to my confidence. Also in gender, being a female. Talk about

intersectionality. Being a female is hard enough, but then you start talking about race, you start talking about ethnicity. They're like, 'you're a Pakistani girl in America. What are you going to do? Just get married and have kids?' I'm like, 'no, I'm a Pakistani girl in America, I can do this; I can be whatever I want to.' So, fighting between those two is hard, it's been tough. I hope I can overcome that.

Elena perceived that it was acceptable for women to work and have ambitions in the United States. However, she said that in Pakistani culture she would be expected to stop working once married so she could focus all her attention on her husband and family. She stated: "I felt like my whole life that I wanted to be a leader and all these things, and I would want to be that in my house too. I would not want somebody to make me take a step back." Elena's belief that women's leadership aspirations and abilities are not valued in Pakistani culture explains one way in which LSE can be constrained, and demonstrates how perceptions of women being "less than" are shaped by multiple identities.

Sally also talked about cultural pressures emerging from multiple identities that influenced how women of color were perceived as leaders within their fields. She specifically shared that in Puerto Rico, where she grew up, Latinas were not valued as professionals, particularly in business. Although Sally primarily spoke from a lens of multiple identities, she hinted at an intersectional understanding of the influence of both race and gender when she shared that people would evaluate Latinas by saying their performance was:

'pretty good, for a woman,' and they'll give them that small token of respect. But it will never be like, 'oh she really knows how to work like a man.' *I'll* be like, 'how about, oh, she just has good work ethic, and she's a good leader,' but *they're* always attributing something to the other sex.

The constant comparison with men appears to reinforce what was previously discussed about the prevalence of the prototype of the male leader.

There were two occasions when participants talked about the idea of being less valued without explicitly referencing a connection with gender. Danielle reflected on the impact that systemic heterosexism had on her:

There are definitely messages of both personal experience and just general societal messages like being a lesbian was never okay. Being gay as a Catholic person was totally not okay... It was hard to hear it from my parents and hear it from everyone else so that totally cut down my confidence for a long time. My confidence, ambition, things like that, so those played a huge part in it.

Jessica spoke about how her self-efficacy had been influenced by racist messages in the media (particularly those related with immigration):

Seeing things like that kind of makes you wonder. Why don't people think that I can do what everyone else can do? Or why should it be like twice as hard for me to do something that someone else is doing without even thinking about it? So those have definitely kind of negatively impacted my confidence.

In contrast, Annie said that her race positively influenced her LSE. As someone who identified as White, and who grew up in a predominantly White community, she had observed lots of people in leadership roles “who looked the same as me. I never felt like I was ‘less than’ or not capable.” Annie felt more assured in her ability to be successful as a leader due to the mere presence of multiple examples of people in leadership roles with whom she could relate in terms of race. Although Annie acknowledged her privilege related to her racial identity, she did so without recognizing a need to do something with that privilege. These examples illustrate how the theme of feeling “less than” as a leader was influenced by one or more multiple identities, or in some cases, by intersections of multiple identities.



## **Exosystem**

A major theme linking leadership with sex and gender was the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. This was the only theme found at the level of the exosystem, a level that consists of high-level structures and institutions that dictate how specific settings function. Similar to the theme of the male leader prototype (at the level of the macrosystem), this theme was based on the historical exclusion of women from opportunities (e.g., those associated with access to formal leadership positions). However, the themes were distinct in that the prototype reflects an ideological perspective about who was considered to be a “typical” leader, while the theme of underrepresentation of women was associated with there being a disproportionately small percentage of women in leadership roles in certain settings.

Most of the participants who spoke about women being underrepresented gave examples related to professional fields such as business, politics, or law. Annie talked about the impact that this could have:

In politics, women are also not very well represented, but if you have those female role models to look up to, and you see that from a young age, maybe that will help get more women involved in that. I think it depends on what you see. So if you're not seeing a lot of CEOs that are female, you're kind of just, kind of conditioned to believe that maybe women just don't hold those positions, or women can't, or whatever.

Although a history of sexism and genderism continues to contribute to the compositional underrepresentation of women in many fields, there are some institutions in which women are prevented from holding specific roles through policy as well. Both Annie and Elena spoke about the lack of women in formal leadership roles within religious communities. Annie talked about a new priest in her hometown who only wants male

teachers at the school connected with her family's church and who plans to go back to only having altar boys. Annie said she grew up in a traditional, closed-minded community, where she no longer feels she could be herself. Although she did not explicitly say so, it seemed that Annie did not think she would be successful as a leader in a context where she felt she did not fit.

Although Elena is proud that she has read about many Muslim women who have had "almost the same stature as some prophets," her father challenged her asking "if women are supposed to be in leadership roles, how come none of the prophets were women?" Not only did Elena resist internalizing her father's opinion, she proudly stated that after continuing to argue her point, he had started to change his perspective. Elena explicitly recognized the impact of:

misogyny and the patriarchy - I see that everywhere. Now that I've seen it in certain places, I'm like, wow it's so integrated nobody really asks questions... Growing up I was always told that it's men that are leaders, and even in school, I think we learned there's this many presidents. There've been 45 presidents but nobody ever questioned how come there hasn't been a female president until now.

By naming ideological influences, Elena seemed to be able to resist the impact they could have on her LSE.

Participants shared their beliefs that the percentage of women in leadership positions was often associated with access to power and influence in certain contexts. Hunter said that because men tend to hold significantly more leadership roles across many fields, there are "male ideals of what women should do," which can be limiting for women. Although she did not explicitly use the term, Hunter's comment hinted at the way in which patriarchal ideology is manifested in concrete ways in institutions, thus

illustrating a relationship between the macrosystem and exosystem. Adenne talked about her experience with the Civil Air Patrol, in a male-dominated context that exemplified many of the characteristics of an industrial approach to leadership including rigid hierarchy. Adenne shared that in the military, directives tend to come from a singular person in a certain position of authority, and “a lot of times, that voice is a male voice that's not really interested in listening to what you have to say from anyone, but particularly from women.” In an environment such as this, which is largely controlled by men, women may feel silenced because female voices are rarely heard when decisions are being made that affect them and other people.

When women are underrepresented in leadership roles, they may also experience a chilly climate in which they are made to feel unwelcome. For example, when Elena spoke about a professional area she is considering pursuing in the future, she worried that she might be made to feel this way:

I research a lot of anti-terrorism researchers who are awesome, who are leaders in their field, and I hope to be one day like them... but I don't know, because I'm Muslim, and I am a woman, and all the anti-terrorism researchers I've seen so far have been men, and they have been White men. And that kind of pushes me back. Am I going to be invited to this, what seems like sort of an exclusive group of boys? Will I be invited in?

Elena's comment reflects the influence of multiple identities on her ability to be accepted as a leader in a field dominated by White men, illustrating a connection with the core tenet related to multiple identities.

Elena was not the only participant for whom cognitive scripts were activated not only by the relatively few women in leadership roles, but also by the small number of women of color in such positions. Similarly, Ashley also spoke about a concern that she

would be made to feel like she did not fit in her chosen career path, the legal profession. She said this both because she would be a woman working in a male-dominated area, and because, as a Latina attorney, she would be further underrepresented and may “be seen like a traitor just because of my race or ethnicity.” Ashley referenced intersections of identities again when she talked about who holds leadership positions within the university:

Considering this campus, most leaders are White obviously, just because it's the majority of the population here. When you see someone of color, or a woman rather than a man in a leadership position it's kind of like, they're kind of like a unicorn... It's just really weird, and now that I sit down and think about it, why do I think that's strange? Why do I think that's so uncommon for a woman, or a woman of color to be in a leadership position?

Ashley demonstrated the use of meta-cognitive skills to disrupt messages that had the potential to be detrimental to her LSE.

Only two participants spoke about women being overrepresented in certain fields, and in leadership roles within those fields. Brooke said that the main reason she changed her major was because of the underrepresentation of women in some of the areas she had been considering when she entered college. Brooke has had many positive experiences with women supervisors and liked the idea of being in a field that was “dominated by women,” so she ended up choosing to pursue human resources. Sarah appreciated being an education major because she has been exposed to more women role models than she believes would have been the case in many other disciplines. Sarah looked to these role models to learn what type of leader she wanted to be, said they “pushed” her to be a leader. As the next section will illustrate, immediate settings can have a tremendous

effect on LSE as can the people with whom individuals interact closely in those environments.

### **Microsystem**

The microsystem encompasses influences on human development that are related to interactions within immediate settings, and experiences with organizations and roles. Three key categories at this level were encouragement, affirmation, and direct experiences. Participants were encouraged indirectly by observing role models who helped them believe that they would be capable of achieving their goals as leaders. More directly, participants were personally persuaded to engage in leadership development opportunities, often by mentors. Participants' abilities as leaders were affirmed when they were selected for roles for which they applied, and recognized when they received compliments from others for their efforts. These external sources proved very powerful in developing LSE. On a more internal level, direct experiences affected participants' LSE a great deal. These experiences contributed to the development of knowledge and skills, an appreciation for what can be achieved when working with effective groups, and a sense of accomplishment.

**Encouragement.** Almost all of the participants remembered being encouraged to become involved in experiences that had the potential to contribute to their leadership development during their childhoods. Parents were frequently the first people who persuaded participants to join organizations, play sports, and engage in service. Participants were also encouraged in similar ways by people such as teachers, supervisors, and peers. Along with parents, these people served as influential guides for

students throughout their leadership development journeys. Among all the people who encouraged participants' involvement, mothers were named most often. Mothers appeared to playing a crucial role for most participants, many of whom also named their mothers as leadership role models. Whoever was the source of the encouragement, being told that someone believed they had the ability to be successful at something often motivated participants to pursue an opportunity that they would not otherwise have considered. More information about this will be shared later in this section.

***Role models.*** When participants used the term “role model” they typically talked about people they admired, and people who they hoped to be like in the future. Often, these were people with whom they could relate because of a mutual interest, a common experience, or a shared identity. Most participants made some reference to one or more role models, but who they named as a role model varied. Other than Mahatma Gandhi (who was mentioned by M.I.T.) and Beyoncé (who was named by Elena), most of the role models discussed were people who participants knew personally.

The majority of the role models mentioned were women; most often participants' mothers. Mothers were appreciated for various reasons. Danielle saw her mother in a professional catering role as “a leader to the staff, and then also a leader to the owners... sharing her experience and what she's learned over the years.” A single mother who always provided for her children, Sally's mother was “the leader of the house. She's just quick, she's smart, she knows what is right from wrong. She just makes good decisions quickly.” Ashley saw her mother as a leader who demonstrated “perseverance and determination and she is a very hard worker.”

Frequently, participants talked about women supervisors serving as role models. Elena said “there have been a lot of women leaders in my life that have affected me... The director of the place I worked with was a woman, and the next person was a woman, and I’m like, women are great.” As an education major, Sarah seemed to be particularly appreciative of supervisors who were focused on supporting the personal growth of others. Sarah noted that she has “had a lot of females as my role models in those specific work experiences or just broad leadership experiences. Those leaders, like my supervisors that I’ve had, have pushed me to lead others to develop.”

Four participants (all of whom were women of color) specifically talked about role models who were women of color. This links the theme of role models as influences with the core tenet that highlights the influence of multiple identities on the development of LSE. Elena admired Beyoncé for being a woman of color who was a leader in her industry and a feminist. M.I.T. talked about one of the first “women in leadership I guess that I saw from an early age,” her acclaimed dance instructor who has preserved “an ancient Indian art form.” M.I.T. was also inspired by a South Asian woman who founded an international non-profit for which M.I.T. would like to work in the future. Sally was grateful for two university staff members who sponsored leadership programs to empower women of color. Prior to university, Ashley had an internship with a state representative whom she greatly respected:

It was really nice because one, she was a woman, and two, she was a woman of color. And it was really nice to see her being one among White women as a leader, and it was really nice to see, although like, at that age you don’t really consider race or gender, but now that I’m thinking about, it was really nice to see that I didn’t really see a difference – I just saw leadership.

The only other time when a participant talked about role models with whom they could relate in terms of one or more identities was when Jessica spoke about her sustained involvement with a network of current and former students of Cristo Rey high schools:

The advisor, along with all the students in the organization have definitely had a positive impact on my confidence in leadership roles just because it's nice to see how, like most of us do come from the same kind of backgrounds, we're from all over the country but Cristo Rey schools definitely serve minorities mostly and lower-income background students. So I think just knowing that we all come from the same background and seeing the way we're all flourishing in college is definitely really, really nice to see and it pushes me and makes me a little more confident to know that I can do really big things in college as well and take those after college and into whatever I end up doing.

Jessica also spoke about a college preparation program she attended where she met a group of student leaders who inspired her to become involved when she came to university. Jessica looked up to these students, and talked about how important it was for her to see successful students who, like her, were students of color from economic backgrounds similar to hers. Participants consistently noted sharing one or more marginalized identities with role models, which speaks to the salience of these identities.

***Mentors.*** Sometimes, participants referenced someone who served as both a role model and a mentor for them. Like role models, participants admired mentors. What distinguished role models from mentors were that mentors also intentionally engaged with participants in ways that helped them to develop as leaders. This support came through coaching, advising, or teaching participants, as well as coordinating educational programs that were attended by participants. Participants most often talked about people who mentored them in high school or college, but a few talked about influences from childhood. The most important thing that all mentors did was to actively encourage



participants to pursue opportunities that resulted in participants becoming more efficacious in their leadership abilities. When asked about factors that had contributed to gains in her LSE, Ashley stated “My mentors definitely, they've always been there and they've cultivated my own sense of confidence and my own sense of purpose. That encouragement has led me to want to pursue even more.” Thus, mentors directly impact LSE through their encouragement, as well as by connecting students with experiences that build LSE.

Often, participants stated that they would not have applied for leadership roles or gotten involved with organizations if it had not been for the push they received from mentors. Elena shared this example from when she was in high school:

I was in something called key club and I was told by our sponsor for the club that I should run for president. I was like, I don't know if I could do that. But he was like, I think you should try. I think you're a natural born leader and you would really thrive in a position like that. And I did. And I ran for it and I got it.

Once involved, whenever participants doubted themselves, these mentors typically played an important role reassuring them. Hunter talked about an athletic coach who kept telling her she was awesome whenever she questioned her abilities. Eventually, Hunter would think of her coach and started to tell herself, “I'm awesome, yeah! Get told that enough, you believe.” Adenne spoke about an adult mentor from the Civil Air Patrol who constantly helped to restore her confidence by telling her:

‘If you say you can, you can, and if you say you can't, you can't. So stop saying you can't.’ She was most definitely the source of, she was the reason why I did a lot of the things that I did and also the backing behind it. ‘I don't know that I can do this.’ ‘Of course you can, where is the doubt coming from?’

The mentors who provided encouragement were overwhelmingly adults such as family members, teachers, high school counselors, supervisors, and coaches. These were not the only people who encouraged participants' involvement in leadership development activities, but they did appear to play a crucial role, particularly in terms of supporting participants' initial attempts with various opportunities.

*Serving as role models and mentors.* Perhaps because of the positive influence that roles models and mentors had on them, many of the participants talked about serving in these roles for other students. Many participants saw themselves as role models, such as Adenne, who had been an RA for multiple years, and Lilly, who felt other students looked up to her because of her role as a high school tour guide. As an executive board member of a club sports team, Danielle “tried to be a leader in that capacity where I encouraged my teammates... I viewed myself as like a good example for others.”

Most of the participants in the study served as mentors, often in formal roles such as being an athletic coach for younger students or an orientation leader. Both Ashley and Jessica gave back to their high schools by mentoring students there once they started college. It meant a great deal to Jessica when her mentees got involved in activities and believed in themselves, which reminded her of her own experiences in high school:

I do think back to kind of like when I first started, about how I guess un-confident I was. About pushing myself into those leadership roles and I think that's kind of pushed me now to try to help younger kids that I know, or maybe other people from my high school. I try to go back and push that a lot.

Some students were mentors in university student organizations. Annie appreciated that when she was elected to serve in an executive role in the group, the person who held the role before her shared information and tips, which helped “make me

feel more confident.” Annie was committed to mentoring the person who was going to take on the role when she completed her term. M.I.T. talked about mentoring newer members of a student organization to which she had belonged since her first year in university:

Through being a good leader and through networking with other people, and definitely, I think one of my biggest goals is like making the new kids on my team feel welcome and making sure that they get the experience that I got after four years on that team.

Supporting these students reminded M.I.T. of the older students who mentored her when she was younger, and she was happy when her coaching helped younger members to improve. It made participants feel special when someone explicitly pointed out that they were mentors or role models. For example, Brooke’s coach confirmed that younger players looked up to her, and Annie’s father told her that her position as a female sports referee likely made other girls feel capable of filling a similar role themselves when they got older.

**Affirmation.** When others recognized participants as capable leaders, it helped them to overcome any feelings of self-doubt that they may have had and affirmed that their beliefs in their own abilities were well-founded. Affirmation often came in the form of being selected to join groups or serve in positions. It was also associated with receiving compliments about their achievements from people whom they respected.

***Selected for roles.*** For the majority of participants, being invited to join organizations or teams, or being selected for formal leadership positions, signaled to them that others believed in them, and increased their LSE. Annie stated that when she was elected to student council in high school, it:

Was the first time that I kind of went for a leadership role, which granted, I wasn't like on the board or anything; it was just to be on the student council and to represent the student body... I ended up getting on student council but it was like the first time I'd ever really been addressed as like a leader... Once I did get in, it was definitely a confidence booster.

Similarly, for other participants, such as M.I.T., being selected for a role marked a “first step to [achieving] leadership goals” when they had not previously seen themselves as a leader.

