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# THE JOURNAL OF STUDENT LEADERSHIP



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VOLUME 6 • ISSUE 2

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF  
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UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

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## ABOUT THE COVER



### CLEAVING

*This painting is about marriage. I loved the way these two trees were clinging together, practically intertwined, and had grown together as one. I loved that they were both cleaving to light—in this case the last rays of sunlight pouring over the mountains and flooding the valley with light. They had clearly battled the elements together, and grown stronger together than they would have grown separately. This section of Provo Canyon's South Fork is a spot I have visited many times, but on this particular evening it was one of those unforgettable "take your breath away" moments that I simply had to capture. It took dozens of glazes to achieve the richness of color and dusky sense of oncoming night.*

JANA PARKIN, B.F.A.  
UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY  
Watercolor



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# CONTENTS

## ARTICLES AND ESSAYS

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS.....	IX
CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS AND ARTISTS.....	102
COLLEGE STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY: IN THEIR OWN WORDS .....	3
Michael T. Miller, Ed.D. Mei-Yan Lu, Ph.D.	
DECISIONS: THEIR COMPONENTS AND RELEVANT EXAMPLES WITHIN EMERGENCY SERVICES .....	17
Brayden McLaughlin	
INVOLVEMENT IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY: DOES IT MATTER TO STUDENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT? .....	23
Juhee Kim, Ph.D., Ed.D. Elizabeth Wargo, Ph.D.	
AM I WHO YOU THINK I AM? COVERING AND REVERSE COVERING OF IDENTITY AS A POLITICAL STRATEGY FOR EMERGING POLITICAL LEADERS .....	41
Jamal Halley Chloe Rawlings Elizabeth S. Smith, Ph.D. Jillian Wacker	
THE IDEA OF NATURAL BORN LEADERSHIP AND ITS HARMFUL ASSUMPTIONS .....	63
Nathan Jackson	
SMASHING THE PIGGY BANK: ARE FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP STYLES PASSED DOWN FROM PARENTS TO THEIR CHILDREN .....	69
Madison Barnett	
A LEADER IN THE MIRE .....	84
Ethan Powers	
THE POTENTIAL FACTOR .....	97
Sierra Russon	

# CONTENTS

## ARTWORK AND POETRY

DEAR TO THE HEART .....	2
Tyler Christensen	
MISLABEL AS "BROKEN" .....	14
MaiLyn Millward	
FATIGUED .....	16
Erica Hardin	
BLACK AND WHITE .....	22
Hallie Watt	
CHEF MIKE .....	40
Ethan Hoenic	
GATHERING.....	59
Sophie King	
NO ONE ELSE WILL .....	60
Presley A. Brady	
COMPARISON .....	62
Ava Gonzalez	
WOMEN'S WORK.....	80
Hannah Olivia	
WHY SHOULD WE CONSIDER YOU FOR THIS POSITION .....	82
Christian Heftel	
SERENE .....	92
Yen-Chen Liao	
SCARS; DIFFERENT, BUT OURS .....	93
Shantelle Erksine	
ZANE.....	94
Anna Van Noy	
SPEAK EVIL .....	96
Racheal LeSueur	
DOUBLE MIRRORS .....	98
Eliza Jensen	
OUTSTANDING AND FIRM .....	100
Yen-Chen Liao	
FATHERHOOD.....	101
Cullen Watkins	





## LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

TO OUR FELLOW READERS,

We are pleased to present the Fall 2022 issue of *The Journal of Student Leadership* and would like to emphasize some of the outstanding leadership topics found in the articles and artwork. The article by Halley, Rawlings, Smith, & Wacker sheds light on student government leaders' identities, while Kim & Wargo's work highlights how student leaders grow when challenged by extracurricular activities. Collectively, we learn that leaders, whether informal (even work-in progress) types (Hoenig) or potentially corrupt ones (LeSueur) are faced with the ubiquitous of choice, and "a choice not to decide is still a choice" (McLaughlin). Works by Russon, Jackson, Jensen, Van Noy, or Watt remind us to broaden our views, that leadership is within each of us and very attainable, and Erskine or Christensen's artwork expresses how practiced inclusion can look.

This journal issue beautifully conveys how questions about qualifications for positions are embedded in nature (Liao) or the "finite" power of individual experience (Heftel). Miller & Lu discuss a student survey with results we might not expect, with students describing "parents as the greatest leaders they know." Similarly, Barnett, King, Gonzalez, or Watkins convey that the greatest kinds of leaders may be parents or those who show love and nurture children. Leaders, however, can be put on pedestals (Brady or Olivia), but that comes at a price (Hardin, Millward, or Powers) and raises questions about context—how leaders look, how they got there, how they can be supported, or how they might fall.

We sincerely thank the JSL Staff, our editorial board, anonymous peer reviewers (at all levels), and the Department of Student Leadership and Success Studies. Above all, thanks to the authors and artists who contributed to this issue. Enjoy!

**BENJAMIN A. JOHNSON, PH.D.**

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**DEAR TO THE HEART**

*TYLER CHRISTENSEN*

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

*Bronze statue*

A good leader is someone who will find “the one” that needs help. A good leader sees those that are missing and does all they can, even in uncomfortable circumstances, to bring them to the group.

# COLLEGE STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

MICHAEL T. MILLER, ED.D.    MEI-YAN LU, PH.D.  
*University of Arkansas*                      *San Jose State University*

*The college campus is an important area for leadership development as students begin to think more broadly about the world around themselves. The current study surveyed 124 undergraduates at a western state comprehensive university asking them to describe different elements of leadership. Study findings identified the perception of leadership as a personal benefit, yet the students in the study also described parents as the greatest leaders they know. Additionally, students shared that leadership development was critical to the campus community. Findings provided evidence that those working in leadership development should be cautious about generalizing what leadership has been for the new generation of college students.*

**T**he college experience produces many expectations, ranging from receiving occupational training to developing critical thinking skills. Underscoring the curricular-based learning, however, is the development of college students in social and emotional maturation. Aligning with college student development theory, these emerging adults use the time and experiences of college enrollment to make important decisions about who they are, what they value, and how they will engage with their world.

Much has been written about parental involvement in college student lives, suggesting that parent involvement might truncate student development. Additionally, critical observations on the structure and content of academic programs suggest that as much, if not more, maturation and development occur outside of the classroom as inside (Miller & Nadler, 2020). This concept is not new, as nearly 40 years ago Astin (1984) studied



and argued for the importance of co-curricular learning in his Student Involvement Theory.

Many students engage in a wide variety of student activities, both formal and informal, when crafting and discovering their identity. This involvement provides opportunities for experimentation and exploration in leadership. These experiences in taking personal responsibility can result in stronger self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and commitment to both community and civic engagement. Leadership exposure is critical to learning in college and the search for identity.

Leadership programs and opportunities are formal, informal, and situational (Dugan et al., 2011). In some instances, programs such as student government provide mechanisms for complex decision-making, consensus building, and responsibility within large groups of individuals (Bray, 2006). Other opportunities for student leadership growth might occur as the result of small-group decision-making among students who live together (Brown, et al, 2019). As leadership development opportunities are present throughout a student's college experience in multiple times, locations, and activities, it becomes increasingly important that college faculty and administrators create a thorough understanding of how these students think about leadership and how they see leadership relating to themselves.

A great deal of popular and academic literature on the topic of leadership exists, much of which offer anecdotal or applied approaches to understanding and developing an individual's leadership potential. This literature, however, does not include perspectives of leadership by the emerging generation of students who are overtaking both higher education and emerging into the workforce. Therefore, the purpose for conducting the study was to explore and describe how entering college students think about the topic of leadership.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The study and understanding of leadership in the current world environment are important for a number of reasons. Not only does such an understanding provide context for current and future generations to work and be successful, it also guides understanding for how to grow leadership capacity and followership. As a new generation of late-adolescents and young-adults arrive on college campuses and enter the

workforce, employers, policymakers, politicians, public servants, and virtually every aspect of society need to have an understanding of their cultural perspectives about work, life, and the balance between these two (Woods, 2019).

With multiple perspectives of student leadership on college campuses, there are a range of opportunities for student growth and engagement. From informal co-curricular and extracurricular involvement to formalized work and learning in classrooms and labs (Soria, Werner, & Nath, 2019). The notion of co-curricular involvement is perhaps the most common touchstone of leadership development, as some programs are specifically designed to develop the leadership potential of students. In some institutions, leadership development programs have competitive entry while others are openly accessible to all students. These programs promote opportunities to increase self-awareness and observe campus and community leaders. Some programs include service-learning components, helping students learn about focusing their attention on others.

Many unintentional opportunities for leadership development also exist on campus, as students engage in Greek life, residence hall councils, academic societies, sports teams, and, particularly, in student government. In each of these activities and associations, opportunities for student engagement result in a selection of students taking on additional responsibility and providing guidance for a larger group, resulting in the first steps of developing the individual into a leader.

Leadership by college students has multiple impacts on both the individual student and the campus community (Gross, 2018). For the student, greater involvement in the campus community often results in a greater commitment to individual actions and activities, and ultimately, frame the notion of *involvement in learning*. Such involvement can result in greater student learning, increased social structure support, better retention and academic performance, and greater satisfaction with the collegiate experience.

Student engagement is critical for the construction of a campus community that allows students to take chances, experiment, and grow in maturity. By providing multiple avenues for student leadership, institutions can help individuals become more capable of interacting with others,

learn empathy and communication skills, engage in a civic-minded way, and learn how to agree to disagree with others (Reed & da Silva, 2007; Brown & Burdsal, 2012).

One of the challenges facing colleges and universities is deciding how to structure leadership development on their campuses. In some instances, leadership programs are offered through divisions of student affairs, while in others, they are implemented through individual academic units, stand-alone centers, or institutes. The result is often duplication of efforts and the lessons some units learn as they implement programming are not shared with others (Downing, 2019). This includes understanding of who the current generation of college students are.

One of the more popular approaches to understanding college student tendencies is to explore, explain, and study the concept of generational commonalities. Generational studies look closely at mainstream, frequent, or common behaviors of individuals born within a particular time period, and can often make generalizing strategies easier for complex institutions (Zemke, et al, 2013).

As generational studies, reports, and consultations have profiled populations ranging from the Baby Boomers to Millennials, there is now a growing flood of data and information regarding the latest wave of population, frequently referred to as Generation Z. These individuals were born between the years of 1996 and 2015 and have been defined as risk-averse, self-assured individuals who grew up and matured during a time of economic turmoil. They are also known for being “level-headed,” meaning that they are typically not extremists and have a strong sense of pragmatism (Lev, 2021). This generation of students comprise the majority of college students on campus today, their characteristics, behaviors, tendencies, and outlook frame the discussion about how college services can and should be structured and offered for the foreseeable future. The current study provides an initial glimpse into these students as they think about the idea of leadership.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

In this descriptive study, college students were asked a series of open-ended questions about their perceptions of what leadership is, what

characteristics are reflective of good leaders, and who they perceive to be great present-day and historical leaders.

Students participating in the study were enrolled in three different sections of a first-year student seminar. The course was a requirement at the university and all first-year students, regardless of ability, were required to complete the one-hour seminar. The course was offered at a comprehensive public university in Northern California, and all three sections of the course were taught by the same instructor. Students were offered extra credit for completing the survey, and 124 responses from 140 students were received (an 88% participation rate).

The open-ended questions were compiled into an online survey instrument and delivered to students in the class during winter of 2020. Although there were 15 total questions included in the online survey, only six of them were thematically consistent enough to be included in the study. These questions included prompts related to general perceptions of leadership, definitions of leadership, leadership characteristics, motivation for leadership, the importance of leadership, and the identification of great leaders.

## **FINDINGS**

The first question asked of the undergraduate students was “When you heard the word leadership, what were your perceptions?” The students noted 122 different perceptions, and after reviewing the content of these responses, the comments were identified as falling into seven different thematic areas or clusters: responsibility, positionality, personality, power, relationships/relational, technical, and talent vs. development. The largest two categories of responses were related to the personality of a leader and the relational necessity of having interactions that allow leadership to occur.

The second question asked was, “Who is a leader?” Students again produced a listing of over 120 responses, and aside from 6 comments indicating the student could not answer the question, the comments were clustered into 10 areas: influencer, communicator, motivator, team-focused, group-focused, control, followership, personal characteristics, leader leads, and teacher. The three most frequently identified comments related to a leader being able to influence others, communicate effectively, and motivate



others. Similar to the notion of motivation, a variety of statements referenced a leader's ability to create followership among others, an idea that was also identified in but considered slightly different from the categories of being team-focused and being group-focused. Several students also simply defined a leader as "one who leads," and others noted a developmental perspective on leadership, defining a leader as a teacher.

The third question asked students to write words or sentences describing certain personality traits necessary to be an effective leader. With 96 responses, 60 were accounted for in five terms: outgoing ( $n = 27$ ), confident ( $n = 13$ ), trustworthy ( $n = 13$ ), charismatic ( $n = 10$ ), and honest ( $n = 9$ ).

Students were also asked to identify their motivation for becoming a leader. This question was included in the survey to help understand the students' thought processes, specifically, how they imagined benefitting by participating as a leader. Their answers fell broadly into five different categories, including personal motivations, altruistic motivations, professional reasons, selfish motivations, and no motivation to be a leader.

Personal motivations included elements such as responding to a personal passion ( $n = 5$ ), an effort to improve oneself ( $n = 6$ ), and using personal skills ( $n = 4$ ). These personal motivations were closely aligned with altruistic motivations, such as helping others achieve their full potential ( $n = 9$ ), helping to improve their communities and campuses ( $n = 6$ ), and providing support for organizations and groups that need help ( $n = 4$ ).

The two largest categories of self-reported motivations for engaging in leadership or leadership development were for professional reasons or reasons related to professional success but were markedly different and classified here as selfish motivations. Professional reasons included motivations such as improving career options ( $n = 11$ ), to put on a resume ( $n = 8$ ), or to gain work experience ( $n = 8$ ). Selfish motivations were focused on the results of being a leader from the perspective of the student, including making more money ( $n = 19$ ), having more power over other people ( $n = 10$ ), and broadly, being more successful ( $n = 7$ ).

A number of students responded to this question by indicating that they had no motivation to be involved as a leader. A total of 16 students

wrote in some version of “none,” “there is no real motivation to be a leader, you are only born that way or not,” or “nobody really wants to be a leader.”

Students were asked on the survey to describe their perceptions of how important leadership development is on a college campus. Similar to other questions, responses included a number indicating that it was simply “very important,” or “yeah, it’s really important,” ( $n = 17$ ) as well as 8 students who responded, “it’s not,” “nope,” or “nobody really cares.” The most common answers related to the welfare of campus life ( $n = 22$ ), such as “leadership development opportunities are good for us as we lead our [registered student organizations],” “having a chance to become better leaders helps us be better students,” and “learning leadership helps everyone on campus, not just us.”

The last question asked students to identify who they considered the greatest leader they could think of. Over 120 names were entered onto this section of the survey, and they were broadly classified into the areas of family members, politicians and activists, sports and entertainment individuals, business leaders, and individuals who had a personal relationship to the student completing the survey. The majority of all names identified were family members, with the most frequently identified leader being “mom” ( $n = 14$ ) followed by “parents” ( $n = 10$ ), and Dad ( $n = 5$ ). The most frequently identified politician or activist was Martin Luther King, Jr. ( $n = 12$ ) followed by former President Franklin D. Roosevelt ( $n = 7$ ). For sports and entertainment figures, the recently deceased Kobe Bryant ( $n = 6$ ) was the most mentioned, followed by mixed-martial arts competitor Conor McGregor ( $n = 5$ ). In business and industry, Chinese industrialist Zhang Ruimin ( $n = 4$ ) was the most frequently named, followed by K. W. Chang, the Chief Executive Officer of the Taiwan-based Starlux Airlines.

