

ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA'S IMPACT ON LEADERSHIP IDENTITY
DEVELOPMENT

A Thesis

by

RACHEL EDDOWES

Submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Chair of Committee, Jennifer Strong
Committee Members, Kim Dooley
Srividya Ramasubramanian

Head of Department, Clare Gill

May 2019

Major Subject: Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication

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ABSTRACT

How does media shape our leadership identities? How are leaders portrayed in television and film, and how does this influence our self-development? There is research on media effects and how we are shaped by the media we consume, but there is a gap pertaining to how our leadership identity is shaped by the media we consume. The purpose of this research was to explore the gap in both leadership literature and media effects literature in regards to how entertainment media shapes leadership identity development. This study answered the following research questions: *What is the impact of entertainment media and fictional characters on the Developing Self factor of the Leadership Identity Development Model? What is the impact of entertainment media and fictional characters on the Developmental Influences factor of the Leadership Identity Development Model?* Fourteen students, seven freshmen and seven seniors, pursuing an undergraduate leadership degree at Texas A&M University were recruited and interviewed for the study. A qualitative study using a constructivist approach and semi-structured interviews were used. Open coding using a deductive lens and constant comparative method was used for data analysis. Themes were categorized as they fit under the Developing Self and Developmental Influence factors of the Leadership Identity Development Model. Participants discussed the various ways entertainment media influenced their behavior and leadership development.

The participants in this study showed how entertainment media and fictional characters could impact the leadership identity development process. Participants shared

how they grew in self awareness, were motivated into leadership, and developed interpersonal skills from watching characters on the screen. Participants even shared how they modeled themselves and their leadership style after various fictional characters. The seniors in this study were able to identify and articulate different leadership concepts they had seen in the television they watched for entertainment, demonstrating critical media literacy, and shared how the use of public pedagogy aided them in the development of this skill. As a result of this study, critical leadership media literacy is being introduced as a new leadership skillset, defined as the ability to analyze and interpret leadership models, theories, and philosophies in entertainment media. This research provides suggestions for future researchers to explore and eventually measure entertainment media's impact on leadership identity.

DEDICATION

To my fictional and real heroes, for inspiring me along this journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could not have made it through the completion of this thesis or graduate school experience without the help and support from many people in my life.

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Jen, and my committee members, Dr. Dooley and Dr. Srivi, for their guidance and support throughout the course of this research. Thank you especially to Dr. Jen for accepting the call from a complete stranger and enthusiastically agreeing to be my IMA. Thank you for taking me under your wing as your graduate student and teaching assistant. Thank you for inspiring me with your edutainment philosophies and for encouraging and supporting me as I pursued my research interests. Thank you for your patience and bright smile.

Thanks also to my Aggie Scouting friends for introducing me to Texas A&M and for your welcome and support these past two and a half years in Aggieland. Thank you Gerry, for all your love and support these past few years. Long distance has been hard but I could not have made it this far without you. Thanks also go to my friends and colleagues and the ALEC department faculty and staff for making my time at Texas A&M University a great experience.

Finally, thank you to my Grannie-Annie for your encouragement and support throughout this entire grad school experience. Thank you for making my education a priority, and for setting me up for future success.

CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

Contributors

This work was supervised by a thesis committee consisting of Professor Jen Strong and Professor Kim Dooley of the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication and Professor Srividya Ramasubramanian of the Department of Communication.

All other work conducted for the thesis was completed by the student independently.

Funding Sources

Graduate study was supported by a Graduate Teaching Assistantship from Texas A&M University.

No other funding was provided for the completion of this thesis.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“When I published my book, *Intelligent Disobedience*, my friend turned to me and called it my Captain Kirk Book. When I asked him why, he said I was always breaking the rules, so it made sense I would write about how to break the rules. I reflected and realized Star Trek was my favorite show growing up.”

--Bob McGannon, Author of *Intelligent Disobedience: The Difference Between Good and Great Leaders*, at a roundtable discussion on entertainment media’s effect on leadership at the 20th International Leadership Association’s Annual Global Conference

Background

How do our favorite shows and fictional characters influence our development as leaders? How might Gibbs from *NCIS* or Phoebe from *Friends* model leadership to viewers? What can viewers learn about leadership from watching *SpongeBob SquarePants* or *Game of Thrones*? Ninety-nine percent of homes in the United States have a television, and 70% of children aged 8-18 have a television in their bedroom (Kirsh, 2010). It comes to no surprise this age range consumes more than four hours of televised media per day (Kirsh, 2010). Children experience high emersion of media during their formative years (Kirsh, 2010), which shapes their values, beliefs, ideologies, perspectives and understanding of the world (Gerbner et al., 2002). Given all these

messages children consume, it begs the question what types of ideals, worldviews and behaviors they will exhibit as young adults, and later, adults.

Media, particularly television, has repeatedly shown to play an influencing role in how children develop their understanding of the world (Kirsh, 2010). The consumption of media shapes audience's worldviews and conveys what it means to be of a certain race, gender, class, sexuality, or any other aspect of identity. These views tend to be the master narratives of identity and convey what is collectively considered normative and dominant (Sandlin, Wright, & Clark, 2013). Television is not just a form of entertainment, but "has become the primary common source of socialization and everyday information" where viewers, especially children, can learn about "gender, minority and age-role stereotypes, health, science, the family, educational achievement and aspirations, politics, religion, [and] the environment" among other topics (Gerbner et al., 2002, p. 44-46). It is possible audiences may also learn about leadership through the television shows they watch, however a study has yet to be conducted to explicitly explore the likelihood entertainment media (film, television, books, comics, video games, etc.) plays a role in shaping or influencing one's leadership identity development.

In the early 2000s, researchers found young adults possessed constraining beliefs about leadership, leading to self-disempowerment (Astin & Astin, 2000). In trying to figure out what types of constraining beliefs college students had about leadership, Shertzer and Schuh (2004) found students understood leadership to be a possession by the individual, they saw it as a position rather than emergent, and saw leaders as distinguished by their qualities, skills and internal motivations (such as passion or

control). Students with constraining ideas of leadership did not believe they were capable of leadership, lacked confidence in themselves, and felt they lacked opportunities to be trained or mentored in leadership (Shertzer & Schuh, 2004). There is a significant gap in the literature which examines where these constraining beliefs originate or how this affects one's leadership identity development.

Social Learning Theory postulates children and adolescents learn through the observation of the behaviors of others (Bandura, 1973), and Decker (1986) explains this theory can be used intentionally to develop leaders: by modeling leadership behavior, others can learn what it means and what it takes to be a leader. Preda and Stan (2016) found adults do look to fictional characters as role models for leadership. However, as Harms and Spain (2016) point out, a study has yet to be conducted to explicitly explore the possibility entertainment media (referred to in this study as media consumed for entertainment, to include film, television, books, comics, video games, and similar platforms along these lines) plays a role in shaping or influencing a person's leadership identity development. Harms and Spain (2016) did evaluate the children's television show *Transformers* for its portrayals of leadership and followership, yet they did not focus on how these portrayals actually influence the audience.

There are many facets to leadership development, and no one influencer can account for everything a person knows about leadership. Brungardt (1996) explains:

Studying the multiple factors that influence the development and performance of leaders is an enormous job. As we investigate the various stages of development in the life cycle, almost every activity or experience could be credited to having

some role to play in the development of our personal leadership behavior and style. In addition, because much of leadership development is continuous and often not deliberate, characteristics critical to this growth are hard to identify and measure. (p. 84)

As children and youth grow into young adulthood they become more likely to become exposed to leadership trainings shape their understanding of what leadership, how it works, and their leadership ability and style. However, this does not remove entertainment media as an influencing factor.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to explore the gap in both leadership literature and media effects literature in regards to how entertainment media shapes leadership identity development. This was an exploratory qualitative study in order to understand what role do entertainment media play in influencing an individual's leadership identity development. This study may serve as the launching point for a new area of study, which seeks to understand how entertainment media constructs perceptions of leadership in general, as well as perceptions of personal leadership capabilities.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ 1: What is the impact of entertainment media and fictional characters on the Developing Self factor of the Leadership Identity Development Model?

RQ2: What is the impact of entertainment media and fictional characters on the Developmental Influences factor of the Leadership Identity Development Model?

In order to answer these research questions, a qualitative study was conducted, with this thesis presenting the literature, methodology, findings and implications. This thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 consists of the literature review which highlights leadership and media effects literature, as well as the gap in the literature regarding entertainment media's impact on leadership and leadership identity development. Chapter 3 outlines the qualitative methods used in this research study. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the qualitative study, with selected quotes from participants. And finally, Chapter 5 discusses the implications of these findings, and what they mean for leadership practitioners, educators, and researchers.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Leadership Identity Development Model

When people grow and develop in any area, it usually happens is a process. Be it knowledge, skill or ability, it takes time to learn and evolve, and especially so when it comes to leadership. With there being a gap in the literature when it came to how leadership develop, Komives et al (2005) developed a qualitative study to “understand the process a person experiences in creating a leadership identity” (p. 594).

Leadership identity was found to be a six-staged process by Komives et al. (2005) through their qualitative, grounded theory study. By interviewing thirteen students, Komives et al. (2005) developed a conceptual theory, called the Leadership Identity Development (LID), which illustrates how individuals develop their identity as a leader as they develop their understanding of what leadership is. The theory outlines many factors that influence a person’s leadership identity development, to include Developmental Influences, Developing Self, Group Influences, Changing View of Self With Others, and Broadening View of Leadership (see *Figure 1*).

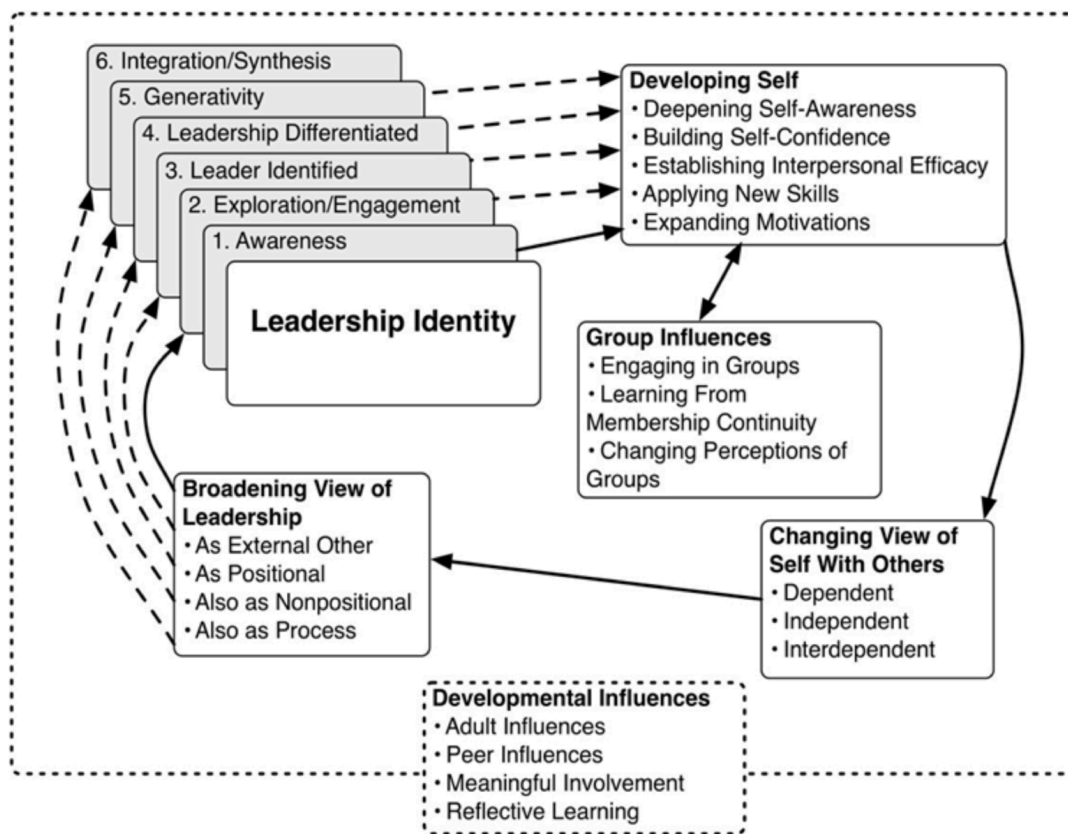


Figure 1 Leadership Identity Development Model.
Figure 1 presented in this chapter is reprinted with permission from “Developing a leadership identity: A grounded theory” by Komives, S. R., Owen, J. E., Longerbeam, S. D., Mainella, F. C., & Osteen, L. 2005. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46(6), 593-611, Copyright 2005 by College Student Educators International.