Ashley made a point of mentioning that she was selected for roles over people who were older or more experienced than she was. Whether it was when she was elected for a role in a community organization at a young age, or hired for internships in legal firms for which undergraduate students are not normally considered, Ashley felt special and extremely capable when she was unusually young for the roles she held. Brooke was the only person to reference identity as it related to being selected for a role. Rather than talking about age, Brooke spoke about gender:

When I was given that job, when I was interviewing for internships, I knew I was going up against guys who can schmooze and can talk really well. I think being a woman it's a lot harder to be like a 'schmoozer.' Because I just think guys are better at it. I think women are more direct, and normally... I think men are definitely, I don't want to say 'better,' but they appear to 'sell themselves' more than a woman would.

Being selected for a role served as a form of external validation of students' abilities as leaders, and helped to boost their LSE as a result.

Just as being chosen for a role had a positive effect on participants' LSE, not being selected had a very negative impact on LSE. M.I.T. appeared to be upset just thinking about a time when she was not offered a positional leadership role with a campus department, and Lilly was hurt when someone else was elected to an executive

board position in her sorority instead of her. When asked about factors that may have had a negative effect on her confidence in her leadership abilities, Brooke talked about how she felt when not given the opportunity to join student council in high school:

Everyone was really big on running for student council just because you're the cool kid if you're on student council. And I never won, and so I was just like, 'screw this'... I really did want to be a part of that but that just completely pulled me away. I don't want to do that anymore - 'what's the point?' kind of thing. That had a negative effect on it because I never really got to pursue anything like that... I think that had a negative effect on me at a young age. So it's kind of, it's like I'll never forget.

This experience seemed to have a lasting effect on Brooke's LSE related to certain involvement opportunities. Not being selected for a role in student council made Brooke feel she could not be successful in this type of involvement and negatively affected her motivation to pursue a similar role in the future.

Fortunately, some students were able to overcome the disappointment that came with not being offered opportunities they had wanted. On the day of her second interview with me, Sally had just learned that she did not get an internship that she had been really hoping to have. She wondered aloud what she had done wrong in the interview and stated that she was disappointed. However, she was sure she would be able to brush it off because she knew that she was capable and may be chosen for a different opportunity in the future. Sarah also talked about moving past the self-doubt she initially experienced when told she was an alternate candidate for a formal leadership position. Not being offered the role the first time she applied "just completely shattered my confidence like 100%. I almost didn't accept the position at all" when it was later offered to her. After

accepting the position and receiving the praise of a supervisor, Sarah felt affirmed and was later excited to hold the role again another year.

***Recognition.*** When talking about things that had a positive effect on their confidence in their abilities as leaders, every one of the participants shared at least one example of a time when they had received a compliment from someone about their leadership capabilities. Most frequently, this affirmation came from peers, many of whom were mentees, or colleagues involved with the same teams or student organizations as participants. Supervisors also served as a common source of recognition through verbal compliments. When Annie's supervisor credited her with playing a huge role in the success of a team, she said: "I never felt like this before with any sort of organization, feeling like I could be in charge of a small team or something like that. But I remember being so confident." Elena had gone to her job in an on-campus office after her first interview, and told her supervisor that she had spoken about the leadership role she felt she had played training and supporting new student staff. He agreed that she had been serving as a leader in that way (although it was not officially part of her role) and ended up giving her a pay raise as a result of their conversation. This really affected Elena:

I feel so much more confident, saying 'yes, I have a leadership position in that job.' So it's great, yeah. I was really thinking about it and was like, you know that I do a lot of leadership stuff here, and he realized that, too, after we talked about it.

A few students also referenced being affirmed by coaches, parents, and teachers. Brooke appreciated receiving "reinforcement by my coach and my teammates. Like, 'you're doing really well out there' ... Their confidence in me helped my confidence in myself.

Although a few comments (primarily spoken by parents) reflected a general sense of pride in the participants, the vast majority of the examples of praise were related to specific skills that participants had displayed, or particular achievements, such as coordinating a successful event, effectively solving a problem, or completing certain tasks with a level of excellence. When they received specific feedback, it appeared to have a more significant impact on students than when people shared vague comments. M.I.T. talked about a time when she had worked to incorporate the ideas of members of her acapella group when creating a new song mix. Her teammates complimented her for what the student organization was able to achieve together that day. M.I.T. said that a leader needs to be driven themselves, but that one “also needs to have the appreciation of others to make you inspired. I felt great when my teammates said that... I actually felt like a more confident leader at that point.”

**Direct experience.** The verbal persuasion and affirmation that participants received was generally grounded in various experiences that allowed students to build their skills, gain knowledge, and achieve certain goals related to their leadership activities. All participants spoke about a number of direct experiences and the effect they had on their LSE. There were three main themes related to the category of direct experiences: (a) different types of experience mattered in unique ways; (b) LSE was influenced by group dynamics; and (d) specific accomplishments were tied to growth in LSE.

*Different types of experiences mattered in unique ways.* Participants talked about a variety of opportunities that supported LSE. Overarching benefits of direct experience

were developing skills and knowledge and learning through practical experience.

Although all the experiences discussed were credited with increasing participants' LSE, different benefits were associated with each type of involvement.

Almost all of the participants spoke about involvement with student organizations during university. Being part of these groups gave students opportunities to practice skills related to coordinating programs, organization management, teamwork, and to achieving measurable goals such as increasing membership or attendance at events. Danielle talked about specific outcomes that let her know that her work as an executive board member of a club sports team was making a difference:

I felt very successful when I saw the numbers, whether it be the budget from fundraising, and also the numbers from having a large team, the numbers in the scores like we were having... stuff like that, and just the amount of fun that we had.

Many participants also attributed involvement with student organizations with an evolving understanding of and efficacy for leadership as a relational, collaborative process.

Multiple participants talked about holding campus leadership positions outside of student organizations. Roles included (but were not limited to) serving as an RA, orientation leader, and peer mentor. Some of these students discussed how planning successful events made them feel capable as leaders, but most of the references to these positions were associated with the (often intensive) training they received, and the opportunities they had to apply what they learned while "on the job." The knowledge and skills that were gained helped participants to manage conflict, build community, handle



crises, and support the development of others. Adenne reflected on the training she received as an RA:

I felt like training definitely prepared me to be able to do the role. I had leadership experience before, and coming out of that with such a high level of confidence and falling right into another leadership experience I didn't feel any type of weirdness about it. It was what I've always done; I've always been a leader so 'here we go again' type of a thing.

Many participants mentioned that what they learned through these experiences helped them in other types of leadership activities. In other words, the learning was transferrable, and helped participants to feel more efficacious as leaders in various roles. Danielle reflected that in various positions “we did a lot of leadership training and I've worked a lot, a lot of different roles that have made me feel like a student leader,” resulting in her believing in her abilities to serve in new roles.

Another involvement type that provided participants with transferable skills was sports. Half of the study's participants talked about the importance of athletic activities. Some said that sports helped them to become more disciplined and to appreciate the value of commitment. Lilly shared:

Soccer was what I did mostly throughout my life and I just, when I got better is when my confidence built up. As I was getting better at soccer, I was more involved in school. I was getting better on the soccer team in sixth grade and I joined the team and started doing that, like more taking on leadership roles. So the discipline in sports might have had a factor in that also.

For Lilly and others, lessons related to hard work and focus were applied in other involvement areas. Students also learned how to better articulate what kind of support they needed from others so they could be successful. For example, Hunter said “once I joined sports I gained more confidence in myself and I was able to speak up more when I

didn't like how somebody was coaching me.” Not everyone was involved with team sports, so it was not surprising that only Danielle and Brooke connected sports with gaining the interpersonal skills and learning about group dynamics associated with team experiences.

An area in which the focus on relationships was central was service. Participants who engaged in community service spoke primarily about how valuable it was to develop relationships. For example, Sarah measured her success at a home for elderly individuals based on how closely connected she was with the residents, and Annie said members of her service team were able to achieve the goals set for the program because of how well they knew the children at the school where they served. When talking about her service site, Jessica said:

Just going in I was kind of leery about what I would have to do or if the people there would be accepting of everything. It's kind of like you kind of walk in tiptoeing. You don't really know what's ok, and what's not ok. But it definitely got my confidence up to get more comfortable. Then you start seeing regulars there and it gets a little bit more comfortable.

For students who volunteered, feelings of success were tied to getting to know people, being able to anticipate their needs, and building trusting relationships within groups.

***Group dynamics.*** Through direct experiences in groups, participants had the chance to both build individual skills as leaders as well as learn about group processes. Participants noted that the nature of a group could have a tremendous influence on their ability to successfully achieve their shared goals. As M.I.T. stated, there are “so many factors to being a good leader, some of which are not in your control as a leader [such as] the stage of the group that you're trying to reach.” Participants talked about times when

group dynamics limited their success as leaders and others when they experienced a sense of collective efficacy.

Many participants shared multiple examples of groups functioning poorly. Groups were most often related to class projects, but students also mentioned a sports team, organizations, and a staff of positional student leaders. Some people seemed to take personal responsibility when goals were not achieved, like Adenne, who spoke about a class assignment:

The execution of it didn't go anywhere near as planned. Part of it was circumstance and the other part was we weren't cohesive as a group. And having been one of the ones to put together the plan and not have it go well, I kind of, like, took that on me. Clearly you didn't do a very good job because this didn't turn out very well.

Similarly, Elena blamed herself when students who were supposed to be helping with her service organization's project ended up separating from the group and leaving the high school's grounds to drink alcohol during the school day. Elena remembered thinking "I'm responsible and I can't believe you did this. I can't believe you broke my trust. That really brought down my confidence a lot as a leader." In contrast, Ashley did not feel at fault when she was part of a group who did not do well on a class assignment. She said that poor group dynamics may have an effect on the group achieving its goals, but:

I wouldn't really say on my own leadership ability... sometimes I can be working on a project with a group of people and I know that I can be working so hard, where I know it's not going to get anywhere because we're not working as a cohesive unit.

It was unclear why some students internalized blame while others did not. However, the fact that Ashley was able to separate her own LSE from the group's level of

accomplishment may help to explain why she was one of the participants who most consistently described herself as someone with a high degree of LSE.

Participants spoke about times when their LSE was positively influenced by the fact that they were working with an effective group and they believed that they could accomplish their shared goals. Lilly shared that when she and members of her church youth group worked on projects, “I was fairly confident because I knew everyone, I trusted everyone to do what was best to perform the task at hand.” Similarly, Annie talked about the second time she ran for an executive board position in her student organization:

Definitely this time around, running for this position, I did feel a bit more confident, just knowing who else was on the board with me... We bring our different perspectives to it but I feel like we definitely are on the same page for the common goal that we have. I feel that kind of helps. I think that helps a lot with leadership when you know who you're working with.

The experiences that participants shared were related to student organizations, a service project, rally, and a church youth group. In these instances, participants believed in the talents and commitment of their collaborators and their own LSE were bolstered as a result.

*Accomplishments.* All participants spoke about their LSE increasing due to accomplishing important goals. The majority of the stories shared were related to executing successful events, most often as members of student organizations. Lilly took a lead role coordinating a major event with a campus activities group. She said her staff advisor “told me that it was the smoothest that it ever ran over the past four years... So that definitely built my confidence there. I'm actually doing something right.” Lilly had

felt good about the program itself because it exceeded the group's expectations for it.

Receiving affirmation from the staff member added to her own positive evaluation of her role coordinating the program with the team.

Serving in formal leadership roles and having a positive impact on a group or organization also contributed to greater LSE. For example, Adenne talked about an experience she had with the Civil Air Patrol:

There's a large gathering of all of the squadrons that are in that area, and so one of the things that I was able to do was go to one of those gatherings and lead the entire group as the second in command. I want to say it was maybe 300 cadets there. So by the end of the program, at 17, I was entirely confident in my ability, it had a lot to do with that experience.

Adenne appreciated that there were clearly communicated expectations for her to meet and by working hard she felt she was able to meet them even though the task was initially daunting.

In addition to times when they were successful, participants also talked about overcoming challenges, such as working through conflict within student organizations and teams or motivating a group that had been struggling to re-focus on their purpose. When Danielle took an executive board position with a club sports team, "the whole executive board was like a nightmare. Totally unorganized." When she worked with the other members to initiate some drastic changes in the way the team functioned together, it lead to many positive outcomes. Hunter talked about coaching a sports team of students at a public high school who were initially not thrilled to be involved. Over time, however, Hunter noticed a difference in their athletic skills as well as their attitudes towards the

sport and was pleased that “they respected me and they actually wanted to come to practice.” M.I.T. spoke about her acapella group soon after the organization was founded:

There was leadership but everyone was just splitting apart, becoming clique-y, being childish. So to root that out it took a good year of growing pains and that was a hard time for me... I wanted to quit, but this was something so great, so I had, like, a push and pull. And I was still on a leadership post. I was in charge of taking care of all of them vocally, like musically. So it was, I'm glad we went through that because after going through that, not only will we never let that happen again but, like, we know how bad it got and we grew from it... We excelled and we ended up somewhere we never thought we would end up in our collegiate time.

Knowing that they had been presented with a challenge and then taken action that fostered a significant change made the participants feel capable as leaders. Successfully tackling a difficult situation also seemed to help students feel more resilient and ready to work through problems they may encounter in the future.

### **Internal Level**

Beyond the microsystem are the internal processes that influence LSE. At the level of internal processing, the RMMDI (Abes et al., 2007) serves as an organizational framework for the presentation of findings. At this level, a filter is used to make meaning of the messages that are constantly received from the surrounding context, which is comprised of various layers within Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (i.e., the macrosystem, exosystem, and microsystem). These messages are shaped by the multiple identities everyone holds, which surround the core in the RMMDI. The messages affect how individuals understand their interactions with the world, their emotions, as well as their self-concept.

At the center of the RMMDI is the core sense of self (Abes et al., 2007). The key concepts that participants used to define themselves represented reasonably stable characteristics and attributes. The same word may mean different things to different people based on their social identities and experiences. For example, seven participants wrote the word “daughter” in their core, but what this role actually means may be shaped by social identities such as their race, ethnicity, or religious identity. Other words commonly included in participants’ cores were “sister” and “friend.” Some participants used characteristics such as determined, open-minded, and selfless. Some students included words in their cores that were particularly relevant to leadership: Danielle listed “ambitious” and “confident;” Jessica noted that she was a “woman for others” and a “leader;” Sarah stated that she was a “relator” and “developer;” Annie is “willing to take initiative;” Hunter wrote the words “leader,” and “limit-pusher;” and Sally defined herself with the following terms: social justice, charisma, open-mindedness, ENTJ, mixed ethnicity, and hipster. Regardless of what words students used, their core self-concepts shaped the leadership abilities they valued in themselves, how they understood leadership as a concept, and their efficacy for that approach to leadership.

**Relating with a post-industrial understanding of leadership.** Having been influenced by societal assumptions of leaders and leadership that are industrial in nature, it was not surprising that participants sometimes saw leadership in that way. For example, many of the examples of leadership experiences involved holding positional roles and stories were often leader-centric rather than focused on group processes. Despite this, almost all of the participants shared a personal definition of leadership that largely

reflected concepts consistent with a post-industrial understanding of leadership. For example, they recognized that leaders do not need to hold a formal position and acknowledged that leadership requires relationships and collaboration. For example, Danielle stated “I don't think you can really be a great leader if you can't get along with a lot of people that you're working with,” and M.I.T. said that a leader is “someone who understands the needs of everyone else that they're leading and includes everyone for a larger purpose.”

When sharing what participants believed were their strengths and talents as leaders, they tended to highlight their abilities to work effectively in groups and qualities that helped them establish positive relationships (e.g., being effective communicators, and good listeners). Almost all participants claimed that they were able to build connections across difference, which involved having empathy, valuing different perspectives, and being inclusive with their words and actions. A comment from Danielle illustrates this:

I think listening is really a big thing. I always think my empathy is important. Understanding where someone else is coming from when they're saying things or contributing to a conversation, it doesn't just come from nowhere, it clearly came from some experience or multiple experiences to shape those opinions.

Students also talked about encouraging their peers and developing others through their leadership roles, such as Jessica, who said “I'll figure out a way to get to whatever the goal is and help other people if they're getting discouraged.”

Participants articulated that their definition of leadership had changed over time. This influenced their leadership identity development, as well as their LSE. Annie said that when leadership “was described as like, a group of people working together to affect



positive change... I feel like I'm definitely more of a leader in that sense.” Jessica realized that she used to only consider people leaders if they were in the spotlight, in positional roles, and that “since I was never really that person, I didn't think I was a leader at all. So once I got to high school, that's where I saw you can be a leader without having to be up there all the time.” When she recognized that the important work she was doing with service could be considered a part of leadership, Jessica started to believe in herself and to value her abilities to be successful as a leader. Similarly, when M.I.T. started to think “actually, you can *not* have a label, and you can still be a leader in a different way” she saw that she had been enacting leadership even without a formal position in a student organization. This helped her to believe in her abilities to make a difference in a way she had not done before.

As participants’ understandings of leadership evolved, some recognized the cognitive growth that facilitated this process. For example, Sally reflected on how her increasingly complex understanding of leadership supported her acceptance of women leaders, as well as leaders who displayed diverse leadership styles:

As one grows old they're exposed to more things and the brain develops, and you can grasp a little bit more abstractly instead of - especially because we've gotten so much more exposure as well over the years for women. Which is great because when I was younger, what I was exposed to was very limited, and now we've gotten... more diversity, which is really good. So that's why I would have to say my definition changed.

This change in thinking disrupted the dominant narrative that includes the prototype of male leaders and industrial portrayals of leadership with which participants could not always relate personally. As a result of redefining leadership, participants’ LSE increased

because they recognized accomplishments they had not previously understood to be related to their abilities as leaders.