Another frequently identified category consisted of individuals who had personal relationships with the students. These 15 individuals were identified in comments such as “My high school counselor,” “Jovan, a former store manager of mine,” and “My manager Alejandro, from when I used to work at Target.” Five individuals also noted that they could not name a good leader.

Study findings suggest that many college students have some level of understanding about what leadership is, but broadly do not see the larger value or potential value of leadership in society. Their depictions of leadership highlight popular thinking from the perspective of very personal relationships, such as parents. This is somewhat expected considering that most leadership development on college campuses occurs in informal settings, as noted earlier, and is often not specifically labeled “leadership development.” Leadership among college students may need to be articulated and defined in order to be better understood and valued.

## **DISCUSSION**

College students have unique perspectives on leadership, and as much as university administrators may want to identify great leaders of the past as role models, this younger generation seems to have a different appreciation for what leadership could be. This is possibly reflected in students identifying one or both parents as great leaders more than twice as much as iconic figures like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Somewhat surprising in the student comments were the self-directed perspectives on the value of leadership for professional advancement reasons. Comments were moderately polarized, with some students appreciating leadership as an important characteristic to have and develop, and others feeling leadership was an unimportant attribute only contributing to personal gain.

University leaders may find these comments helpful as they structure student leadership programs and cultivate leadership within the current generation of college students. They may also use these findings to help shift views of leadership to more than personality traits and emphasize the value of student leaders on campus who work for the welfare of others. The leadership comments from the students in this study allude to a strong need for colleges and universities to help restore the concept of working for the common good rather than individual gain.

Additionally, these findings suggest that student development leaders need to think creatively and broadly about what leadership is, who values leadership and how, and ultimately, who can be recognized as a leader to

emulate. Programming that differentiates a range of leadership theories might help college students understand leadership is not a one-size-fits-all approach, and that parental leadership, for example, might be outstanding in small group (family) settings, but that leadership can look very different in more diverse groups.

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## **MISLABEL AS “BROKEN”**

*MAILYN MILLWARD*

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

*Mixed Media Sculpture*

Hope is an essential quality for a leader to have. If a leader loses hope, it brings down the whole team. This piece is about finding hope in a hopeless situation.





**MISLABEL AS “BROKEN”**

*MAILYN MILLWARD*

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

*Mixed Media Sculpture*





**FATIGUED**

*ERICA HARDIN*

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

*Sculpture*

# DECISIONS: THEIR COMPONENTS AND RELEVANT EXAMPLES WITHIN EMERGENCY SERVICES

BRAYDEN McLAUGHLIN

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

*People are born in varying circumstances, and none are exactly alike. Part of what creates one's uniqueness is life's experiences. Without regard to the physical environments, political climates, social constructs, or cultures into which people are born—the life lessons learned, the friends made, the groups associated with, and ultimately the experience gained comes from decisions. Every day we make decisions. A choice to not decide is still a choice. It is inescapable. Victor Frankl, in Man's Search for Meaning, recalls his experience with decision-making while enduring Auschwitz, attesting that choosing one's attitude—especially when all else has been taken away—is the enduring human freedom (Frankl, 1984). Because choices are ever present and unavoidable, understanding how people make decisions and come to their own conclusions is vital to produce better care. In scenarios where situations are dynamic and may have high stakes as seen by law enforcement and Emergency Medical Services (EMS), active and intentional decision-making must occur.*

**D**ecisions range in their difficulty level. Seemingly easy decisions are made when the individual clearly knows what must occur. Though a decision may be easy, depending on a set of life circumstances and motivations, multiple people can arrive at a different conclusion of a course of action when confronted with the same scenario (Fischhoff, 2013).

Picture a routine traffic stop conducted by three different law enforcement officers where there is no threat to their own life. Officer A sees a vehicle slowly roll a stop sign—almost bumping a person on a daily run. Officer A's goal is to establish a good rapport with locals and ensure a safe community, so the officer has a quick and productive conversation with the driver, allowing them to leave. In the same scenario, Officer B, who is newer, also desires a safe community, to enforce the law as best as

possible, and to establish a good reputation among coworkers. Officer B sees the vehicle make a rolling stop and issues a ticket—complying with their duty as an enforcer of traffic laws. Lastly, Officer C is a seasoned veteran and will soon retire. Officer C just wants to make it until the next paycheck. Officer C sees the rolling stop, observes no injuries, and ignores the situation completely. All the officers witnessed the same event, but based on their motivations and life circumstances, each chose a different course of action with ease.

### **UNCERTAINTY**

Uncertainty causes a decision to become more difficult. Some decisions require one to learn before acting when accounting for vital information that may alter an outcome (Fischhoff, 2013). Uncertainty flows from information that is vague, missing, too complex, or unreliable. This is where the Utility Theory comes into play. This theory “is concerned with people’s preferences and judgments of preferability, worth, value, goodness, or any of a number of similar concepts” (Fishburn, 1968, p. 335). Using this theory of decision-making, an individual considers all options, positioning them according to what yields the greatest benefit (Fischhoff, 2013). During a life-threatening pre-hospital situation where a medical course of action must be especially justified, this comparative way of decision-making will be used consistently. However, if utility is considered for every difficult decision, does that improve decision-making? Gary Klein shares:

Because uncertainty is inevitable, decisions can never be perfect. Often, we believe we can improve the decision by collecting more information, but in the process, we lose opportunities. Skilled decision makers appear to know when to wait and when to act. Most important, they accept the need to act despite uncertainty. (1998, p. 305)

When a difficult decision is made, but the result turns out to be undesirable, was it a poor decision? A poor outcome doesn’t necessarily indicate a poor decision, because even “the best decision possible given the knowledge available can still turn out unhappily” (Klein, 1998, p. 297). According to normative models of decision-making, most decisions are considered rational and optimal if the person deciding is well-informed about the world and their own values (Fischhoff, 2013). In this outlook, people will see the world in the way they desire, so when one’s decisions

align with what they hold in their value system, one cannot dawn criticism to that choice. After an incident, understanding the intentions, training, and information previously available will alter the tendency to immediately place blame upon a person for an error (Woods et al., 1993). This idea of examining a process rather than blaming builds cultures of trust, compliance with safety, healthy coaching opportunities, and continuous improvement. However, if the factors that lead to a “decision error” are what come under scrutiny rather than the person themselves, who retains accountability? Do the values or goals an individual holds become criticized rather than the individual themselves? Further, if all decisions are seen as rational, a choice to accept a certain value system may not be “rationally” criticized. What if the person who comes under scrutiny for a choice made a decision that did not align with their own values in the first place?

Klein notes that “naturalistic decision-making researchers...tend to reject the idea of faulty reasoning and try to show that poor decisions are caused by factors such as lack of experience” whereas “those who favor analytical approaches to decision-making believe poor decisions are caused by biases in the way we think” (Klein, 1998, p. 297).

### **BIASES AND STRESS**

Stressors and biases are attributed to our decision-making processes. Biases are errors in perception and judgment and may lead to limiting the quality of a decision (Buchbinder & Shanks, 2007). Bias is evident when a paramedic decides a person fits the stereotype of one who is drunk, rather than considering a case of low blood sugar. It is evident when a patient is labeled as a drug seeker when they are actually in pain (Keating & Fridell, 2021). When it comes to comparing options of action, like how to medically treat a patient, the subconscious may elect to “conveniently accept what makes sense...rather than engage in the work of serious reflection and analysis” (Buchbinder & Shanks, 2007, p. 93). Consciously and unconsciously noticing information to confirm existing beliefs also falls under bias (Buchbinder & Shanks, 2007). Heuristics play a role in biases as people believe that information that is easy to recall and familiarity with a situation equates to experience and therefore should be trusted (Buchbinder & Shanks, 2007). Caregivers have a responsibility to overcome biases to improve the quality of their care.

Regarding stress, it “*does* affect the way we process information but *does not* cause us to make bad decisions based on the information at hand. It *does not* warp our minds into making poor choices” (Klein, 1998, p.301). Time pressure does not give people a chance to process all the information that is available. Noise ambiguity doesn’t allow a person to fully use their memory, distracting them from the task at hand (Klein, 1998). Finding ways to cope with stressors is important, especially in high-stakes scenarios. Emergency room trauma teams organize themselves with specific responsibilities and easy access to tools before a trauma arrives. Effective emergency room physicians can direct staff during the process of stabilizing the patient, which this leadership allows others to remain focused on their role while under immense stress.

### **RECOGNITION-PRIMED DECISION-MAKING MODEL**

The Recognition-Primed Decision-Making (RPD) model is a method of decision-making that can help limit disruptions. Rather than relying upon reasoning with just two options, The RPD model relies upon “experience... as an example of a prototype” of a “typical course of action” (Klein, 1998, p. 41). It is about proficient decision-making where the decision-maker settles for the first course of action, rather than the absolute best one. This type of decision-making is especially useful in EMS as action must be taken quickly and stressors are ever present. Mental simulation plays a huge role in the success of this model, and therefore experience is important. The model explains that one who faces time pressure, high stakes, imperfect information, and dynamic conditions use prior experience to try to size-up the situation and act. Mental simulation, rather than the comparing of multiple options, leads to the idea that no choice is necessarily a bad one, especially if the aim is for quick decisions.

### **CONCLUSION**

Understanding how decisions are made and how to overcome daily stressors and biases will help people make better decisions and, in many cases, proficient ones. Two opposing theories place decision-making responsibility on either the circumstance or the person themselves. Effective leadership within any organization requires good decision-making skills, and knowledge of the theories to increase value for customers, an entity, and its employees.

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## **BLACK AND WHITE**

*HALLIE WATT*

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*Photography*

Leadership isn't always black and white. It's being able to take in all the grays of the world, widening your horizons, and broadening your understanding in order to be a good leader to those around you.

# INVOLVEMENT IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY: DOES IT MATTER TO STUDENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT?

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*Higher education has recognized participation in extracurricular activities to extend leadership development as a learning outcome. This study explores how involvement in extracurricular activities affects college students' leadership development outcomes. This study focused on the group and community values of the Social Change Model of Leadership Development. Data were collected from college students (N = 705) and analyzed using quantitative methodology. The results showed that higher involvement in extracurricular activity produces higher leadership development outcomes. Though time spent per week as a quantitative measure was not associated with increased leadership development, serving as an officer or having a higher participation level was. Specifically, high involvement level students indicated relatively high citizenship in leadership outcomes. Also, students' self-perception of leadership skills was the most significant predictor of community values of leadership development outcomes. High involvement in extracurricular activities exerted a direct positive effect on leadership development outcomes. Educators should be challenged explicitly to enhance students' participation in extracurricular activities for socially changed leadership. This study can guide leaders in higher education to structure student participation opportunities for extracurricular activities to affect a student's leadership development outside the classroom positively.*

Students are “often othered and left out of real decision-making within schools” and communities (Rodela & Bertrand, 2018). One major exception is student participation in extracurricular or co-curricular activities that enhance student learning and impact student leadership development (Hevel et al., 2018; Komives & Wagner, 2017; Martinez et al., 2020; McRee & Haber-Curran, 2016; Zeeman et al., 2019). An analysis of studies relating to extracurricular activities reveals vital predictors of student leadership development. However, little is known about how extracurricular activities affect college students' group and community leadership development outcomes for social change.



As a dynamic set of activities, leadership is understood to affect social and organizational change (Watt, 2009). Leadership is necessary to alter the conditions needed to improve individuals within a group or community. Within the Social Change Model (SCM) of leadership development, leadership is a practice which facilitates positive change in a community or defined organization (Tyree, 1998) and contributes to community change for the common good (Komives & Wagner, 2017).

The SCM considers three perspectives of leadership: individual, group, and community, and eight-core values building from levels of self-awareness and willingness of the individual to collaborate with others for the common good (Kim, 2022). Specifically, the group perspective promotes values of collaboration, common purpose, and controversy with civility for groups. The community perspective attends to citizenship (Komives & Wagner, 2017). These values represent a student's leadership knowledge and capacity as well as contribute to community change for the common good. The SCM is facilitated through a purpose-driven, value-based, collaborative approach (Foreman & Retallick, 2016; Martinez et al., 2020; Mitchell & Soria, 2017). For example, the officers of the more than 100 student clubs at the University of Idaho are directly responsible for developing and enacting their club's mission and vision with others—including making decisions tied to fundraising and service efforts leading to positive changes in their communities.

Drawing on student development theory, this study focuses on college student leadership development using the SCM. This theoretical framework focuses explicitly on college students and is consistent with the emerging leadership paradigm (Komives & Wagner, 2017). The study aims to examine how extracurricular activity experiences influence student leadership development. First, the study examines the relationship between extracurricular involvement and leadership development outcomes demonstrated by involvement experiences and index level. The involvement index is determined by a combination of involved years and the level of participation. Second, the study analyzed how general characteristics, pre-collegiate, and collegiate experiences contribute to the college students' group and community values of leadership development. Exploring the impacts of participating in extracurricular activities is critical to this study

because it supports identifying factors contributing to significant differences in group and community leadership development for social change.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### *INVOLVEMENT IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY*

Undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities has been linked to higher measures of interpersonal competence, such as teamwork, decision-making, conflict resolution, and communication (Kholiavko et al., 2020), which are paramount for effective leadership. Fenzel and Richardson (2018) identified the benefits of after-school programs, such as developing practical leadership skills, belonging to a community of supportive faculty and peers, and developing a solid commitment to service and activism oriented toward addressing the needs of underserved communities. College extracurricular activities can help students learn new skills and make valuable career contacts which greatly enhance the college experience personally and professionally. Colleges and universities have long touted their position as developers of change leaders equipped to make a difference in society's needs (Kolditz et al., 2021). In part, this is developed through providing opportunities for students to assume leadership roles.

Foreman and Retallick (2016) revealed that a college student's leadership role and the number of involved organizations affected their leadership scores. They also suggested that engagement in three to four organizations was optimal and the number of hours per week students spent participating in each club mattered. However, Heaslip et al. (2021) indicated that over-scheduling extracurricular activities could result in poor adjustment, higher stress, and/or less time spent with family. Maintaining a moderate degree of participation may thus be suggested to decrease stress and improve adjustment.

Rosch et al. (2018) investigated strong developmental relationships between past high school involvement, current collegiate involvement, and leader capacity change. Scholars found evidence that involvement in some experiential components is linked with students' leadership development and multicultural competence, pointing toward potential additional associations with outcomes related to social change and perspective-taking (Soria et al., 2019; Soria & Johnson, 2020). Because of the positive aspects

of extracurricular activity and student organization involvement, it makes sense that universities encourage students to become more involved.

### *LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT*

Leadership skills enable students to interact with other people effectively and harmoniously (Lippman et al., 2015; Page et al., 2021). Student service programs, collegiate organizations, and service-learning projects are examples of collegiate settings where students may develop and improve their leadership capabilities. Participation in a service-learning project encourages students to create effective social change (Wuetherick, 2018). Kim (2022) also reported a significant increase in leadership development programs on college campuses, indicating the importance of successful leadership development in training tomorrow's leaders. However, more insights about "how" and "how many" extracurricular activity experiences influence student leadership development are needed.

Martinez et al. (2020) pointed out that, in the context of leadership education, students should be taught how to engage in meaningful discussion across differences and proactively create opportunities to do so. The extent to which students connect with and get mentored by faculty is also correlated to overall leadership capacity. According to Komives and Wagner (2017), community service and leadership development offices on college campuses should function independently. They urged connections to be established through leadership, social justice, and activism. They have also recommended the infusion of service-based experiences into courses and training programs. Social justice and community leadership are about engaging in democratic, inclusive, and transformative practices to change social structures and influence all stakeholders to collegially promote justice and equity in schools (Wang, 2018). Thus, connecting students to diverse service-learning experiences would be crucial for encouraging community leadership development.