Developmental Influences were found to be those external influences which “fostered the development of a leadership identity” over time, and included Adult Influences, Peer Influences, Meaningful Involvement, and Reflective Learning (Komives et al., 2005, p. 596). As an individual grows and learns about leadership, they experience “dimensions of personal growth that changed throughout the development of leadership identity,” referred to as Developing Self in the theory, and encompasses Deepening Self-

Awareness, Building Self-Confidence, Establishing Interpersonal Efficacy, Applying New Skills, and Expanding Motivations (Komives, et al., 2005, p. 599). These Developing Self components interact with Group Influences, which “includes the properties of Engaging in Groups, Learning from Membership Continuity, and Changing Perceptions of Groups” (Komives et al, 2005, p. 602). Over time, as an individual develops themselves and are influenced by groups, they experience a Changing View of Self with Others. This component is described as “how participants changed their view of themselves in relation to other people,” and consisted of three stages: dependent on others, independent of others, and then to interdependent with others (Komives et al., 2005, p. 604). This lead to a Broadening View of Leadership when it came to one’s personal definition of leadership (Komives et al, 2005).

As a person experienced these different influences and underwent these changes, they progressed through six stages of leadership identity development. The first stage is Awareness, when in one’s early years they become aware of leadership and how it exists independent of self. The second stage is Exploration/Engagement, and occurs when one takes on responsibilities in a positional role. Next comes the third stage, Leader Identified, and happens when people perceives groups to be “comprised of leaders and followers” and where “leaders did leadership” (Komives et al., 2005, p. 606). From there a person progresses to the fourth stage, Leadership Differentiated, where one realizes leadership is more than a position, it is instead a process where anyone can be a leader. For stages three and four, people experience two phases in each: emerging, where individuals practice the identity, and then immersion, where individuals take ownership

of the identity. The fifth stage is Generativity, where individuals commit to a larger purpose and groups. Finally, the last stage is Integration/Synthesis, where individuals experience daily, active engagement with leadership as part of their self identity. Overall, individuals progress “from a hierarchical, leader-centric view” of leadership “to one that embraced leadership as a collaborative, relational process” (Komives et al., 2005, p. 609).

After the creation of the Leadership Identity Development theory from the grounded study, more research was conducted to expand upon the seminal work to create the Leadership Identity Development Model. This model expanded upon the initial categories of the theory, integrated them into each of the six stages, and offered suggestion on theory application. This model offered leadership educators the ability to intentionally help students progress through each of the stages (Komives et al., 2006). Later an article was published which outlined how Leadership Identity Development could be integrated into student organizations, classes and curriculum, to include challenges which may arise in the application of it (Komives et al., 2009).

Interestingly, the only place in the theory and model where media is touched upon is under Developmental Influences, specifically Adult Influences. When discussing how role models help individuals develop as leaders, one participant mentions how role models do not have to be real people, and could be heroes like Superman, Batman, and *Star Trek* characters (Komives et al., 2005).

The Leadership Identity Development theory and model was developed from a purposive sample of thirteen students at a single university, each of which had a

relational leadership approach (Komives et al., 2005). Due to the limitations of sample size and selection, it could mean there is more to leadership identity development than what the researchers were able to learn from their analysis of the interviews. For instance, the field of media effects research focuses on how media influences the behavior and identity development of viewers. It is possible that entertainment media serves as an external influences to the Leadership Identity Development Model, and can be measured by focusing on the Developmental Influences and Developing Self factors of the theory.

How We Learn and Develop

Bandura's Social Learning and Social Cognitive Theories

Anything can be learned through the experiences one has themselves, as well as through vicarious experience, where they observe the behaviors and consequences of others (Bandura, 1986). Desirable and undesirable behavior can be learned from observing others (Luthans & Kreitner, 1975); much like how younger siblings watch their older siblings, there exists the possibility children and adolescents can learn desirable and undesirable leadership characteristics from the fictional characters they watch through entertainment media. Social Learning Theory postulates children and adolescents learn through the observation of the behaviors of others (Bandura, 1973), and children will model behaviors based on what they observe (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961). In addition, Social Cognitive Theory explains people learn by watching and imitating others (Bandura, 1978; 1989). According to Bandura (2001),

people gain understanding of causal relationships and expand their knowledge by operating symbolically on the wealth of information derived from personal and vicarious experiences. They generate solutions to problems, evaluate their likely outcomes, and pick suitable options without having to go through a laborious behavioral search. Through the medium of symbols people can communicate with others at any distance in time and space. (p. 267)

Bandura (2001) then specifies “a vast amount of information about human values, styles of thinking, and behavior patterns is gained from the extensive modeling in the symbolic environment of the mass media” given “observers can transcend the bounds of their immediate environment” (p. 271). Media can create and alter personal attributes of individuals (Bandura, 1986; Williams, 1986).

To help differentiate between Bandura’s two theories, Tu, Lu, and Yu (2017) explain: “distinct from social learning theory, social cognitive theory focuses on the cognitive process, wherein people understand and react to social environment, and underscores the self-regulation and self-reflection people employ to align their behaviors with internal standards” (p. 232).

Bandura’s Theories and Leadership

Social Learning Theory has been applied to leadership (Decker, 1986), as well as Social Cognitive Theory. Banks and Mhunpiew (2012) argue for leadership to be learned through social observation (Social Cognitive Theory), the leadership behavior must be demonstrated authentically. McCormick (2001) suggest leadership trainings “can use social cognitive theory to guide the design of interactions” in order to “improve the

leadership capabilities of their trainees” (p. 31). Leaders who behave ethically have been found to relate to follower moral awareness, moral identity and task satisfaction since followers “will internalize the ethical codes” (Tu, Lu & Yue, 2017, p. 241). Tu, Lu and Yue’s (2017) study highlights the importance for daily ethical leadership and role modeling for followers.

Bandura’s Theories and Media

Some of these influences and effects have been duly noted. Gender roles are continually being reinforced to viewers through the characterization and portrayals of televised characters, causing children to adopt gender normative identities and behaviors (Witt, 2000). These roles can be altered through different portrayals of gender through media (Clément-Guillot & Fontayne, 2011). However, gender normative narratives tend to prevail, especially in children and adolescent television programs. There tend to be fewer portrayals of female characters than male characters in television--usually twice as many male characters than female characters. Female characters are defined by their attractiveness and are noticeably concerned about their appearance (Gerding & Signorielli, 2014) while male characters are more likely to display aggression, bravery, and leadership (Thompson & Zerbino, 1995). With more male characters being displayed in leadership roles and being characterized as assertive and decisive, it is possible young viewers internalize these portrayals as they come to understand what leadership is and to what extent they are capable of being a leader (Witt, 2000).

Bandura' Theories, Media, and Leadership

There has been a little research on how entertainment media portrays leaders. Research has found popular films portray and reinforce the idea leaders are solitary individuals who do not collaborate with their team, and governmental and political figures focus on personal gain over collective achievement and service to others (Cronin & Genovese, 2012). Davies et al. (2005) found when exposed to commercials with stereotypical portrayals of women, women reported lower aspirations for leadership positions and preferred follower positions. This reinforces the idea entertainment media may be shaping constraining beliefs about leadership. However, media can do the opposite, as Simon and Hoyt (2012) found when exposed to commercials with counter stereotypical portrayals of women, women had a more positive outlook on the leadership domain.

The observability of behavior change or influence from entertainment media can either be immediate or cumulative over time (Hogan, 2001). As Duduciuc (2014) puts it, “the more people watch television, and therefore are more exposed to this distorted version of reality the more they function in real life with the cognitions and perceptions provided by television. Perceptions of reality, taken from the media, may influence attitudes (e.g. on violence, alcohol, professional success) and behaviors (e.g., aggression, purchasing behavior, etc.)” (p. 67). Since “communications media promote changes by informing, enabling, motivating and guiding” viewers (Bandura, 2001, p. 285), there exists the possibility people’s leadership identity development is shaped by the media they consume, even if this development is not readily distinguishable.

Role Models

People tend to observe those around them for guidance on appropriate and ethical behavior (Kohlberg, 1969; Treviño, 1986). People will pay attention to the consequences others experience, will evaluate these consequences as either positive (rewards) or negative (punishment) and will adjust their own behavior accordingly (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (2001) explains “models not only exemplify and legitimate new practices, they also serve as advocates for them by directly encouraging others to adopt them” (p. 285). Role models tend to be characterized by having power and status, but also by showing care and concern for their followers, as well as treating followers fairly; these characteristics gain the attention of their followers, leading followers to model themselves after these role models (Bandura, 1986).

There are a few elements to modeling which influence how likely or to what extent an observer will adopt the behavior of said model. The more vivid the behavior being modeled is, the more likely others will adopt it (Bandura, 1969; Goldstein & Sorcher, 1974). Learning from role models is not entirely passive. To learn from a role model, one must focus on the behaviors of said role model (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Observers will identify more with role models who struggle and overcome a challenge rather than a role model who experiences little challenge (Manz & Sims, 1981). There are also negative role models, who demonstrate attitudes and behaviors observers seek to avoid (Gibson, 2004), and provide examples for others of how not to behave or act (Bandura, 1986).

There has been a substantial amount of research into how a leader models ethical behavior and how this influences their followers. People will learn appropriate ethical behavior by observing their leader's actions and decisions. Ethical leadership comes from "demonstrating integrity and high ethical standards" as well as "considerate and fair treatment" of followers" (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005, p. 130). Ethical leaders model ethical behavior to their followers by being caring, honest, fair and by setting high ethical standards and holding followers accountable (Treviño et al., 2000).

Fictional Role Models

Research on leader prototypes has focused on real leaders and real people, either past or present (Guillén, Mayo, & Korotov, 2015), but not on the possibility of fictional characters filling this role. Fictional characters have come to influence viewers and the collective psyche, and hold what is called a 'postmodern presence' in viewer's lives as they construct their identities (Tisdell & Thompson, 2007). Women have been found to actively model their appearance after media characters (Beneke, 1997), and both men and women will model themselves after celebrities in their appearance, activities, and attitudes (Caughey, 1984). Fictional characters have shown to be regarded as role models to audiences (Ramasubramanian, & Kornfield, 2012) and children have been shown to identify with same-gendered characters (Baker & Raney, 2007). The direct effects of these fictional portrayals has not yet been measured to understand how they affect viewer's leadership identity. However, given leadership development is tied to identity development (Ibarra, Snook, & Ramo, 2010), and comparison to others plays a role in a person's leadership self concept (Greenberg, Ashton-James & Ashkanasy,

2007), it is conceivable fictional characters can serve as a model for children and adolescence to model their understanding of leadership and their own leadership potential.