**Overcoming self-doubt.** Regardless of the fact that all participants described themselves as having high LSE, almost all of them shared at least one story of a time in their lives when they had experienced a level of self-doubt. Brooke spoke about the self-doubt she experienced “in my head. I think that happens a lot to a lot of people, where their downfall is their own thoughts. I think you're your own worst enemy in most situations.” Brooke claimed that self-doubts were often unfounded and noted that she sometimes needed to remind herself that she was capable. In this way, Brooke used self-talk to interrupt cognitive scripts that were influenced by external messages that had potential to negatively impact her LSE. Annie was initially hesitant to try for a new formal position in her student organization because “I still feel like there's so much that I didn't know, like what was going on, or things that I was supposed to do. So kind of goes back to the feeling of unqualified.” Even after feeling good about the role she had played in a previous year, the thought of taking on a new role with which she was unfamiliar made Annie question her abilities.

Like Annie, a few other participants attributed their self-doubt to a lack of experience. Some believed their age was a factor, such as Adenne and Ashley, both of whom had skipped a grade in school and were younger than peers in their classes. Adenne noted that “having a leadership role on top of [being younger] makes it a little bit difficult” to earn the respect of older peers. As one of the youngest members of her high school student council, Annie was “intimidated by the upper classmen. Does what I have

to say even matter? Are they going to care?” Others talked about doubting themselves because they felt unprepared for their roles. Often, this was because they had not yet spent much time in that role, or because they thought they had not received sufficient training. For example, Hunter said that at the end of an intensive training period for a positional leadership role, “I just had a feeling like, I'm not, this is not going to be enough. You're telling me all these rules and I'm not going to remember any of it.”

In addition, as previously explained, participants sometimes questioned their leadership abilities because they were negatively influenced by messages they received, whether they were related to societal assumptions, structural inequities, or experiences. Positive influences on LSE (e.g., encouragement, affirmation, gaining and applying knowledge and skills through direct experience) helped to counter self-doubt by building LSE. However, positive influences did not always appear to be sufficient on their own to mitigate the impact of negative influences on LSE. Most participants talked about strategies that helped them do this, such as approaching opportunities with a learning orientation and reframing fears.

***Learning orientation.*** Every participant talked about how valuable it had been to learn from various experiences. Sarah said “I think that I will never stop developing as a leader ever. Because I think that there is always something that I can learn to be better for other people and people who are different from me.” Although participants sometimes were disappointed when they failed, they understood that it would be impossible to avoid facing challenges. Rather than giving up, they evaluated themselves based on their efforts and what they had gained, then focused on approaching new opportunities as learning

experiences. Participants stated that even when they failed to meet their goals, they were still grateful for the experience because they were able to learn something from it.

Danielle shared:

A lot of people were intimidated to run for president, for example. But I was just kind of like, alright, I can do this. That's how I felt about a lot of things. Again, no experience has been bad. I'll never consider an experience bad because there are always things I can take away from it, good or bad. So I just think of myself again, part of my leadership identity, I think versatility is a big thing that I would add to it.

Participants talked about learning new skills, gaining knowledge, and increasing their level of self-awareness. Through direct experiences and reflection, participants found out what they were capable of doing. This self-awareness mattered for participants like Annie, who said “I'm a lot more confident in my ability because I've seen myself use that ability to do things, and I know a lot more... As I've grown to know myself better, I know what I can handle.”

Some participants articulated that the times when they struggled or failed were among their most valuable learning experiences. Elena spoke about the time when some students who signed out of class to help with her high school service group's project ended up skipping school instead. Elena had been feeling positively about the program until this happened. Although she was initially disappointed in her peers and herself, over time, she became grateful for what she gained from the situation:

I guess it helped me grow just having that experience... I needed a blow to my confidence, or I needed to be told ‘you need to work on this.’ I just needed to be told that I need to start being more open to the idea that I can't do everything alone.

Elena took a lesson from that experience that helped her feel more assured of her leadership abilities the next time she was working with the group on an event. Similarly, when Adenne spoke about what had helped her to believe in her abilities as a leader, she said:

Definitely the things that come to mind the most are probably the times that I struggled. Just because I made it past it, and there were times that I struggled and triumphed, and times that I struggled and failed, and I think I learned from both of those... If I struggled and triumphed, I know I can get past it. That was difficult then, this is difficult now, but I'm more than capable of handling it. If I struggle and failed then there was a lesson to be learned from it. It's applicable to every other scenario from here on out.

Adenne talked about a time when she was over-confident, which she felt was not a good thing. During the interview, she said she realized that she would never know everything but she knew enough to feel capable in whatever role she took on, and was ready to learn whatever was necessary to be successful. She appeared to think that this was much better than becoming complacent due to being overly confident.

*Disrupting cognitive scripts.* In addition to focusing on learning, a strategy employed by most of the participants was intentionally recognizing and disrupting negative messages in their own minds. When faced with adversity, participants talked about reframing things in a more positive light. This included being intentional about not doubting themselves, recognizing when fear of being judged or failing was preventing them from taking action, and perceiving challenges as opportunities to prove that they were effective as leaders. Brooke, who used to worry too much about what other people might think about her, said that she has to consciously tell herself “everyone has been wrong in their life. You're going to make mistakes. If I'm wrong once, it doesn't mean I'm

going to be wrong again.” Brooke decided to approach new leadership opportunities by thinking positively and having confidence in herself. Annie decided the same thing, and worked to prevent herself from worrying so much about the judgments of others. Sarah spoke about when she was not hired the first time for a leadership position but later was offered the position.

I started out with that thought in my mind of oh I'm inadequate. And then I, after a certain amount of time of feeling awful, I decided I'm going to use this as fire or fuel for me... I am going to prove that person so wrong and... help them to see how great I can be as [a positional student leader]. That was the absolute best thing that I could have possibly done for myself that year.

The staff member who did not initially select Sarah for the role later praised Sarah for her work. This supervisor expressed regret for not hiring Sarah from the start, which Sarah greatly appreciated.

A number of participants talked about “reframing” to counter stereotypes associated with the marginalized identities they held. After acknowledging the potential that biases had to negatively influence their LSE, participants said they chose to actively prove the stereotypes wrong. Sometimes, only one identity was mentioned, such as when Jessica came to university and for the first time found herself in an environment where the majority of people were White. Jessica’s racial identity became highly salient and she experienced racism in ways she had not previously:

I started to inform myself a little bit more about what these issues are and with that, I kind of took that to my leadership roles, and I guess it was a point where that kind of motivated me to try harder I guess. Because I realized that I was in a lot of ways that I haven't seen before, I was at a disadvantage compared to a lot of the people who are at [the university]. Which I try to see as a good thing and use that to motivate myself to do a lot more than I usually do, or to try harder specifically in leadership roles like when it comes to service or just stepping up in a student organization.

Other participants talked about multiple identities, such as Sally, who stated:

I am a minority in terms of ethnicity-wise, but then like, coupling in with my bisexuality; you know you're told so many times how you're so different, how you really have to work against the grain... It gives you that, not necessarily 'pressure,' but that 'want' to prove yourself to other people, that you're just as capable even though you're different. And that I think also helped foster a good sense of leadership in me.

Ashley also talked about feeling she needed to prove herself, and being motivated to challenge stereotypes that might otherwise make her doubt herself as a leader. When she spoke about her internship in a law office, Ashley mentioned an intersection between race and gender:

They actually embrace the fact that I'm a woman Hispanic, because it's like, I can better communicate with their clients. Or now they have a bigger clientele because I speak Spanish, it's a lot easier for them. So it's the fact that I'm more appreciated and I can really reflect on these things as they give me more confidence instead of feeling sort of negatively about being the like, the woman Hispanic on a predominately White campus.

When Ashley spoke about how she felt she was perceived differently at her internship site than she sometimes is on campus, it was one of the few times a participant recognized the impact of context on their LSE, outside of the examples of collective efficacy noted previously. Although context shaped participants' perceptions of themselves, and the experiences they had, it was rare for students to discuss a link with their LSE.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I described the major themes found in the data, and how they relate with the core tenets of the emerging theory. One core tenet is that LSE is affected by the dominant narrative about leaders and leadership, which is perpetuated across

various layers of societal systems. Messages reflect themes of industrial notions of leadership, prototypical conceptualizations of leaders as men, and identity-based stereotypes that can impact LSE. A second core tenet is that these messages are mediated by concrete interactions with people and experiences. Related themes were focused on the importance of role models and mentors who provided encouragement and affirmation, as well as the value of direct experiences to build LSE. A third core tenet was that LSE is influenced by internal processes at the individual level, where themes reflected LSE being shaped by changing conceptualizations of leadership, and strategies to overcome self-doubt. Across all levels of systems, and interrelated with all themes, was the core tenet that the development of LSE is shaped by multiple identities.



## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### **Overview of this Study**

As stated previously, LSE is positively associated with resistance to gendered stereotype threat, the enactment of leadership, identifying as a leader, leadership capacity, and perseverance when facing challenges (Bandura, 1997; 2001; Bandura & Locke, 2003; Black & Earnest, 2009; Dugan & Komives, 2010; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007; Jex & Bliese, 1999; Komives et al., 2009; McCormick et al., 2002; Paglis & Green, 2002; Shertzer & Schuh, 2004). Across various contexts, studies have consistently found that women have lower LSE than men, despite being equally capable as leaders, and having similar levels of leadership experience (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; McCormick et al., 2002; Sax, 2008).

The gender gap in LSE is problematic because LSE has the potential to help women counter the barriers that may negatively impact their leadership development and enactment (Adams & Keim, 2000; Bandura, 1997). These challenges include that relative to men, women (a) are underrepresented in leadership roles, (b) have limited access to same-gender role models and mentors, (c) are evaluated more harshly as leaders, and (d) tend to be less accepted as leaders because they do not fit the male leader prototype (Allan 2011; Dominici et al., 2009; Dugan, 2011a; Dugan & Komives, 2011; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Hogg, 2001; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Hoyt, 2010; Kark & Eagly, 2010; Kinzie

et al., 2007; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Smith & Monaghan, 2013; von Hippel et al., 2011; Yoder, 2001).

Fortunately, there are a number of factors that have been positively associated with LSE, all of which have the potential to enhance the LSE of university students who identify as women and females. These experiences include involvement with student organizations, and holding positional leadership roles on campus (Astin, 1993; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Dugan et al., 2008). In addition, mentoring relationships are important because mentors can encourage students to participate in leadership activities, and affirm students' leadership abilities, resulting in gains in LSE (Bandura, 1997; Arminio et al., 2000; Komives et al., 2005). LSE tends to increase when students develop adaptive thought patterns, approach leadership with a learning orientation, and deepen their self-awareness (Bandura, 1997; Komives et al. 2005; Lord & Hall, 2005; Owen, 2011; Wagner, 2011).

This study was conducted at a mid-sized, urban Catholic university in the Midwest. The following sampling strategies were employed to recruit participants: theoretical sampling, snowball sampling, intensity sampling, and maximum variation sampling (Birks & Mills, 2011; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007; Mertens, 2005). Using grounded theory methodology, I conducted two semi-structured interviews with each of the 12 participants. I engaged in simultaneous data collection and analysis, using the constant comparison method. Throughout this process, I sought evidence that participants were actually referring to LSE (an assessment of one's abilities to accomplish one's goals as a leader) even when

they used the less precise, but more common term “confidence” in relation to their evaluation of themselves as leaders (Bandura, 1997; Hannah et al., 2008; McCormick et al., 2002). Consistent with grounded theory methodology, I used various levels of codes to organize the themes and categories from which four core tenets emerged (Charmaz, 2014).

One of the four core tenets is that people receive messages about leaders and leadership from layers of ecological systems. Informed by ideologies and reinforced through patterns of socialization, there is a dominant narrative that presents leaders as people with positional authority who operate in task-oriented, hierarchical systems (Dugan & Komives, 2011; Komives & Dugan, 2010; Rost, 1993). Assumptions also exist about leaders being prototypically White, heterosexual, cisgender, middle- to upper-class men (Dugan, 2011a; Dugan & Komives, 2011; Hogg, 2001; Lord et al., 1986). At an institutional level, the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles communicates messages about how women are valued in these roles, and the existence of barriers to achieving these positions (Dominici et al., 2009; Hoyt, 2010; Kark & Eagly, 2010; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; von Hippel et al., 2011). A second core tenet is that the negative impact of the dominant narrative on LSE can be mediated by direct experiences as well as by people who provide encouragement and affirmation (Bandura, 1997; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kodama & Dugan, 2013; Komives et al., 2005). A third core tenet focuses on the internal processes at play that shape individuals’ interpretations of the world, themselves, and their LSE (Bandura, 1997; Komives et al., 2009; Lord & Hall, 2005). The final core tenet, which connected with virtually all of the

themes, was that multiple identities influence the development of LSE in a variety of ways.

### **Discussion of the Findings from the Study**

In this chapter I will discuss the emerging theory as it relates to the research question for this study, relevant literature that currently exists, and various implications. These implications concern practice within higher education (particularly for educators in student affairs) and future research. The limitations and strengths of the study will be presented. At the conclusion of the chapter, I share final reflections on the process of conducting this study.

### **Discussion of Emerging Theory in Relation to Research Question**

The purpose of this study was to better understand how LSE is developed by university students who identify as females or women. I was particularly interested in learning how this process was influenced by multiple identities (if at all). By presenting an emerging theory that was grounded in the experiences of the participants, this study was designed with the goal of informing the work of educators in universities and colleges. My hope is that these efforts will result in the elimination of the gender gap in LSE that currently exists despite women's competence as leaders (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; McCormick et al., 2002; Sax, 2008). This could ultimately result in more women and females being motivated to pursue leadership roles, benefiting from enhanced abilities to enact socially responsible leadership, and persisting in their leadership efforts when faced with adversity (Bandura, 1997; Dugan & Komives, 2010; McCormick et al., 2002; Paglis & Green, 2002; Shertzer & Schuh, 2004).

My research supports the assertions of scholars who have articulated that efficacy develops over the course of individuals' lifetimes through complex, holistic processes that are influenced by a variety of factors (Bandura, 1997; Dugan, 2011a; Dugan, Rossetti Morosini et al., 2011; Komives et al., 2005; Lord & Hall, 2005). Although each participant had unique experiences, there were similarities in the processes that contributed to growth in their LSE. From the stories shared by participants in the study, themes emerged. The main categories of these themes had dimensions that reflected different developmental experiences. Consistent with grounded theory methodology, these patterns among common concepts created the framework for the emerging theory (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Woven throughout these categories and themes were four core tenets: (a) starting in childhood, people receive messages regarding leaders and leadership from levels of ecological systems; (b) the effects of these early messages are mediated by people and experiences; (c) internal processes play a crucial role in shaping LSE; and (d) during this developmental process, LSE is influenced by multiple identities.

Throughout their lives, participants received messages about leaders and leadership, many of which were influenced by the ways in which they were socialized based on their multiple identities. Dominant narratives reflected the industrial paradigm of leadership, and portrayed typical leaders as people with privileged identities, particularly related to gender and race. Because these depictions did not fully reflect the identities of participants, or the leadership approaches they tended to employ, it was difficult for many of them to believe they would be successful as leaders. Their awareness of the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles across many fields

further contributed to participants doubting themselves as leaders while they were growing up.

All participants were encouraged to become involved with leadership development activities by adult guides such as family members, teachers, and coaches. As a result of learning that someone they respected believed they were capable of being effective leaders, it helped to disrupt societal messages that had previously had a negative effect on students' LSE. Students' LSE was positively influenced by this encouragement (without which, many of whom would not have gotten involved), as well as by opportunities to gain skills and knowledge, which they applied through practical experience. By perceiving challenges as learning opportunities, and changing their cognitive scripts, participants were able to counter barriers to the development of their LSE.

### **Discussion of Emerging Theory in Relation to Existing Literature**

In this section, I will describe relationships between the findings of this study and the existing literature, some of which was outlined in Chapter II. Many of the findings described in Chapter IV support what other researchers have found. However, there were cases when what I found did not completely align with what may have been predicted based on previous studies. Also, I believe this study offers new insights. This study addresses the gap in literature about the influence of multiple identities on leadership development along with providing new insights about levels of systems that shape the development of LSE.

First, I will examine the connections between the literature and the societal and institutional messages that had an impact on participants' LSE. Then, I will focus on how LSE was influenced by experiences with organizations, roles, and people. Following that, I will consider the literature related to the internal processes that affected LSE. The influence of multiple identities is interwoven throughout this section.

### **Dominant Narratives Within the Macrosystem and Exosystem**

Scholars have written that students enter college having already been introduced to various perspectives about leadership through interactions with people, personal experiences, and exposure to societal assumptions (Arminio, 2000; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Heifetz, 2010; Komives et al., 2005). Therefore, it was not surprising that the participants spoke at length about the messages they had received about leaders and leadership since early childhood. These stocks of knowledge influenced the way students understood leadership, whether and how they perceived themselves as leaders, and their LSE. Often, these messages were not attributed to a certain source. Stories shared by participants seemed to indicate that the messages were persistent and pervasive, which was supported by the consistency of themes among all participants. This speaks to the significant impact that dominant narratives can have on one's view of self and the world (Althusser, 1970; Bronfenbrenner, 1977). These narratives sometimes reflected broader ideologies, such as "patriarchy [which] is not defined only in terms of men's chauvinist attitudes but people's very creation of gender roles and expectations that limit women's choices" (Leonardo, 2004, p. 14).

**Industrial notions of leadership.** When participants talked about the messages they had received about leadership throughout their lives, they usually talked about leaders as individuals and not about leadership as a process. Three main themes emerged related to what had been communicated to students about leaders and leadership: (a) leadership is associated with one person in a position of authority; (b) leaders are perceived as “bossy;” and (c) leaders are assumed to be men. These themes reflected models and theories associated with the industrial paradigm of leadership, which are characterized as being task-oriented, trait-based, hierarchical, and focused on individuals in positional roles (Dugan & Komives, 2011; Komives & Dugan, 2010; Northouse 2012; Rost, 1993). Despite the fact that this paradigm represents outdated, individualistic, production-based assumptions about the way in which organizations work that are neither adaptive nor relevant (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007), it remains influential (Rost, 1993). Assumptions promoted by industrial models have resulted in contemporary models being enacted in ways that sometimes still reflect dominant norms. Thus, it is not surprising that even the participants whose personal definitions of leadership were most closely aligned with a postindustrial and collaborative understanding of the construct tended to focus on formal leadership positions more than on leadership as a process.