Engagement in the college environment in general, and involvement as a member of clubs and organizations, are positively connected with leadership skills and efficacy. (Kim 2022; Leupold et al., 2020; Martinez, et al., 2020). Smith and Chenoweth's (2015) research demonstrated that students' perceptions of their activities influenced leadership skills. The

results suggested that students involved in extracurricular activities showed higher positive self-perceptions of leadership characteristics than students who did not participate in activities. Educational institutions/organizations could not function appropriately without students' contributions (Jenkins, 2020). According to Komives and Wagner (2017), higher education should incorporate high-impact learning strategies into their mission, such as service-learning, efficacy-building activities, and group engagement opportunities. As a result, additional research into various factors and effects might be valuable for educators trying to enhance student leadership.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *DATA COLLECTION*

University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study. This study's target demographic consists of undergraduate college students enrolled at three universities: a regional university, a private liberal arts college, and a research-intensive university. The survey's gender demographics included 186 male students (26.3%) and 517 female students (73.2%). In terms of ethnic background, the poll had White/Caucasian (81.9%), Asian American/Asian (5.7%), and African American/Black (4.9%) respondents. In addition, there were seniors (52.5%), juniors (22.8%), sophomores (19.1%), and freshmen (5.5%) in the current class. Researchers selected to survey upperclassmen with more opportunities to engage in extracurricular activities. By doing so, we were able to learn more about their extracurricular experiences.

Students' contact information was received from the universities' registrar offices, institutional research centers, the offices of international student services, and the multicultural students' offices. In addition, college students responded to a web-based questionnaire linked by email. Qualtrics automatically logged survey responses as individuals finished the survey. Finally, 705 data entries were processed after incomplete data and response set errors were eliminated.

### *INSTRUMENTATION*

The survey integrated pre-existing instruments for measuring leadership development outcomes with survey questions about experiencing extracurricular activities. Before collecting data, the questionnaire was

validated. During pretesting and piloting, survey items that did not make sense to participants were uncovered, as were difficulties that may lead to biased results. By refining the queries, these issues and questions were resolved.

In the survey, subjects were asked if they were involved in any extracurricular activities, performed any off-campus internships, or received any leadership training other than classwork while in college. They also were asked follow-up questions regarding their experiences based on their responses to the participation question. Next, participants were asked how many organizations they were active in, amount of time they spent per week in every organization, number of years they had participated in the organizations, and what their highest level of commitment in extracurricular organizations/clubs they are active with was.

The Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS-R2) was used to measure leadership development with 68 Likert-type items from the Social Change Model (SCM). The study focused on Group Values (*Collaboration*, *Common Purpose*, and *Controversy with Civility*) and Community Values (*Citizenship* and *Change*) and used Cronbach's alpha to determine the reliability of each SRLS-R2 scale (see Appendix A). The instrument showed a reliability of 0.95. This tells that the items are highly intercorrelated. A group of students like those in the sampling was established. The questionnaire was reviewed by expert panels of professionals and faculty who had served as administrators or advisers in extracurricular and student organizations. Face validity was discussed with a group of doctorate students and professors. Changes to the instrument, including content and question structure, were made after carefully evaluating the proposals of both student and professional panels.

#### *DATA ANALYSES*

In order to determine if there were mean differences in the quantitative and qualitative components of involvement experiences in extracurricular clubs and organizations, as well as their relationships with leadership development outcomes, inferential statistics were computed. After data collection, raw data was verified for missing information and apparent mistakes and then analyzed using the SPSS (Version 24) application. The extracurricular involvement index was constructed by adding the number

of years students reported they were active in extracurricular activities and the highest level of engagement in that activity. The involvement score was divided into three levels and utilized as the independent variable in an ANOVA to analyze the relationship between this construct and leadership development.

Hierarchical regression was the primary statistical technique. Variable blocking reflected the conceptual framework which drove earlier literature. Two independent blocks were used to compare the impact of the independent variables. The percentage of variance in the dependent variable group and community values was explained by this first block, which included general characteristics and pre-collegiate experiences (i.e., gender, student type, pre-collegiate extracurricular involvement and leadership training, and self-perception of leadership). The second block, which included collegiate experiences (such as extracurricular activity, internships, and leadership training), revealed the model's explained variation by percentage.

#### *LIMITATIONS*

The study was carried out at three universities in one state, which may limit generalizability. Also, because the replies indicate points of view, the data utilized for this study were self-reported data from college students, which should be considered when generalizing. The significance level in this study was .05%. Furthermore, the study only looked at twelve predictor factors in general characteristics as well as pre-college and collegiate experiences.

#### **RESULTS**

This study examined the relationship between involvement in extracurricular activities and group community leadership development. The specific empirical analysis results are as follows. Students who put in at least seven hours every week with extracurricular activities scored higher in group and community leadership than those who spent one or fewer hours per week. The amount of time per week and the number of years that students were actively engaged in extracurricular leadership mattered. Students actively involved for five or more years in extracurricular organizations while in college showed a higher score in group and community leadership development. There were significant mean

differences in collaboration and common purpose in group leadership as well as citizenship in community leadership. Students involved in state or national-level leadership organizations scored significantly higher as well.

The extracurricular involvement index was computed by summing the number of years a student reported they were active in a particular extracurricular activity, their highest level of engagement within this activity while in college and high school, and their self-perception of leadership. The involvement score was divided into three roughly equal groups and utilized as the independent variable to assess the association between this construct and leadership development outcomes evaluated by the SRLS-R2 scale.

Depending on the Involvement Index Level (see Appendix B), *Common Purpose*, a sub-variable of group values, showed a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ). In other words, students who had a high involvement index level scored higher in group leadership total. Conversely, those in the middle or low index level scored relatively low. Even though there was no significant difference ( $p > .05$ ) in community values total, citizenship showed a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ). Put simply, when students' involvement index level was high, their citizenship scored high in leadership development (SRLS-R2). Still, those with moderate or low involvement levels scored comparatively low.

There was a significant correlation in Model 1 with group values of leadership. It comprised gender, class level, student type, leadership training, number of years involved, the highest level of participation, and leadership perception of college students while they are in high school. These variables allowed Model 1 to predict group values of leadership development better than not knowing these variables ( $F = 3.740$ ,  $P < .05$ ,  $R^2 = .168$ ). The R-Square value indicates that the above seven predictors explain 16.8% of the variance in group values. Model 2 comprises collegiate leadership training, internship, experiences with international students, number of years involved, and the highest level of participation in extracurricular organizations/clubs. This Model 2 indicated significance collectively and predicted the group value of leadership outcomes ( $F = 3.241$ ,  $P < .05$ ,  $R^2 = .199$ ). The above five predictor variables accounted for 19.9% of the variance in the group values of leadership development outcomes.

As a result of inputting variables in Model 1 (see Appendix C), student type ( $\beta = .109$ ) and self-perception of leadership skills ( $\beta = .143$ ) were found to have a significant positive effect ( $p < .05$ ). In Model 2, the highest involvement level ( $\beta = .161$ ) was significant ( $p < .05$ ). These results showed that student type, leadership perception, and highest participation level were significant predictors of group value of leadership development outcomes. The above three significant predictors were all positively related to group values total. As they increase, the group values total increases. The best predictor of group values total was the highest-level participation ( $\beta = .161$ ), followed by self-leadership perception ( $\beta = .143$ ), a small to moderate predictor, and the student type ( $\beta = .109$ ), a small predictor.

Leadership perception was the only significant predictor of community values of leadership development outcomes. When students had a positive self-perception of their leadership abilities, the overall community values increased. Model 1 was significant collectively. All seven variables entered allowed Model 1 to predict community values of leadership development ( $F = 2.469$ ,  $P < .05$ ,  $R^2 = .146$ ). These predictor variables accounted for 14.6% of the variance in the community values of leadership development. It is crucial to the study as it tells us whether the predictors significantly contributed to the model.

This same trend was seen in Model 2 ( $F = 1.980$ ,  $P < .05$ ,  $R^2 = .163$ ) and the entered five predictor variables accounted for 16.3% of the variance in the community values of leadership development (SRLS-R2). As a result of input variables in Model 1 (see Appendix D), self-perception ( $\beta = .151$ ) had a significant positive effect ( $p < .05$ ). When the self-perception of leadership skills is high, the total community values increase. There are no significant variables in Model 2.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study revealed a significant relationship between extracurricular activity and leadership development. It also demonstrated how extracurricular activity benefited college students' leadership development in terms of group and community values as measured by the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale. The following are the key findings:

First, the amount and variety of extracurricular involvement affected leadership development outcomes. The results indicated that



students actively involved in extracurricular activities with five or more organizations had relatively higher leadership outcomes than those without involvement. In addition, students who spent five or more years in extracurricular organizations had higher leadership outcomes than other groups. Furthermore, students who served at the state or national leadership level or were officers within extracurricular organizations/clubs scored relatively higher than the ordinary members. As a result, the higher competencies frequently attributed to involvement level may be linked to the additional training officers get. However, further research is needed to support this determination.

Second, collaboration and common purpose in group leadership showed significant differences by involvement index between groups. Also, citizenship in community leadership indicated a significant mean difference. In other words, students with a high involvement level showed a relatively high common purpose and citizenship in leadership outcomes significantly ( $p < .05$ ).

Third, significant predictors of group value of leadership development outcomes were leadership perception of leadership skills and student involvement level while in college, all positively related to student group leadership. The group value of collaboration, common purpose, and controversy with civility will contribute to establishing human connections and relationships through trust and collaboration, allied with a common purpose to make our world a better place.

Lastly, self-perception of leadership skills was a major predictor of community values of leadership development outcomes, and it was related positively. As students' leadership perception increases, so do community values. Therefore, there may be opportunities for teachers, advisors, mentors, and coaches to increase student perceptions of their own leadership skills. Engaging with peers and others in organizational contexts may allow them to review self-perception. In short, educators should encourage students to engage in extracurricular activities to help develop students' leadership self-perception.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

College students can strengthen their leadership skills through extracurricular activities. College administrators should establish a

structure for developing a connection between extracurricular activities and student leadership development. According to the results of this study, educators should pay attention to students' prolonged engagement in organizations and encourage them to apply for regional and national leadership roles. These active involvements will likely yield citizenship growth and leadership development for meaningful social change.

This influence can help to continuously build a culture of leadership founded on citizenship and common purpose. Eventually, participating in extracurricular activity can display the leadership factors on group and community value levels defined through the Social Change Model. Therefore, educators should reconsider the impact of extracurricular activities on student leadership development outcomes and actively design services and programs that provide a meaningful experience for all participating students. Educational leaders should encourage students' participation in extracurricular activities and provide meaningful experiences that will assist them in succeeding during and after college.

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## APPENDIX A

### *The Critical Values of the Social Change Model*

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#### **Group Values**

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Collaboration	Working with others in a common effort, sharing responsibility, authority, and accountability. Multiplying group effectiveness by capitalizing on various perspectives and talents, and on the power of diversity to generate creative solutions and actions.
Common Purpose	Having shared aims and values. Involving others in building a group's vision and purpose.
Controversy with Civility	Recognizing two fundamental realities of any creative effort: 1) that differences in viewpoint are inevitable, and 2) that such differences must be aired openly but with civility.

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#### **Community values**

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Citizenship	Believing in a process whereby an individual and/or a group become responsibly connected to the community and to society through some activity. Recognizing that members of communities are not independent, but interdependent. Recognizing individuals and groups have responsibility for the welfare of others.
Change	Believing in the importance of making a better world and a better society for oneself and others. Believing that individuals, groups, and communities have the ability to work together to make that change.

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*Note.* Adapted from a social change model guidebook version III, Higher Education Research Institute, 1996, p. 21, used with permission from the National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs.

## APPENDIX B

### *Differences in Leadership Development by Involvement Index Level*

		N	M	S.D	F	p	Scheffe
Collaboration	low	203	4.07	.45	1.571	.208	
	middle	299	4.09	.42	1.571	.208	
	high	203	4.14	.47	1.571	.208	
	Total	705	4.10	.45	1.571	.208	
Common Purpose	low(a)	203	4.04	.44	12.200***	.000	c > a,b
	middle(b)	299	4.05	.43	12.200***	.000	c > a,b
	high(c)	203	4.22	.42	12.200***	.000	c > a,b
	Total	705	4.10	.44	12.200***	.000	c > a,b
Controversy with Civility	low	203	3.89	.44	1.586	.205	
	middle	299	3.92	.43	1.586	.205	
	high	203	3.96	.43	1.586	.205	
	Total	705	3.92	.43	1.586	.205	
Group Values Total	low(a)	203	3.99	.38	5.137**	.006	c > a,b
	middle(b)	299	4.01	.38	5.137**	.006	c > a,b
	high(c)	203	4.10	.37	5.137**	.006	c > a,b
	Total	705	4.03	.38	5.137**	.006	c > a,b
Citizenship	low(a)	203	4.02	.59	8.872***	.000	c > a,b
	middle(b)	299	4.06	.52	8.872***	.000	c > a,b
	high(c)	203	4.23	.50	8.872***	.000	c > a,b
	Total	705	4.10	.54	8.872***	.000	c > a,b
Change	low	203	3.83	.49	.344	.709	
	middle	299	3.80	.50	.344	.709	
	high	203	3.82	.53	.344	.709	
	Total	705	3.81	.50	.344	.709	
Community Values Total	low	203	3.92	.47	2.696	.068	
	middle	299	3.91	.45	2.696	.068	
	high	203	4.00	.45	2.696	.068	
	Total	705	3.94	.46	2.696	.068	

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

## APPENDIX C

*Impact on Group Values Total Regression Analysis Coefficients*

Model / Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standard Coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
<b>1</b> (Constant)	3.949	.210		18.830	.000	
Gender (M0, F1)	-.069	.045	-.081	-1.551	.122	1.044
Class level	.039	.022	.092	1.775	.077	1.036
Student type (Yes0, No1)	.164	.080	.109	2.043*	.042	1.108
HS Leadership training	-.073	.044	-.099	-1.688	.092	1.328
HS Number of years	.023	.022	.059	1.018	.309	1.309
HS Highest level Perception	-.005	.017	-.020	-.320	.749	1.577
	.061	.024	.143	2.576**	.010	1.193
<b>2</b> (Constant)	4.070	.236		17.212***	.000	
Gender (M0, F1)	-.061	.044	-.071	-1.370	.172	1.059
Class level	.004	.028	.010	.147	.883	1.723
Student type (Yes0, No1)	.170	.084	.114	2.027*	.043	1.240
HS Leadership training	-.061	.045	-.082	-1.358	.175	1.442
HS Number of years	.024	.022	.063	1.076	.283	1.368
HS Highest level	-.016	.017	-.061	-.928	.354	1.688
Perception	.051	.024	.120	2.171*	.031	1.211
Leadership training	-.025	.044	-.034	-.572	.567	1.358
Internship	-.023	.047	-.028	-.498	.619	1.227
Q6 4: International	-.046	.041	-.061	-1.117	.265	1.166
Q9 1: Number of years	.002	.022	.008	.109	.914	2.067
Q9 2: Highest level	.043	.017	.161	2.514*	.012	1.607

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

## APPENDIX D

### *Impact on Community Values Total Regression Analysis Coefficients*

Model / Variable		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
<b>1</b>	(Constant)	4.095	.250		16.409	.000	
	Gender (M0, F1)	-.022	.053	-.022	-.421	.674	1.044
	Class level	.036	.026	.072	1.377	.169	1.036
	Student type (Yes0, No1)	.020	.095	.011	.207	.836	1.108
	HS Leadership training	-.072	.052	-.082	-1.382	.168	1.328
	HS Number of years	.028	.026	.063	1.068	.286	1.309
	HS Highest level Perception	.008	.020	.025	-.392	.695	1.577
		.076	.028	.151	2.690**	.007	1.193
<b>2</b>	(Constant)	4.287	.284		15.115***	.000	
	Gender (M0, F1)	-.013	.053	-.013	-.250	.803	1.059
	Class level	-.007	.034	-.013	-.192	.848	1.723
	Student type (Yes0, No1)	.013	.101	.007	.130	.896	1.240
	HS Leadership training	-.062	.054	-.071	-1.148	.252	1.442
	HS Number of years	.030	.027	.067	1.110	.268	1.368
	HS Highest level	-.016	.021	-.052	-.781	.435	1.688
	Perception	.068	.028	.136	2.405*	.017	1.211
	Leadership training	-.008	.053	-.009	-.157	.875	1.358
	Internship	-.072	.056	-.073	-1.280	.201	1.227
	Q6 4: International	.016	.026	.045	.612	.541	2.067
	Q9 1: Number of years	.027	.020	.085	1.301	.194	1.607
	Q9 2: Highest level	.043	.017	.161	2.514*	.012	1.607

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$





**CHEF MIKE**

*ETHAN HOENIG*

SOUTHERN UTAH UNIVERSITY

*Spray Paint Stencil*

Chef Mike is a community member who leads an unofficial feeding the homeless program in Salt Lake City. He receives food donations and cooks for the homeless in a city park. Chef Mike is homeless himself. He represents the best kind of leadership by going out of his way to help people while needing help himself.