Parasocial Interactions and Parasocial Relationships

Parasocial Interactions and Parasocial Relationships are ways in which audience members interact with and are influenced by characters portrayed in the media. A parasocial interaction takes place during a single viewing, such as watching a single television episode of a specific show. A parasocial relationship develops when the viewer continuously watches the same television show over multiple episodes. Parasocial interaction is one sided, as the character portrayed in the media cannot directly interact with the viewer (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Children form parasocial relationships with media figures starting around the age of seven (Hoffner, 1996). Viewers will change themselves to emulate aspects of characters when they experience a parasocial interaction, and will do so more with characters they like compared to characters they dislike (Tian & Hoffner, 2010). Tian and Hoffner (2010) explain

although defined as an one-sided, imaginary relationship, parasocial interaction can be very influential, not only by increasing audience members' enjoyment of media content while viewing but also by affecting their identities, lifestyles, attitudes, and behavior beyond the viewing situation. The effects could be positive or negative, depending on the nature of the character and the message.

(p. 266)

Conway and Rubin (1991) argue parasocial interactions play a larger role in motivating individuals to engage in entertainment media than the program content or story itself.

Similar to modeling, there are a few factors which contribute to the likelihood a parasocial interaction or relationship will manifest. When looking at the interpersonal and psychological predictors of parasocial interactions, Turner (1993) found people will develop parasocial interactions with characters who share a similarity in attitude, and people with a high self evaluation were more likely to develop parasocial interactions with comedians. Turner (1993) also found “the length of time persons had watched their favorite television personality had small, if any, relationships with their development of parasocial interaction with certain personality” (p. 450). When comparing Big Five personality factors to parasocial interaction, Ingram and Lockett (2017) found individuals who are high in neuroticism (a Big Five personality factor) were found to be more likely to turn to the *Harry Potter* books to fulfill their interpersonal need for guidance (i.e. seeing the *Harry Potter* characters as a source of advice). These researchers also found individuals who were agreeable were more likely to develop parasocial interactions with the *Harry Potter* characters, and individuals high in extraversion had the desire to have face-to-face interactions with the fictional book characters. Finally, Hu, Chen, Li and Yin (2017) found a viewer’s culture and ethnocentric perspectives play a role in which characters they develop parasocial interactions with, particularly with television shows from a different country and culture.

Both Tian and Hoffner (2010) as well as Stehr, Roessler, Leissner, and Schoenhardt (2015) point out fictional characters can have impacts on viewers through parasocial relationships, and Caughey (1984) has catalogued instances throughout history where people have developed relationships with fictional characters. For instance, viewers of British soap operas were found to develop parasocial interactions based on characters who reminded them of people they knew in real life, which helped them to understand their own lives (McQuail et al., 1972). Parasocial interactions have also been found to take place between viewers and cartoon characters (Hoffner, 1996).

Many fields have research parasocial interactions, to include communication, psychology and sociology (Giles, 2002; Hoffner, 1996; Klimmt, Hartmann, & Schramm, 2006; Rubin & Perse, 1987; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985; Sood & Rogers, 2000; Tsay & Bodine, 2012), but the field of leadership has yet to dive into this topic in regards to entertainment media.

Identification and Wishful Identification

Children will imitate their parents' behaviors and speech mannerisms as they grow and develop their identities (Cramer, 2001). Identification also takes place when children and audiences engage in entertainment media. Identification is defined as “a mechanism through which audience members experience reception and interpretation of the text from the inside, as if the events were happening to them,” and can lead to audiences denoting “feelings of affinity, friendship, similarity and liking” as well as imitation of media characters (Cohen, 2001, p. 245-249). A social psychology definition of identification revolves around the viewer temporarily altering their self-concept based

on perceived characteristics of the character being portrayed--in other words they temporarily become the character (Christoph, Dorotée, & Peter, 2009).

Viewers will readily identify with characters similar to them, particularly when it comes to age (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005; Tian & Hoffner, 2010). However there are gender differences between who identifies with which character. Men are more likely to identify with male characters “whom they perceived as successful, intelligent, and violent” while women were more likely to identify with “female characters whom they perceived as successful, intelligent, attractive, and admired” (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005, p. 342).

Identifying with a character can reinforce and attenuate existing attitudes, and identifying with a character who has similar attitudes can make these preexisting attitudes stronger (De Graff et al., 2012). This may imply those with leadership backgrounds may pay attention to leadership in entertainment media, and may have their understanding of what leadership is reinforced.

Wishful Identification is the desire to become like a character portrayed in the media (Hoffner, 1996; Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005). This happens with a viewer wishes to emulate characteristics of the character through their identity development, or imitate specific behaviors of the character (Giles, 2002). This is different than the social psychological definition of identification; instead of becoming or pretending you are the character, the viewer instead wants to change who they are to become more like the character. According to Horton and Wohl (1956), parasocial interaction relates to responding to a media character, as if they were a friend or real person, while

identification relates to becoming or identifying as the media character. Identification is a form of vicarious experience.

Since viewers will wishfully identify with characters who they regard as role models (Cohen, 2006; Feilitzen & Linne, 1975; Hoffner, 1996), what then, is the likelihood viewers would wish to emulate leadership aspects of characters they watch or read about? What is the likelihood viewers would want to emulate the characteristics of characters they see as leaders in the show or book?

Parasocial Interactions, Parasocial Relationships, and Wishful Identification

Giles and Long (1998) used qualitative methods to find the favorite characters of children between five and six years old were influenced by identification while the favorite characters of children between ten and eleven years old was influenced by parasocial interaction. Ramasubramanian and Kornfield (2012) developed a model to explain how U.S. youth connect with Japanese shōjo heroines. Audiences of Japanese shōjo shows would “progress from liking a heroine, to wishfully identifying with her, and then participating in a parasocial relationship” with the heroine (Ramasubramanian & Kornfield, 2012, p. 202). Particularly, audiences who saw the heroine as nice, good optimistic and encouraging were prompted to imitate her behavior.

Media Influence on Political Leadership

Media has been found to shape perceptions of political leaders (Aaldering, van der Meer, & Van der Brug, 2017; Bos, Van der Brug, De Vreese, 2011; Eberl, Wagner & Boomgaarden, 2017; Smith, 2016; Stevens & Karp, 2012). Since most of the population does not have the opportunity to meet political figures face to face, they

resolve to learn about the political figure and their political views from the media, and on the flip side, political leaders need the media to communicate to the masses about their platforms (Bos, Van der Brug, De Vreese, 2011). Exposure to opposing political views through the media has been shown to “reduce partisan antipathy toward candidates in the opposing party” (Smith, 2016, p. 78). Positive portrayals of political leaders in the media lead to positive perceptions, while negative portrayals lead to undermined support (Aaldering, van der Meer, & Van der Brug, 2017).

Parasocial interactions can be formed with a variety of media figures, not just characters in a show. Shartel Dunn (2018) found parasocial interactions can take place between viewers and political commentators. When a political commentator was trusted and well liked by viewers, viewers were more likely to adopt the views of the commentator, and when viewers experienced higher levels of parasocial interaction, they were more open to persuasive messaging. Shartel Dunn (2018) also found watching political commentators produced attitude change in viewers.

Stehr, Roessler, Leissner, and Schoenhardt (2015) created a theoretical model in order to understand “how media personalities exert influence on the attitudes of their audiences,” focusing specifically on opinion leaders (p. 983). Referred to as parasocial opinion leaders, the researchers detail a list of criterion need to take place for viewers to form parasocial interactions with opinion leaders, who consist of media personalities to include journalists, politicians, and comedians. These criterion include the media personality display personal characteristics, have high levels of experience and knowledge, and be socially active and highly integrated. These opinion leaders

communicate with viewers by reducing the complexity of political information, orient viewers towards certain values, norms and political attitudes, and arouse interest in their viewers (Stehr, Roessler, Leissner, & Schoenhardt, 2015).

Peters (1996) points out opinion leaders can be role models for their followers and Watt and van den Berg (1978) explored how media can influence people, to include how media influences opinion leaders who then influence others. However, the scope of this research will focus on how entertainment media and fictional characters shapes leadership identity.

Public Pedagogy

Media has been utilized as teaching tools in the formal educational classroom and in adult learning (Callahan & Rosser, 2007; Callahan, Whitener & Sandlin, 2007). Using popular culture artifacts as teaching tools has been found to be effective (Callahan & Rosser, 2007), and has been coined the term ‘public pedagogy’ by Henry A. Giroux (Giroux, 2000). When it comes to the relationship between popular culture and the classroom there are two main research perspectives. The first deals with using “popular culture as a tool to promote learning in the classroom” of a subject (like leadership) while the other deals with teaching critical media literacy in order for students to learn to “deconstruct the messages about race, class, gender, sexual orientation and other positionalities prevalent in mass media” (Wright & Sandlin, 2009, p. 125-126). While film and television clips have been intentionally used and analyzed to understand what leadership is and how it works, there has yet to be a research perspective explores what

existing underlying messages have been conveyed to audiences and absorbed into their identities regarding leadership.

In his research, Henry A. Giroux (2011) has found “power is mobilized through [media’s] use of images, sounds, gestures, talk and spectacles in order to create the possibilities for people to be educated about how to act, speak, think, feel desire and behave” and can be used to provide “alternative views of the world” (p. 687). He calls attention to the need to “understand, engage and make accountable” the “modes of learning” (as in, popular culture, film, television, etc.) shape the identities of youth (Giroux, 2011, p. 690). While film and television clips have been intentionally used and analyzed to understand and teach what leadership is and how it works, there has yet to be a research perspective explores what existing underlying messages have been conveyed to audiences and absorbed into their identities regarding leadership.

In their study, Williams and McClure (2010) compared three teaching methods, public pedagogy, traditional lecture, and experiential learning, to gauge which method lead to the most content retention. By far, the most knowledge retention was from “students who received their information via public pedagogy” (Williams & McClure, 2010, p. 94). Yet only thirty percent of educators reference entertainment and media frequently or very frequently in their classroom, and forty percent of educators will only use movie clips either occasionally or somewhat often (Tisdell & Thompson, 2007).

There are a few existing examples of where media has enhanced students’ understanding of leadership. By watching episodes from *The Office* and engaging in reflective journaling after each viewing, students were able to learn that leadership

should be professional, leadership effectiveness can vary, decision making is crucial to leadership, and leadership is contradictory (Wimmer, Meyers, Porter, & Shaw, 2012). In this case watching episodes from *The Office* were beneficial to students given that while they “have not yet had the opportunity to be the leader who must fire someone, share bad news, make difficult decisions, or resolve conflict, viewing the episodes in the courses did allow them to think critically about how they should behave in these types of situations” (Wimmer, Meyers, Porter, & Shaw, 2012, p. 65). Students were able to develop a better understanding of authentic leadership from analyzing the film *Iron Jawed Angels* (Scott & Weeks, 2015). Odom, Jarvis, Sandlin, and Peek (2013) advocate to leadership educators to utilize social media in the classroom in order to relate to their students, noting that students have a high comfort level with using Facebook as an option for instructors to communicate with students. Many researchers encourage educators to survey their students to better understand the media they consume (Güven & Keleşoğlu, 2014; Berk, 2009; Giroux, 1988).