The theme of the prototypical leader as a White, heterosexual, middle- to upper-class cisgender man was prevalent. Scholars have stated that it is more difficult for those who do not reflect this prototype to perceive themselves as leaders and to be seen as credible leaders by others (Dugan, 2011a; Dugan & Komives, 2011; Hogg, 2001; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Lord et al., 1986; McEldowney et al., 2009; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis,



2010). This phenomenon was reflected in the stories shared by participants, many of whom spoke about internalizing portrayals of leaders being men. As a result, while growing up, they often failed to recognize leadership in other women or to see themselves as leaders.

**Judgments of women leaders.** The experiences of the participants in this study also mirror what has been written about the influence of gendered and sexist stereotypes on women and females in leadership roles. Participants spoke about the misperception that women are overly emotional. Danielle was advised to hide her emotions so she would not be judged harshly as a female leader, which made her feel that she could not act as her true self. In addition, participants shared a belief that various leaders could engage in the same behavior, but that they would be labeled “bossy” if they were women or female, rather than “assertive” if they were men or male. Participants in this study shared personal stories about being evaluated harshly as leaders, being called “bossy,” and experiencing tensions between being authentic and conforming to social norms related to gender.

Similar findings were described by Haber-Curran (2013) who found that women university students in leadership roles within student organizations were challenged to balance task-oriented roles with a relational focus. They were either evaluated harshly for being direct or viewed as being too nice, which resulted in not being taken seriously. More broadly, participants’ statements about the impact of biased reactions to women leaders reflect research showing that women leaders tend to be incorrectly seen as indecisive and irrational (Astin & Leland, 1991) and evaluated harshly due to stereotypes

(Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Boatwright & Egidio, 2003; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Yoder, 2001). Women are placed in a “double bind” when people believe they have failed to conform to either traditional gender roles, or to masculine characteristic associated with industrial notions of leaders (Carli & Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Carli 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; von Hippel et al., 2011; Yoder, 2001).

A related theme that emerged in the interviews was the concept of women having to strive to prove they were capable as leaders. This was particularly prominent in the stories shared by participants with multiple marginalized identities. For example, Danielle talked about how both her motivation as a leader and her LSE were negatively affected when she first came out as a lesbian. Sally talked about the role her race and sexual orientation played in her conviction to demonstrate that she was capable when others doubted her because (as a bisexual woman of color) she differed from the “typical” job applicant. Sally’s feeling of not fitting the “norm” may be at least partly explained by biases that favor White, heterosexual men in leadership roles (Baker & Greene, 2007; Fassinger et al., 2010). Both stories demonstrate the unique double bind that is experienced by lesbians and bisexual women who face stereotypes related to gender and sexual orientation that are at odds with the prototype of heterosexual, male leaders (Fassinger et al., 2010). In addition, Sally’s experience also reflects an interaction between sexual orientation and race.

The challenges of facing multiple forms of identity-based oppression were named by all of the participants who are women of color. Both Ashley and Jessica felt they needed to work harder for their leadership efforts to be acknowledged, Sally spoke about

women not being appreciated as leaders in various career fields in Puerto Rico, and Elena talked about cultural expectations that could restrict her from fully pursuing her professional leadership goals. This theme has been presented in the existing literature in various ways. In comparison with White men, men of color, and White women, scholars have found that women of color face additional resistance as leaders (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Rosette & Livingston, 2012; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010), are more vulnerable to stereotype threat (Sanchez-Hucles & Sanchez, 2007), and need to work harder to be recognized as leaders (Vasquez & Comas-Diaz 2007).

Researchers have found that various forms of oppression (e.g., sexism, racism, and heterosexism) can limit the freedom with which people practice leadership, lessen the likelihood that people (including themselves) will believe in their abilities as leaders, and increase pressures to conform to leadership approaches that reflect dominant norms (Allan, 2011; Arminio et al., 2000; Banks & Mona, 2007; Carli & Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Jourian, 2014; Lord & Hall, 2005). Adenne provided a powerful example reflecting many of these challenges when she talked about being told during a performance review that she was too emotional and needed to adapt to fit the rest of the RA team. Mirroring what was found in a study on Black college students (Domingue, 2015), Adenne stated that she felt she was being seen through the lens of the “Angry Black Woman” stereotype, which resulted in her valid concerns being dismissed, and her peers telling her supervisor that it was difficult to work with her. When Adenne felt that she was not valued as a leader in this role, it had a deleterious effect on her LSE.

**Underrepresentation of women and females in leadership roles.** Societal ideologies such as patriarchy are reinforced in direct and covert ways at the institutional level to perpetuate inequities, such as those related to sex and gender (Althusser, 1970; Errington Nicholson, & Pasque, 2011; hooks, 2000; Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011). Women have historically been (and continue to be) underrepresented in leadership roles across many fields, which can negatively impact their LSE, minimize their leadership aspirations, and provide them with fewer women role models and mentors (Allan 2011; Catalyst, 2015, Catalyst, 2012; Catalyst, 2008; Dominici et al., 2009; Kark & Eagly, 2010; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Smith & Monaghan, 2013; von Hippel et al., 2011). When people see disproportionately low numbers of role models with whom they can relate, it makes it easier for them to dismiss the role models who do exist because they are viewed as being atypical (Bandura, 1997).

These research findings were reflected in this study when the majority of the participants spoke consistently about the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles. Some talked about being conditioned to believe that women were not leaders and feeling that it is more difficult for women to obtain and maintain leadership positions. Some students, like Annie, said the messages about women not being leaders were subtle. However, messages were more direct for others, such as Elena, whose father explicitly said that the lack of women prophets confirmed that women were not meant to be leaders.

Without prompting, many participants made associations between the theme about the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles and multiple identities. In some cases, intersections of identity were also mentioned. For example, Ashley noted

how discouraging it was for her to see so few women of color in leadership roles at the university, and a number of participants discussed inequitable access to leadership roles in religious communities based on gender. More direct consequences of the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles are addressed in the next section, as it related to the availability of role models and mentors with shared identities.

In summary, while growing up, participants were exposed to societal assumptions that influenced their understanding of leaders and leadership. Many of these reinforced industrial, hierarchical notions of leadership, and conceptualizations of leaders as men who are in positions of authority (Dugan & Komives, 2011; Komives & Dugan, 2010; Northouse 2012; Rost, 1993). People who do not fit with this dominant portrayal of leaders are more likely to face challenges in being accepted as leaders (Dugan, 2011a; Dugan & Komives, 2011; Hogg, 2001; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Lord et al., 1986; McEldowney et al., 2009; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Stereotypes affect the way in which women leaders are evaluated, restricting the freedom with which they approach leaders, and negatively affecting their LSE (Astin & Leland, 1991; Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Boatwright & Egidio, 2003; Carli & Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Carli 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; von Hippel et al., 2011). In addition, the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles can negatively influence their LSE, reduce their motivation to lead, and provide them with fewer women role models and mentors (Allan 2011; Catalyst, 2015, Catalyst, 2012; Catalyst, 2008; Dominici et al., 2009; Kark & Eagly, 2010; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Smith & Monaghan, 2013; von Hippel et al., 2011).

### **Developmental Influences of People and Experiences Within the Microsystem**

Influences within the microsystem represented direct interactions that fostered LSE over time. Although development did not necessarily occur as linearly as the following description may imply, there were some general patterns noted in terms of the path of development. Growing up, participants were inspired by various role models of leaders. Then, they were directly encouraged to pursue leadership development opportunities by people with whom they had close relationships. Typically, students' involvement was encouraged and sustained by adult leadership guides such as family members, teachers, coaches, and (as students got older), supervisors. Participants' abilities as leaders were affirmed when they were selected for roles, and when they received positive feedback, both of which contributed a great deal to the development of LSE. Direct experiences also played a powerful role in shaping LSE as participants learned and then applied skills and knowledge to successfully achieve their goals.

**Encouragement.** Most of the participants talked about being inspired by people who served as leadership role models for them. Every one of the students spoke about mentors who directly encouraged them to pursue leadership development activities. These influential people played important roles in the early stages of building LSE.

**Role models.** Role models were found most often in supervisors and parents, but also in celebrities, teachers, and peers. Similar to what was discovered by Komives et al. (2005), when participants were younger they solely considered older adults to be leaders. Often, these people were only seen as leaders when they held positions of authority. However, as their understanding of leadership broadened, students also perceived peers

as leadership role models. Moving from an awareness of adults as leaders to a recognition of peer leaders was consistent with stages of the LID model (Komives et al., 2005). Peers may serve as a particularly powerful source of vicarious experience for observers if they are similar in age or have shared experiences. When people compare their own performance with that of others, it is more likely that their own self-efficacy will be positively influenced when they can personally relate to a model who is successfully completing certain tasks (Bandura, 1997; Brown & Innouye, 1978; Lord & Hall, 2005).

Similarly, if students observe successful models with whom they can relate in terms of one or more identities, it is more likely that it will result in increased LSE in the observer (Bandura, 1997; Brown & Innouye, 1978). Even an act as simple as viewing a picture of a famous female politician before speaking publicly can result in women rating their own performance more favorably and being evaluated by others as being more empowered as leaders (Latu, Schmid Mast, Lammers, & Bombari, 2013). Bandura (1997) posited that vicarious experience is especially important for women. Lockwood (2006) found that when asked to name someone who inspired them professionally, females tended to name female role models. Therefore, it is not surprising that almost all of the role models referenced by participants in this study were women.

Participants who were women of color explicitly referenced the importance of seeing women of color in leadership roles. The visibility of these role models may be partly explained by the fact that marginalized identities tend to be more salient than privileged identities, particularly in environments that cue them or where privileged identities are pervasive (Abes & Jones, 2007). The importance of seeing leaders who

share identities as women of color echoes existing literature (Domingue, 2015; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Sanchez-Hucles & Sanchez, 2007) and may be related with the fact that role models are more influential when observers relate with them in one or more aspect of identity, such as gender or race (Bandura, 1997). None of the students referenced the identities of their role models other than to note non-dominant identities related to gender and race. For example, nobody spoke about role models who had marginalized identities related to sexual orientation. It is possible that participants perceived that there are few lesbian leaders as a result of these leaders being reluctant to disclose their sexual identity in fear of facing discrimination (Baker & Greene, 2007; Rankin, 2003).

***Mentors.*** In addition to role models, participants talked about mentors who actively persuaded them to pursue leadership development activities by affirming participants' leadership abilities. Without this encouragement, a number of participants said they likely would not have gotten involved. This finding supports the work of Anderson et al. (2008), who stated that educators must foster LSE in students who do not see themselves as leaders before these students would be likely to get involved.

Typically, the first people to recognize students' potential and encourage them in this way were adult guides such as family members, teachers, and coaches. Scholars have also found that people in these roles often persuade students to get involved and help them appraise their leadership abilities (Arminio et al., 2000; Domingue, 2015; Heifetz, 2010; Komives et al., 2005). All participants in this study had been encouraged in their leadership development endeavors prior to college, and their



previous experiences positively influenced their decisions to become involved in university. This finding mirrors existing research about the role pre-college experiences play in increasing the likelihood of university involvement in leadership development activities (Antonio, 2001; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Shertzer & Schuh, 2004). Studies have found that people with high LSE are more likely to enact leadership than people with low LSE (McCormick et al., 2002; Paglis & Green, 2002). More specifically, university students tend to pursue leadership opportunities on campus when they perceive themselves to be capable as leaders (Shertzer & Schuh, 2004).

Mentoring has been said to play a crucial role in leadership development (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Although Komives et al. (2005) found that adult mentors supported students' meaning-making processes, participants in this study did not mention talking with their mentors to make sense of their experiences. When participants spoke about mentors, they rarely talked about anything other than the influence of their encouragement, which directly affected their LSE. This is interesting given that the literature on mentoring fails to consider the role of building efficacy and focuses instead on mentors contributing to skill development and the building of social capital (Campbell et al., 2012; Dugan, Kodama, et al., 2013; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010).

Intentional efforts to help mentees develop skills and gain knowledge were mentioned when participants talked about their own experiences serving as mentors to younger students. However, it appeared that the main purpose of their efforts as mentors was to persuade mentees to pursue leadership development activities. This seemed to be especially important to Ashley and Jessica who mentored students from the high schools

they had previously attended. For other students, such as Annie and M.I.T., their mentoring efforts were focused on preparing younger students to take leadership roles within student organizations at university. This reflects one of the more advanced stages of development in the LID model, called generativity, which is characterized by students expressing passion for organizations or causes, committing to the development of others, and helping to sustain groups to which they belong (Komives et al., 2005).

**Affirmation.** Once they were convinced to pursue leadership development roles or activities, participants' abilities as leaders were affirmed when they were selected to serve in certain roles, and when they received recognition for their efforts. For some students, this external confirmation of their capabilities appeared to be a precursor to the development of internal beliefs in their own abilities. For others, it served to bolster their LSE by confirming that their own beliefs were justified. The influence of affirmation is not surprising given that it is one of the four main factors that inform efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997) and that constructive feedback helps people navigate new contexts and continue their efforts when faced with challenges (DeRue & Wellman, 2009).

***Selected for roles.*** The LSE of most participants was positively influenced by being selected for formal leadership roles, or being chosen for membership in an organization or on a team. Knowing that someone believed in their abilities as a leader helped them to evaluate their leadership abilities more positively and feel more competent. Most participants were first selected to serve in leadership roles during their later years in elementary school, or in high school. At this age, students are often in earlier stages of developing an identity as a leader, which is associated with viewing

leaders as people in formal positions (Komives et al., 2005). This mirrors statements from participants who indicated that the first time they saw themselves as a leader was when they were chosen to be in a certain role. This is likely because holding this position helped them to match industrial portrayals of leaders as individual people in positions. I saw no evidence that participants ever challenged the notion that equated formal positions with the label of leader, however, most came to understand that a title was not always required to lead.

***Recognition.*** When students were selected for roles and had the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills through direct experience, it meant a great deal to them when they received compliments from others. Much of this recognition came from peers, including athletic teammates, students who were members of the same student organization, peer mentors, and mentees. In the LID model, peers were noted as an important developmental influence not only because they served as role models, but also because they were sources of encouragement (Bandura, 1997; Komives et al., 2005). In addition, participants frequently mentioned that being recognized by supervisors meant a great deal to them. This finding is congruent with previous research indicating that LSE was positively associated with mentoring relationships with employers (Dugan, Garland et al., 2008; Dugan & Komives, 2007). Because supervisors and peers who had similar involvements had witnessed participants' engaging in leadership activities, it is likely that the evaluations of these observers were considered by participants to have a certain level of credibility, increasing the likelihood that their feedback would be valued and that it would have an impact on LSE (Bandura, 1997). When affirmation and feedback was

specific it helped participants accurately assess their leadership abilities, which contributed to growth in LSE and a desire to continue in their efforts.

**Direct experience.** Typically, when participants received feedback, it was given to them by people who observed them acting in leadership roles or activities. Bandura (1997) stressed that opportunities to build skills, gain knowledge, and practice leadership played a crucial role informing efficacy beliefs. This was reinforced by the stories of participants in this study. Unlike confidence, which can be understood to be a fairly fixed trait, students talked about their LSE growing over time, which speaks to the developmental nature of the construct (McCormick et al., 2002). Gains in LSE were due in large part to engaging in experiences that helped students develop skills and knowledge, and then practice what they had learned. There were three major themes that emerged from what they shared: (a) unique benefits were gained from different activities; (b) group dynamics influenced LSE; and (c) accomplishing particular goals supported the development of LSE.

***Different types of experiences mattered in unique ways.*** All participants spoke about multiple experiences that enhanced their LSE. Although different types of activities appeared to have distinct benefits, all of them helped students to identify their strengths and areas of growth. As a result, their LSE increased and they became more likely to get involved, a pattern which is reflected in the LID model (Komives et al., 2005). The four main types of experiences discussed by participants were student organizations, positional leadership roles, sports, and service. What follows is a brief description of the benefits associated with each involvement.

*Student organizations.* Almost all participants talked about being members of student organizations. For most of them, this involvement began in high school. A number of these early experiences were with student council, which is a type of group that has been specifically recognized as contributing to growth in LSE for women students (Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Romano, 1996; Sax, 2008). Interestingly, none of the participants went on to become involved with student government at the university level. This might be due in part to the hierarchical nature of institutions of higher education, which may influence the underrepresentation of women in executive leadership roles in this type of student organization (Miller & Kraus, 2004). Instead of joining student government in college, participants became connected with a number of different groups related to their specific interests, such as sororities, club sports, service groups, and cultural organizations.

Scholars have found that active participation in student organizations provides people with opportunities to apply different skill sets, which positively influences their LSE (Astin, 1993; Dugan et al., 2008; Dugan & Komives, 2007). In this study, participants attributed student organization involvement to the development of skills such as event planning, project management, and team-building. In addition, student organization involvement often contributed to an evolution in students' understanding of leadership. This change reflected a major shift in the LID model, when students essentially transition from focusing on positional leaders to viewing leadership as a collaborative process (Komives et al., 2005). This shift is associated with understanding the benefits of interdependence, establishing interpersonal efficacy, and learning to work

effectively with people who have different identities and perspectives (Komives et al., 2005).

Skill development related to group processes (i.e., sustaining organizations) tends to be more fully realized when students make long-term commitments to groups, rather than being involved only in a limited capacity in many organizations (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Komives et al., 2005). This was demonstrated by how frequently participants referenced organizations with which they had been involved for multiple years when speaking about factors that had positively influenced their LSE. As students maintained involvement with certain groups, they often went on to hold leadership positions within them. As reflected in this study, and supported by existing research, serving in these formal roles is positively related with gains in LSE for students across racial group membership (Kodama & Dugan, 2013), and is particularly powerful for women students (Dugan & Komives, 2007).