# AM I WHO YOU THINK I AM? COVERING AND REVERSE COVERING OF IDENTITY AS A POLITICAL STRATEGY FOR EMERGING POLITICAL LEADERS

JAMAL HALLEY      CHLOE RAWLINGS

ELIZABETH S. SMITH, PH.D.

JILLIAN WACKER

FURMAN UNIVERSITY

*How do emerging college student leaders manage their identity to gain political support? In this paper, we examine when and how the identity of a leader plays a central role in their campaign strategy and policy goals. We first review the literature on impression management theory and stereotyping. We then discuss the concept of covering in further detail and how minority political leaders have used this strategy in political campaigns (Yoshino, 2007, 2002). Finally, we consider the role identity plays for majority and minority candidates in college student government races through in-depth interviews of student government presidents. Our primary goal with this focus on college student government presidents is to investigate the norms and demands placed on the youngest cohort of emerging political leaders to provide insight into the potential generational shift in the significance of identity to politics and leadership (Stout, 2020). We find that minority status plays a particularly important role in student government presidents' campaign decisions. Rather than covering their identity, minority identity motivates these student leaders, provides direction for their campaign and leadership, and helps them gain support and legitimacy as representatives.*

“**M**aking a good first impression”—a phrase we often hear—can help you land jobs, get a date with someone, or keep you out of trouble. Social actors, especially leaders, manage how they present themselves to others. In politics, hopeful candidates have a particular incentive to carefully consider the impressions they give others. Candidates must meet the needs and desires of their audience to secure electoral support. Given the various stereotypes about minority groups, minority candidates face particular challenges in managing the impressions

of the public (Bauer, 2020; Conroy, 2018; Bauer, 2014; Haider-Markel, 2010; Golebiowska, 2003). To appeal to voters, a minority candidate might find it useful to downplay their minority identity to avoid prejudice, sometimes referred to in the literature as covering (Yoshino, 2007). However, in other cases, depending on the issues of the day or the political culture in which one runs, the candidate might find it advantageous to fully embrace their minority identity (Bauer, 2014; Haider-Markel, 2010; Stout, 2020). In this paper, we examine when and how minority leaders' identities play a central role in their campaign strategy and policy goals, using the next generation of political leaders, college student government presidents, as our sample. We first review the literature on impression management theory and political stereotyping. We then discuss the concept of covering in further detail. Finally, we consider the role identity plays for minority candidates in college student government races through in-depth interviews with student government presidents. Our primary goal with this focus on college student government presidents is to investigate the norms and demands placed on the youngest cohort of emerging political leaders to provide insight into the potential generational shift in the significance of identity to politics.

### **IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT THEORY**

Erving Goffman (1959) argues that our impression management strategies include both “expressions given” and “expressions given off.” *Expressions given* might include clues to our identity that are explicit (like coming out as a member of the LGBTQ+ community) and *expressions given off* might include clues to our identity which are more implicit (like referencing a certain bar known by those in the LGBTQ+ community but, maybe not all, to be gay-friendly). Goffman argues that both play important roles in the “fronts” we use to manage the perceptions others have of us. People are usually aware of how they present themselves to others and can consciously adjust their expressions accordingly, regardless of whether they believe in their own performance.

The process of “covering” minority identity is inherently tied with what the audience knows about the performer and what they demand. A concept similar to covering that is used commonly among the LGBTQ+ community is “passing,” where someone who is LGBTQ+ “passes” as a heterosexual/cisgender person to an audience that does not know of

the performer's LGBTQ+ identity. In the case of covering, however, the audience *knows* the performer is LGBTQ+, but still demands that they act heterosexual/cisgender. A person who covers makes it easier for the audience to forget about their minority status by emphasizing the parts of their identity that do not make the audience uncomfortable (Yoshino, 2007, 2002).

For a politician, putting on an appealing performance for one's audience can directly impact the politician's ability to win office. A political candidate who falls into a marginalized group (e.g., LGBTQ+, African-American, or women) and who wishes to obtain public office must carefully consider their campaigning strategy, particularly their impression management strategy, in light of prejudices of voters based on the candidate's identity. In order to win an election, the candidate must make their minority status palatable for the greatest number of voters. In the political world, we see such behaviors emerge in such forms as a deracialized campaign by Barack Obama or in Hillary Clinton's effort in her campaign to "negotiate masculinity" in the patriarchal space of politics by emphasizing strength through her connections to the military (McIlwain, 2013; Duerst-Lahti & Oakley, 2018, p. 16).

Voters do not always respond well to covered campaigns, however. Politicians can face at times the demand by voters to reverse cover, or to act "black enough," "feminine enough," "gay enough," etc. Depending on the voters to whom one is trying to appeal, one's minority status can be an advantage, suggesting the candidate is "one of us" in regard to descriptive representation and thus also likely to represent a particular group substantively (Haider-Markel, 2010; Bauer, 2020; Stout, 2020).

The research investigating the extent to which race, gender and ethnicity affect vote choice and the outcome of elections is complicated. While voter bias and prejudice clearly exist, the research shows that in most cases, party identification trumps race, ethnicity, and gender in determining which candidate to vote for. However, a substantial body of research indicates that race, ethnicity, and gender are also used (rightly or wrongly) as indicators of a candidate's policy position and, thus, may affect voter preference (see Juenke & Shah, 2016 for a good review of this literature). Regardless of the exact effects of voter bias, candidates often

behave strategically in response to perceived voter biases. Minority status often affects candidate impression management strategies. Therefore, our questions are: How do identities and perceived voter expectations affect the newest crop of political leaders, particularly college student government leaders? Do certain identities result in covering or reverse covering during campaigns by political leaders on college campuses? How do identities affect motivations to run for office, campaign strategies and policy positions? What might this mean for the future of minority candidates and their political success?

## METHOD

Our study involved the exploration of the representation of diverse individuals in the highest leadership position in college student government, Student Government President. Because of the lack of recent data about who leads college student governments, we first present descriptive data on the gender and race of college student government presidents—data which we have been collecting since the 2017-2018 academic year. Our sample of college student governments includes the top 50 universities and top 50 liberal arts colleges as ranked by *U.S. News and World Report* from 2017 to 2020 (the school years of 2017 and 2018, 2019, and 2020, respectively) (“U.S. News Best Colleges,” 2017-2020). These elite schools were chosen in part because of their history educating some of the most powerful political leaders in the United States. In fact, of the 33 U.S. presidents who attended at least some college, 32 (97%) of them attended, for at least some period, an institution included in our analysis. Attendance at one of these schools can be an important pipeline into politics. Because college rankings change from year to year, our sample in 2017 had an original sample size of 101 and in 2020 a sample size of 105 (we kept the schools that were in our original list so that we can develop consistent comparative data over time and added those which moved into the top 50 each year).

The majority of our findings for this paper were collected through in-depth, qualitative interviews with the presidents of these student government associations (see Appendix for survey). Emails requesting phone interviews were sent to all student government presidents. Twenty-one interviews were granted. They lasted between 30-45 minutes. Our

primary interest was to discover what identity was particularly salient to these leaders, how that identity affected their decision to run and the impression management strategies (covering or reverse covering) they used when campaigning and choosing the issues that mattered to them. Interviews were semi-structured, elite interviews which were analyzed for common themes through content analysis of the open-ended responses.

Our interview sample included 12 individuals who identified as male and nine who identified as female. Thirteen identified as white and eight as a person of color. Eight identified as gay, pansexual, or bisexual (see Table 1). A majority (76%) of the respondents included one minority identification (either minority race, sexuality or gender)—only five (or 24%) were straight, white males (see Table 2). Seventeen identified themselves as Democrats, one as a “not very strong” Republican, one as a Libertarian, one independent, and one preferred not to identify their party identification.

**Table 1**

*Demographics of Student Government Presidents*

Female	43% (9)
Male	57% (12)
Straight	57% (12)
Gay/Bisexual/Pansexual	43% (9)
White	62% (13)
Person of Color	38% (8)

**Table 2**

*Intersectional Identities of Student Government Presidents (descending order)*

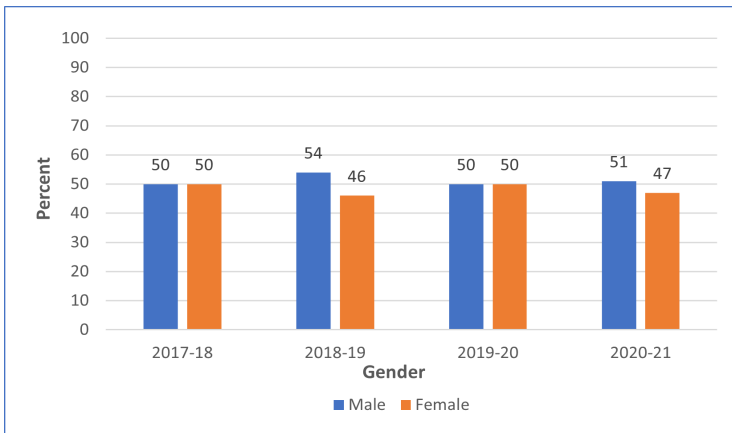
Straight, White Male	Straight, White Female	Gay/Bi, POC Male	Gay/Bi, POC Female	Gay/Bi, White Female	Gay/Bi, White Male	Straight, POC Male	Straight, POC Female
24% (5)	19% (4)	14% (3)	10% (2)	10% (2)	10% (2)	10% (2)	5% (1)

**FINDINGS**

Before considering the results from our qualitative interviews, we will first discuss the broader, national data we have collected over the past four years on the leadership of the top 100 universities and liberal arts colleges. This data reveals a high level of diversity in student government leadership. In contrast to national politics, as can be seen in Chart 1 below, women serve as SGA (student government association) presidents at rates more comparable to men. In addition, on average over the past four years, student government presidents of color are also elected at rates comparable to white students (Chart 2). Finally, student government presidents are much more likely to identify as part of a minority group (non-whites and/or females) than as white males (Chart 3). For the past four years, white male student government presidents represent less than 30% of the total student government presidents. The demographics of these student leaders, while more diverse than our current leadership in politics, reflect the shifting demographics of the nation as well as the increasing diversity in Congress (Schaeffer, 2021). Given these changes and the future of our polity, it is important that we understand these diverse leaders, the role their identity plays in the campaigns they run, and the issues they care about.

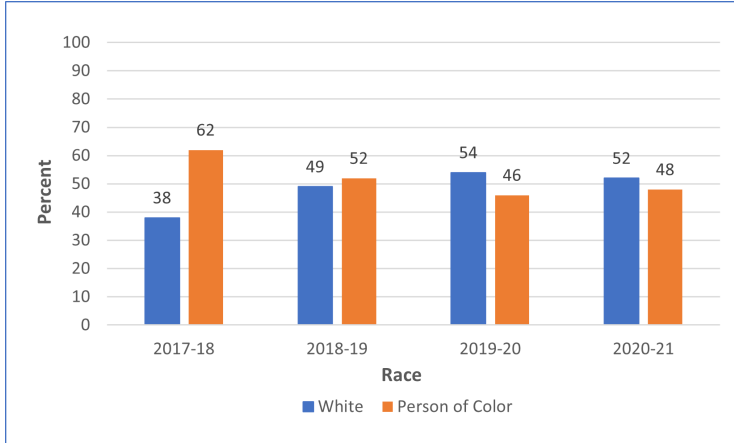
**Chart 1**

*Gender of SGA Presidents*



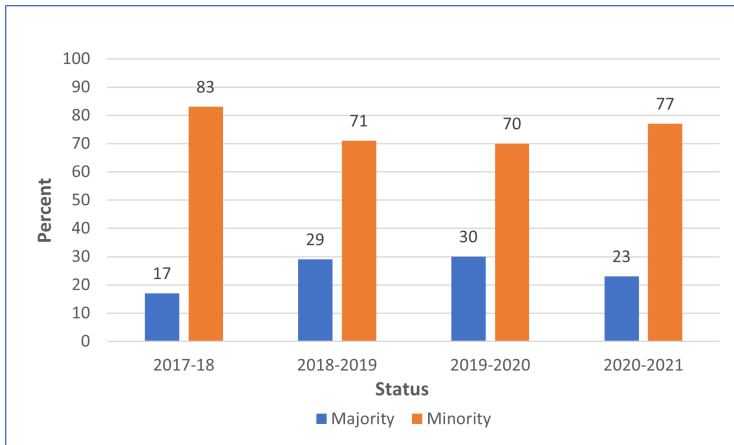
**Chart 2**

*Race of SGA Presidents*



**Chart 3**

*Majority (white, male) versus Minority SGA Presidents*



In the qualitative interviews, we were interested in discovering the centrality of identity to the leaders and their campaigns. First, we were interested in whether the students found it necessary to conceal or highlight their identities when they ran for the highest political position on



their campus. What was most striking from the responses was the general consistency across respondents who had at least one minority identification regarding the centrality of their identities to themselves personally and to their campaign. Instead of covering or minimizing their minority status, almost universally, minority candidates found it to be advantageous and/or vital to their success in several ways. Minority identities were largely fully embraced by these candidates and central to their sense of self. When asked what the most important facets of their identity were or what made them who they are, responses of minority candidates were specific and significant. As one leader said: "How I operate in this world is ethnicity and race first and foremost defines who I am..." Another response representative of this embracing of minority identity was: "Being a black man, I hold strong to this identity and try my best to knock down any stereotypes that others may have about me." One student said, "Being Latina is a huge part of my identity." Another student said, "I feel like it's my race, gender, and sexual orientation." A bisexual, female student reported that her identity was defined in regard to "Being white...being bisexual...and coming from a low-income" background.

Perhaps because of the strong association of the word "identity" with minorities, white leaders were more likely to struggle to articulate their answer to the question, "What are the most important facets of your identity or what makes you who you are?" and instead answered this question more often with specific facts about their life circumstances. For example, one white, female leader responded: "Wow, that is hard question. I am really trying to think. I guess I think I am a cis white heterosexual woman and I think I am perceived by the world as an educated young woman." An international student responded, "Being a woman doesn't really impact my identity" although her international background was particularly important to her identity. Another student discussed his parents' work responsibilities (stay at home dad, working mother) and several others focused on their religious beliefs, their geographical background ("Texan" or "from the South"), socioeconomic status ("middle class," "underserved," or "no problems"), or their skills ("hardworking;" "on track team").

Especially for those with the greatest number of intersectional, marginalized identities, identity was recognized by these leaders as very

important to their campaigns. For minority candidates, identity played a central, motivational, and even advantageous role in their campaign. Rather than covering, these minority leaders used their minority position in a variety of ways they saw as very helpful to their success. Providing descriptive representation to the student body was cited as one of the values of their own minority status. As one student said, “I hope people saw themselves in us.” Another student, who identified as *two spirit*,<sup>1</sup> male and female, and Latin American/black/indigenous said, “I feel like my identity was important. I was able to make it personal, and I wouldn’t just say I’m promoting diversity, everyone wants to hear that. I was able to show the emotional side of things, and I was able to inform people in a way that was about me, not just someone else’s story.”