Using film has been found to develop critical thinking and analytical skills in students; this being said it is not the films--or media--being used which develop these skills but rather in how instructors use them (Weber, 2001, Güven & Keleşoğlu, 2014). Simply showing video clips passively, such as showing a film adaption of a book in a literary class, does not count (Duncan-Andrade, 2004). Instructors must be intentional about the use of media they use in their teaching strategies. An instructor cannot simply show a video clip in order for students to grasp the concept, they must engage the students in conversation in order for observations to be shared; “each viewer can only

notice so much in one viewing of a show or film. Through shared conversations of a common text, new meanings emerge” (Tisdell & Thompson, 2007, p. 670).

Critical Media Literacy

Whenever an educator shows clips from a movie or TV show in class they are “facilitating the development of critical media literacy in some way” (Tisdell & Thompson, 2007, p. 670). Not only are they teaching students about a concept or aspect of their course curriculum, but they are teaching students to critically analyze film for the underlying messages that are presented through the medium. Take for instance, recognizing the different power bases in *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Upon showing the film students can learn about the five different power bases and see them in action as different characters utilize different bases (Williams, 2006), but in doing so students also learn to recognize power dynamics and struggles in any film they watch then onward. Critical media literacy is the ability to critically analyze entertainment media for the underlying messages being presented (Tisdell & Thompson, 2007).

Critical media literacy is important in both youth and adult education (Tisdell & Thompson, 2007). Giroux (2002) advocated that it is important to teach using public pedagogy, a term he used to refer to teaching critical media literacy, teaching students to analyze and be critical, to deconstruct and analyze media. Studying popular culture can help teach students to recognize, question and counter dominant power and privilege structures within society, developing an overall critical consciousness (Giroux & Simon, 1988; Robertson & Scheidler-Benns, 2016).

Tisdell and Thompson (2007) found that “many people engage entertainment media simply to unwind” and that even those who are more media savvy are “often not aware of the extent to which pop culture and entertainment” infiltrates their lives (p. 668). This is an indicator that critical media literacy is a valuable knowledge base to teach. Doing so goes hand in hand with using media as a teaching tool for other subjects.

Gap in the Research

While it is common for educators to use film and entertainment media as a teaching tool of leadership (Edwards et al., 2015), it is unusual for leadership to be studied through entertainment media. It has yet to be explored how representations of leadership are portrayed through entertainment media affect viewers (Islam, 2009). If children are exposed to certain portrayals of leadership in the entertainment media they consume, then as they grow and mature they could develop certain perceptions of what leadership is, what it means to be a leader, and whether they think they are capable of leadership. It is worth exploring what perceptions about leadership have been formed through entertainment media consumption to determine if entertainment media is a source of constraining beliefs about leaders and one’s leadership identity development.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Qualitative Methodology

According to Dooley (2007), “life does not come to us like a math problem, but more like a story. There is a setting or context, there are characters or respondents, and there is conflict or a problem to address. Storytelling is how we have traditionally learned and passed on knowledge from one generation to the next” (p. 34). People live, tell stories of their lives, and listen to the stories of others’ lives. Understanding these stories and how they relate to and influence one another is the basis of qualitative research.

This study followed a qualitative, constructivist approach. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain the overall purposes of qualitative research are to “achieve an understanding of how people make sense of out their lives, delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience” (p. 15). Conger (1998) draws attention to the need for qualitative research studies to be utilized in the field of leadership, and Bryant, Thompson and Finklea (2013) call for more qualitative media effects research, in order to “identify the circumstances, conditions, or variables account for media effects at all their various levels and forms and offer generalizations--perhaps very complex ones, even typologies of effects--will explain the complex phenomenon of mass media effects” (p. 50). The use of qualitative research methods in the field of leadership is rapidly expanding (Parry,

Mumford, Bower, & Watts, 2014). Since leadership largely focuses on social influence processes, quantitative research methods cannot measure the full scope of leadership (Parry, 1998). The reason for using qualitative methods to discover how entertainment media shapes perceptions of leadership stems from qualitative research being used to explore new phenomenon not yet studied before (Ospina, 2004).

Researchers use constructivism in order to understand the meaning of a phenomenon. The purpose of constructivist research is to understand; understand the meaning of a phenomenon, understand how people interpret and ascribe meaning to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Through this study, the researcher sought to understand participant's critical media literacy when it comes to how leadership is portrayed in the media.

The purpose behind this study was to understand what role entertainment media plays in influencing an individual's leadership identity. Measuring perceptions in relation to media effects is not new, as Bond and Calvert (2014) measured parent's perceptions of their children's parasocial relationships with their child's favorite television character. This study sought to understand what role entertainment media and fictional characters played in ones Leadership Identity Development.

Sampling and Data Collection

A purposive sampling method was used to recruit participants. This sampling method is "based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 96). In this case, the researcher sought undergraduate

college students due to Astin and Astin's (2000) and Shertzer and Shertzer and Schuh's (2004) research on young adults and student's constraining ideas on leadership.

Permission to interview students in the undergraduate leadership programs at Texas A&M University was requested and granted from the Associate Department Head for Graduate and Undergraduate Programs and the course's respective instructors. Students pursuing a degree in Leadership were recruited using a purposive sampling technique. From these classes, students who self identified as freshmen or seniors and who volunteered for participation were used in this study. Fourteen students were interviewed for the study; seven freshmen, and seven seniors. Each participant was compensated for their time with a ten-dollar gift certificate to Chick-Fil-A, the expenses coming from the researcher's personal funds. This study received approval from the International Review Board (IRB). See Appendix A for the outcome letter.

To protect the identities of participants, pseudonyms were randomly assigned to each student, and will be used throughout the rest of this thesis. Participants self selected their demographic responses to age, sex and race/ethnicity. See Table 1 for the participant demographics.

Pseudonym	Classification	Age	Sex	Race/Ethnicity
Aaron	Freshman	27	Male	White/Caucasian
Alejandro	Senior	22	Male	Hispanic/Latin
Bernard	Senior	39	Male	White/Caucasian
Cameron	Freshman	18	Male	White/Caucasian
Crysta	Freshman	19	Female	White/Caucasian
George	Freshman	19	Male	White/Caucasian
Hannah	Freshman	18	Female	White/Caucasian
Kelly	Senior	21	Female	White/Caucasian
Kyle	Senior	27	Male	European
Lee	Senior	23	Male	White/Caucasian
Lyra	Senior	21	Female	White/Caucasian
Mike	Freshman	18	Male	Hispanic
Roberto	Senior	39	Male	White/Hispanic
Sophia	Freshman	18	Female	White/Puerto Rican/Hispanic

Table 1 Participant Demographics

Semi-structured interviews were conducted. Questions were asked related to participants' favorite shows and fictional characters, and their reflections on entertainment media's effect on their behavior when it came to their Leadership Identity Development (See Appendix B). Questions were modeled around the Developing Self component of the Leadership Identity Development model.

Informed consent was gained from each participant prior to starting the interview, and participants were made aware they could skip any question and leave or terminate the interview at any time. Each interview went at the pace set by the participant, with interview durations ranging from eighteen minutes to an hour and thirty-four minutes. Four interviews were over an hour in length, eight interviews ranged from thirty minutes to one hour, and two were less than thirty minutes.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed through Trint. Trint is a website and mobile application which allows users to record interviews and voice memos. An artificial intelligence then transcribed the audio recording. An editable document was then created by Trint, allowing users to listen to the audio, follow along with the transcript, and make any necessary edits (Trint, n.d.).

The researcher used her personal funds to pay for the transcription service. The mobile application was used to record interviews through the researcher's phone, with interviews being uploaded to the website afterwards. Once all interviews were transcribed through Trint's artificial intelligence, the researcher spent time reviewing each recording and transcriptions, making edits and corrections. The transcriptions were only found to be around fifty percent accurate, requiring an extensive amount of time by the researcher to make edits and corrections.

Instrumentation

In quantitative and qualitative data, an instrument is used to collect data. Quantitative studies will rely on instruments such as surveys to collect, while qualitative research relies on the researcher as the instrument for collecting data. When the researcher serves as an active respondent during the research process, they serve as the instrument (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). This requires the researcher provide information on their positionality, which consists of their social identity and background "particularly with respect to the study purposes" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 63-64). For this reason, the researcher will provide information about herself:

I am an White, Heterosexual Female in her mid-twenties. I am an only child, and grew up a Military Brat, with my Dad serving as a Naval Officer. I was born in Newport, RI but my family moved to Coronado, CA shortly after I was born. We lived there for six years, during which my Mom kept me from watching television. When I was six we moved to El Puerto de Santa Maria, Spain, (near Rota) where we lived off of the military base, and instead of attending the American elementary school on base, I attended a private Spanish school for first and second grade. When I was eight, we moved to Formia, Italy (near Gaeta). I did attend the Gaeta American School for third grade and half of fourth grade.

While living in Spain and Italy we did not have television. We had a collection of movies, and my parents did allow me to select one movie per week to rent at the movie rental store on base. I mostly watched Disney and non-Disney animated movies, along with animated shorts on DVD sets such as Silly Symphonies, Merrie Melodies and Looney Tunes. As I grew older my Dad would introduce me to different movies he enjoyed, based on age appropriateness, such as the *Star Wars* films and *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. I also grew up as the *Harry Potter* movies were being released, and the new releases were always something I looked forward to as a fan of the books. Reading was a challenge for me during these years, so I did not read much on my own, but instead enjoyed my Dad reading to me before bedtime each night, such as the *Harry Potter* books and *The Hobbit*. My Mom was against me playing video games, but I was allowed a Game Boy Color and later a Game Boy Advance with some *Mario* and *Kirby* games. I also played a few Humongous Entertainment computer games such as the

Freddi Fish, Pajama Sam and *Put-Put* games, and played the first three *Harry Potter* computer games as they were released.

In my early years it was rare for me to watch a television or cartoon show, only catching a random episode here or there in military base waiting rooms, at an American's friend's house where they had a VHS or DVD collection of English episodes, or at a European friend's house or hotel where the language of the show or cartoon on the television reflected the country I was in. Overall, my consumption of television growing up was minimal, with other forms of entertainment media not being much more as well. Since we lived off-base and I was not able to play in the streets with neighbors, and most of my time was spent occupying myself with toys.

In late 2003, early 2004, half way through my fourth grade year, my Dad was diagnosed with ALS (commonly known as Lou Gehrig's Disease). This prompted us to immediately move from Italy to Virginia Beach, VA, where he could be near the military hospital. During the shuffle of this move we spent the first number of weeks at my Aunt and Uncle's house in Norfolk, where they had cable television. As my parents spent most of their time searching for a new car, searching for a house, learning about how ALS affects the patient and family, I was left to my own devices, and no longer had my Mom's restriction on the television. My eyes were opened to the world of Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, Disney Channel, and 4Kids TV. During the first few years of being back in the United States, I would spend hours and entire days in front of the television, switching between channels during commercial breaks. This habit carried on into my middle school years, and as I grew older I consumed other forms of

entertainment media, such as Nintendo DS games, young adult novels once I became a stronger reader, and anime as I became introduced to online video hosting websites.

During this time I was amazed by the marvelous adventures the characters in the shows I watched embarked on, but had constraining beliefs about my own abilities. To me, leaders were easily distinguished in superhero shows or shows that involved a team/group of characters. Usually the leader of the team was easy to pick out via their color coordination. If a character was a guy and he was dressed in red (Red Power Ranger, *Teen Titans*), and usually lead an all-guy or mixed gendered team, he was the leader. If a character was a girl she was dressed in pink (*Powerpuff Girls*, *Mew Mew Power/Tokyo Mew Mew*) and usually lead an all-girl team, she was the leader. These characters usually had the most power and responsibility, and usually had the most drama in their lives. I predominantly associated leadership with the Guy Who Wore Red, and as a result did not see how I could be a leader, since I was not a guy who wore red. As a result had constraining views of leadership.