*Positional roles.* In addition to holding specific roles in student organizations, students benefited from serving in leadership positions connected with on-campus departments. These positions included (but were not limited to) roles as an RA, orientation leader, and a student facilitator. These experiences have been found to foster LSE for students across all demographic groups (Dugan, Kodama et al., 2013). Participants talked about what they gained from the training associated with these positions, naming growth in their abilities to manage conflict, build community, handle crises, and support the development of others. While “training experiences enhance student performance in leadership roles through an emphasis on skill building” (Dugan,

Bohle et al., 2011), growth in capacity leads to gains in LSE. Students recognized the transferability of these skills to various involvements. Komives et al. (2005) noted that when students learned about leadership through trainings, they were exposed to new language and ideas that were helpful to them as they assessed their abilities. Positional roles also tend to provide structured opportunities for students to receive feedback, such as through performance appraisals. When these activities are employed effectively and students are provided with constructive feedback, it can help students to accurately appraise their abilities, which can support the growth of LSE (Bandura, 1997).

*Sports.* Half of the participants stated that athletic activities contributed to growth in their LSE. This is not surprising considering that participating in intramural and club sports teams has been positively associated with both LSE and leadership capacity (Dugan, Torrez, & Turman, 2014). Like Komives et al. (2005), I found that involvement with sports enhanced students' motivations and abilities to do their best while supporting others. However, in my study, the relationship between athletics and personal development appeared to be much more salient than the connection between sports and collaboration. It is possible that participants in this study tended to name individual growth in areas such as discipline and commitment because many of their athletic pursuits were more solitary in nature rather than team-focused. Danielle's role as team captain for a club sports team built both LSE and strengthened her leadership abilities through direct experience. This mirrors results from studies that have found that leadership development is enhanced by serving in a positional role on NCAA athletic teams (Grandzol, Perlis, & Draina, 2010) and campus recreation teams (Hall, Scott, &

Borsz, 2008). This study not only supports existing research that has found a positive relationship between sports and leadership development. It also demonstrates that participating in sports contributes to the development of LSE for women and female college students.

*Service.* For students who were involved with community service, their LSE was positively affected when they were able to establish positive relationships with people associated with their service sites. They felt successful as leaders when they could anticipate people's needs, make a positive impact in others' lives, and become part of a community. Involvement with community service has been found to be positively associated with LSE for women in STEM, which was posited to be due to the "opportunity to experiment with leadership behaviors that are more relational in nature" (Dugan, Fath et al., 2013, p. 16).

*Group dynamics.* The influence of relationships on LSE played a role in the development of LSE in other ways. For example, when asked to share factors that had a negative influence on their LSE, a number of participants talked about times when they felt unable to achieve their goals as leaders because of the actions of other group members. Participants mentioned challenging group dynamics within organizations, a sports team, and a staff of students in positional roles. Most often, however, difficult experiences with groups were related to class projects, which have been found by other researchers (Komives et al., 2005).

Despite the distinction between individual LSE and collective efficacy (which reflects a group's capability to achieve their goals; Day & Halpin, 2004; Hannah et al.,



2008), most students assumed a level of personal responsibility for a group's failure, which seemed to decrease their LSE. This is not entirely surprising because, despite the fact that collective efficacy is established through group interactions, people within the group are conscious of it at an individual level (Bandura, 2000). Students whose views on leadership are heavily shaped by dominant norms may be particularly susceptible to being negatively affected by dysfunctional groups if they see themselves as "the one in charge" who was unable to direct the group's efforts in positive ways (Komives et al., 2009). Fortunately, for most participants, the negative impact on LSE that occurred through being unsuccessful seemed to be restricted to work with a particular group, and did not appear to transfer to other experiences.

The impact of group dynamics was demonstrated as having a positive influence on LSE as well. A number of participants talked about experiences when they felt more capable of achieving their leadership goals when they were part of groups whose members worked together effectively. When group members perceive each other to be competent, and are supportive of each other, both individual LSE and collective efficacy can be enhanced (Hannah et al., 2008; Paglis, 2010).

In summary, within the microsystem, a number of influences are at play that can shape LSE. Influential guides provide encouragement that often is a key antecedent to involvement with leadership development activities. People also offer affirmation to students that directly build LSE. Direct experiences give students many opportunities to gain knowledge and skills, and then practice what they have learned, which also informs LSE.

## **Internal Processes**

Through encouragement, affirmation, and direct experiences, participants developed LSE. This development appeared to be strongly related with the process of coming to identify as a leader. The findings from this build upon those related to the LID model (Komives et al., 2009; Komives et al., 2006; Komives et al., 2005) in a number of ways, as will be described in this section. Similar to the LID model, the theory that emerged from this study draws upon the integration of families of theories that are focused on psychosocial processes, cognitive growth, and identity development (Komives et al., 2009). The following section will explore relationships between LSE and participants' (a) core sense of self, (b) evolving understandings of leadership, and (c) strategies for overcoming self-doubt.

**Core sense of self.** As depicted in the RMMDI (Jones & Abes, 2013), the core represents the values, beliefs, and characteristics that comprise one's primary sense of self. Although scholarly discussions continue regarding the core, Jones and Abes put "emphasis on social identities as distinguished from personal identity contained in the core" (p. 83). Because social identities are situated in social structures, they are distinct from social roles (e.g., daughter, or sister), and the personal attributes that are represented in the core, such as being kind, intelligent, or hard-working (Jones & Abes, 2013).

Due to the relationship between values-based leadership, self-awareness, and commitment to action, an identity as a leader can realistically be considered to be part of someone's self-concept (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Hogg, 2001; Komives et al., 2005; Komives et al., 2009; Lord & Hall, 2005). This concept was reflected in what participants

wrote to describe their core sense of self when they completed a worksheet with a visual image of the RMMDI (Jones & Abes, 2013). Among the terms used by participants were: confident, leader, developer, willing to take initiative, and social justice. These aspects of students' core self-concepts reflected their understanding of leadership and their personal relationship with the construct. However, based on students' reflections about how their definition of leadership had evolved over time, these may not have been words they would have used when they were younger.

**Relating with a post-industrial understanding of leadership.** Consistent with the LID model, in their early experiences participants tended to adopt leadership approaches that reflected the industrial paradigm; they were task-oriented, directive, and they reinforced hierarchical structures (Dugan & Komives, 2011; Komives & Dugan, 2010; Komives et al., 2005; Northouse 2012; Rost, 1993). Over time, however, a shift occurred that is reflected in existing literature (Komives et al., 2005, 2009). Often attributed to their involvement with student organizations, students came to realize the value of collaboration, and started to value diverse perspectives. As a result, both their behavior and their understanding of leadership began to evolve (although evidence of postindustrial understandings of leadership often proceeded a consistent demonstration of behavior that reflected this approach, as described by Komives et al., 2009). Initially, participants accepted and internalized the dominant narrative about leadership (which focuses on industrial approaches and the male leader prototype). As they questioned these hegemonic assumptions, they were able to embrace a leadership definition and adopt a leadership style that was more closely aligned with their personal values and authentic

selves. As participants redefined leadership, their LSE increased because they recognized accomplishments they had not previously associated with their leadership abilities.

One's understanding of leadership not only influences the development of LSE; it is also associated with the development of an identity as a leader (Dugan, in press).

Leadership identity develops "through reflecting on meaningful experiences, modeling others, being encouraged by others, and successfully handling emotional cues" (Komives et al., 2006, p. 414). These processes reflect the key sources of efficacy information described by Bandura (1997). Given that similar processes promote the development of both LSE and an identity as a leader, it is not surprising that LSE contributes to the establishment of an identity as a leader (Komives et al., 2006).

**Overcoming self-doubt.** As indicated in the previous section, growth in cognitive complexity supported gains in LSE through the development of more complicated understandings of leadership. Existing research has noted that leadership development can be enhanced when students experience cognitive growth, which involves the employment of self-regulative skills and the adoption of adaptive thought patterns (Bandura, 1997; Komives et al., 2005; Lord & Hall, 2005; Owen, 2011; Wagner, 2011). A critical component of leadership development, LSE is also positively associated with constructive ways of thinking which include using a problem-solving mindset to address challenges and ascribing failure to external variables that can be overcome (Bandura, 1997, 2001; Bandura & Locke, 2003; Black & Earnest, 2009). The fact that LSE has a positive relationship with perseverance in the face of adversity (Bandura, 1997, 2001;

Bandura & Locke, 2003) may be explained by the tendency for people with high LSE to employ these productive cognitive approaches.

In this study, evidence of adaptive thought patterns was found when students shared the strategies they employed to counter feelings of self-doubt that sometimes surfaced. These feelings were common among participants, despite the fact that they reported having high LSE, and that they had benefited from many experiences that helped to build their LSE. This demonstrates the persistent power of negative messages and experiences on LSE, as well as the constantly evolving nature of LSE (Bandura, 1997; McCormick et al., 2002). One of the two main tactics that participants used to counter self-doubt was to approach experiences as learning opportunities that would result in improved efforts in the future. Being able to do this even when they failed to achieve their goals appeared to be important in terms of protecting their LSE. The other strategy was to intentionally examine factors that had a negative influence on their LSE and then reframe them in productive ways. These approaches reflected that participants were employing meta-competencies in areas such as self-awareness and adaptability, which scholars have deemed to be crucial to leadership development (Day & Lance, 2004).

***Learning orientation.*** Based on information they received from vicarious experience, feedback from others, and direct experiences, participants learned what they were capable of doing, gained knowledge, and developed skills that supported their continued growth as leaders. As a result, students also became more conscious of themselves. A number of participants explicitly talked about how this deeper self-awareness contributed to growth in their LSE. This is not surprising given that a number

of scholars have made strong connections between self-awareness and LSE (Bandura, 1997; Day & Lance, 2004).

Most participants specifically stated that they were grateful for the learning opportunities they had as leaders. This sentiment was consistent regardless of whether or not participants were successful in meeting their goals related to a particular endeavor. They seemed to understand that engaging in leadership involved taking risks, and that it was impossible to avoid facing challenges. Rather than giving up when they experienced difficulties, they evaluated themselves based on their efforts and what they had learned from the situation. This is consistent with Hannah and Avolio's (2010) research, which showed that when people with a strong learning orientation fail to meet their goals as leaders, they tend to attribute it to a gap in knowledge or skills that can be addressed, rather than to unmalleable personal deficits. Scholars have written about the benefits of adopting a learning orientation and having high self-efficacy for learning, both of which motivate people to invest in their personal development, and to persist in their efforts when faced with adversity (DeRue & Wellman, 2009; Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011; Schunk, 1996). It appears that having a learning orientation is consistently important, even if LSE might ebb and flow over time.

In this study, most participants had experienced fluctuations in their LSE based on how successful they were in achieving their goals related to different leadership experiences. This variation in self-efficacy beliefs is not uncommon, and research has found that "efficacy spirals" are in fact "critical to leadership development" (Bandura, 1997; Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011, p. 462). When people always achieve their goals,

their commitment to learning tends to falter, eventually resulting in complacency (Bandura & Locke, 2003; Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011). Conversely, when people experience repeated failures in their leadership endeavors, they often feel helpless, and their motivation to continue their efforts decreases (Bandura, 1997; Bandura & Locke, 2003; Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011). When people's performance and LSE continually reinforce each other as they change over time, it results in a self-correcting spiral that supports on-going self-appraisal and a focus on learning (Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011). Elena shared a powerful example of a time when she experienced this phenomenon; she talked about being grateful for all she learned after members of a service project did not meet the expectations she had for them. She stated that the situation taught her about areas of improvement and said that sometimes "you need a little blow to your confidence just to help you become better." Adenne also talked about her appreciation for times when she had struggled because they helped her learn that she would be able to overcome other difficulties in the future.

***Disrupting negative messages.*** In addition to focusing on learning, participants overcame self-doubt by consciously acknowledging it and then finding ways to reframe whatever factors or messages were negatively affecting them. For some students, this meant actively stopping themselves from engaging in negative self-talk. For example, Annie forced herself to stop worrying about whether other members of a student organization thought she was an effective leader, Brooke reminded herself that everyone makes mistakes sometimes, and Sarah decided to do such a great job in a leadership

position that her supervisor would think it was a mistake not to have hired her for the role the first time she applied.

A number of participants actively addressed negative self-talk by changing their cognitive scripts. For example, Ashley talked about the underrepresentation of women of color in administrative leadership positions on campus and then stated, “now that I sit down and think about it, why do I think that's strange? Why do I think that's so uncommon for a woman, or a woman of color to be in a leadership position?”

Challenging internal scripts is an advanced cognitive strategy requiring a degree of meta-cognition. This occurred when they recognized that a message they had received was part of the dominant narrative, considered its validity, and then chose to adjust how they thought about it. Similarly, in a study conducted with participants in a women's leadership institute, students recognized the gendered discrimination and biases that threatened their abilities to effectively lead and made conscious efforts to perceive these factors as challenges that they could overcome (McEldowney et al., 2009). This process reflects the meaning-making filter that is situated in the RMMDI between identities and contextual influences (Jones & Abes, 2007). Jones and Abes determined that as students develop their meaning-making capacity, they become more adept at critically questioning factors that can influence their identities, such as social norms, and stereotypes.

Participants were prompted to consider whether their LSE had been negatively influenced in a way that was related to any of their social identities. Almost all participants talked about a relationship between LSE and messages they had received about gender. Similar relationships were noted between identities such as race, sexual



orientation, and religion, demonstrating a connection between core tenets and themes.

Leadership educators have been advised to acknowledge how multiple identities influence the development of an identity as a leader, particularly those identities that are associated with a history of marginalization (Jones & Abes, 2007; Komives et al., 2005; Komives et al., 2009). The stories shared by participants in this study demonstrated the value of this recommendation.

Some participants in this study appeared to disrupt the dominant narrative by valuing subtle behaviors that did not further reinforce stereotypes, although they may not have been conscious of doing so. For example, when Brooke applauded her teammates for not being overly emotional, she did not explicitly recognize that their behavior was not fitting with stereotypes associated with women. Disrupting the dominant narrative in this way is not progressive. In fact, it can be seen as hegemonic because the behaviors of the women were valued for conforming to prevailing notions of unemotional leaders.

Other students were intentional in identifying stereotypes and messages that negatively affected their LSE, and then responding in ways that countered the potential damage they could cause. Ashley chose to focus on the fact that her employers at a law firm valued her work, and recognized that her identity as a woman of color helped some clients relate to her. Sally noted that she did not fit the typical White male leader prototype, but rather than internalizing this in ways that could negatively affect her LSE, she was determined to prove anyone who held biases about her to be wrong. Sally not only acknowledged her talents as a leader, she also celebrated her identity as a bisexual woman of color because she could contribute diverse perspectives to a group. These

approaches reflect how LSE mediates the impact of stereotype threat on women by lessening the likelihood that they will internalize gendered biases related to women leaders (Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007).

This section related findings from this study to existing literature on the internal processes that influence the development of LSE. Gains in cognitive complexity support evolving understandings of leadership, which lead to gains in LSE. In addition, meta-cognitive strategies have been shown to be powerful, such as adopting a learning orientation, and disrupting cognitive scripts.

### **Implications**

Grounded theory methodology is ideal for researchers who desire to use findings from a study to develop a theory that will be likely to inform practice (Charmaz, 2014; Dugan, 2011b). The goal for my study was to positively influence the work of educators like myself. Due to my years of professional experience in the field, the practical application of my work was always been at the forefront of my mind. In the following section, I describe implications for practice, as well as for future research.

Although it is not usually possible to adequately represent all aspects of a complex theory in one visual image, it is feasible to design a model that explains the relationships among the core tenets and themes on a general level. The key elements of the theory that emerged from this study are demonstrated in the model presented in Figure 3. At the center is the individual, who continually receives messages about leaders and leadership from various levels of societal systems. Messages are represented by arrows in the image. As a child, there are few to no challenges to the dominant narrative

coming from the level of internal processing. As time goes on, the importance of interactions with settings, organizations, and people increases. These influences are symbolized by the growing yellow circles within the microsystem. In addition, over time, there is significant growth in the influence of the cognitive filter, which is represented by the green inner circle. Illustrated as being ever-present at the foundational level across systems is the influence of multiple identities throughout the process of developing LSE. This model serves as a tool and mental guide for educators who wish to translate findings to inform practice.

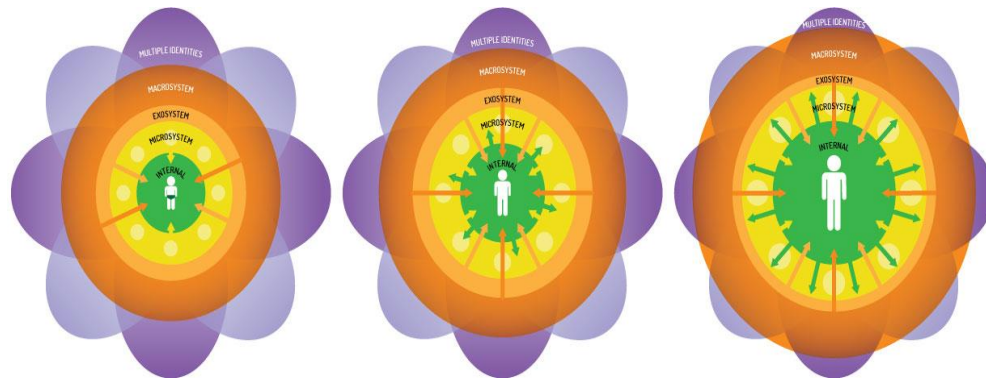


Figure 3. Visual Image of the Development of LSE for College Women and Females

### **Implications for Practice that can Promote Social Justice**

Foundational to the theory emerging from this study is an important finding focused on the role that dominant ideologies play in influencing leadership. This finding relates with many of the following recommendations in various ways. First, to effectively teach students about society's evolving understandings of leadership, educators should explicitly name the role that power and privilege play in the leadership development process and encourage students to deconstruct the dominant narrative and make meaning of the influence of systems of oppression (Dugan, 2011a; Dugan, Rossetti

Morosini et al., 2011; Leonardo, 2004). By acknowledging the barriers that can constrict the development of LSE for people with one or more marginalized identities who may not fit with the White, cisgender male, heterosexual leader prototype, it may help people to better understand the impact that various levels of oppression have on the development of LSE. These conversations must include explicit affirmation of students' multiple identities (Dugan, Rossetti Morosini et al., 2011). Educators must help students to navigate systems without internalizing the harmful messages, and offer students tools to make change on a systemic level to improve the future.