In addition to providing descriptive representation, minority leaders recognized that their status was advantageous in several other ways. For one, it helped them connect with a broad array of student groups. One student said, “As a Chinese student, it was easier to reach international students. Being a female may have helped because people want to see diversity.” A gay, Asian male leader said: “I would emphasize my identity quite a lot depending on who I would talk to, but I would never conceal my identity.” Additionally, minority status was advantageous as it distinguished them from other candidates and suggested better substantive representation at the same time: “...being diverse actually worked in my favor. Makes me stand out more and gives new insight and perspective.” One black, gay, female leader said: “Of course I emphasized [my minority status] because it was to my advantage.” She goes on to discuss how important identity was to her campaign: “It was everything. I cannot—and I mean this with no offense possible—I cannot imagine running as a cis white straight guy. I can’t imagine being in this day and age having an identity that isn’t super intersectional. It’s so rooted in everything.” Another gay, Asian president said, “It has given me empathy because I care a lot about disability rights and socioeconomic equity—it helps me better relate to marginalized students and those with less access to power.”

Reverse covering demands by voters was articulated by one minority leader. This student government president was an Asian female. Her

<sup>1</sup> An umbrella term for Indigenous people who hold a sexual/gender identity beyond the heterosexual/cisgender norm (<https://lgbtqhealth.ca/community/two-spirit.php>).

post-election treatment illustrated the complexity of intersectional identities—where her victory triggered a sexist backlash in the form of calls for reverse covering. After she won, she said, “A ton of people tweeted that I wasn’t a real ‘person of color,’ even some white people. My VP, who is East Asian, hasn’t received the backlash that I have (he is male)...Many people have called me a sellout by including white people in these discussions about diversity.” As a female, her Asian identity was not seen as sufficiently diverse for many students.

For white leaders, identity played a different and more muted role in their campaign and its success. One white male from a midwestern school in response to the question of how important his identity was to his campaign said, “In the sense that I was just honest about what I believed, I think very important. In the sense that did I emphasize my humble background or religious faith, no.” Another white, not openly gay, male leader said: “I don’t think it was too important. The only part, which I am not sure if it’s identity, but I had a more aggressive vibe towards administration, which people definitely liked due to the anti-SGA vibe on campus.” Another white male leader said his identity was “pretty not important I would say. The things I was really working on was what all the work I have done was and where I can go in the future.” One majority candidate who described himself as a “non-descript white” felt that his status was an advantage in that he was able to emphasize his “...genericness. I portrayed myself as very normal.”

While the literature on covering primarily focuses on the role covering plays in protecting marginalized groups, we found that, consistent with the recent work by Christopher Stout (2020) where he makes “the case for identity politics,” reverse covering, or stressing one’s minority status, was far more advantageous for minority students. In fact, the only real instance we saw of covering was among majority student leaders. White student leaders were the only group that mentioned a particularly strong form of covering in that those in a sorority or fraternity mentioned that it was important that they did not advertise that fact. This is an interesting reflection of the status of a different form of “marginalized” group on campus (Greek organizations)—organizations that have traditionally and historically been highly exclusionary and dominated by whites. As one

white, female student leader said, “I tried to downplay my involvement in my sorority.” A white, male student said, “Being a cisgendered, white male with a privileged background, I wasn’t trying to hide it, but I wasn’t trying to highlight it either. I was in a fraternity, and it was something that I did not want to bring up.” That student went on to say that he was pushing for the abolishment of fraternities which he now thought of as “super toxic.”

We found that identity strongly informed candidates’ goals and work as student leaders. A strong sense of one’s identity provided student leaders a focus to their campaign and more agentic positions as leaders. Student leaders in marginalized groups offered specific, targeted plans to address issues of diversity and inclusion. Their policy goals included: addressing problems with public safety officers’ treatment of students, getting diverse mental health counselors hired on campus, providing students with access to tampons and pads, addressing a university’s history of discrimination, promoting work study opportunities, addressing textbook accessibility for students, making a statement on Black Lives Matter. Identity directly shaped this work: “[My work] came from being a black woman...being black and knowing instinctively what to do.” “We made it clear we would use our identities to make an inclusive place.” “[My identity] takes a huge role in terms of my positions on things, especially concerning issues that will address diversity and sexuality.” “I really lean into the first-generation low income perspective...It plays a big role in the projects that I take on.”

Student leaders with a less active sense of identity, typically those in majority groups, had less specifically-focused agendas as leaders. One straight, white male leader said his platform was, “Let’s get real,” and he described his agenda as focused on “little things that are improvements but not life changing [for example, the dining policy on use of meal swipes]...you don’t have to set ambitious goals.” When asked about the issue positions on which he ran, another straight, white male said, “I wanted to come off as a person that can be trusted, not any sort of main issues.” Similarly, another white (not openly gay) male said his goals were transparency and openness and he said his identity worked against a particular issue focus: “I kind of feel like, for me, the most outward part of my identity is white guy, so that doesn’t point me in a particular direction.”

While lack of a strong identity seemed to lead to a less-specific issue platform as well as fewer coalitions of students to which one could appeal, there seemed generally to be a real commitment among white, straight student leaders to educate themselves on issues of concern to marginalized groups and to be allies. Most of the white male respondents recognized their privileged status. They reported both a willingness to learn from other students about issues central to them as well as a willingness to use their privilege to make changes. As one white male president said: "I owe it to the world to do what I can and use my privilege." Another said, "I would say that my identity has prevented me from getting the complete view of being a marginalized student on...campus and that's changed my leadership style over the past year...Being a privileged person during a time when there has been outrageous acts of systemic racism and a serious movement for changing it, being a white leader, being a privileged leader is interesting for me trying to create change and enact policy." Another white, male leader said, "It's really refreshing to have people around me pushing me to see issues in a new light. Like there is a student coalition against campus policing, so it was exciting for me to learn about it when my initial reaction would have been that they are fine and great. After looking into them, it has expanded my views by looking at the facts more." A white, female leader said, "Being white has made me take a step back for the black student union to lead on their list of demands."

## **DISCUSSION**

Our findings reveal that identities play a unique, specific, and important role for marginalized student leaders. In contrast to our expectations, minority identities served as mobilizing agents for student leaders, playing an important role in how and why they ran, directly shaping the issue positions on which they planned to govern, and providing them an advantage in their appeal to students. In many ways, these findings reflect the nature of the times. These student leaders were running for office during a time of great national attention on the problems of systemic injustice and racism. College campuses have been at the forefront of the push for diversity and inclusion efforts, and this generation has been leading the call for change. These student leaders illustrate that traditionally marginalized students are also leading the charge—stepping up to participate with their minority identity front and center in their appeals. Rather

than covering who they are, these students are engaged in what we have called reverse covering—emphasizing and utilizing their identities as a means for connection and direction. Stout (2020) recently showed that the efficacy of identity politics depends in part on the context and the nature of the times. He argues that, particularly in this time of increased partisan sorting and polarization, identity politics can be a quite effective political strategy: “under the right conditions, appeals to underrepresented groups can boost political organizations’ chances of success by engaging racial/ethnic minorities and mobilizing sympathetic whites” (Stout, 2020, p. 3). In the context of university life in 2020, student leaders indeed seem to have benefitted by representing, both in their own personal identity and in their policy positions, the interests of a diverse and mobilized student electorate.

Our research method of intense, in-depth interviews has been beneficial as it has allowed us deep insight into these candidates, who they are, and what they care about. This kind of data collection is most helpful when discussing deeply personal issues such as those regarding identity and how one understands oneself. However, we acknowledge our method is limited in that we only know what the students we spoke to told us (however, this is an issue even for large public opinion polls as well). This is a limited sample, representing 21% of the student body presidents at the top 100 liberal arts and universities in the country (U.S. News Best Colleges, 2017-2020). Thus, we are unable to make broad generalizations about student leaders at other colleges. While we did find some correlations regarding which schools were more likely to elect marginalized students (Northeastern schools) versus white candidates (Southern and conservative schools, as reported by the student leaders), the numbers in the respective data cells are too small to say with certainty that these findings hold true generally.

These results do, however, reveal the significant role identity can play in shaping the goals and behavior of political candidates. It also, perhaps even more revealingly, illustrates the challenges leaders who fall in the white, cisgender majority face in understanding and/or appealing to an increasingly diverse electorate. The white, cisgender student leaders in our sample were the only ones who were actively covering an identity (especially

if they had Greek status). These student leaders also recognized that they faced an uphill climb—citing their white privilege and the obstacles it created to fully understanding the challenges for diverse students on a college campus. The way forward as leaders, they also recognized, was rooted in listening to and understanding a broader perspective on the urgent issues of the day and being willing to use the power still afforded to majority groups to make a change.

As the United States becomes increasingly diverse, the ability to encompass and negotiate diversity will be essential to all political leaders. A successful political leader must recognize the diverse identities and interests that are important to their constituents and how those intersect with their own personal identities. As this research suggests, leaders have political advantages and disadvantages conferred upon them by the very nature of the identities they themselves hold. Our research suggests that successful leaders, if cognizant of the role identities play, have great opportunity to use their own personal identities to connect and serve all groups effectively in a democratic system made up of diverse constituents.

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## **Appendix: Qualitative Survey Instrument<sup>1</sup>**

Thank you for setting aside time to be interviewed today. The purpose of this study is to learn more about college student governments. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may stop with no penalty at any time or choose not to answer any question you do not wish to answer. All data will be confidential. Data will be kept and locked in a personal Box folder that is password protected. After the study is over, all data will be deleted. Any questions may be directed to the principal investigator (Dr. Liz Smith, Furman University, liz.smith@furman.edu). By moving forward, you are agreeing to the aforementioned statements and confirm that you are 18 years of age or older.

- 1) Can you please state your name, what school you attend, your class year, and your current position within the student government?
- 2) What is your preferred gender and race?
- 3) Do you identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community?
  - i. If yes, are you comfortable sharing your sexual orientation with us?
  - ii. How “out” would you say you are? Are you out to just trusted friends, or to anyone who asks?
- 4) Are you registered to vote?
- 5) Do you think of yourself a Democrat, Republican, an Independent or what?
  - i. Would you consider yourself a strong Democrat/Republican or not very strong Democrat/Republican?
  - ii. If independent, would you say you feel closer to the Republicans or Democrats?

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<sup>2</sup> Institutional Review Board approval was obtained for this study.

*Let's talk about your experiences in student government.*

- 6) Were you previously on student government before this term? If so, what was your position?

*Let's talk about your most recent campaign.*

- 7). What motivated you to run for president?
- 8) On what issues did you campaign? What issues were part of your campaign platform?
- 9) Who was your target audience on campus? If there was a group among the student body you targeted the most, who was it?
- 10) What efforts specifically did you make to appeal to voters?
- 11) What are the most important facets of your identity, or what makes you who you are? For clarification: The definition of identity is who you are, the way you think about yourself, the way you are viewed by the world and the characteristics that define you.
  - i. If they do not mention their minority status: Does your minority status influence any parts of your identity?
- 12) In your campaign, did you emphasize (or conceal) any parts of your identity to appeal more to student voters? Why or why not?
- 13) Were there times when you felt pressure to conform to certain societal standards (appearance, speech, ideology, etc)?
- 14) Why do you think your campaign was successful?
- 15) How important was your identity to your campaign?
- 16) Do you think your identity had any influence on your campaign's success?

*Let's talk about your time in office.*

17) How would you describe your leadership style as SGA President?

Please pick between these two sets of phrases that you feel is closest to your style as an SGA leader.

1. Focusing more on debating proposals, persuading others to your views, developing and drafting bills, & future political ambition.
2. Focusing more on reconciling different interests, keeping abreast issues others care about, getting suggestions from others, & helping the student body address problems with administration.

18) How would you describe other members of the SGA's impressions of you?

19) Has your identity affected the decisions you have made as a leader? Why?

20) Does your identity play a major role in your experiences in student government? Why?

## **SCARS; DIFFERENT, BUT OURS**

*SHANTELLA ERSKINE*

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

I grew up in church,  
my parents divorced when I turned six.  
And by the time I was nine,  
I said goodbye to what was divine.  
My mother taught self-advocacy and just being me,  
and my father I never really got to see.  
I tried to express myself,  
but the kids at school never liked me because I didn't believe.  
I wasn't established the traditional way,  
but I thought we all have our scars,  
and though we are imperfect, joy can be ours.  
Marks on our canvas that drip with our pain,  
stories untold, grudges remain.  
Why hold onto the definitions of those who hurt us,  
and inflict the same pain underneath others' skin?  
Why must we treat one another as an alien?  
Are we not all human?  
Derived from something, we are all someone's children.  
One and the same,  
we cannot crumble from shame.  
We must lead the way,  
to help one another stitch up our scars.  
And make room for the ones with histories different than ours.

## **NO ONE ELSE WILL**

*PRESLEY A. BRADY*

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

*Mixed Media*

Within the footholds of Stagnation, a dragon keeps its lair. This dragon roils in progression and abhors connectivity. When people discuss leadership, it seems to always be put on a clean and tidy pedestal, where the filthy fingerprints and sweat stains won't show up. The dragon rests in the hollow beneath it. The dragon settles, secure in the idea that it cannot be moved, that it is final and it will continue to be. Secure in the knowledge that not everyone will be willing to dirty their hands, clawing and pushing the dragon till it topples into obscurity. The dragon will not move until someone moves it and the dragon does not know this. But now you do.



**NO ONE ELSE WILL**  
*PRESLEY A. BRADY*  
UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY  
*Mixed Media*





## **OUTSTANDING AND FIRM**

*YEN-CHEN LIAO*

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

*Photography*

For me, a great leader should be outstanding like the rock in this photograph.

# THE IDEA OF NATURAL BORN LEADERSHIP AND ITS HARMFUL ASSUMPTIONS

NATHAN JACKSON  
UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

*The phrase “natural born leader,” is used often when describing team captains or coaches in athletics. Assumptions about these individuals are made at times claiming that someone is born with traits that better suit them for leadership than others. To adequately judge one’s leadership abilities, various factors such as perception of followers, proficiency, and competency in their field all contribute to how well someone can lead. A natural-born leader is presumed to possess some ability, since birth, that sets them apart as an outstanding leader. However, the idea that individuals can possess a genetic advantage, predisposing them to becoming a better leader in the future is unnatural. The perpetuated concept of natural-born leadership is one that is limiting and one that prevents individuals from evolving and attempting to take on leadership roles.*

What is leadership? What are some of the qualities of effective leaders? Are the best leaders born with these traits and, in turn, are “natural born leaders,” or were qualities developed throughout life and experience? Gary Yukl (2010) explains the idea of the “trait approach” and natural-born leaders in his book, *Leadership in Organizations*. Yukl writes, “Underlying this approach was the assumption that some people are natural leaders, endowed with certain traits not possessed by other people” (p. 13). The idea that certain individuals have endowed traits that preexist any experience or opportunity contains undertones of the Calvinist religious principle of predestination. Francis Galton (1869), called by some a “scientific Calvinist,” was a firm believer in this concept, as outlined in *Hereditary Genius*. He wrote, “Those upon whom the greater part of my volume is occupied, and on whose kinships my argument is most securely based, have been generally reputed as endowed by nature



with extraordinary genius. There are so few of these men..." (Galton, p. 2). Furthermore, the belief that inherent traits aid in leadership abilities could potentially inhibit individual motivation to aspire for leadership roles and damage an individuals' confidence to aspire to them.