It was not until my high school years I began to receive a more formal education on what leadership was. I became involved in the co-ed Venturing program of the Boy Scouts of America, and became involved in the different leadership training courses they offered. By serving on staff and teaching my peers what leadership was, and as I saw examples of peer-female leaders, I began to understand what leadership was, and that I had skills which were beneficial to leadership. These experiences inspired me to study Interpersonal Communication and Interpersonal Conflict Analysis and Resolution in college, and later to pursue a Masters in Leadership.

Since my initial conceptualization of what leadership was rebuked by formal leadership training, I began to wonder if fellow peers who were not receiving leadership training had a similar conceptualization of what leadership was based on the media they consumed. Since it did not occur to me to reflect on or challenge my understanding of what leadership was until experiencing leadership training, I figured that any conceptualizations of what leadership is based on media consumption would be subconscious and not cognitively thought about.

I understand the value of leadership training and how important it is for youth, young adults, everyone to receive training on what leadership is and how to be a leader. I think it is important to dispel any misconceptions of what leadership is. Anyone who has developed their own understanding of what leadership is indirectly without training will find themselves in the workplace where they are working in teams, working under a leader and/or may be put in leadership positions, and their understanding of what leadership is will shape their leadership behavior.

I think it is important to understand how entertainment media portrays leadership. Writers write a good story; their motivation is the storytelling, not educating the public on what leadership is, or how to best be a leader. Entertainment media is filled with examples of different leadership styles, how best to be a leader and what is ineffective as a leader, however it takes critical media literacy to be able to identify and reflect on the leadership messages one is receiving.

I appreciate the use of public pedagogy in leadership education. Most trainings and classes will use common films such as *Apollo 13*, *Remember the Titans*, *12 Angry*

Men, and *The Avengers*, however I think almost any film or television series can be used to teach/learn about leadership. Thus any film or television series can influence a person on what leadership is and their leadership development, even if unintentionally and subconsciously.

All of this led me to my thesis: I wanted to understand what role entertainment media played in one's conceptualization of leadership and their leadership development. I knew I was influenced growing up, and I knew it took extensive exposure to formal leadership education to counter this initial influence. I think this is an important topic to dive into and research, since there would be a number of implications for leadership educators. This is the lens in which I have operated under while working on my thesis.

Pilot Study

A pilot study for this thesis was conducted as part of a graduate qualitative class. A qualitative, constructivist grounded theory approach was used. Seven young adults from across the United States with extensive backgrounds in leadership development through the Boy Scouts of America were interviewed to understand what leadership meant to them, what their media consumption was, and how they perceived leadership to be portrayed in entertainment media. The purpose of the pilot study was to answer the question, *What role does entertainment media play in influencing an individual's perception of leadership?* The findings of this study were presented for class purposes, but not published or presented formally outside of class. The study was found to be too broad for the purpose of a thesis, and so the Leadership Identity Model was introduced

as a theoretical framework to guide the thesis research questions and new interview protocol.

Data Analysis and Coding Procedure

Data Analysis was conducted after all interviews took place and were transcribed. Deductive, open coding was used during the analysis process. Deductive Approach is used when research “is conducted with reference to hypotheses and ideas inferred” from theory (Bryman, 2016, p. 690). Open coding is used to “express data in the form of concepts” where codes are given to segments of data, and these codes are categorized by “grouping them around concepts and phenomena associated with the data which are particularly relevant to the research question” (Klenke, 2008, p. 93).

Interviews were analyzed using the Leadership Identity Development model as the framework, deductively looking at Developing Self elements. During data analysis, elements of Developmental Influences emerged.

A Constant Comparative Analysis was used. The purpose of using a Constant Comparative Analysis is to identify patterns in data. This form of analysis “involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 32). Data are grouped together into dimensions, then these dimensions are given a name and become a category (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, codes were given based on phrases, sentences or paragraphs from the participant’s transcripts. Three hundred codes with corresponding quotes were identified from the fourteen interviews. Codes and descriptive quotes were assembled into a spreadsheet, then were each identified with the component of the Developmental Influences or

Developing Self of the Leadership Identity Development Model they best related to for theoretical triangulation.

Issues of Rigor and Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers “to the degree of confidence that the findings of the study represent the respondents and their context” (Dooley, 2007, p .38). Dooley (2007) explains how “credibility is achieved by representing [the] multiple realities” of participants adequately, and can be done so by peer debriefing and member checking (p. 38). Trustworthiness for this thesis was obtained through member checking, reflective field notes, and peer debriefing. An audit trail was kept during the interview and analysis processes, and thick descriptions were provided for transferability.

Member checking takes place when the researcher solicits feedback on preliminary or emerging findings from participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This can take place by providing participants a summary of the interview, or the entire transcript, to the participant asking for “feedback, corrections, and clarifications (Dooley, 2007, p. 38). For this study, member checking took the form of emailing each participant a copy of their interview transcript (after the transcripts were edited by the researcher) to ask for feedback.

A researcher takes reflective field notes to share “what the researcher himself or herself is thinking about as he or she observes,” can include reflections on analysis, method, ethical dilemmas, the observer’s frame of mind, and points of clarification (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2015, p. 512). During this study the researcher kept

reflective notes during data analysis as items began to reoccur and possible themes emerged.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), peer reviewing involves “asking a colleague to scan some of the raw data and assess whether the findings are plausible, based on the data” (p. 249-250). Peer reviewing took place with the researcher and Committee Chair reviewing the interviews and selected quotes, and working on conclusions together.

Audit trails are kept in a qualitative study to describe “in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry” (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 252). During the data analysis process notes were kept on codes, emerging themes, patterns in the data, and connections between the data and leadership theories. To enable transferability of data, thick descriptions were provided in Chapter 5 of this thesis. Thick description refers to a “detailed description of the findings with adequate evidence presented in the form of quotes from participant interviews” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 257).

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

“I’ve always taken little aspects that I liked about certain people that I had viewed ... even if they were fictional.”

--Kyle, during his interview

During the open coding process of analyzing data, a deductive lens and a Constant Comparative Analysis were used. Interviews were analyzed using the Leadership Identity Development model as the framework, deductively looking at Developing Self elements. During data analysis, elements of Developmental Influences emerged. In this study, codes were given based on phrases, sentences or paragraphs from the participant’s transcripts. Three hundred codes with corresponding quotes were identified from the fourteen interviews.

Developing Self

Developing Self is one of the aspects of the Leadership Identity Development Model. As individuals progress through the six stages of leadership identity, they experience personal growth which change throughout their development. In Komives, et al.’s (2005) model, the Develop Self aspect interacts with Group Influence “to shape the student’s changing view of self with others” (p. 597). There are five components of Developing Self: Deepening Self-Awareness, Building Self-Confidence, Establishing Interpersonal Efficacy, Applying New Skills, and Expanding Motivations (Komives, et al., 2005).

Deepening Self-Awareness

The first component of Developing Self is Deepening Self-Awareness. This component is described as happening as individuals “label aspects of their personal identity on their own” (Komives et al., 2005, p. 599). These include race, sexual orientation, gender, personal values, and sense of personal integrity.

Self Awareness

Some participants discussed how upon reflection on the actions of characters within the shows they watched, they were able to realize aspects of themselves and others, and alter their behavior and interactions accordingly. George discussed his broadening sense of self awareness as a result of watching various Disney Channel shows. George, a freshmen, described watching the way the children in *Good Luck Charlie* acted around and treated their parents, and reflected how the children were “almost in control of their parents,” treating their parents “like idiots all the time.” George shared how he “was raised to have great respect for my parents ... and I looked up to hem so much and it was kind of difficult for media to ... try to change it that and make my parents seem like they weren’t important in my life.” George also shared how in other Disney Channel shows, he had observed how his own behavior mirrored that of the characters in how he treated his siblings and other people in his life. “I kind of thought,” George shared, “the people in the show are kind of acting like this too towards people in their lives and I’m acting like that. So maybe I shouldn’t be watching this show and I shouldn’t be acting like this and that was kind of like an aha moment for me.”

Alejandro shared how the mother in *The Goldbergs* helped him with his relationship with his mother. He shared how the mother in *The Goldbergs* “is this really over loving character. She loves the kids,” and how this prompted Alejandro to realize “it’s ok to let people come into your life even through you can’t really stand them or you don’t really have time for them because ... there’s gonna be a point where you move on or they go away and ... you’re going to miss those moments that you ... could have spent with them. So now I’m a little bit more lenient, especially with my mom.”

Building Self-Confidence

The second component of Developing Self is Building Self-Confidence. This component is described as happening when individuals feel special in families or to other adults, knowing that one matters, having a positive self-concept and sense of themselves, and confidence usually came from identifying ones strengths and weaknesses. As confidences grew, individuals would take more risks and become more involved, feeling empowered, and would later begin to identify as leaders (Komives et al., 2005).

Inspiration from Show / Movie

Many participants shared how they were inspired in some form from the shows or characters they watched. For instance, Lee shared how while his parents were the ones to motivate him to be a leader, he would feel more confident being about to be a leader “after seeing it portrayed on the television screen.”

Some talked about internalizing inspirational messages characters would say to one another on the screen. For example, Sophia shared how “in those moments in any TV show whenever they ... talk about self-confidence, and ... whenever there’s a

character that's struggling in that sort of sense. And ... one character is like, talking to them about ... you are worth more than that” and how she would relate these character interactions to her own life to help with her own confidence. Hannah also shared how “instantly your self-confidence is kind of boosted” whenever “a character says something where you’re like ‘that’s me.’” She elaborated that having these moments would help “people understand they're not the only one in the world that feels like this,” and went on to elaborate how Brooke in *One Tree Hill* mentioned being the footnote in someone else’s love story, and Hannah remembered watching that and “was like, ‘me!’” Another example of this taking place came from Crysta, who shared how the characters from the Muppets gave her confidence when she was younger to face the challenges she went through: “since a lot of ... everything I went through happened and I was ... a little bit younger, I didn’t really find a character that was going through the same thing that I was going through. But I found characters that were just remaining positive in hard times and so that sort of helped me ... I still went back to *The Muppets* ... their positivity and like Kermit, how I really liked him.”

Establishing Interpersonal Efficacy

The third component of Developing Self is Establishing Interpersonal Efficacy. Komives et al. (2005) describe this as happening when individuals have experiences which contribute to one’s efficacy in working with others. This includes learning to make new friends, learning to relate to others, communicate with others different than oneself, appreciating diversity, develop interpersonal skills such as delegation and trust, and learning to build, prioritize and maintain relationships.

Model after Character

Many participants described how they would model their behavior after a character, or would look to characters to provide an example as to how they could act in general or interact with other people in real life. For instance, Sophia shared how sometimes in situations she pictures Leslie Knope from *Parks and Rec* and reflects “I could totally see ... Leslie doing this,” and likewise will reflect “do I need to stop doing that? Or do I need to take a step back?” Aaron also shared how he is “always thinking about” characters as he watches them and reflects how “I would either do that or I wouldn't do that ... if I was in this scenario” or “is there a way that I could have done that?” He would see the situations characters found themselves in as a “take away potential experience.” Aaron also went on to share how the Sergeant in *Generation Kill* modeled how to treat members of a team, to which Aaron used when working with his fellow Marines. Aaron shared how the Sergeant “utilized ... everybody to their potential. And I feel like that ... really got me on to my view of everybody has some potential ... nobody is completely useless .. So everybody is strong ... in something. You just have to find it. And as frustrating as that is to dig it out of them ... it is there.”

