



STUDENT
AFFAIRS
IRELAND



IASAS
International Association of
Student Affairs and Services



**Understanding Gendered Meanings of Leadership in
College Learning Experiences: Recommendations for
Developing Gender Equity-Minded Collegiate
Leaders**

Amanda B. Pascale, PhD

The Topic



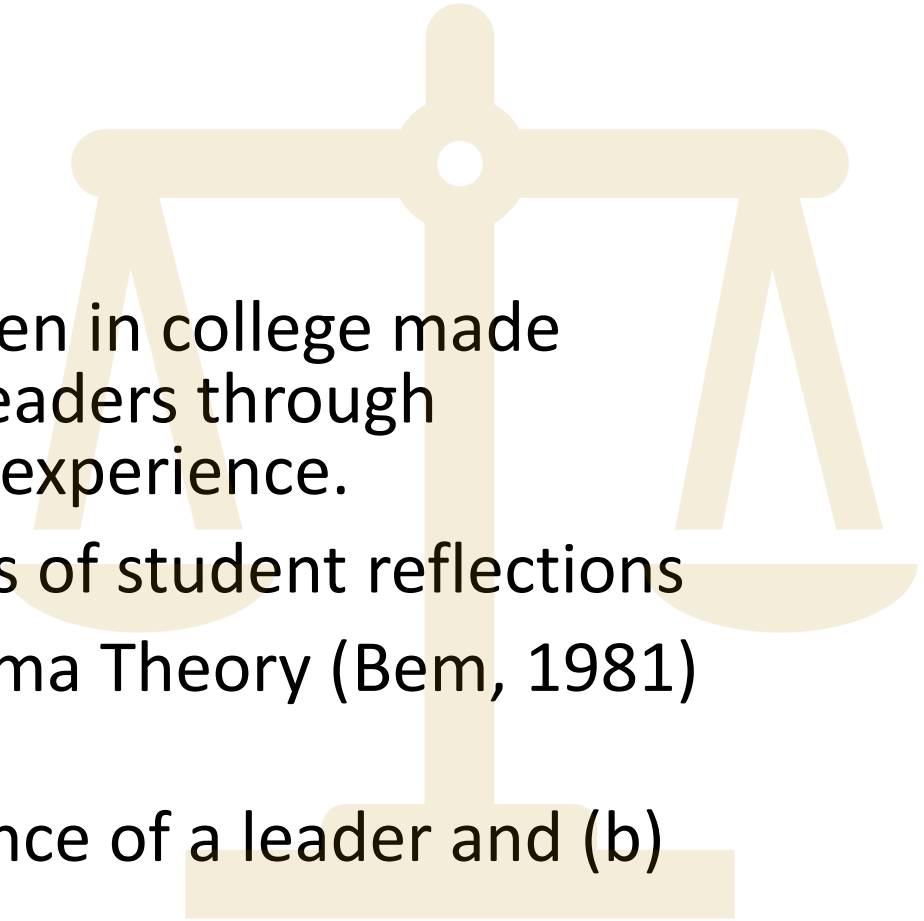
There is a need to explore how programs and practices in higher education can, and should, be used to promote equity, inclusion, and diversity



The Study



- Examine how women and men in college made meaning of leadership and leaders through participation in a mentoring experience.
- A qualitative content analysis of student reflections
- Analyzed using Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1981) as a lens
- Two major themes (a) presence of a leader and (b) leader impact



The Presence of the Leader: Gendered Meanings



- Both women and men described leaders as confident and social and that they should use social skills for effective communication with others.
- Operational definitions of confidence differed. Men described confidence as an outward display and comfort interacting with others (e.g., gregariousness) and women operationalized confidence as an internal construct (e.g, viewing oneself positive or negatively or helping others see themselves more positively).

Leader Impact: Gendered Meanings



- Both men and women talked about leaders as people who were in control of themselves and their environment, were role models, and could affect change.
- Men tended to select mentees who they perceived to already “look up” to them in some way. Women tended to select friends to mentee.
- Men described experience as having their mentee benefit and grow as a result of their mentorship. Women talked about the mutual and reciprocal nature of the growth and development of themselves and their mentee

Major Takeaways

- While men and women used similar words to describe their experiences, the deconstructed contextual meanings were gendered.
- Men's ideas aligned to more traditional hierarchical styles of leadership (e.g., power, trait, or influential leadership models)
- Men and Women were bringing gendered understandings of leadership to their mentoring experience, and used the experiences to reinforce binary gender roles—an unintended and negative consequence.
- It is important to explore and deconstruct the role that gender and other stereotypes play in experiential learning practices prior to the students' engaging in these experiences.





Thank You