Leadership, while something one does, is also a characteristic. It is an aspect that individuals demonstrate through proficiency and accountability. Warren Blank (2001) argues that while leaders possess something unique, leadership is not instilled in an individual at birth. In his book, *The 108 Skills of Natural Born Leaders*, Blank argues that "A select group of people seem to have that 'certain something' that elevates them above the pack and enables them to be what we call 'natural born leaders.' Such unique individuals emerge in every situation in which they find themselves. Many distinguish themselves at an early age" (p. 6). Blank reserves this idea that some unidentified x-factor exists within certain individuals that predisposes them to leadership roles more so than others. He does not write, however, that individuals are born with this x-factor. "Are some people 'naturally' born to lead? I argue no. No one is born a leader. No one is genetically programmed or innately structured as a leader" (p. 8). Blank touches on which individuals are bestowed this title. He writes, "The natural born leader label is an attribution made to those who master the skill set related to gaining willing followers" (Blank, 2001, p. 9). Notice how he does not mention genetic or personality characteristics that make one suited to direct others. The generally accepted conceptual framework of an effective leader is one that possesses certain attributes that make them fit to guide others. However, leadership itself is an attribute, so to state that you possess an attribute because you possess other characteristics is misleading.

The entirety of the human experience has been accumulating knowledge and implementing new ideas to evolve. It is counterintuitive to the human psyche to stay complacent and maintain an inability to do something simply because they are not born with the ability. If a child struggles to read, they continually work at and practice reading until they are a competent reader. Leadership is no different. People may lack the ability to effectively lead, yet through experience can grow and become an effective influence over others. The idea of a natural-born leader is contrary

to human experience and inherently neglects the ability of individuals to learn leadership skills and abilities by means of experience. Leadership is no different and is simply related to the confidence and competence at which an individual seeks promotion within their organization. If a basketball player studied the plays their team executed in games and worked hard to understand and perfect their craft, odds are they would be a decent coach and, in turn, demonstrate through teaching others what they themselves have learned through experience.

Blank (2001) argues that the most effective leaders are labeled “natural born leaders” because they appear to do it efficiently and seamlessly. “I propose that some people are labeled natural born leaders because they *effortlessly, spontaneously, consistently, and frequently* demonstrate the specific skills that cause others to willingly follow” (p. 8). These “natural born leaders” are in turn considered so effective because they excel in attracting followers and maintaining them. Leading is not innate; to be a good leader is contingent on the perception or assessment of one’s followers (Blank, 2001). Various personality traits can factor into this exchange. If a leader possesses charisma and they are friendly and appear confident, all these things could potentially contribute towards a positive perception by those they lead.

Personality is not innate; it is something that forms from the environment one develops. According to Benjamin Hardy (2020), “Personality is often predicted by the season of life we’re in, the role we’re in, who we’re around such as peer-group, and more” (Sum-Up section, para. 1). Rather than an innate genetic personality, Hardy asserts personality is subject to change based on additional factors. While personality traits contribute to a leader’s effectiveness, it is the confidence and competence an individual has developed that motivates them to step into a position to lead others that makes one fit to lead, not some ability that one inherently possesses. This idea is further reinforced in the study, “Nature vs Nurture: Are Leaders Born or Made? A Behavior Genetic Investigation of Leadership Style” (Johnson, et al., 1998). They wrote, “Although it is becoming increasingly clear that there are systematic trait differences between leaders and non-leaders, there are situational, organizational, and motivational characteristics that affect the success of the individual within the leadership role” (p. 217).

When considering the debate of innate versus learned leadership skills, it is important to keep in mind that different leadership styles are better suited to different groups. Two style examples are authoritative and laissez-faire. David Carlin, a contributor at Forbes, writes, “Laissez-faire leaders do not participate in the decision-making process, and rarely offer opinions.” Opposite of laissez-faire is authoritative or authoritarian leadership, described as “the leader has full power. Authoritarian leaders tell groups what to do and expect group members to execute” (Carlin, 2019). While those in the military may respond better to an authoritarian personality in leadership, investors or bankers may respond better to a laissez-faire type of leadership. The concept of effective leadership is not so much possessing characteristics rather than being able to discern which leadership style is best suited to those you lead. A leader’s end goal is to motivate those they lead and accomplish the established goals efficiently. A coach’s goal is to maximize the potential of each of their players. The players will not listen if the coach does not demonstrate competency and confidence. This competency comes through experience, learning, and confidence demonstrated for that sport. The same applies to most other leadership positions. Again, this emphasizes the learned aspect of leadership through dedication and intelligence in one’s profession.

The perpetuated idea of a natural-born leader limits who can become leaders. If it was widely accepted that all leaders were born with an innate ability for leadership, none would step up to leadership unless they were told they possessed this ability. Similar to Blank’s assertion, one is not identified or dubbed a natural-born leader until they have demonstrated their proficiency in leadership and their effectiveness communicating with and managing others. Thus, when one emanates an aura of confidence, competency, and authority, others see this and view that individual as a natural at leading. However, simply stating that someone is good at something because they were born that way discredits the hard work they have put in to get to that point. If a basketball player becomes proficient at shooting three-pointers and fans claim the player is a natural or was born a shooter, this instantly discredits the hours of intense practice that player put in to become an exceptional shooter. Therefore, if the idea held firm that leaders were endowed, chosen, or simply born as leaders, no

individuals would have the confidence or courage to claim stewardship over others other than those who simply desire power.

Leadership is subjectively viewed by a leader's followers. A coach who played professionally may be revered by their players because of the expertise and knowledge they have of the sport. A first-year player joining a collegiate team will not likely have the same authority over their teammates as a tenured coach has because they do not yet command the earned respect of their teammates. The first-year player will not likely be immediately named team captain simply because they were born with certain qualities that are considered beneficial in a leader. The only way to gain the respect of their teammates and be acknowledged is by demonstrating their abilities. They must demonstrate their personal ability and exemplify professionalism until they are respected by those around them.

To be considered a great leader individuals must demonstrate their proficiency in the area they wish to lead, and they must command the respect of those they will lead. Individuals must have the confidence through practice and knowledge obtained to make the right decisions for those they have accountability over. Blank's idea that people are viewed as natural born leaders because of their success is easy to see. That success comes from consistency and hard work, not birthright. If individuals were endowed with leadership abilities, every hereditary monarchy would have succeeded. If individuals work hard, become knowledgeable in their field, and demonstrate a superior ability to communicate, anyone, not just those born with them, can develop leadership capabilities. The perpetuation of the idea of genetic predisposition to leadership prowess is not only misguided, but it also hinders and at times prevents individuals from stepping into leadership roles due to the uncertainty of whether they possess this genetic characteristic that makes them a natural born leader.

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# SMASHING THE PIGGY BANK: ARE FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP STYLES PASSED DOWN FROM PARENTS TO THEIR CHILDREN

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*The goal of this exploratory essay is to explore the correlation between money management and skills of parents and individual financial leadership. I expect to discover many similarities between the way that an individual chooses to manage their finances and the way their parents managed their finances while they were growing up. To get an accurate representation of money management patterns, I chose to interview individuals from different ages, genders, relationship statuses, and levels of education.*

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the median household income in the United States is \$79,900. The average American household is approximately \$145,000 in debt. This means that the average debt to income ratio of the American household is 55.1% (Fay, 2021). In one study, researchers discovered that 36.7% of the participants reported financial problems as the cause of their divorce (Scott, et al. 2013). Overall, financial wellness and money management play a sizeable role in the stability of a marriage and family.

The goal of my exploratory research is to determine whether there is any correlation between the financial leadership and money management skills of parents and their children's financial leadership style. If a particular parent took leadership over their own finances, does it affect whether their child will do the same? I expect to discover many similarities between an individual deciding to take leadership over their own finances and the

financial leadership roles established by their parents. To get an accurate representation of money management patterns, I chose to interview individuals from different ages, genders, relationship statuses, and levels of education.

### **MEASUREMENT**

I created a list of questions (see Appendix) I hoped would help me to better understand if there is a correlation between an individual's money management habits and the habits of their parents. I wanted to collect data on the individual I was interviewing so I asked baseline questions, "Are you male or female" and "How old are you" before getting into the questions about financial leadership.

I also interviewed two individuals who are divorced and have not entered into another committed relationship. For those individuals, I did alter the questions slightly to accommodate them. Any of the questions regarding a current relationship or partner were phrased in the past tense. For example, instead of asking if they frequently discussed finances with their partner, I asked if in past relationships they had frequently discussed finances with their partner. Below is the list of questions I asked each of my ten participants.

### **DATA COLLECTION**

I interviewed ten people. Four of the individuals were males and six were females. I conducted the interviews over the phone, in person, and by email correspondence. The individuals I interviewed were work colleagues, family members, and friends. In choosing interview subjects, I tried my best to get a diverse group of individuals. The age of my participants range from 27-67. Of the ten participants, eight are married, and two are divorced. Nine of the ten practice the same Christian religion. Two of the participants are children of divorced parents.

### **FINDINGS**

#### *FAMILY OF ORIGIN: FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP? WHAT'S THAT?*

While reviewing the answers to my research questions, I noticed that eight of the ten participants stated that their parents had never discussed financial leadership with them in any capacity. These same individuals also reported that they never had a savings account when they were growing

up. Only three participants reported their parents ever arguing about money. Separate, these facts may seem innocuous. Combined, they led me to believe that financial leadership was not discussed in any capacity around these participant's homes. I found this particularly interesting considering the high rate of marital conflict that mismanaged finances can bring.

*FAMILY OF ORIGIN: DUAL EARNER VS SINGLE EARNER HOUSEHOLD*

I asked participants if they recall their parents arguing about finances when they were growing up. I found that the three participants who responded that their parents had argued about finances also came from a dual earner household. This got me thinking that there might be a correlation between dual earners and financial arguments. If both partners are bringing money into the household, they may feel more inclined to share their opinion on how the finances should be managed. This could also be the reason why those who have a single earner household report fewer or no arguments. The single earner has control and the one who does not work outside of the home may feel that they are not entitled to weigh in on the finances.

*FAMILY OF ORIGIN: CREDIT SCORES & CREDIT CARDS*

Seven participants answered that their parents never discussed credit scores or their function with them. When it came to obtaining their own loans or credit lines, most of the individuals I interviewed were self-taught. Two of individuals that I interviewed reported that when they were in their early 20's, they obtained their first credit cards. Not having a full understanding of credit cards and how interest works, they saw the credit limit as an extension of their bank account balance.

One of these individuals purchased an entire furniture set on their new credit card and failed to make any payments. Because of this, the credit card was closed and his account was sent to a collection agency. His credit score took a nosedive as a result and it took him years to rebuild his credit score. This caused setbacks in this individual achieving his financial goals. He had to delay purchasing a home and a car for his family. This individual stated that he wished that his parents had passed on some knowledge about credit scores.



Of the participants who stated that their parents discussed money management with them, there were three whose parents also explained credit scores as they approached their late teen years. These individuals felt they had a good understanding of how credit scores work. They felt prepared and informed when it came time to obtain their own credit cards and apply for their own personal loans. These individuals also stated that their parents were their number one role models when it came to managing their finances. These individuals stated in our conversations that they frequently went to their parents for financial advice and guidance.

#### *FAMILY OF ORIGIN: ALLOWANCE VS. NO ALLOWANCE*

Only two of the participants I interviewed reported receiving an allowance during their childhood. Neither of these individuals reported having to complete chores or household duties in exchange for their allowance. Their parents supplied the allowance weekly without any expectations from their children. One of the individuals who received an allowance also reported that her parents had poor financial leadership skills while she was growing up. She also stated in our conversation that she felt she had made poor financial decisions in her adult life. She felt that receiving an allowance during her childhood did not teach her the value of earning money and saving it. She knew that whether she spent her allowance, or chose to save it, she would receive more the following week. This decreased her desire to take leadership over her own finances.

Both of the individuals who received an allowance from their parents did not have a formal savings account growing up. When I asked about what they did with their allowance, they reported that they spent it almost immediately after receiving it. When I asked if they ever thought to save a portion of it, they said that it had never occurred to them. They knew they would get more money the following week, so they never worried about saving any of it.

The remaining eight individuals I interviewed did not receive an allowance from their parents. While a few did report receiving the occasional \$10 or \$20 from their parents, it was not a consistent "allowance". They also stated that their parents usually made them complete a task around the house or promised to reimburse them in exchange for the money. It

was not freely given. These eight individuals reported that this increased their desire to take leadership with their own finances.

One individual I interviewed stated that he did not receive an allowance and actually chuckled at my question. He said that his allowance was that he was “allowed to live in the house.” He explained that his parents expected him to do chores around the house as part of being in their family. Everyone contributed and their payment was room and board.

#### *FAMILY OF ORIGIN: POSITIVE MONEY MANAGEMENT SKILLS*

Two individuals stated that their parents discussed financial leadership with them on a regular basis beginning at a young age. One of these participants told a story of his mother taking him to their local bank to open his first savings account. His mother had arranged a meeting with a representative of the bank to discuss the account he was opening and take a brief tour of the bank. He said he also received a sucker and a keychain as an added bonus. The participant said that this positive experience his mother curated helped to foster a good relationship with the bank and a sense of comfort when visiting. He said that because of this, banks have never made him feel anxious or uncomfortable. He feels comfortable asking questions and contacting his bank when needed.

There were two individuals who reported being taught about charitable donations from a young age. These participants also discussed how their parents would explain budgeting to them. The most common conversations these participants reported having with their parents were when they were shopping with a parent and asked their parent to purchase an item for them. The parent would respond by stating whether the item was within the budget or not. This set an example for them of how to make decisions when it comes to making purchases.

#### *GENDER ROLES AND FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP*

When asked about which parent took leadership over the finances in their family of origin, eight of the ten participants responded that it was their mother who took most or sole responsibility. The most common explanation for this was that the father worked all day and the mother was a homemaker. The mother had “more time” to spend balancing the

checkbook, reviewing the bank statements, and paying the bills. Based on the answers from those I interviewed, money management and budgeting seemed to be an expectation of the female in the relationship.

Participants who stated that their mother was responsible for managing the finances in their family of origin were more likely to have the female in their household managing their finances. One participant I interviewed works full time and his wife is a homemaker. I asked him why his wife is the one who manages the finances, and it took him a minute to respond. He stated that his mother had managed their family finances when he was growing up and he just assumed that his wife would take leadership over the finances. He was never formally taught how to budget or manage his money.

I was expecting there to be a greater correlation between the gender of the parent who managed the finances in your family of origin and the gender of the individual who manages the finances in the participants relationship. From what I gathered in my research, it looks like it may be slightly affected by the way you were raised, but not always. It was inconclusive.

#### *CURRENT FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP STYLE IN MARRIED COUPLES*

I found that most couples I interviewed reported never having a formal discussion about who would manage the finances. It seems that in most cases, one spouse simply took over the family finances with little discussion. A common answer to the question, "How did you choose which partner would manage the finances?" was "I don't know." I found this so interesting as finances are one of the top reasons for disagreements in a marriage and divorce. One would think that such an important decision would come with multiple discussions and weighing the pros and cons. That did not seem to be the case among those I interviewed.

All of the married subjects I interviewed reported that they frequently discuss their finances with their significant other. Included in these discussions are debt payoff, financial goals, and plans for the future. There was one participant that I interviewed who stressed the importance of discussing money management and financial goals regularly. She and her husband have achieved a number of the goals they set when they were first

married. They have been married for almost 20 years. She stated that the biggest part of successful money management for her and her husband was communication. They talk regularly, if not daily, about their finances and plans for the future. She attributed these frequent conversations to their financial success.

#### *CURRENT FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP STYLE IN SINGLE ADULTS*

I interviewed two individuals who are not married or in a committed relationship. One of them stated that she sits down at least once a month to review her bank accounts, spending habits, and budget. She also reported setting financial goals and making plans for her future. While her financial goals are limited due to income, she has managed to build up small savings for herself and foresees a bright future.