Alejandro also shared how the characters from *Boy Meets World* helped his communication skills. “I went to a private school” he shared, “then ... I transfer to a public school so I didn't really have the same communication skills because there's so many more people, so ... [in] *Boy Meets World*, the way they would talk to each other so politely and ... the way they would joke with each other ... I would use that when I would go to school.”

Crysta shared how she related to Elsa in *Frozen*: “Elsa whose struggling with ... something she’s been keeping inside herself ... for a long time I ... struggled with depression .. I kept everything to myself. I was not open ... I saw a little of myself in Elsa because she had to keep [her ice powers] a secret ... And then you see her through the film and by the end of it ... she’s proud of what gift she has and ... she’s willing to ... share it with people because she knows that it’s important for people to be let in and know who she is ... And I learned ... through my leadership experience in band if I don’t let people in, if I didn’t let my Section Members in they didn’t know me and they had no reason to listen to me ... So especially with the girls I had to let them in ... and I learned that opening up first it shows them that it’s ok to open up and then they’ll do in return.”

Kyle mentioned how he’s “always taken little aspects that I liked about certain people that I had viewed ... even if they were fictional.” He elaborated with Heero Yuy and Duo Maxwell from *Mobile Suit Gundam Wing* and Goku from *Dragon Ball Z*. Kyle shared how “Heero Yuy, he’s extremely quiet .. but he lead by example” while Duo Maxwell “was very much the same way except he was, ‘I agree with what you’re doing ... what do you need help [with], what do you need with me?’ But he wouldn’t really ask you, he’d just sit there and wait and was like, ‘if you’re not gonna give me something [I’m going to] figure something out to help’ ... which is very similar to ... my career path ... and how I ended up doing things. I didn’t really realize it until after watching [Mobile Suit Gundam Wing] after my first deployment.” Upon rewatching the show, Kyle realized how similar he was to the two characters, sharing “Ok. I now know where

that was from.” With Goku, Kyle shared how Goku was very “lighthearted and relaxed, even when .. stuff got really bad ... Whereas I realize now ... I do that a lot.”

Finally, Lee shared how he would look to shows to provide examples for how to handle different situations. Particularly with *NCIS: Los Angeles*, he shared “I’ve definitely tried it on my own after I’ve seen it. May not be the next day. But, when that same situation came up I’d definitely try to do what they did and under the same situation.” He then went on to describe an episode where the team was responsible for tracking down a bomb. When the team members lost track of the bomb, one member tried to “go off and fix the problem on their own without trying to get any help for it. And then, the other day at work that kind of ... situation ... not a bomb or anything but they messed up with the ... tractor and they were trying not to tell anybody that it happened. They tried to fix it on their own but they really didn’t know what they were doing ... and they were going to hurt themselves if they kept trying to fix it because it was electrical and with battery cables ... And we just talked about how ... when you mess up you just need to tell somebody and not try to solve it on your own situation ... and I just handled it kind of like [Hetty] handled it in the show and it worked out.”

Relate with Others because of Show

Many participants also shared how they were able to relate to others or even make friendships because of the favorite shows they shared in common with others.

Alejandro shared how upon moving from a private school to a public school, he was able to relate to his new classmates by making jokes from the *Fairly Odd Parents* and *SpongeBob SquarePants*. He shared “I would ... talk to classmates and I would

make jokes or say something funny about a show or ... make a reference to a show and they would relate ... it would boost my confidence because it would feel like I had friends to talk to ... they thought it was funny, they thought it was cool ... because I knew what was going on, like I was in the loop.” Mike shared how he would play with friends on the playground as Star Wars characters. He reflected how he thought “it’s really cool to see ... how [shows] form those relationships with people and ... you can ask somebody if they watch [a show] on Netflix and they say yes and then immediately you already have a connection with that person and you’re able to at least have a laugh with them about the show that you enjoy watching and even end up watching that show with them.”

Other ways participants related with others included watching shows with specific groups to forming connections with strangers. For instance, Kelly shared how she and her roommates would band together to watch *Bachelor in Paradise* together, and Lee would only watch shows with his family. He shared how he doesn’t watch shows “with friends ... because it’s kind of our ... family thing” Sophia also watches shows with her family: “in my household we’re ... big family watchers. That’s ... our hobby that we’ve done together ... just watching new TV shows, new movies.” She went on to explain how watching shows together would influence how they interacted together as a family. Sophia also explained how she enjoys it when “talking to new people and trying to figure out new things about people. I’m big on ... finding something that ... puts me in the conversation or finds something that I can ... talk about to... bring us together ...

I'll mention something about ... one of my TV shows, and they're like 'I love that show!' And I'm like, 'Really? Not many people do.' and so it's ... cool."

Cameron shared how he once had a "big Disney watch party one year and we would watch like all our favorite Disney movies ... it's kind of cool to get in a group where all the same people feel the exact same way and then you watch it and then you're like 'oh my gosh ... I love this movie.'" Crysta also bonded with others through Disney; she shared how she and her fellow band-mates would sing Disney songs together. Someone would play the piano during practice and "sometimes they pull up their Disney booklet and immediately I was in the room ... wanting to be a part of that ... I did make friends through my love of Disney and Disney songs and music and the fact that we were all in band helped because we gravitated towards music anyway."

Bernard shared how "*Breaking Bad, The Walking Dead* ... [are] water cooler shows ... everybody watches them ... for the most part and .. you want to talk about it," and Lyra shared about *The Office* community, and how quotes can be the bridge to connect people: "you can pick out quotes that people use often and ... you instantly become friends .. I've actually made quite a few [friends]. People who've come over for ... projects or something we actually have ... become friends over ... watching *The Office*."

Applying New Skills

The next component of Developing Self is Applying New Skills, which consists of the development and use of new skills, finding developmental opportunities, and practicing different styles and approaches to leadership. Some skills include public

speaking, delegation, member motivation, member recognition, trusting others, being open to diverse ideas and perspectives, team building, teamwork and listening (Komives et al., 2005). Some participants cited shows and characters from which they learned a new skill, while others shared about a new skill they had learned when it came to observing leaders and leadership in entertainment media.

Critical Leadership Media Literacy

Critical media literacy is the ability to critically analyze entertainment media for the underlying messages being presented (Tisdell & Thompson, 2007). Some participants discussed their development of critical media literacy, specifically when it came to critically analyzing entertainment media for underlying messages about leadership.

Kelly talked about how a class assignment where she had to analyze the film *Guardians of the Galaxy* “helped me learn a lot better because now ... [it] opened my eyes to the one move we did and now I can pick out other types of leaders throughout other movies,” and Alejandro shared how the public pedagogy used in class and for assignments changed the way he watches television: “it definitely changes the way I watch shows now. Like I watch less TV than I used to, but now any TV I watch is kind of like, I analyze it and look at ... which characters, what they do and what their communication style is and what role they play in the organization and stuff like that.” He even shared how “there's an episode [in *The Office*] where there was ... an ethical dilemma where one of the employees ... is getting discounts on work supplies because she was having an affair with the supplier. So, like the H.R. representative came in and

... they were talking about ethics and ... it just remind me of a lot of the stuff we talk about in [the Ethics Class] I was taking.”

Lyra went on to share how the concept of Situational Leadership clicked for her when watching an episode of *30 Rock* for a class assignment: “I had *30 Rock* and I had never seen that show before. So ... when we said we would get ... TV shows I was thinking it'd be ... serious stuff because it was school related but then ... looking at the different parts and you can actually break them down in ... any situation [it] was interesting ... it might have triggered like the Situational Leadership ... that's actually what pointed me to it.”

Lee started to recognize leaders, leadership, and leadership concepts at home when watching shows. He shared how

I just started, it just kind of naturally learned in class, and it's in your head, then you go home and at night you watch television series and like oh, that's that ...

That's when I started recognizing it, just because I heard it in class ... you have it in your head and then you see it happen on television. Like, 'oh, that's that.

That's cool.’

Lee reflected how learning leadership concepts in class “and then watching those shows has shown me how to actually do it in real life. Because I don't know, in class we don't really talk about how using it in real life, but then I've seen it in the shows and like, oh, that's how you could use that in real life. And then I've tried to do that in my real life situations everyday.” He elaborates: “it's not just something we're learning in class just to pass school but it's actually used outside of class, even if it is in a movie I can see

how it can be applied. But definitely over the last two years I've definitely seen that, that I've grown more into it and seeing how I could do it." Lee even describes the different leadership approaches Gibbs from *NCIS* takes when interacting with his different team members. Lee shared how "in class we don't really talk about how using [leadership concepts] in real life, but then I've seen it in the shows" and how he realizes "oh, that's how you could use that in real life. And then I've tried to do that in my real life situations everyday."

Learned Skill from Character

Some participants mentioned learning skills from the characters and shows they watched. For example, Crysta shared how she has become more vocal: "I know I've been influenced to speak my mind a little more with like characters that show that they're not afraid to do so and things like that."

Some skills participants learned were relational skills. Alejandro explained how he gained a better idea of how to handle conflict through the show *Boy Meets World*. When referring to Alan, Corey's father, Alejandro explained "he dealt with his son's doing something he really didn't agree with ... he went and he would go to them about it. He wouldn't just avoid the problem ... I took that and used that for my own benefit. It really helped because before I didn't really like conflict. Like, if I had a problem with you ... I'd try to avoid you. But now it's totally different ... [I'm] face-to-face with conflict. That's my style now." Kelly shared how the film *P.S. I Love You* helped her improve her conflict and communication skills. She shared how she "compared myself to [Holly] because I've been in a really long relationship too and everything she did and

her relationship kind of reflected on what I did. And then in the movie something tragic happened and it make me like, open my eyes to realize I need to not do as much as what she did because she nagged. I'm not a mean girlfriend at all, but she ... kind of nagged at him or would give him the silent treatment ... if something was wrong and that made me open my eyes that I need to communicate better and not just be quiet when we do have a problem.”

Hannah shared how one of her “major things is ... just being able to see how ... other characters can forgive and move on. And I definitely would say that I've ... been in conflicts with people myself and I've ... seen two characters have a conflict and then come together and ... forgive one another ... that's probably motivated me to be like ok, maybe I need to reach out to this person and stop ... this conflict from going on because I've seen that ... it's possible and I can do it, and it's been displayed to me on the TV so why can't I do that myself in real life? So you just get better at that the more you see that.”

When talking about the show *Psych*, George mentioned how he would find “techniques for talking to different people. Picking up on conversation ... [Shawn] always has weird quirks and like figures out how to just talk to people and understand them and I think ... [I] picked up on that ... just listening to people and from ... that, figuring out what you need to say to understand the best about them. So I definitely think I learned that from that show specifically.” An example of this came from Lyra, who shared how she learned to banter more from watching *The Office*: “I'm a very ... bantery

person with people. I've definitely ... improved with that by watching *The Office* because that's something they do a lot and I've actually used a lot of their lines."

Expanding Motivations

The last component of Developing Self is Expanding Motivations. This entailed the expanding motivations of individuals taking initiative and becoming leaders.

Individuals, as they developed their leadership identity, would transition from engaging in activities because they wanted to make friends and do interesting things to wanting to achieve goals, do something due to a deepened sense of commitment to something, do something because they were passionate about it, to realizing they could be a catalyst or change agent (Komives et al., 2005).