An important component of efforts to transform current oppressive systems is to highlight counter-narratives that help to disrupt them (Bell, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Solorzano & Yosso, 2009). While there remains a need for more equitable representation of women in leadership roles (Dominici et al., 2009; Hoyt, 2010; Kark & Eagly, 2010; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; von Hippel et al., 2011), there is an opportunity to lessen the impact of this imbalance by doing a better job telling the stories of the women leaders who are making an impact. Participants talked about a change they had noticed in their own lifetimes in which women were gaining more visibility as leaders, and this made them feel hopeful about the future. There is power in challenging the male leader prototype by recognizing women and females as effective leaders. In doing so, it will also be important to positively highlight leaders who represent diverse identities beyond gender (Latu et al., 2013; Munin & Dugan, 2011). While it is important to critique and deconstruct systems of inequity, to sustain those who are

working to promote justice, there must also be critical hope (Leonardo, 2004; Preskill & Brookfield, 2009).

**Critical evaluation by educators.** If educators hope to cultivate the development of LSE in all students, they must also critically evaluate the ways in which their own practice may be perpetuating inequities and then take action to address the issues (Guthrie et al., 2013). One step educators can take is to analyze how leaders and leadership are portrayed in their marketing efforts, programs, and interactions with students (Munin & Dugan, 2011). As demonstrated by this study, messages that are aligned with the industrial paradigm may help build the LSE of women and female students. It is important to be aware of the identities of pictures of people in marketing efforts, peer mentors, and staff associated with leadership programs, because of the messages that can be communicated about who is (and is not) portrayed as a leader.

Educators also have a responsibility to examine their biases and their potential impact on students. For example, as demonstrated by the negative feedback that Adenne received on her performance appraisal, training should help supervisors recognize the implicit leader prototypes that may influence evaluations, as well as other interactions with students (Baker & Greene, 2007; Fassinger et al., 2010; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Rosette & Livingston, 2012; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). In addition, educators should critically examine whether student organizations groups are treated in inequitable ways. Certain groups, such as student government, have access to significantly more power and capital than others (Arminio et al., 2000). Access to resources and support can influence people's beliefs in their abilities

to achieve their goals, which can affect both the self-efficacy of individuals as well as collective efficacy (Bandura, 2000; 2001; Ganz, 2010; Hannah et al., 2008). When resources are more equitably distributed, it can have a positive impact on all students – not just those connected with prestigious involvement opportunities. For example, not expecting that a cultural group would receive significant funding, Ashley was pleasantly surprised when the Salsa club was given a large amount of money to host an event, and felt capable of achieving her goals as a result.

### **Implications for Student Affairs Practice**

There are a number of ways in which findings from this study can be used to inform practice in higher education, particularly for student affairs educators.

Recognizing that many leadership development efforts on college campuses neglect the cultivation of LSE, scholars have advocated that educators consider the work of Bandura (1997) and others to intentionally promote LSE (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Komives et al., 2009; Komives et al., 2006; McCormick, 2001). While supporting this argument, this study offers unique insights to help educators better understand how students who identify as women or female develop LSE.

**Encourage and affirm to increase student involvement.** As demonstrated by this study, students who have grown up being encouraged by adult mentors are likely to begin university having engaged in pre-college leadership experiences (Arminio et al., 2000; Heifetz, 2010; Komives et al., 2005). These students will be more likely than their peers to pursue similar opportunities when they begin university (Antonio, 2001; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Shertzer & Schuh, 2004). This initial

participation tends to have a reciprocal relationship with students' LSE, which leads to further involvement and helps to explain why students with high LSE are significantly more likely than students with low LSE to hold many leadership roles before graduation (McCormick et al., 2002). It is not surprising that pre-college experiences explained most of the variance in LSE (Dugan & Komives, 2007). Although scholars have advised educators to "move beyond polishing diamonds or working most directly with students who self-select into formal leadership programs" (Astin & Astin, 2000; Dugan, Bohle et al., 2011, p. 13; Dugan & Komives, 2007), this study shows that even those students with pre-college experience stand to benefit greatly from continued involvement during university.

At the same time, however, educators should be aware that 46% of students graduated without having held a leadership position, while 27% of seniors had served in multiple roles (Dugan & Komives, 2007). This indicates that participation in these opportunities could be distributed more equitably (Dugan & Komives, 2007), which is a conclusion I have reached in my professional experience. If educators gave more students opportunities to be involved, more students would benefit. This study demonstrated how influential it was when adult guides encouraged students to pursue leadership development opportunities, some of whom would not have done so otherwise. Thus, intentional efforts should be made to reach out to students who are not seeking out opportunities to let them know someone believes in them, and persuade them to get connected by communicating the benefits of involvement (Dugan, Garland et al., 2008). Attempting to do so early in students' college careers is important because some may

need this support as a precursor to their involvement (Anderson et al., 2008; Bandura, 1997). By doing so, educators have a chance to support the leadership development of students who may benefit more from their involvement than their peers who have prior experience (Astin & Astin, 2000; Dugan, Bohle et al., 2011, p. 13; Dugan & Komives, 2007). There is an implication here related to social justice, in terms of the reasons some students may not be seeking leadership experiences. Although leadership can be learned, the process is influenced by systems of privilege and oppression which make doing so easier for people who have greater access to opportunities, and those who see themselves reflected in dominant narratives associated with leaders (Dugan, 2011b).

**Mentor with a focus on encouragement, feedback, and meaning-making.**

When educators mentor students, they should remember that this role involves much more than providing mentees with opportunities that support the development of skills and knowledge, despite the fact that these tasks are emphasized in literature on mentoring (Campbell et al., 2012; Dugan, Kodama, et al., 2013; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Findings from this study and others (Komives et al., 2006) indicate that mentors play a crucial role providing the encouragement and affirmation students often need to develop LSE and their identities as leaders. Simple acts matter, such as persuading students to pursue involvement activities that could contribute to their leadership development, nominating them to be recognized in an awards program, or praising their abilities. When recognizing students for their efforts, mentors should remember that feedback is most likely to influence LSE when it is both specific and genuine (Bandura, 1997).



Particularly when students are relatively new to leadership roles, educators can recommend that they seek opportunities with limited risk of failure, which will increase the likelihood that their LSE will be enhanced (Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011). Mentors should also help students process their experiences to promote greater self-awareness, while framing them as learning opportunities (Bandura, 1997; Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011). Mentors should be coached to support leadership development by helping students make sense of power dynamics, learn how to navigate relationships and systems, and build resilience (Dugan, Kodama, et al., 2013). This may involve a delicate balance of recognizing the unjust ways in which systems currently operate, while protecting LSE from detrimental effects. For example, the person who advised Danielle that women leaders would be evaluated harshly if they cried at work was correct. Although it would be ideal if people were able to be their authentic selves in all contexts without judgment, that is not our current reality. A mentor may be able to support the maintenance of students' LSE by helping them to manage this dissonance in a constructive way. If students can learn to cope within unjust systems while attributing challenges to oppressive forces in the external environment rather than internalizing them, they will be more likely to navigate systems without harm to their LSE.

**Coach students to serve as mentors.** My study is not alone in finding that peers also play an important role sponsoring students' pursuits of leadership opportunities (Komives et al., 2006). Therefore, educators should coach students to encourage and mentor their peers. Mentees benefit from this relationship and students serving as mentors can gain valuable skills while ensuring the continued success of the

organizations or roles with which they are involved. M.I.T. was not alone in mentoring younger students in ways that mirrored the support she had received from older students in the same organization when she was new to university. When experienced student leaders prepare less practiced peers to assume leadership roles, it reflects behavior consistent with one of the later stages of the LID model, which is called generativity (Komives et al., 2006).

**Promote experiences that help students learn and practice skills.** In this study, distinct benefits were related with engagement in various types of activities. Staff might recommend certain involvement options based on their perceptions of students' developmental needs, or on what students have articulated their goals to be. In this study, one of the most influential experiences was involvement with student organizations. Scholars have found that gains in LSE are positively associated with both membership in student organizations, and serving in leadership roles within them (Dugan & Komives, 2007). As found in this study and others, student groups offer excellent opportunities to build skills related to working in teams, such as striving to achieve a common purpose, and communication (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Komives et al., 2006). To ensure that learning about group processes is not left to chance, educators should teach these skills. It may also be beneficial to evaluate whether the rigid hierarchical structures that often exist in these organizations do more harm than good, particularly for students whose tendency is not to lead with an authoritative approach that can create distance in relationships (Haber-Curran, 2013).

**Encourage prolonged involvement with organizations.** There are benefits to encouraging students to stay involved with a group for an extended period of time so they can be a part of a number of group transitions (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Komives et al., 2009). Many of the participants talked about being involved in organizations for multiple years, which allowed them to become mentors to other students after having been mentored themselves, and to take on roles with increasing levels of responsibility over time. Long-term commitments to student groups increases the likelihood that students will hold leadership positions within those organizations, which can result in further benefits (Dugan & Komives, 2007). This study found that another important contribution of student organizations was the way in which they influenced an evolution in students' understanding of leadership that reflected the postindustrial paradigm of leadership. When participants in this study began to view leadership as a collaborative, inclusive process for the purpose of positive change, their LSE was positively influenced as they recognized their previous behaviors as ones that contributed to leadership.

**Explicitly discuss and disrupt the dominant narrative about leadership.**

Opportunities to understand leadership in more complex ways are not limited to taking place in the context of involvement with student organizations. For example, students in positional roles are exposed to a great deal of training. Participants in this study indicated that the training associated with holding these positions was incredibly valuable. This may be one of the reasons that holding positional leadership roles has been found to cultivate LSE for students across demographic groups (Dugan, Kodama, et al., 2013). When students' experiences are complemented by reflecting on leadership, it can provide

a framework to help them evaluate their abilities as leaders, which can support growth in LSE (Komives et al., 2005).

Educators should strive to find multiple formats in which to foster more complex thinking about leadership by teaching students about the language and theories associated with the study of this construct (Komives et al., 2009; 2005). Based on findings from my research, there is value in going beyond these foundational conversations to explicitly acknowledge the role of power dynamics and the influence of hegemonic norms on leadership development. Students can benefit from recognizing the ways in which systems of oppression operate, and learning to navigate within them while protecting their LSE.

**A case to demonstrate the application of this theory to practice.** To help illustrate how educators might employ some of these recommended strategies, I will use Adenne's experience with her performance appraisal as a case. If Adenne had approached an educator as a mentor to help her process this experience, there are a number of things this person could do to intervene. An educator could support Adenne as she makes meaning of the experience, while helping her learn to navigate unjust systems and manage relationships within them. A conversation with Adenne should begin with the educator validating her perspective. By explicitly exploring the power dynamics that appear to have affected her supervisor's interactions with her, Adenne and the educator can acknowledge and disrupt the influence of dominant narratives about leadership, as well as those related to social identities that operate at the level of the macrosystem. A mentor can also affirm Adenne by providing her with specific feedback about her

abilities as a leader, while encouraging her to persist in her efforts despite this challenge. Framing the experience as evidence of the barriers faced by women of color in the development of LSE rather than perceiving the supervisor's comments as an accurate assessment of her abilities as a leader may be helpful. A message like may be received by Adenne as more credible if it is presented by a mentor who shares her identity as a woman of color. An educator may present Adenne with various options to consider if she wishes to contest the performance appraisal, and provide support with whatever approach she may choose to take. For example, Adenne might choose to request a mediated dialogue with her supervisor, or file a formal complaint. At the structural level, an educator could intervene by making recommendations related to training for individuals who supervise student staff, in hopes of preventing other students from having an experience that is similar to Adenne's.

### **Implications for Future Research**

In light of critiques related to the failure of much of the literature to define the term leadership (Dugan, 2011b; Rost, 1993), I intentionally described how I understood the concept throughout the study, starting with the materials used to recruit participants. Some participants noted that this definition was influential in helping them decide that they wanted to be part of the study. By asking students to share messages they had received about leaders and leadership, as well as their own definitions of leadership, important information was gained. As important as I believe it was to define leadership, I did not specifically define LSE for the participants. Aware that the concepts are often conflated, I used the term "confidence" instead of self-efficacy in materials shared with

potential participants, and in the interviews themselves. I did this because the word “confidence” is more commonly used, and I believed that participants would respond better to questions focused on a concept with which they were familiar. This approach has been used in other studies. For example, the MSL used the term “confidence” in the scales to measure LSE (Dugan, Fath et al., 2013). However, as a result, I had to listen attentively to participants’ stories to ensure that I was making accurate interpretations. If researchers employ this approach in the future, they are advised to be conscious of it during data collection and analysis to determine if what participants share truly reflects their LSE.

As previously mentioned, all participants had pre-college experience with leadership development activities. Future research should explore the process of developing LSE for women and female students who have not been involved in these ways. Based on the understanding that these students are less likely to pursue leadership roles (Antonio, 2001; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Shertzer & Schuh, 2004), studies should also discover how best to encourage unengaged students to participate in opportunities that could support their leadership development.

Students talked about valuing diverse perspectives, the importance of being inclusive, and some related leadership with efforts for social justice. Elena even seemed able to resist negative influences on her LSE by naming the impact of ideologies such as patriarchy, which she learned about in a class on race, gender, and class in the United States. However, nobody made direct links between the development of LSE and engaging in socio-cultural conversations with peers. Because participating in this type of

discussion is positively associated with LSE (Dugan, Garland et al., 2008; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kodama & Dugan, 2013), further exploring the relationship between LSE and socio-cultural conversations would be beneficial. In addition, based on Elena's advanced understanding of issues of power and privilege, which she attributed in part to the class referenced above, future studies should explicitly explore possible connections between academic experiences and the development of LSE.

Scholars have found that involvement with identity-based student organizations is positively associated with gains in LSE, identity development, and the cultivation of an identity as a leader (Renn, 2007; Renn & Bilodeau 2005; Renn & Ozaki, 2010). Despite the diversity of the sample for this study, there were no data found to support this claim. There may have been a number of reasons that this was the case, including the fact that few participants were involved with identity-based student organizations. In addition, my questions were focused on factors that influenced LSE, so various experiences only were discussed when participants mentioned them. If I had asked more intentional questions about different involvement opportunities, it is possible that these groups may have been recognized. Future research should explore the role of identity-based groups in the development of LSE.

An important recommendation for future research is to consider how the development of LSE is influenced by various factors within multiple levels of systems. Certainly, the argument for doing so is not new to the study of human development (Althusser, 1970; Bronfenbrenner, 1977). In addition, scholars have articulated the need to explore the role that context plays in leadership development general (Bandura, 1997;

Day et al., 2009; Fassinger et al., 2010) and the cultivation LSE (Hannah et al., 2008; Paglis, 2010). This study stressed the importance of looking at the development of LSE over the course of a life-span and the need to consider the influence of multiple identities on that process. Being conscious of not using a “one size fits all” approach to educational interventions is crucial because leadership development differs for students based on various aspects of identity (Dugan, Kodama et al., 2012; Guthrie et al., 2013; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Kodama & Dugan, 2013; Munin & Dugan, 2011) and more specifically, predictors of LSE differ based on group membership related to race (Dugan, Kodama, et al., 2013). It is important to learn more about the unique experiences that can be most beneficial to distinct groups of students.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study was not intended to represent the diverse experiences that all women or female students have related to the development of LSE. From a social constructivist perspective, there would be doubts than any one study (qualitative or quantitative) could truly achieve this (Charmaz, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The group of participants was small, and specific (particularly in terms of meeting the criteria related to high LSE). Because all but one of the participants identified as cisgender women or females, this study will do little to address the critique that much of the literature on women and leadership perpetuates binary notions of gender (Dugan, Kusel et al., 2012). In addition, all participants were undergraduate students who were studying at one institution. Although attempts were made to recruit a sample that reflects diversity in terms of certain social identities, it would not have been possible with such a small sample size to reflect the



general diversity of the undergraduate student population at a national level. The goal of this study was not to result in a prescriptive list of actions that leadership educators can take to enhance LSE for all students who identify as women or females. Instead, the goal was to develop a theory that supports better understanding of some of the processes involved with the development of LSE for students who identify as female or women, so practitioners can apply this information in their practice after adapting it to best fit individual students at their institutions.

A second limitation is that I tried to employ an intersectional lens in the analysis of the data without the benefit of having many leadership studies to serve as examples (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Sancez-Hucles & Davis, 2009). Using an intersectional approach can be valuable, but it was difficult to do because of the complexity involved with considering how lived experiences are shaped by intersecting identities (Bowleg, 2008; Cole, 2009; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012). I was unable to fully utilize this lens because only some of the participants spoke about intersections of identity. I had to navigate a difficult balance between searching for patterns and themes in the data, and recognizing that each participant's experience was unique because of the interactions among their multiple identities and the multifaceted layers of contextual systems that influence their development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Jones & Abes, 2013). I attempted to successfully employ an intersectional lens by intentionally acting in accordance with the principles of this approach, which includes considering the meaning of identities on individual and group bases, and exploring the influence of systems of power on human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Cole,

2009; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Jones & Abes, 2013).