The unmarried male I interviewed has been divorced for a number of years. He has trouble managing his finances and lives paycheck to paycheck. He is retired and living on a limited income. He said something very interesting during our conversation. He said that one of the hardships he faces in saving and managing his money is lack of accountability. When he was married, his wife was able to review the bank statements and track the family's spending. She helped to keep him from overspending. Now that he is no longer in a relationship, he is the only person responsible for managing his finances. Because of this, he frequently overspends.

#### *CURRENT FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP STYLE: HABITS TO AVOID*

I asked each of my participants if there were any money management habits that their parents exhibited that they actively chose not to implement in their own lives. Four of the ten participants I interviewed responded that they would not implement a specific money management style that their parents modeled for them. I was surprised that all four of these participants mentioned that they avoided credit card debt that their parents had accrued. Each of them stated that they have chosen not to allow themselves to accrue credit card debt or purchase items on credit. They had each watched their parents accumulate unmanageable amounts of credit card debt. When I asked these individuals how they avoided credit card debt, they each had different responses. One chose not to have a credit card at all, another chose a credit card with a low limit to keep their debt manageable, another pays off the full statement

balance of their card each month, and the last only uses their credit card in an emergency.

For example, one of the participants I interviewed was raised by parents who divorced when she was quite young. Her mother did her best to manage their finances, but it was difficult. She would often spend money on things like beauty products. This individual made it a point to budget and rarely spends money on her hair and make-up. She saw the ways of her mother and actively chose not to prioritize spending that was not necessary.

In another interview I conducted, a participant cited that her parents are in quite a bit of debt and do not manage their money very well. She stated in our interview that she and her husband are in a great deal of debt as well. Her parents did not teach her how to manage money and she simply replicated their relationship. Her partner also comes from a family whose parents lost their home due to foreclosure while he was a child. She mentioned that this lack of knowledge has caused strain in their relationship. The lack of knowledge has added anxiety and pressure to succeed at work for both of them so they can pay down their debt to eventually buy a home.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, I do believe there is some correlation between the financial leadership style of parents and the financial leadership style of their children. It seems as though each individual or couple brings quite a bit of what they have learned from their parents into their current life. While each couple has developed their own way of managing their money that works for them. There were quite a few participants who took bits and pieces of what they had learned from their parents and applied them to their own lives. No one had the exact same habits as their parents.

In a majority of the interviews I conducted, participants cited constant communication with their partner as the reason for their financial success. Individuals and couples who communicated regularly about their finances seemed less stressed and anxious discussing their finances. It seems like the secret to successful financial leadership within a marriage or committed relationship is communication. Those I interviewed who had positive attitudes toward money and their financial future seemed to communicate frequently with their partner.

If I could conduct my survey again, I would ask an additional question, “Are you happy with your current financial leadership arrangement?” With a follow up question of, “If not, what would you change?” For some of my participants, it seems that the conversation they had with me was the first conversation about their finances in quite some time.

Overall, it seems that while the way your parents managed their finances can have an effect on how you manage your own, it does not have to be the way you manage your own. I think asking these questions of yourself can help you realize why you are making the financial leadership decisions you choose to make in your own life. It can also help you to realize areas that you need to improve so that you can make more mindful financial leadership decisions in the future.

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## **APPENDIX: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

- Are you male or female?
- How old are you?
- Did you come from a dual-earner household? (did both your mother and father work)
- If you have a spouse, do they work?
- Which parent took leadership over the finances when you were growing up?
- Did your parents ever discuss financial leadership with you when you were growing up?
- Did you have your own savings account growing up?
- Did you have a job when you were growing up?
- Were you expected to contribute to your family financially when you were growing up?
- Did your parents give you an allowance?
- In your own relationship, who takes leadership of your finances?
- How did you choose which partner would take the lead in managing your finances?
- Did your parents argue about money when you were growing up?
- Do you and your spouse frequently talk about finances? Your goals, debt payoff, etc.
- Did your parents ever explain credit scores and how they work?
- What are some financial leadership skills that you learned from your parents that you have implemented in your own life?
- Are there any financial leadership skills that your parents had that you choose not to implement in your own life?





## **WOMEN'S WORK**

*HANNAH OLIVIA*

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

*Masking tape, acrylic, mixed media*

In their homes, communities, and workplaces, women are put on a pedestal and asked to be a light for others. But with this noble labor, one must wonder, “does the Statue of Liberty ever get tired? Does Lady Justice ever get burned out?” What is the emotional toll of our admiration and expectations? And how do we support those who do desire to light the way for others?



**WOMEN'S WORK**

*HANNAH OLIVIA*

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

*Masking tape, acrylic, mixed media*

# WHY SHOULD WE CONSIDER YOU FOR THIS POSITION

*CHRISTIAN HEFTEL*

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

To start with,  
I've experienced heartbreak 5+ times over my lifetime,  
And I presume that experience will serve me well here.  
My work experience also demonstrates that I've learned how  
To give up on a dream that's grown too old—  
The dreams that only a younger self could bear.  
I can also perform functions in Excel  
And speak conversational Spanish.

But there are details that didn't fit in my application packet  
That I wanted to share,  
Because I believe they are relevant  
And explain some of my potential value:

I've held an infant in my arms  
And struggled to comprehend how a being  
Can be made from pleasure and pain.

I've walked streets where no one spoke my language,  
And smiled.

I've been dropped while rock climbing  
And, despite cuts and bruises and whiplash,  
Have climbed again,  
Although never with the same belayer.

I've felt black rage against the world,  
At the machines and systems  
That grind us down,  
And felt the pull to violence,  
And instead have written words.

I watched sunsets when I could.

And I know the smell of summer pine  
From winter,

And the way rain smells  
In Utah,  
In Texas,  
In Hawaii,  
In Norway,  
Like dust, like mold, like salt, like stone.

And I know how to breathe  
And breathe and breathe.

All these things I know and more,  
More than I could fit  
Into this 15-minute formality  
Filled with false smiles,  
False questions,  
False answers.

What qualifies me is my life,  
My experiences,  
My self,  
The finite years I've spent on this earth,  
And the finite years that still remain,

Just like all the other suit-clad men  
And pantsuit women  
Sitting in the hallway  
And hoping,  
Like me,  
For consideration.

## A LEADER IN THE MIRE

ETHAN POWERS

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

*Mary, a surgical tech and medical school dropout, joins the refugees of Myanmar's ethnic cleansing to provide healthcare to the wounded victims, but she is met with a surprise that no medical professional could have been prepared for. This story is based on true events. The characters and their names in this story are fictional.*

In a small bamboo shack, located in the jungles of Myanmar, a surgical team watched the emergent operation, silently. The whole team waited intently for the next command from Mary, the woman who came to save lives. The room with a dirt floor was surrounded by bamboo walls and a ceiling which made up a rudimentary operating room built by the local villagers. The room was as humid as a sauna, and in the surgical gowns, they were all drenched in sweat. Ignoring the torrid weather, everyone in the room held their breath as they watched Mary perform life-saving surgery.

Sweat dripped into Mary Malabar's eye as she held her hemostat deep in the flesh of her patient's thigh wound. The sweat stung, but she refrained from wiping her face while trying to surgically remove an AK-47 bullet with a small arsenal of surgical instruments. Her patient, a Muslim villager in northern Myanmar, screamed in pain while a nurse held him down on the bamboo table.

"Can you have someone wipe the sweat out of my eye, please?" Mary asked her first assistant, San, who was holding the wound open with small

forceps. San, a native of Rakhine, Myanmar, like her patient, had previously been one of Mary's English students. San barked orders in a foreign language to the other medical personnel helping in the bamboo triage room. It was ninety-eight degrees inside.

A small girl in an oversized gown rushed over and wiped the sweat from Mary's face with a plaid cloth.

"Tell her I say 'thank you,'" Mary said, now able to see in both eyes again. The hemostat was forced deeper until she felt it stop at the bone. The patient yelped again. Mary could feel the femoral shaft fracture with her hemostat along with another hard object near the *Linea aspera*.

"Dang it, San, it *did* hit the femur." She closed the hemostat forceps on the assumed bullet and removed it from the wound site. Mary examined the impacted bullet in the lights from the bamboo ceiling. The bronze bullet was deformed, but not fragmented. Fortunately for the patient, there were no other pieces in the wound as the bullet in its entirety was removed from his thigh.

"Got it!" she declared. "There's no other foreign bodies in the wound, so let's go ahead and close it up." She placed the bullet in the kidney basin and closed the wound with a nylon suture. Suturing is a skill that Mary was always proud of. "When you stop the bleeding, pack the wound, and let me know when you find a blood donor."

"Yes ma'am," San replied back. San was the only one in the room who could speak both English and Rohingya; thus, she translated for the other medical volunteers.

Mary was from the United States, but this wasn't her first time in Myanmar, nor was it her first time in Southeast Asia. Mary had been to almost every country in Southeast Asia, either as a volunteer for humanitarian trips or English teaching. This time, however, she came to help the wounded victims of Myanmar's ethnic cleansing. The last time she was in Myanmar, she heard about the government attacks on the Rohingya tribe in western Myanmar. The military drove villagers out of the country by bombing them. Mary knew she needed to come back.

Mary was exactly who the wounded refugees needed; someone who had worked as a surgical first assistant, was fascinated by medicine, and was eager to help. She went to medical school for two years, almost three. In her third year, she had dropped out. As a peculiar girl, she loved surgery and always aspired to be a physician, but wanted a lifestyle that allowed her to travel the world. And she did so, making trips to numerous countries. Mary was Indian-American and had visited her mother's family in Western India. Her looks of being half Indian helped her blend in, she connivingly snuck into Rakhine to be the only healthcare provider to the refugees.

Her Boston apartment had been left with her Charlie Brown Christmas tree still up, despite Christmas being four months ago, and a Styrofoam bowl of Thai curry on the table. Several months of working overtime hours were done to save money for this trip, which had been planned out between her and San. It had been over three years since they had last seen each other, but like most good friends, they kept in touch in the meantime. San promised to escort Mary safely from the airport to the Rakhine villages. This involved a six-hour drive from the capital city of Yangon to the distant mountainous jungles. In a small four-door passenger car, they drove out of the urban metropolis, through long plains of rice paddies, then into the mountains entangled in vegetation. The last two hours of the trip, the small car gradually made its way along dirt roads at high elevation where wild elephants and rambutan trees inhabited the jungles in abundance. Upon arrival in Rakhine, San drove straight to the genocide sites in the underdeveloped countryside where the recently attacked victims prepared for an exodus out of the country.

A group of orderlies carried the patient away on a stretcher as Mary went outside the hut to check on the triage line. The humidity made her forehead sweat more. She looked down at the wounded refugees near her feet. As expected, the line outside the hut extended fifty meters into the jungle's hillside.

"Bring in the next patient," she ordered. A malnourished man covered with black burn wounds was lifted into the hut while Mary examined the burns on his chest. Immediately, she opened her general surgery textbook to the pages of the burn care section. The surgical resident who allowed her to unconditionally "borrow" the book had written notes from their

university's burn clinic. This resident wasn't going to need it again and knew that it would be handy to Mary who had expressed her extreme interest in surgery. As Mary flipped through the pages, San helped the new patient gulp down a cup of alcohol since they had run out of pain medication eleven cases ago.

"Aha, here it is," Mary thought to herself as she put her finger down on the page with notes. In sloppy handwriting, she read the resident's notes about escharotomy, a procedure for third-degree burns.

"Transverse incisions across the torso with a Bovie," she read out loud. However, Mary didn't have a Bovie or any electric cautery equipment. Sophisticated medical equipment was limited as the refugees provided whatever they had scrapped up from each township when the genocide started. The patient couldn't be transported to a hospital. There weren't any for hundreds of miles, not any that hadn't been bombed already.

"A scalpel will have to do," she remarked after she read the sentence stating: *Avoid using a scalpel to decrease the chance of troublesome bleeding.*

"What's this all over him?" Mary inquired of San when she noticed her burn patient was covered in gel.

"It is a burn medicine from a plant. His family put it on him after the attack," San replied.

"Oh, like aloe vera? That's nice, but I need his skin cleansed with iodine." San translated the orders and the team prepared the patient for the procedure. As Mary waited, she could feel from inside her gown, sweat was flowing down the front and back of her body. The escharotomy was done with her scalpel along with removal of shrapnel pieces found in the wounds. Her patient screamed in pain and eventually fainted.

After the burn patient was wrapped in bandages from head to toe, Mary had two more cases of removing bullet fragments from gunshot wounds and three more shrapnel wounded patients, one of them a child no older than six. This concluded Mary's priority patients from her triage and began her line of urgent labeled patients. First was an ill adolescent girl with a rash and fever.



“This looks like the hemorrhagic fever,” San stated as they examined the young girl on the table.

“Oh, yeah. Zika and Dengue fever are common here, right?” Mary asked. “Let me look at a blood sample under your microscope. I’ll look for clues of viral cell damage or bacterial infection.” This was a skill she learned as an undergrad when she studied biotechnology. As San prepared a blood sample on a glass slide, Mary unzipped the microscope bag from the clutter of medical equipment.

Mary’s sweaty hand turned the focus dial as she pored over the small cells. Everyone in the room waited on Mary’s microscopic observation, but before she could see any details of the blood, shouting was heard outside. The room turned into chaos as everyone panicked to get outside.

“What’s going on out there?” Mary asked. No one replied to her as they all ran out into the sunlight to investigate. Even San ignored her. Along with the shouting, Mary could now hear the chopping noise of a helicopter in the distance. She remained seated at her microscope but faced towards the door where everyone had left.

San ran back into the room.

“What is it?” Mary asked her, nearly yelling it.

“The junta is here. We must go.”

San grabbed Mary by the hand and pulled her out the door. Mary saw her triage line of patients and villagers now running into the jungle.

“Take this off,” San demanded, tugging on Mary’s surgical gown. “We need to hide.”

“We need to carry the wounded with us.”

“There is no time. We must go now.” The whirring of the helicopter grew louder until Mary saw it fly overhead, no more than a couple hundred feet above her. The side gunner of the chopper rattled the fifty-caliber machine gun. Mary, San, and other villagers ducked in terror as they came under fire.

“Come now!” San yelled as she pulled Mary into the jungle. The chopper spun around in a circle, firing at other huts and anything that moved. As Mary ran through the elephant grass and mango trees, she felt the heat of the rockets explode behind her.

*Boom. Boom. Boom.*

Three rockets left the village and the jungle scorched in flames. Mary and San looked back to see everything burning. Their faces reflected the glow of the giant orange flames. Their operation and refugee checkpoint, in its entirety, was destroyed. San led Mary by the hand and implored her to move on.

“We must leave now! We cannot stay here. The junta will send soldiers here soon,” San cried as she tugged on Mary’s arm.

“San, how do you know that?”

“Because this has happened to me before.”

At this frightening news, Mary’s heart sank. It was true. This same catastrophe had occurred at San’s home village. Mary observed the sweat dripping from San’s forehead and the visible pain in her eyes. They stood in the scorched jungle, surrounded by flames over two meters high.

“San...” Mary choked on her words as she tried to say something reassuring. “I’m so sorry.”

“Being sorry does nothing. This is what my life is like now. Trust me when I say it’s time to go.”

San grabbed Mary by the hand and led her into the thicket.

The further they went, the more wounded villagers they found seeking cover, bleeding out, nearing their end. One man was lying against a tree with bleeding chest wounds. Instinctively, Mary ran to him and knelt to examine his wounds. The man said nothing as he laid back against the tree with his jaw and limbs limp. His honey-colored eyes peered up in the trees before he brought them down to focus on Mary’s. The wounds bled profusely enough to give Mary the realization that the man would

not survive, even if he were on her operating table. Mary stood up and took a step back from the helpless man. He died there, only a few seconds after she stepped away.

“He didn’t die until after I stepped away from him,” Mary thought to herself. While she was deep in thought, San yelled out in eagerness, “The Arakan Army!”

Mary looked up to see soldiers in dark green camouflage stepping out of the thicket to greet them. As San spoke to them, Mary observed the ill-equipped jungle militia of approximately one hundred men carrying AK-47s—skinny, short men wearing jackets and hats with their army logo embroidered on them.