Motivated by Character

Some participants even mentioned being motivated by entertainment media. Sometimes this took on the form of paying attention to a character's behavior. For example, Kelly shared how Rocky would motivate her: "I am motivated by [Rocky] because of how hard he tries ... he is an influence on like millions of people in the movie ... And he tries really hard and I want everyone to see, or, I feel like people have seen, since I've been little, how hard I've tried and tried to be an influence on so many people, especially younger than me in my sport of rodeo."

In other cases, motivation came from characters for participants to be leader. George shared how he "definitely wanted to be a leader because of [*Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* ... not strictly because of [the show]. Just ... seeing them as leaders and wanting to kind of have that same kind of influence on people in ... the way they

helped ... I thought that was really cool, the way they could help people so much from their position.” Sophia shared how the film *A League of Their Own* inspired her as well: “I think that like, just each one of them were like leaders in like that time And so ... I watched that ... really young, and when I was watching ... that was whenever I was full on softball. So I was like, ‘I’m going to be like, a leader in this.’” Finally, Mike shared how the shows he watched growing up motivated him to be a better leader:

I look back on it now ... I watched *Star Wars*, I watched *SpongeBob* [*SquarePants*], and I can't necessarily say, um, that there was a specific time because I can't really remember how I felt in that moment watching the show, but looking back now ... looking at those leadership qualities that I saw in people from *Star Wars* and seeing what they did to make a difference whether it was being themselves or making sure they put others before themselves, I'd say that was a lesson that that caused me to go out and be a leader and be someone who does that as well. Was be someone who can lead with that mindset of selflessness, um, and with the idea of putting others before yourself and putting the team, like, goal before your own goals at time as well.

Developmental Influences

Developmental Influences is another aspect of the Leadership Identity Development Model. These external influences evolve over the course of one's leadership identity development, and include Adult Influences, Peer Influences, Meaningful Involvement, and Reflective Learning (Komives, et al., 2005).

Adult / Peer Influences

Adult Influences and Peer Influences are two different Developmental Influences. Adult Influences refers to the different roles adults play as an individual progresses through the six Leadership Identity Development stages. Adults range from family members to role models to mentors to meaning-makers and friends. Adults built confident, affirmed and sponsored youth, prompted youth to become involved in organizations, and set high expectations as individuals grew and developed as leaders (Komives et al., 2005). Through Komives et al.'s (2006) study, Adult Influences were found to include fictional characters, where one participant mentioned wanting "to be like Superman and smart like Batman and be in touch with people like Star Trek characters" (p. 596). Peer Influences refer to friends and role models who play a significant role in one's leadership identity development. Older peers tend to play a role in involving individuals in organizations, and as time progressed, "engaging with peers gained depth and meaning," where "peers served as followers, teammates, and ultimately as collaborators and peer meaning-makers" (Komives et al., 2005, p. 597-598).

In the Leadership Identity Development Model, Adult and Peer influences are two separate influencers. In this study, each participant mentioned fictional characters who were at varying ages and at different times in their (the participant's) life as having influenced them in some way. For this reason, the findings for this section are grouped together. The themes which emerged for these categories were Admire Character, Character Provided Example, Character and Real Example, and SLT/SCT.

Admire Character

Many participants mentioned admiring different fictional characters. For example, Sophia shared her admiration towards Ron from *Parks and Rec*: “I admire Ron in that sort of sense that ... he loves hard the people that are in his bubble. And it's not only that he's not gonna do anything nice to people who are around him that need help, it's just that, whoever's in his bubble is going to really get that true love and true compassion and, like, he's always going to be loyal to you. And so I, I want to portray that with my own friends and people.”

George talked about his admiration for strong characters, particularly strong male characters: “I just like when there's ... strong men... 'Cause a lot of times adults, especially when I was younger I saw adults ... being made fun of in TV shows ... TV shows like, *The Last Man Standing* and stuff like that. I like to see where they're ... not kind of trampled on to a certain extent and you still maintain that, um presence 'cause I think that's really important ... it could be the way that the entertainment industry is intentionally taking it and not intentionally taking it ... I kind of go towards those shows 'cause I see really powerful, not just men, but also women. It's just they work together and it's, they're not really like, no one's, no one's taken away from just because of who they are.”

Hannah shared her admiration for female characters, particularly Hermione from the *Harry Potter* franchise and Katniss from *The Hunger Games* franchise. She shared how “in *Harry Potter*, I really liked Hermione because she was ... smart, ... very intelligent but she also wasn't like timid or shy. She was like bold and was like not afraid

to speak. So I feel like, I like as a kid I remember dressing up as her for Halloween and stuff because, like, you know, I just thought she was like really cool. And it's interesting to see her character development through the series and it seems like she like, she always starts out, like she starts out as being that way but then she just progressively grows into a like, a stronger woman, I feel like as the series progresses but I really like her.”

Hannah went on to share “of course in *The Hunger Games*, loved Katniss. I loved how she was like supportive of her family. I loved that she ... had character flaws where she wasn't always the best at communicating herself ... I think she had more of a manly or like, masculine sense that she wasn't good at like expressing her emotions but she like, saw the need for things and she was more focused on what she had to do to get there.”

Aaron had a number of characters he admired. He detailed his admiration for Woody from *Toy Story*, Neo from *The Matrix*, and Grant from *Jurassic Park*. When referring to Woody, he shared “ it's really no contest. Woody between Buzz. I like Buzz, but ... Woody's the best because he's loyal, he's caring, uh, he's moral. Deals with many emotions and events throughout the *Toy Story* series but um, you know, he's, he's real. He, he overcomes jealousy to accept outsiders ... And by overcoming that he builds a better community of all the toys and he's brave, coordinates the other toys into action, kind of like their commander. He's smart and ingenuitive. So as far as a character goes he's well fleshed out and, I mean, there's nothing that he wouldn't do to, to, either protect the, the group of toys or ... for Andy ... It's, it was always a big character that I, that I liked growing up.”

Aaron shared how Neo was “another unexpected hero, did not seek power and yet kind of obtained it after Morpheus kind of dragged him out of that. So, he could've easily allowed that power to kind of go to his head but he stayed down to Earth for the most part. Sought to help humanity as best he could. Adaptable. Had to be adaptable because his whole world was flipped upside down. Strong morality and purpose ... he's a pretty strong character with another good sense of morality and values.” And finally, when referring to Grant, “he's got a strong personality. He's protective, intelligent. Another kind of father figure of the movie. He's instructive. So, he's, you know, teaching things about the dinosaurs to the kids that are there. He genuinely cares. So he's not kind of brushing people off because he knows more than them or he's not self-centered ... He's also willing to put himself in danger for others.”

Character Provided Example

Within the shows and movies participants watched, participants shared having observed characters providing them with many examples on how to interact with others and try new things. This is different than Model after Character; Model after Character refers to when participants mentioned modeling themselves after characters, while with Character Provided Example, participants reflected on examples on how something could be done. For example, Roberto shared how upon joining the Marines, he rented a number of military movies to see what life would be like. He shared “so you got the movie *A Few Good Men* with Tom Cruise and what not. I love that movie ... But I watched ... a lot of movies before I went to boot camp ... I was trying to prepare myself ... I rented *Hamburger Hill*, rented *A Few Good Men* and *Full Metal Jacket*.”

Aaron shared how “media, films, TV shows, all that had a pretty large impact on how I viewed things,” and how he was “able to experience these scenarios and whether I was intentionally thinking about it at the time it still is exposure. It's still, like I've seen that somewhere before ... which is a different way of being able to ...look at things,... if I pulled [media] out of my life um, I don't know, I mean you could see a completely different person sitting here today.” He later went on to elaborate on the example Mary provided him from *It's A Wonderful Life*:

one of my all time favorite movies is *It's a Wonderful Life* ... Mary Hatch or Mary Bailey, however you want to look at it. The wife. I actually liked her character more than I do the main character because ... for me, ...[I'm a] child of divorce. Family kind of broke up and ... I had to deal with that growing up as a kid and to me the husband in that movie ... that's a lot of weakness ... So from the wife's perspective she's strong, unbowing, loving, takes care of the family even though the husband is falling apart Selfless, committed, intelligent, imaginative. She is everything that the husband is lacking throughout that movie. She's always there for him and I always really appreciate that throughout the movie.

Alejandro shared about different characters who provided different examples to him. With regard to Ned Stark from *Game of Thrones*, “Ned Stark was a really good one. Um, just because, I liked his leadership style because ... you can tell he's a man of his word. He's going to do what he says but he also has a sensitive side. He knows what it's like to come up ... fighting, and getting in trouble and wanting to do things your way.

He knows that there, that people are going to have that urge and he respects that and ... he also does ... what's ethical.” Alejandro shared how the character Sandy Cheeks from *SpongeBob SquarePants* displayed leadership to him, noting “an episode where ... she's in hibernation and [SpongeBob and Patrick] go into ... her dome and ... they mess with her while she's hibernating. Obviously that's not a good thing, but, um, the next episode she was totally fine with them. I guess that's a pretty good leadership ... attribute, like forgiveness and realizing, putting yourself in their shoes ... realizing that they weren't in the wrong they were just curious.” Alejandro even shared how when he transitioned from elementary school to middle school, he looked up to the characters in *Boy Meets World*: “I saw him and like, he was in middle school and I was like ;alright, I'm going to be in middle school soon so this is how they're supposed to act.; I would kind of look up to those characters.” Also with *Boy Meets World*, Alejandro shared “I really liked how ... the mom and the sons would talk. Even though my mom and I didn't have that same relationship ... it was good to see what it's supposed to look like. And also the dad ... I watched it the other day and I was like ... in the future, if that opportunity comes for me to have kids that's how I want to communicate with, with my children. The way that dad does it.”

Bernard shared how the characters in the *Newsroom* provided different examples of leadership styles for him: “as far as ... something that could be used as a demonstration for different leadership styles, different leadership tools ... [*Newsroom* is] actually an excellent show for that, um, because there's so many different leadership roles ... in that show, or leadership characters in that role, ... because you have the

traditional managerial structure and so, you know, CEO, Programming Director, Director of the Show and the Lead Anchor. And then sub characters as well who all have different leadership roles and so there's a lot to pull from from the episode, or from that series, um, for, uh, leadership examples.”

Crysta detailed how the interactions between characters on sitcoms and in the movie *To Save a Life* provided her with examples on how to interact with other people: in ... sitcoms ... like *The Office* and things like that or... in *Friends* it's like, they go through a lot and ... you see that and you see how they deal with issues that can happen in the real world. So I guess ... when there is ... a protagonist specifically that deals with a lot and ... was able to problem solve and get through it ... at the end. I think that's probably the biggest thing that I would identify with because everyone goes through something and everyone has to make it through it. And so, like growing up I went through a lot in my life and my family and and things like that and so seeing like how they put that into shows and movies, it's more like empowering I guess? Like in shows people like, yeah you can make it through it. ... here's an example like in real life, a real life issue that could happen ... We're showing that this person made it through and so can you.”

With regards to *To Save a Life*, Crysta shared,

“I would see how like, characters how they, how they approached other people and things like that like in movies they want the protagonist to be ... the nice ones ... most of the time. So your protagonist that's ... really really genuine with with people or really friendly at first, ... and some of them they are like the listener.

Some of them put their put everything out there from day one ... Some are really outgoing. Some are the shy ones ... But it just seemed like, ... seeing characters make friends influenced me approaching people and me being able to make friends because ... it's like, when they're making friends they introduced themselves and they're ... start out just talking and ... showing that they're ... not afraid to make those friends and do those things ... if you wanna make a friend you've got to put yourself out there. ... things like that were ... showing how characters got to know each other. It helped me want to ... listen more.