Unfortunately, the students who expressed interest in being participants were overwhelmingly students who were involved on campus in many ways. It could have been beneficial to have had greater diversity in the sample in terms of levels of involvement. Because leadership development is not limited to occurring within formal leadership programs and roles, and the majority of undergraduate students do not participate in these experiences (Dugan, Bohle et al., 2011; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Dugan, Kodama et al., 2013), important information was likely missed because all but one of the participants were actively involved in multiple traditional leadership roles on campus. This may be a somewhat expected situation, however, given that I asked people to encourage students with high LSE to participate, and that people with high LSE are likely to be people who are involved in leadership activities (Antonio, 2001; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Shertzer & Schuh, 2004).

Another limitation is that the participants were all university students. Only 41% of the total population of 18 to 24 year olds in the United States were enrolled in college in 2012 (U.S. Department of Education, 2014), and college students have a certain amount of educational privilege and access to social capital in U.S. society. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that women and females who do not attend university develop LSE the same way. Nevertheless, the study is still critical because of the importance of exploring the potential for higher education to address sexism and genderism, and to contribute to women's leadership development.

### **Strengths of the Study**

A strength of this study is that it helps to address gaps in the existing literature. Considering the dearth of research that has focused on LSE (Dugan & Komives, 2010; Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011) and the more specific need for research on the development of LSE in the context of higher education (Dugan, 2011b; Dugan & Komives, 2007), this study can provide educators with valuable insights that can inform their practice. In addition, this study helps to answer the call made by many researchers to further explore relationships between multiple identities and leadership (Fassinger et al., 2010; Komives et al., 2009; Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Ostick, 2011; Renn, 2007; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005).

As explained in Chapter III, conducting research using grounded theory methodology requires researchers to take intentional action to ensure the quality of the study (Birks & Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2014; Jones et al., 2014; Mertens, 2005). Consistent with best practices for this approach, I accurately outlined the procedures I followed in detail, and created an audit trail of memos, transcriptions, and other documents (Birks & Mills, 2011; Jones et al., 2014; Mertens, 2005). Following the recommendations of scholars, I made deliberate attempts to use thick description, include many direct quotations to amplify voices without exploiting them, and to engage respectfully with participants throughout the process (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Mertens, 2005; Olesen, 2000).

In addition, I engaged in reflexivity by trying to be constantly conscious of how data collection and analysis could be influenced by power dynamics related to my role at

the university, my multiple identities, and those of the participants (Birks & Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2014; Jones et al., 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Based on the nature of the stories communicated by participants, and the level of depth at which they shared, I believe I was able to establish trusting relationships with the participants that resulted in the collection of valuable data. Because I was aware of the biases and assumptions that informed my role as the key instrument for data collection and analysis, and because I shared my values and perspectives, readers should be able to better understand and evaluate the study (Charmaz 2014; Jones et al., 2014; Merriam, 2009; Mertens, 2005; Schwandt, 2007). I believe I accomplished the goal of a grounded theory study, which is to create a comprehensive theory that is grounded in data, and that has the potential to inform practice (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

### **Reflection and Conclusion**

Throughout the two-year process of writing this dissertation, what I have learned has continued to shape my practice as an educator. I have become more aware of the message about leaders and leadership that I receive on a daily basis through societal assumptions, the media, personal experiences, and interactions. In my work, I have become more intentional about calling attention to the dominant narrative and trying to disrupt it. I continually strive to further develop my cultural competence, and to be critically conscious of the influence of systems of power, privilege, and oppression in all aspects of our daily lives. I have also made it more of a priority than ever before to provide students with constructive feedback, encouragement, and affirmation. I hope this study provides insights to other educators in higher education who find value in what I

have shared. I realize that at both the institutional and individual levels there is significant work to be done to better live up to the espoused values of our field. However, I still believe in the potential of education to make a difference in the lives of students, and as a result, to have a positive impact on the world.

I chose to explore this topic not only because the need to do so was articulated in the literature or because of the patterns I had observed in years of professional work. The development of LSE for women and females held personal interest for me as well, in part due to my own familiarity with feelings of self-doubt as a leader. There were many times when I resonated with what participants shared when they talked about the impact of the negative messages they received within various contexts, as well as the harmful self-talk that affected their belief in their abilities to be successful as leaders. I also could relate with participants when they spoke about how much they appreciated their mentors, or how experiences and accomplishments had a significantly positive influence on their LSE. Throughout the process of completing this dissertation, I often wondered what the future would hold for my own daughters. I conclude this study feeling aware of the challenges presented by a world in which systems of oppression remain persistent and pervasive, and at the same time, optimistic for a better future.

## APPENDIX A

### EMAIL FROM RESEARCHER TO STAFF AND FACULTY

Dear

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to ask you to share information about a study with students who identify as women or female. I will conduct interviews to better understand how students who identify as women or female develop leader self-efficacy (LSE). LSE refers to people's beliefs in their abilities to be successful as leaders. **I am seeking students who believe that they are capable of influencing efforts towards positive change in communities, whether they are groups/ teams, organizations, local communities, or on a broader scale.**

I ask that you consider students who: (a) appear to be comfortable taking initiative on group projects, (b) actively mobilize people to become engaged with a program or cause, (c) seem eager to participate in new opportunities that can contribute to their personal growth, and (d) persevere in their efforts despite facing challenges.

I am seeking a sample of students with various types of involvements, both on- and off-campus. Please do not limit your nominations to students who hold multiple recognized leadership or athletic roles on-campus. It is equally important to include students who may not be perceived (or self-identify) as a "typical" student leader. To explore the potential influence of multiple identities on the development of LSE, I am seeking a sample of participants that is diverse, particularly in terms of race/ethnicity and sexual orientation.

I am emailing you a flyer with information about the study that you can forward to students. I would greatly appreciate it if you would share this flyer with potential participants within the next week. I will also bring printed copies of the flyer to your office. Students interested in participating in the study can contact me directly.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you so much for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Shannon Howes

Doctoral Candidate in Loyola University Chicago's Higher Education Program  
Director for Student Leadership Development at Loyola University Chicago

APPENDIX B

FLYER FOR STAFF AND FACULTY TO SHARE WITH POTENTIAL  
PARTICIPANTS





## **Participate in Interviews for Research Study**

**For more  
information, or to  
volunteer for the  
study, contact:**

Shannon Howes

(Phone Number)

(Personal Email)

- PhD student seeks to interview students who identify as women or female
- Topic: Developing confidence in abilities to influence positive change in teams, organizations, or communities
- Receive a \$25 gift card (choice of Amazon or Chipotle) per interview
- Participate in 2 interviews (each interview is 1 hour or less)
- Participation is voluntary and confidential

## APPENDIX C

### EMAIL FOR STUDENTS INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN STUDY

Dear

Thank you for contacting me to express interest in participating in my study. For my doctoral dissertation, I am conducting a study on leadership development in students who identify as women or female.

In this study, I am defining leadership as “an ethical and inclusive process in which people work together to create positive change in communities, whether they are groups/ teams, organizations, local communities, or on a broader scale.” This positive change may involve building communities of empowerment, educating to increase awareness of social issues, engaging in direct service, advocacy, or similar activities. I hope to interview a diverse group of students who identify as women or female to learn how they have gained confidence in their leadership abilities.

Each interview will take approximately one hour and will be held in a quiet space on campus at a time selected by you. If selected to participate, you will be asked to commit to two separate interviews over the next few weeks. After each interview you will receive a \$25 gift card to Amazon or Chipotle (whichever you prefer). Interviews will be audio-recorded and then transcribed. You will have the opportunity to review the transcripts and to provide additional comments after each interview, if you wish to clarify anything.

Participation in the study will be confidential and voluntary, and it should not affect your involvement with departments, activities, or academic units on-campus. The benefit of this study is that it may help educators to better support a diverse group of students in their efforts related to leadership development.

Please contact me at (*personal email address or cell phone number*) if you have questions and/ or would like more information about the study. If you are interested in participating in this study, please click on the link below to give consent and to complete a brief information form (*insert Google form link*). I will select participants based on the information provided on the forms and will contact students soon to schedule an interview. I hope to wrap up the process of inviting an initial group of participants for the study in the next week or so.

Thank you so much,

Shannon Howes

Doctoral Candidate in Loyola University Chicago’s Higher Education Program  
Director for Student Leadership Development at Loyola University Chicago

APPENDIX D  
CONSENT FORM (ONLINE FORM)

**Project Title:** The Development of Leader Self-Efficacy in University Students Who Identify as Women or Female

**Introduction:**

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Shannon Howes, a doctoral candidate working on her dissertation in the Higher Education Program at Loyola University Chicago (LUC). Shannon is working under the supervision of Dr. John P. Dugan, Associate Professor in the Higher Education Program at LUC.

You are being asked to participate because you were invited to do so by a staff member, faculty member, or student at LUC. The researcher will interview between ten and twelve students within the next few months. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to better understand how students who identify as women or female develop confidence in their abilities as leaders. For the purpose of this study, leadership is defined as “an ethical and inclusive process in which people work together to create positive change in communities, whether they are groups/ teams, organizations, local communities, or on a broader scale.” This positive change may involve building communities of empowerment, educating to increase awareness of social issues, engaging in direct service, advocacy, or similar activities.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to complete a brief online information form, which will immediately follow this online consent form. Students selected for the study will be asked to participate in two interviews, each lasting approximately one hour. The interviews will include questions related to the following topics: (a) your definition of leadership, (b) your confidence in your ability to be successful playing a role in “an ethical and inclusive process in which people work together to create positive change,” (c) the experiences that have shaped your confidence doing so, and (d) ways in which your leadership experiences may have been influenced by identities such as gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation (if at all). You will have the opportunity to review transcripts after each interview to ensure accuracy. Interviews will take place in quiet campus meeting rooms at a time that works for you. Interviews will be audio-taped.

**Risks/Benefits:**

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. However, some questions may elicit emotional reactions. You should be aware that questions will be asked about your identities (particularly related to gender). There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but you may find that it is valuable to reflect on your leadership experiences. In terms of indirect benefits, the findings from this study will inform the ways in which leadership

development programs are delivered at LUC (and potentially at other schools), with the goal of better contributing to student leadership development.

**Compensation:**

To acknowledge the time that will be spent in interviews, after each interview, you will receive a \$25 gift card for your choice of either Amazon or Chipotle. You will receive compensation if you answer all of the questions you feel comfortable answering and/or if you answer a number of questions in depth and the interview reaches an hour in length. Your decision not to answer specific questions will not affect your compensation of the \$25 gift card at the end of the interview.

**Confidentiality:**

The information you share will be kept confidential. A pseudonym will be used instead of your name, and specific identifying features (such as a unique position you may hold in a student organization) will not be included in the study's findings. Only the primary researcher (Shannon Howes), her faculty advisor, and the individual who will type transcripts will have access to the audio recordings and transcripts from the interviews. Only Shannon Howes will know your name. Data will be securely stored digitally in password-protected Dropbox folders, or on an external hard-drive kept in a locked location, and will be destroyed according to institutional research policies.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty (other than not receiving both gift cards if you do not participate in both interviews). Your decision to participate will not affect your involvement with departments, programs, academics, or involvement opportunities on-campus.

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you have questions about this research project, feel free to contact Shannon Howes at (*personal email address or cell phone number*) or the faculty sponsor, Dr. John Dugan, at [jdugan1@luc.edu](mailto:jdugan1@luc.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

**Statement of Consent:**

Typing your name below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study.

Do you agree to participate in the study? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

Do you agree that the interviewer may audio-record the conversation? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

---

Participant's Name

---

Date

APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM (ONLINE FORM)

Please complete this form. All information shared will be kept confidential.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Class Year \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_

Race/Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_ Sexual Orientation \_\_\_\_\_

If there is any additional information about yourself that you would like to share, please do so:

In this study, leadership is defined as “an ethical and inclusive process in which people work together to create positive change in communities, whether they are groups/ teams, organizations, local communities, or on a broader scale.” This positive change may involve building communities of empowerment, educating to increase awareness of social issues, engaging in direct service, advocacy, or similar activities. **When you think about engaging in leadership yourself, what thoughts and/or feelings do you have? (Please respond with a few bullet points or a few sentences)**

**Considering the definition of leadership given above, how would you describe your level of confidence in your abilities to engage in leadership? (Please respond with a few bullet points or a few sentences)**

On-campus involvement may include (but is not limited to) membership in student organizations, serving in leadership roles (Orientation Leader, Resident Advisor, STARS Mentor, etc.), playing on sports teams, and community service through a university-sponsored program. On-campus involvement is not necessary to participate in the study. **If you have been involved on-campus, please list the experiences in which you have participated since starting university.**

Off-campus involvement might include (but is not limited to) community service, a job or internship, sports, etc. Off-campus involvement is not necessary to participate in the study. **If you have been involved off-campus, please list the experiences with which you have been actively involved since starting university.**



## APPENDIX F

### EMAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN FIRST INTERVIEW

Dear

Thank you so much for expressing interest in participating in my study and submitting your information form. Below, I have listed a number of times in the next few weeks when I am available to interview you:

*(list of dates and times)*

By Thursday, August 20th, please email me to let me know which three or four of these possible dates and times work well for you. If none of the times listed above work for you, please let me know three or four alternate dates and times. Once a date and time have been confirmed for the interview, I will reserve a meeting room on campus, likely in the Damen Student Center, Information Commons, or the library (at either Lake Shore or Water Tower Campus). Please let me know if you have a preference for a location. I will send an email confirmation once a space has been reserved.

Please let me know if you have questions or if you would like to talk more about this process. Thank you so much for your willingness to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Shannon Howes

Doctoral Candidate in Loyola University Chicago's Higher Education Program  
Director for Student Leadership Development at Loyola University Chicago

## APPENDIX G

### EMAIL CONFIRMATION FOR FIRST INTERVIEW

Dear

Thank you for sending your availability to participate in an interview with me. Based on our schedules, it seems that the best time to meet is

in Damen Student Center 124 (a meeting room between the Off-Campus Student Life office and the Alumni Relations office). If you need to reach me that day before our interview, feel free to call my cell phone at (*cell phone number*).

Please plan on the interview lasting an hour. Please be prepared to tell me what you would like your pseudonym to be (this is the name of your choice that I will use to refer to you to maintain confidentiality). If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at (*personal email address or cell phone number*). Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Shannon Howes

Doctoral Candidate in Loyola University Chicago's Higher Education Program  
Director for Student Leadership Development at Loyola University Chicago

## APPENDIX H

### EMAIL TO VOLUNTEERS NOT SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY

Dear

Thank you so much for completing your information form. I am pleased that so many students expressed interest in participating in my study.

At this point, I have selected an initial group of participants to interview. As I analyze the data from these interviews and identify both themes to further explore and gaps in knowledge that I would like to address, I will continue to invite more students to interview. I may reach out to invite you to participate in an interview later in the summer or early fall.

Please let me know if you have questions or if you would like to talk more about this process. Thank you so much for your willingness to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Shannon Howes

Doctoral Candidate in Loyola University Chicago's Higher Education Program

Director for Student Leadership Development at Loyola University Chicago

APPENDIX I

CONSENT FORM (PAPER FORM TO SIGN)

**Project Title:** The Development of Leader Self-Efficacy in University Students Who Identify as Women or Female

**Introduction:**

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Shannon Howes, a doctoral candidate working on her dissertation in the Higher Education Program at Loyola University Chicago (LUC). Shannon is working under the supervision of Dr. John P. Dugan, Associate Professor in the Higher Education Program at LUC.

You are being asked to participate because you were invited to do so by a staff or faculty member, or student at LUC. The researcher will interview between ten and twelve students within [*time frame – i.e. the next two months*]. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to better understand how students who identify as women or female develop confidence in their abilities as leaders. For the purpose of this study, leadership is defined as “an ethical and inclusive process in which people work together to create positive change in communities, whether they are groups/ teams, organizations, local communities, or on a broader scale.” This positive change may involve building communities of empowerment, educating to increase awareness of social issues, engaging in direct service, advocacy, or similar activities.

**Procedures:**

You have already been asked to complete a brief online information form, and an online consent form. You are being asked to participate in two interviews, each lasting approximately one hour. The interviews will include questions related to the following topics: (a) your definition of leadership, (b) your confidence in your ability to be successful playing a role in “an ethical and inclusive process in which people work together to create positive change,” (c) the experiences that have shaped your confidence doing so, and (d) ways in which your leadership experiences may have been influenced by identities such as gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation (if at all). You will have the opportunity to review transcripts after each interview to ensure accuracy. Interviews will take place in quiet campus meeting rooms at a time that works for you. Interviews will be audio-taped.

**Risks/Benefits:**

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. However, some questions may elicit emotional reactions. You should be aware that questions will be asked about your identities (particularly related to gender). There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but you may find that it is valuable to reflect on your leadership experiences. In terms of indirect benefits, the findings from this study will inform the ways in which leadership



development programs are delivered at Loyola University Chicago (and potentially at other schools), with the goal of better contributing to student leadership development.

**Compensation:**

To acknowledge the time that will be spent in interviews, after each interview, you will receive a \$25 gift card for your choice of either Amazon or Chipotle. You will receive compensation if you answer all of the questions you feel comfortable answering and/or if you answer a number of questions in depth and the interview reaches an hour in length.

**Confidentiality:**

The information you share will be kept confidential. A pseudonym will be used instead of your name, and specific identifying features (such as a unique position you may hold in a student organization) will not be included in the study's findings. Only the primary researcher (Shannon Howes), her faculty advisor, and the individual who will type transcripts will have access to the audio recordings and transcripts from the interviews. Only Shannon Howes will know your name. Data will be securely stored digitally in password-protected Dropbox folders, or on an external hard-drive kept in a locked location, and will be destroyed according to institutional research policies.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty (other than not receiving both gift cards if you do not participate in both interviews). Your decision to participate will not affect your involvement with departments, programs, academics, or involvement opportunities on-campus.