“Mary, they are the freedom fighters for Rakhine,” San exclaimed with a smile. A plump man stepped forward and acknowledged Mary, greeting her in English.

“Hello,” he said assertively. The man carried no weapon but still seemed to be the center of the soldiers.

“Hi,” Mary replied, still dazed. The soldiers appeared simple and unimposing, but she admired their bravery.

“This is General Twae,” San explained before talking with him in Rohingya. Mary stood awkwardly as they spoke, assuming San would explain her presence to the general. After they were done speaking, the general turned to Mary.

“Thank you for helping my people. I wish I had many more like you.” He spoke fluently, catching her by surprise.

“I’m happy to help.”

“I see you are a great leader. I need you to help the villagers travel west to Bangladesh. They will be safe there.”

Mary turned to San to see what she thought and got a nod in agreement.

“We can do it,” Mary replied.

“Great. For now, stay hidden until we are able to shoot down the helicopter. Then you can escape safely before the next attack.”

Mary and San agreed, but before going into hiding, Mary paused to heed a feeling in her gut. The surviving treetops and vibrant flowering plants held her gaze for a moment. An idea jumped into her mind.

“Wait!” Mary gushed. “Let me stay with your army. Your soldiers will need medical treatment and that’s why I’m here.”

General Twan stared nonplussed for a moment and looked around at his soldiers.

“You can lead us in medical treatment?” He asked.

“I can. Medicine is my craft,” she asserted. General Twan nodded his head with a firm look into her eyes.

“OK. You can come with us.”

Mary smiled proudly. The weather was hot and the jungles were scorched, but she was ecstatic. The road ahead entailed numerous months of dedicating her life to the freedom fighters’ cause. Retrieving the wounded from battle, hiding in caves, and fleeing from more aerial attacks would become her new normal. She meditated on the essence of the jungle, growing sensitive to the radiance of the towering trees, and the atmosphere which seemed to plead for her help. She had never felt more right about any prior decisions than this one. This decision was her answer to a call. A call to make a difference.



## **SPEAK EVIL**

*RACHEAL LESUEUR*

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

*Linocut Print*

Leadership can be used as a tool to corrupt or influence a group when power is given to the wrong people.

I stand in their shadow  
like a child trying to replicate  
a stranger's footprints in the snow  
–Comparison

**COMPARISON**  
AVA GONZALEZ  
UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

## ZANE

ANNA VAN NOY  
UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

zane

you have a quality i think you admire in others  
that of the ability to create reverent followers

you know like zane

anyways.

you've got everyone picking up trash.

---

I wrote this piece after my sister, whom I had been living with, left to the Philippines.

Before she left, she and I talked often about leaders, the charismatic types. The main example we used as our own secret lingo was zane. Our cousin who has that magic charisma, when he says something is cool, it just is. Zane became our code word for the people we met who were simply stars.

My sister and some of our shared friends went to listen to a speaker, he spoke on 5 points of how to make the world a better place. I wasn't there and I can't remember now what most of them were, but they were big abstractions, things like love people etc. The fifth point was a plea for every person listening to pick up every piece of trash they saw. Of the friends that went to hear this speaker, my sister was the only one I witnessed who committed to this. Every piece of trash, she picked up. Now we are college students without a car, so we walked a lot. We saw a lot of trash. She picked up every piece she saw, from disgusting disposable masks to

capri-sun wrappers, she touched it all. And maybe there were things she missed, or days when she was running late and passed something by, but I never saw it. There were times when my sister and I were walking with a group of people, and I was surprised to notice that she and I were the only ones who were bending down and touching questionable things.

Then she left.

And I knew she was important to me, but that may have blinded me to how important she was to other people. I saw my friends, even the germaphobes and boys who think recycling is a joke, all go out of their way, to pick up every piece of trash they saw.

Now that is leadership. The man who gave that speech didn't get those friends to pick up trash. My little sister did. Her subtle example was dedicated, constant, and humble, and it helped clean up our little corner of Provo. She never did it as a "resume builder" or to get self-righteous attention as sometimes is the case with typical "leadership opportunities. She did it because that speaker asked her to, and she knew it would make her world a better place. It wasn't glamorous, it was gross. She got up close and personal with the discarded waste that was left behind. She wasn't mad at the litterers either, she never was begrudgingly annoyed as she picked up their irresponsibility. She just saw what she could do and did it.

She's a leader, and it still makes me smile to think back to those conversations where she knew that she wasn't like zane.

Then she left before she saw  
she was.





**SERENE**

*YEN-CHEN LIAO*

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

*Photography*

A great leader helps others to achieve their goals, to reach their dreams, and to go places they want to be in the future. Leadership requires one to have a beautiful, serene vision in mind all the time and do not get lost on the way.

# THE POTENTIAL FACTOR

SIERRA RUSSON

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

**I**n the vast expanse of the universe, here we stand, as small objects that make up part of the harmony within the symphony of time. Within this universe, we as humans are so small, and yet our impact can be so immense. This is the significance one person can make.

What is a leader, and who can be one? Considering this, one can say anyone has the potential to be a leader, and everyone will have at least one leader moment in their life to act. One thing stands apart from those who are willing to take the plunge and those who stand on the sidelines—this one thing is the ability of a person to see the bigger picture.

When we focus on just a piece of what we do and who we are, it doesn't seem to make much of an impact, like making our bed, brushing our teeth, going to work and school, or walking down the street. For this is one reason I have such a difficult time writing a journal because the impact I make seems so microscopic compared to the philosophers, astronauts, and doctors of the world. How could I possibly be a leader?

It's simple, I stopped seeing the small things I do as insignificant and began to see how I can impact the world using my voice, education, and desire to make the world a better place. Instead of choosing to see life as small things that lead to nothing, we choose to make the places we live in better and help others to be able to live better lives. You begin to look outwards and realize the influence we can make for generations to come. You have that ability within you; we all do. It is our choice to use it, develop it, and grow from it.

**You, as a leader, are a remarkable piece of the puzzle we all make up.**

## DOUBLE MIRRORS

*ELIZA JENSEN*

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

I looked in the mirror and saw a girl  
Sighing sadly, I felt discouraged  
Her lips parted and sighed just as I had  
Dark hair drooped like a dying flower  
Her eyes were gray, misty, and doleful  
I saw tears slip down her pretty face  
And her cheeks became puffy  
Her eyes were rimmed with redness  
I stared at her, she stared right back  
And when I placed my palm to my face  
She wiped away the tears  
I decided to become stronger than her  
Aiming to be the fervent person one looked up to  
And she began to reflect my determination

I looked in the mirror and saw a girl  
I smiled and waved heartily  
She returned the action  
Her wavy hair caressed an exquisite face  
The color of a bright golden sun  
Her dimple, a crescent near her rosebud mouth  
A cozy blanket draped across her shoulders  
Almost falling, gliding down to the floor  
Her feet were crossed at the ankles  
Her back was straight like an immovable tree  
But emulated a soft warm glow inside of her  
She looked confident and capable of anything  
Transformed into a new being  
And at last, I was ready to conquer the world



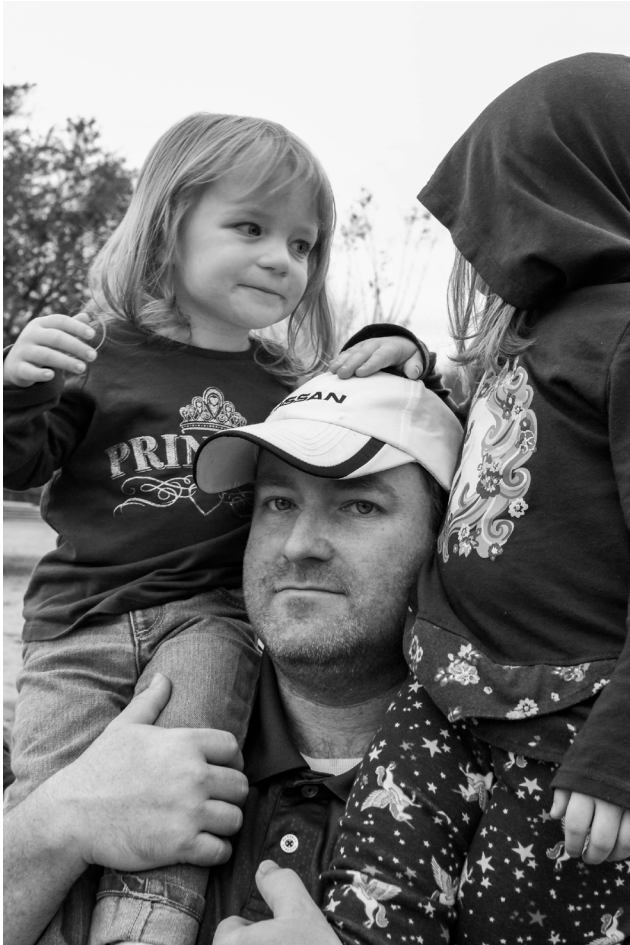
## **GATHERING**

*SOPHIE KING*

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

*Watercolor on watercolor paper woven together*

This painting portrays a mother who is the greatest kind of leader, gathering her children. A mother is a teacher, a lover, and a leader who shows her children the way through life.



## **FATHERHOOD**

*CULLEN WATKINS*

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

*Photography*

For many of us, the first leaders we have in our whole lives are our parents. Leadership often takes patience and sacrifice as well as love. The same is true for parenthood. Parents carry us when we are too tired to carry on and they give up personal comforts for the sake of their children, just as the man in this image carries his young daughter. Parenthood is perhaps the most fundamental form of leadership.

## CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS AND ARTISTS

**MADISON BARNETT** is a student at Utah Valley University, studying Sociology. She plans to graduate with her bachelor's degree in the fall of 2023. Madison is passionate about the study of people and families. She plans to use her degree from UVU to help better her community.

**PRESLEY A. BRADY** is a sophomore at Utah Valley University. She primarily works in both sculpture and digital art forms. She is currently focusing on the emotional and psychological nature of fiction-based storytelling.

**TYLER CHRISTENSEN** is attending Utah Valley University to earn his BFA in sculpture. He has worked as an advertising executive in Denver, CO for the past 25 years and is now following his true passion of art. He and his wife Julie are the parents of 4 children and 5 grandchildren.

**SHANTELE ERSKINE** has published with *TechBuzz News* and picked up by *Utah Business Magazine*. She is currently studying Public Relations at Utah Valley University and expects to graduate in early 2024. She hopes to build a career in event planning after graduation.

**AVA GONZALEZ**, inclusion chair for UVUSA and currently working towards her BS in psychology. She prides herself on humanitarian and social justice advocacy. She runs a Nonprofit ENACT (Eliminating the Normalization of Abuse as Cultural Together) that offers free therapeutic and legal support to young women in marginalized communities.

**JAMAL HALLEY** is a legislative staffer in the United States Senate based in Arlington, Virginia. Jamal graduated from Furman University in 2020 with a double major in French and Politics and International Affairs.

**CHRISTIAN HEFTEL** has been published previously in the JSL and in venues such as *Intergalactic Medicine Show*, *Dialogue*, and *Essais*. He currently works in UVU's office of Accessibility Services.

**ERICA HARDIN** is a 21-year-old UVU student who has been going to school for 16 years straight. For most of my education I have had little

to no purpose for schooling, and have had that purposeless as a physical barrier to success. Despite this obstacle, I had to push through all of my negative emotions in order to continue forward, and eventually find my passion for sculpture.

**ETHAN HOENIG** is a graduate of Southern Utah University. He is an artist and has been published in works such as the *Kolob Canyon Review*. He uses spray paint stencils and likes to highlight societal problems in his artwork.

**NATHAN JACKSON** is a senior studying Applied Communications with a minor in Constitutional Studies at UVU. He is the sports editor of the *UVU Review* and plans on attending law school post-graduation.

**ELIZA JENSEN** fell in love with poetry in her high school English class. She really loves to sing and dance and has a deep love for languages and cultures.

**JUHEE KIM, PH.D., ED.D.** is a Clinical Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership at the University of Idaho. Her areas of focus include Student Leadership Development, Co-curricular & Extracurricular activity, Social Change, International Volunteering & Exchange, and Community Partnership.

**SOPHIE KING** is a BFA UVU painting and drawing student. When she doesn't have to think about anything she chooses to think about painting.

**RACHEAL LESUEUR** is currently working towards a BFA in printmaking and is expecting to graduate in 2024. Her works focus on many topics such as mental health, religion, and nature.

**YEN-CHEN LIAO** is an international student from Taiwan, currently studying in the Utah Valley University Art Department. He is preparing himself to be a professional artist one day.

**MEI-YAN LU, PH.D.** is a professor of higher education at San Jose State University in California. She is also the former Associate Dean for Faculty



Affairs in the Lurie College of Education at SJSU.

**BRAYDEN McLAUGHLIN** is a student in the Emergency Management program at UVU. He will pursue a masters degree in public health or healthcare administration following graduation.

**MICHAEL T. MILLER, ED.D.** is a professor of higher education at the University of Arkansas. He has previously been a faculty member and administrator at San Jose State University and the University of Alabama.

**MAILYN MILLWARD** is from American Fork Utah. She is currently finishing her BFA with an emphasis on sculpture and ceramics.

**HANNAH OLIVIA** is a queer, neurodivergent sculptor and installation artist. Her work has appeared in the Urban Arts Gallery, the Woodbury Art Museum, and the Queer Spectra Arts Festival. Recently, she was recognized by the Scholarly and Creative Undergraduate Learning Partnership Team (SCULPT) for her research into the LGBTQIA+ Interfaith community of Utah. When she's not making art, Hannah can be found collecting bones in the overgrown, abandoned lots of Utah and talking too much about the plots of video games.

**JANA PARKIN** is a professional artist specializing in watercolor. She exhibits frequently and has won numerous awards for her paintings. She accepts commissions from private collectors and interior designers, and is currently working on two for a collector in the UK. Jana loves imparting her passion for the medium of watercolor with students and has taught watermedia courses at Utah Valley University since 2007. She also teaches private lessons and classes in her Provo home/studio and in Salt Lake City, and workshops throughout the west.

**ETHAN POWERS** was born and raised in Maine. He has always had a passion for writing, including fiction, poetry, and nonfiction.

**CHLOE RAWLINGS** graduated from Furman University in 2021 with a major in Politics and International Affairs and Japanese Studies. While living and teaching in Seoul, they have rediscovered a passion for teaching and research and hopes to pursue a career as a reference librarian

after returning to the United States.

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# Journal Description and Call for Papers

*The Journal of Student Leadership* is a double-blind, peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary, academic journal that addresses ideas, theories, and issues of leadership. The journal's two purposes are to:

1. Contribute to the scholarship and discussion on leadership.
2. Provide an engaging outlet for research, writing, editing, and publishing.

We welcome papers and essays on leadership topics from all relevant disciplines, including business, education, law, policy, social sciences, arts, humanities, and technology.

We invite perspectives on leadership from every sector of the academic community. Academicians and students are equally welcome to submit their papers to the editors of the journal for feedback and consideration for publication.

## **What Topics Are Most Interesting?**

Authors often wonder what topics would be of greatest interest to the editorial board or readers. The following topics are just a subset of appropriate areas that could be addressed: ethics in leadership, the need for diverse leaders, why and how people lead, the importance of communication in successful leadership, how to maintain integrity in leadership, what practices the best leaders implement, examples of excellent leaders and their contributions, and a broad range of other topics that relate to leadership. Likelihood of publication exists for those submissions that are able to incorporate current theories of leadership in their paper.

## **How to Submit an Article or Essay**

For the latest on submission criteria, consult the following:

Email the editors at [JOSL@uvu.edu](mailto:JOSL@uvu.edu)

[uvu.edu/slss/jsl/](http://uvu.edu/slss/jsl/)

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