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you have questions about this research project, feel free to contact Shannon Howes at (*personal email address or cell phone number*) or the faculty sponsor, Dr. John Dugan, at [jdugan1@luc.edu](mailto:jdugan1@luc.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

**Statement of Consent:**

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Do you agree to participate in the study? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

Do you agree that the interviewer may audio-record the conversation? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX J

SCRIPT FOR FIRST INTERVIEW

## Introduction

Welcome, [*student's name*]. How are you? How is the semester going for you so far?

Thank you again for participating in my study. Let's review the consent form together. Then, if you are still comfortable participating, I will ask you to sign it before we continue with the interview [*continue after the consent form has been reviewed*].

To maintain confidentiality, I ask you to choose a pseudonym before we begin our interview today. What would you like your pseudonym to be? Before we continue, do you have any questions? If additional questions arise later in the process, please ask at any time.

I will record this conversation so I can later transcribe it and refer to it. My hope today is to discuss your definition of leadership, your perceptions of yourself as a leader, and some of the experiences that have influenced your leadership development.

*Interview – I will ask questions and ask for elaboration (not much comment otherwise – different than “conversation.”*

## Questions

- Why did you express interest in participating in this study?
- What messages have you received about leaders and leadership?
  - Where did these messages come from (for example, from family members, teachers, school, the media, and/or other sources)?

In this study, I am defining leadership as “an ethical and inclusive process in which people work together to create positive change in communities, whether they are groups/teams, organizations, local communities, or on a broader scale.” This social change may involve building communities of empowerment, educating to increase awareness of social issues, engaging in direct service, advocacy, or similar activities. If it helps to read this definition, you can find it in the Purpose section of the consent form I gave you today.

- What reactions, if any, do you have to this definition of leadership?
  - How does this relate to how you define leadership?
  - Has the way you define leadership changed over time? If so, how and why?
- Based on this definition, can you think of the first time you engaged in leadership?
  - Why did you decide to engage in this experience?
    - Did any people or experiences influence your decision?
  - Can you share what feelings arose as you had that experience?

- When you were deciding whether to engage in this experience, how confident were you that you would be successful in that instance?
    - Why do you think you felt this way?
  - Did your confidence change after engaging in that experience?
    - Why do you believe your confidence changed/did not change?
  - Does anything from that experience still come to mind when you think about engaging in another leadership activity? How so?
- What is the most powerful recent experience you have had engaging in leadership?
    - Why did you decide to engage in this experience?
      - Did any people or experiences influence your decision?
    - Can you share what feelings arose as you had that experience?
    - When you were deciding whether to engage in this experience, how confident were you that you would be successful in that instance?
      - Why do you think you felt this way?
    - Did your confidence change after engaging in that experience?
      - Why do you believe your confidence changed/did not change?
    - Does anything from that experience still come to mind when you think about engaging in another leadership activity? How so?
  - How would you describe your abilities to serve in a role with a group of people who are working together to create positive change in communities, whether they are groups/ teams, organizations, local communities, or on a broader scale?

Thank you very much for all that you shared. Is there anything else you would like to add at this time? Do you have any questions for me? In a moment, we will talk about the second interview. Before we do that, I want to ask if there any students you know who may also be willing to participate in my study. I want to interview a diverse group of students who identify as women or female who may be willing to talk about how they have gained confidence in their abilities to effectively serve in leadership roles, and/or to work collaboratively with others for efforts focused on positive change. I will send you a flyer (*Appendix B*) by email, and provide you with paper copies of the same flyer so you can share it with anyone you believe would be willing to participate. Students can contact me directly if they are interested in participating in the study.

If it is alright with you, I would like to look at our calendars now to arrange a time for our second interview, which will take place between *[date range]*. The second interview will focus more on how your experiences with leadership have been shaped by your identity as a woman or female, and by additional identities (if at all). *[Look at calendars to try to determine a date for next interview]*

Between now and our next interview, I encourage you to reflect on the following questions, which I will send to you by email about a week before our second interview.

As you reflect upon these questions, I ask you to consider whether one or more of your identities (such as gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, or additional identities) may have influenced your confidence in your abilities to successfully create positive change in a community.

- Have there been experiences, messages, or interactions that have had a positive influence on how confident you are in your abilities to serve in a role with a group of people who are working together to create positive change in a community? Think of examples from any point in your life. Are there certain situations, interactions, or experiences that make you believe in your abilities to successfully engage in these activities?
- Can you think of a time when you experienced success when working in a group for the purpose of creating positive change in a community? If so, how did that experience make you feel? What impact (if any) did it have on you?
- Have there been experiences, messages, or interactions that have had a negative influence on how confident you are in your abilities to serve in a role with a group of people who are working together to create positive change in a community? Think of examples from any point in your life. Are there certain situations, interactions, or experiences that make you doubt your abilities to successfully engage in these activities?
- Can you think of a time when you experienced challenges when working in a group for the purpose of creating positive change in a community? If so, how did you feel when facing these challenges? How did you approach them?

Thank you again for your time. Here is your \$25 gift card.

## APPENDIX K

### REMINDER EMAIL BEFORE SECOND INTERVIEW

Dear [*student's name*],

Below, you will find the questions I asked you to reflect upon before our second interview together on [*date and time*] at [*location agreed upon for second interview*]. As you reflect upon these questions, I ask you to consider whether one or more of your identities (such as gender, race, sexual orientation) may have influenced your confidence in your abilities to successfully create positive change in a community.

- Have there been experiences, messages, or interactions that have had a positive influence on how confident you are in your abilities to serve in a role with a group of people who are working together to create positive change in a community? Think of examples from any point in your life. Are there certain situations, interactions, or experiences that have helped you to believe in your abilities to successfully engage in these activities?
- Can you think of a time when you experienced success when working in a group for the purpose of creating positive change in a community? If so, how did that experience make you feel? What impact (if any) did it have on you?
- Have there been experiences, messages, or interactions that have had a negative influence on how confident you are in your abilities to serve in a role with a group of people who are working together to create positive change in a community? Think of examples from any point in your life. Are there certain situations, interactions, or experiences that make you doubt your abilities to successfully engage in these activities?
- Can you think of a time when you experienced challenges when working in a group for the purpose of creating positive change in a community? If so, how did you feel when facing these challenges? How did you approach them?

You will find below a link to access a written transcript from our first interview together. It is in a password-protected Dropbox folder: [*link for Dropbox folder*]. The password is the pseudonym you chose. If you have difficulty remembering your pseudonym or accessing the transcript, please let me know. Reviewing the transcript is not required but is your opportunity to ensure that what is written there is accurate. When we meet for our second interview, you will have the opportunity to provide additional thoughts if there is anything in the transcript that you would like to clarify. Again, please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Shannon Howes

Doctoral Candidate in Loyola University Chicago's Higher Education Program  
Director for Student Leadership Development at Loyola University Chicago

APPENDIX L

SCRIPT FOR SECOND INTERVIEW



Welcome back. Thank you for being here for this second interview. I have a copy of the consent form you signed before our first interview. Please take a moment to review it again now. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Is there anything you would like to clarify, or any additional things you would like to say after reading the transcript from the first interview?

- Here are a few of the main themes I perceived when reflecting on your interview [*share 2 or 3 key themes or themes in need of further clarification or confirmation*].
- What are your thoughts when you hear these themes?

Before I ask you interview questions, I would like you to complete this diagram as it relates to your identities [*diagram is Appendix M*]. For each ring, please write how you identify. By placing a dot on the ring you can indicate how salient each identity is to you at this point in time. When the dot is closer to the middle, which represents one's core sense of self, it indicates that an identity is more salient, which means it is more often an identity about which you are consciously aware. [*Show a separate diagram – Appendix N - that was completed by me, the researcher*]. For example, for this ring related to gender, I would write that I identify as a woman, and would place the circle here, close to the core, to indicate that this is an aspect of who I am that I think about often. If there is anything you would choose not to include or that you would rather not discuss, that is perfectly fine. For example, you can see on my diagram that I left "culture" empty. I did this because I find it difficult to describe how I identify in terms of "culture." If there is anything you wish to add to the diagram, please feel free to do so. There are no "right answers" – the purpose of this activity is to explore how you identify. Please take a few minutes to complete the diagram, which I will ask to keep. After you have completed it, we'll have time to discuss it, along with some additional questions.

- Thank you for completing this diagram. Is there anything you would like to share about what it was like for you to complete it?
- *Is there anything you would like to share about how salient one or more identities are for you?*

Let's review and discuss the questions I asked you to consider when we last met. I will ask you these questions now. As you reflect upon these questions, I ask you to consider whether one or more of your identities (such as gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, or additional identities) may have influenced your responses.

- Have there been experiences, messages, or interactions that have had a positive influence on how confident you are in your abilities to serve in a role with a group of people who are working together to create positive change in a community? Think of examples from any point in your life – even the media, world events,

experiences in school, activities, etc. ... Are there specific influences related with your time in university – people, experiences, classes?

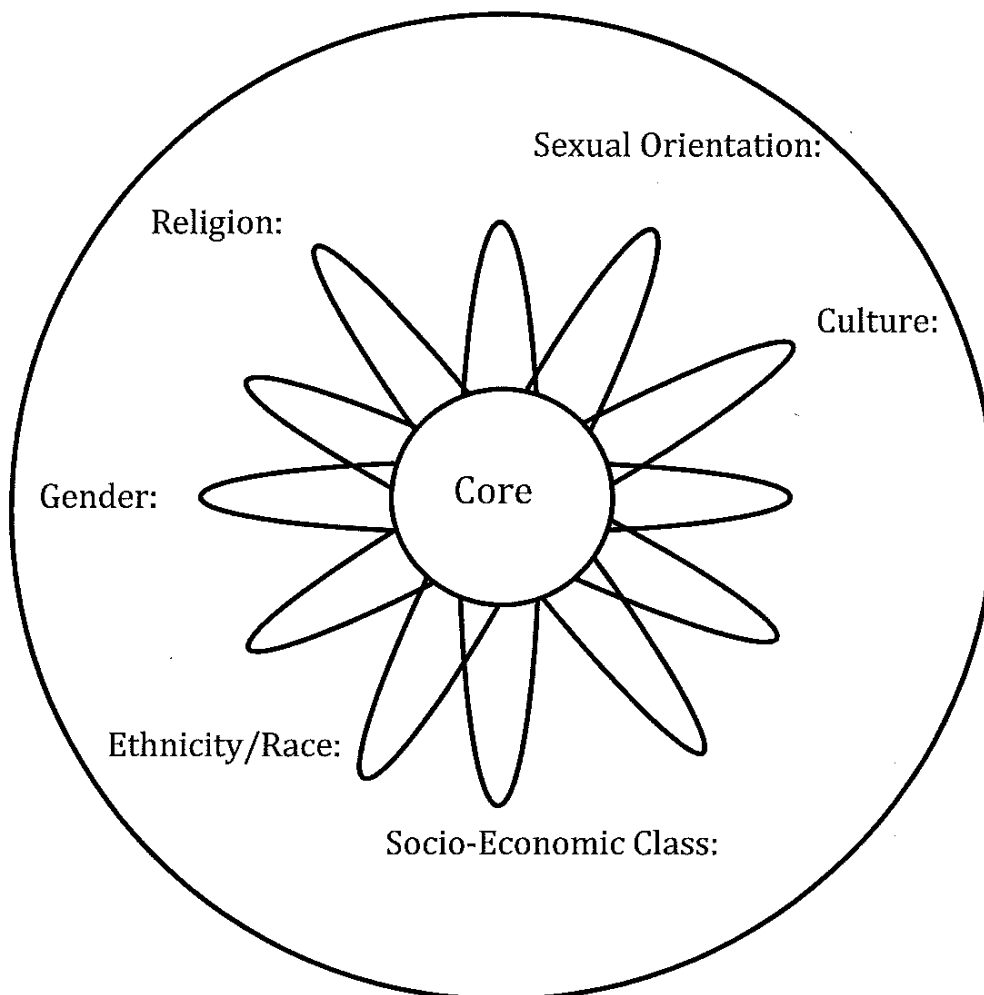
- *Are there certain situations, interactions, or experiences that make you believe in your abilities to successfully engage in these activities?*
- *Can you think of a time when you experienced success when working in a group for the purpose of creating positive change in a community?*
  - *If so, how did that experience make you feel? What impact (if any) did it have on you?*
- Have there been experiences, messages, or interactions that have had a negative influence on how confident you are in your abilities to serve in a role with a group of people who are working together to create positive change in a community? Think of examples from any point in your life.
  - *Are there certain situations, interactions, or experiences that make you doubt your abilities to successfully engage in these activities?*
  - *Can you think of a time when you experienced challenges when working in a group for the purpose of creating positive change in a community? If so, how did you feel when facing these challenges? How did you approach them?*
- Please think again about experiences, messages, or interactions that have had a positive influence on your belief in your abilities to be successful in leadership activities. What connections, if any, do you see between these influences and one or more of your social identities? [*Only ask this if identities were not mentioned in the previous answers*]
- Please think again about experiences, messages, or interactions that have had a negative influence on your belief in your abilities to be successful in leadership activities. What connections, if any, do you see between these influences and one or more of your social identities? [*Only ask this if identities were not mentioned in the previous answers*]

Thank you again so much for your time. I will email you soon to share the transcript from today's interview, so you have a chance to add any comments or clarify anything if you wish to do so. Here is your \$25 gift card.

APPENDIX M

DIAGRAM FOR SECOND INTERVIEW

If there are any additional identities or notes you would like to add, please do so here:



## APPENDIX N

### EMAIL INVITATION TO REVIEW TRANSCRIPT FROM SECOND INTERVIEW

Dear [*student's name*],

Thank you again so much for participating in my dissertation study. By clicking the link below and entering your pseudonym for the password, you should now be able to view transcripts from both of your interviews. I invite you to read them and let me know if there is anything you would like to add or clarify. If you have difficulty opening the files, please let me know. This link will expire on [*30 days from date email was sent*].

As stated previously, the purpose of this study is to better understand how students who identify as women or female develop confidence in their abilities as leaders. The findings from this study will inform the ways in which leadership development programs are delivered at Loyola University Chicago, with the goal of better contributing to student leadership development efforts at additional universities as well.

Please email or call me at (*personal email address or cell phone number*) if you would like to provide additional thoughts, if there is anything here you would like to clarify, or if you have any questions. Thank you again so much for participating in this study.

Sincerely,

Shannon Howes

Doctoral Candidate in Loyola University Chicago's Higher Education Program  
Director for Student Leadership Development at Loyola University Chicago

APPENDIX O  
MEMO TEMPLATE

**Date:**

**Type of Memo** *[include the type of note]:*

- Observational notes – to describe events
- Theoretical notes – to record researcher's thoughts about events
- Methodological notes – notes about procedures

**Interview(s) Being Referenced** *[include page number and line if relevant]:*



## APPENDIX P

### CODES

At various systemic levels (such as the macrosystem, internal level), there were main categories, codes, and sub-codes, as shown below. More specific codes beyond these related to distinct thoughts or stories shared by participants. Throughout the various systems, there was evidence of the influence of multiple identities on the development of LSE, and sometimes, participants talked about the influence of intersecting identities. Some of these codes ended up being combined, or deemed less relevant.

### **MACROSYSTEM**

- **INDUSTRIAL NOTIONS OF LEADERSHIP**
  - Born leaders
  - Bossy
  - Narrow definition of leaders
  - One in charge
  - Positional leaders
  - Prototype of male leaders
- **JUDEGEMENTS OF WOMEN**
  - Appearance
  - Bossy
  - Emotions
  - Less than
  - Work harder to be noticed

### **EXOSYSTEM**

- **UNDERREPRESENTATION OF WOMEN**
  - Career fields
  - Faith communities

### **MICROSYSTEM**

- **DIRECT EXPERIENCE**
  - Accomplishments
    - Success
    - Overcome challenge
  - Group dynamics
    - Limit success when groups function poorly
    - Collective efficacy when groups function well
  - Time
    - Gain skills & knowledge as a result of training and experience
    - Gain greater self-awareness
    - Familiarity with processes and environment
    - Build relationships
  - Type of experience
    - Student organizations
    - Sports
    - Leadership positions

- Service
- ENCOURAGE & AFFIRM
  - Encouraged to get involved/apply/run for position or role
  - Affirmed
    - Selected for role (or NOT selected)
    - Recognized
- INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE
  - Role models
    - Having role models
    - Serving as role models
  - Mentors
    - Having mentors
    - Serving as mentors

### **INTERNAL LEVEL**

- SELF-DOUBT
  - Not feeling prepared for role
    - Youth
    - Lack of training
  - General self-doubt
- LEARNING ORIENTATION
  - Efficacy spiral
- DISRUPT COGNITIVE SCRIPTS
- SELF AS LEADER
  - Abilities
    - Task
      - Persistent
      - Productive and efficient
      - Take initiative
    - Collaboration
      - Teamwork
      - Common goal
    - Building relationships
      - Empathy
      - Listen
      - Help others
      - Encourage others
      - Communicate effectively
      - Manage conflict
    - Relationships across difference
      - Value different perspectives
      - Work well with others who are different from me

- Use inclusive approaches
- Values
- Career choices
- Postindustrial ideas of leadership
  - Positive change
    - Social change
    - Change the system
    - Desire to make a difference and help others
    - Speak up
    - Inclusive approaches on broad level
  - Complexity
    - Increasingly complex understanding of leadership
    - Different ways to lead
    - All can contribute to leadership
    - Leadership is situational
  - Non-positional understanding of leadership
- Identify as leader
  - Did/did NOT see self as leader
  - Understanding of leadership helped students see themselves as leaders
  - Desire to be leader
- Social identities (Intersections were noted)
  - Age
  - Ethnicity
  - Faith
  - Gender
  - Race
  - Sexual orientation

## REFERENCE LIST

- Abes, E. S., Jones, S. R., & McEwen, M. K. (2007). Reconceptualizing the Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity: The role of meaning-making capacity in the construction of multiple identities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48, 1-22.
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