Kelly also shared how the characters from the sitcom *Friends* modeled for her how she could act around others: “their personalities made me realize that it's okay to maybe say something dumb and not care what other people think or just laugh it off and just keep on going.” Lee shared how interactions between characters the show *NCIS* helped him understand an interaction he had with his dad when working on their family’s farm:

My dad was chewing me out. And I didn't know why he was chewing me out because I didn't do anything wrong. But then, I just kind of went along with it and, ... 'cause I knew other people were messing up and I thought, maybe that's why he's chewing me out. But the only reason I thought about that is because that happened in *NCIS* as well. They had two new team members and the oldest one wasn't doing wrong but the other two were doing stuff wrong. So [Gibbs] chewed out the oldest one, showing the other, the younger people that he doesn't mind chewing the older one out and so that doesn't-- So he's not just chewing them out

just because they're younger and new and new to the team, he doesn't want, trying to be, make sure he's not biased because he, they were mad, they were getting mad that the other guy never got in trouble or anything. So he was, chewed the other guy out for no reason. You know, he was doing it right and he didn't say anything because he understood what was going on. And it the, when that happened to me I was like, I was getting mad and like, 'why is he chewing me out? I'm not doing anything wrong.' And everything else, but then I remembered that show and I was like, maybe that's what's going on. And then we talked about it later in private and that's what was really happening.

Character and Real Example

Some participants mentioned how fictional characters provided examples for them to model off of, however this was in addition to the example provided to them by real individuals in their lives. Bernard shared how he did not “want to say yes specifically [to learning leadership skills from characters] ... Because ... you pull from all different things as you're going up and ... even in your early 20s, ... you're still picking up on things from every direction, so, ... I have no doubt that there are shows that ... I've learned aspects of leadership from or leadership styles or traits. I mean, like I said, ... the authoritarian leader, ... [I got from] *The Sopranos*. ... I learned that from there. But then at the same time I learned that from my dad as well, you know, our parents, ... you always get that, there's always that "my way or the highway" mentality somewhere in your life.”

George shared how “that's something my parents did kind of instill in me they kind of made sure that, that I understood right and wrong and that if I saw something wrong to definitely take action about it, um, and that kind of stuck with me. They, they really meant it, I don't think they meant it for movies and television, but I think that they kind of, kind of transferred into that.” Kyle talked about how both the characters from *Mobile Suit Gundam Wing* and his Dad and Marine Corp Sergeants played a role in his leadership development. He shared “mainly, it was, obviously my dad at first ... then those three [Heero and Duo from *Mobile Suit Gundam Wing* with Goku from *Dragon Ball Z*] at the same time because ... I watched those at the same exact time. And then, so the fictional characters at the same time was followed with my dad throughout it. And then ... [it] turned into a lot of my other Sergeants ... when I was a Junior Marine.”

Finally, Lee shared how while his parents taught him, characters reinforced for him. He shared how he “molded my life between what mom and dad had done and what they [characters] were doing. Because I could, my mom and dad just told me what, how I should behave and they, I mean, they did it, like you don't see your parents all the time and you watch a TV show every day, or once every week and you see that with what they're saying portrayed in life and then you can kind of resonate the two together. And then that kind of built me to who I am today.”

SLT / SCT

Some participants did mention how they would model their behavior and interactions off of their observations of other people in their lives, not just fictional characters. This reinforces the Social Learning Theory (SLT) and Social Cognitive

Theory (SCT). For instance, Aaron shared how he developed the mentality of observing and learning from others through his training in the Marine Corps:

I would say after joining the Marine Corps was when I really started looking at that ... I'd been exposed to a lot of leadership classes in the Marine Corps which, which gets you really kind of dissecting how people think and their character and, and all that. So, by exposure to such things I was able to pinpoint different, different values and more specifically in characters which, something that I've always built upon in the Marine Corps and, you know, taught my Junior Marines is to kind of, to look at anybody with professors, your commanders, your juniors, whichever. And kind of figure out what they're doing that you, that you approve of, that you enjoy. Maybe that you don't even do but that you want to embody. Because everybody, well, generally speaking everybody has some type of value that you could improve upon, that you could take and learn from. And so what I would always tell my juniors is look at all your leaders and take, take the best pieces, keep them for yourself. Put that in your leadership book and utilize that as you go up the ranks and just keep taking. And then just drop the stuff that, that you see that you didn't like, you know. Don't duplicate that.

Lee shared how he would learn from his parents. They would “just do their thing and how they go about life and you just, like, see them do it and like, that's how I need to be too. And they're like, I guess, through, I guess you don't really see it when you're younger but as you got older you realize all the respect that my parents have within the community and with people and with friends and like, I want to be the same way.” Mike

also share how he would observe various officers in the Future Farmers of America (FFA) organization: “I’ve looked up to those Officers that were in FFA, like, I noticed certain things about them that I liked and I wanted to implement into my life and my leadership and certain things I didn’t want to implement.”

Meaningful Involvement

Meaningful Involvement refers to the experiences one has which leadership identity evolve. These experiences, such as sports, theatre and band, help individuals “experience diverse peers, learn about self, and develop new skills” as well as make friends (Komives et al., 2005, p. 598).

Real World Leadership Experience

When asked about their experiences as leaders, each participant detailed their involvement in tangible, real situations, which contributed to their leadership development. These experiences ranged from being involved with FFA, 4H and Scouts, to sports and working a job, doing rodeo and helping out on the farm, to even serving in the Marine Corps (see *Figure 2.*)

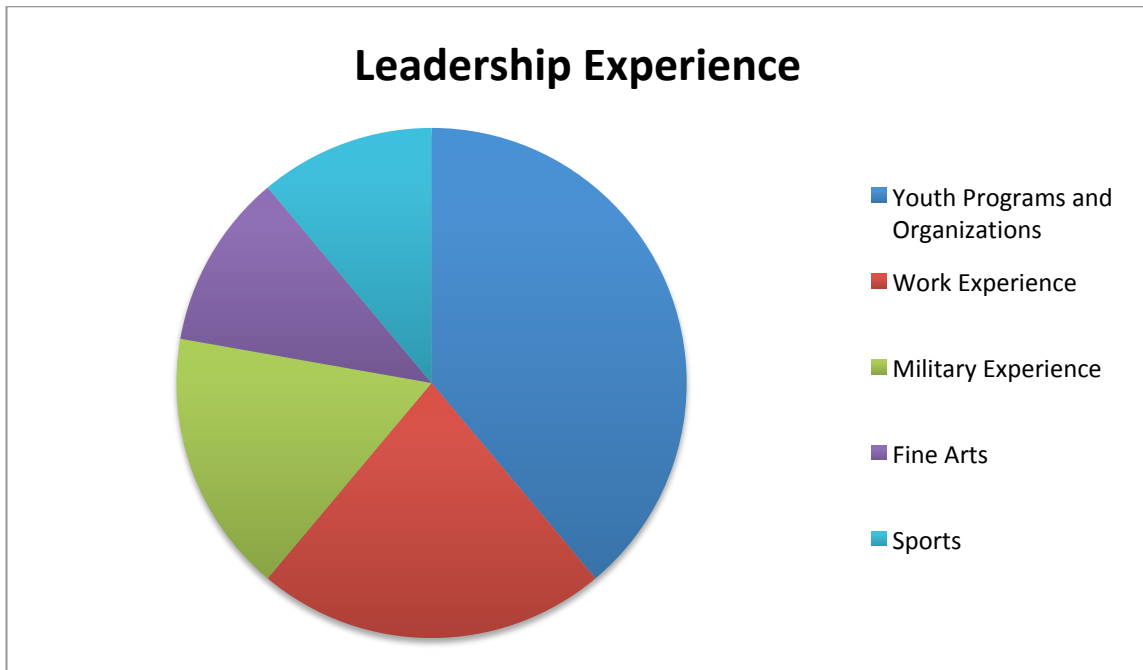


Figure 2 Leadership Experience

A number of the participants were members and leaders in youth programs and organization: Aaron was in the Boy Scouts; Cameron and Sophia were in the Future Farmers of America (FFA); Hannah was also in FFA, even serving as Chapter President; George was in 4H and FFA; Lee was also in 4H and FFA, serving in leadership positions; Mike served on student council for his class, and was involved with the leadership development team in FFA, going to State Contests.

Some participants had work experience: Alejandro had a job; Bernard shared how “the majority of my experience has been in a manager, leadership role. Has been the commercial janitorial;” Lee helped his Dad on their family farm; and Lyra worked at a “ mechanic shop for a few years.” Other participants specifically had military

experience: Aaron joined the Marine Corps, and was still Active Duty during the time of the interview, and Kyle and Roberto were also Marine Corps veterans.

Two were leaders in fine arts programs: Cameron shared how he was a Drum Major his junior and senior year in high school, and Crysta was also in band, serving as a “Section Leader for the clarinets.”

Lastly, two participants were in sports: Kyle played football in high school, and Kelly shared how she’s “rodeo'd my whole life and every summer after our associations there's finals and we ... have a special kids rodeo. It's for kids with disabilities.”

Reflective Learning

Reflective Learning is the final component of Developmental Influences. These refer to “structured opportunities for critical reflection, such as journaling and meaningful conversation with others” (Komives et al., 2005, p. 598). They also included experiences where one intentionally learn about leadership, to include trainings, retreats and classes. This also included participation in Komives et al.’s (2005) study itself, where one participant mentioned how the experience aided their leadership identity development.

Names / Recognizes Leadership Concept

A number of the participants were able either clearly articulate a specific leadership theory, model or concept, or were to at least reference one even if they could not remember the name. For example, Alejandro referenced how to make change when he mentioned “I'm definitely looking into the future more, I guess, um, doing things because they're going to pay off in the end and uh, not going for that short term

satisfaction, uh, I guess. Controlling the elephant more.” Bernard referenced Blake and Mouton’s Leadership Grid, Three-Skill Approach, and Behavioral Leadership when he said “depending upon with who I’m talking to ... my leadership style has changed.... I try and keep it fairly middle of the road ... not too technical, ... not trying to make it too much ... relationship based.” Kyle shared his preference for the Great Man Approach: “I would just do things. And I never really understood why ... That's why I still kind of think, because I'm like, Great Man Approach.” Finally, Lyra referenced Situational Leadership when she shared “learning ... the leader development verses ... the follower developments helped because I just assume that everyone is on the same level as me but are actually learning the different variations of it is pretty eye opening and ... actually something I kind of apply. Especially when I was applying for jobs. ... I can actually talk about it and say like how I would put it into motion. It was pretty cool.”

Names / Recognizes Leadership Concept in Media

Some participants were even able to identify specific leadership theories, models and concepts in the media they watched. Lee was articulate in naming different leadership concepts in the shows he watched. He shared

you can watch *NCIS*, every episode there is an example of some leadership thing we've learned ... the one that's always on there is managing symbols because he makes sure you always keep yourself looking good, you represent the team and his company, so that's probably shown in most to them. And then the Leadership Relationship Model's in there at times and then you could go with a whole list of other ones, but those are probably the two most common ones in there that I've

noticed throughout it. And then Transformational and Transactional leadership is definitely in there as well. But they just, I don't know if it's really taught me anything, it's just reinforced stuff I've learned in class or from my mom and dad or for just from living life and I think how life should be, and it's just like, that's, that's right. That's not like life should be and that's why the directors made it that way because they, they believe the same thing, so, but, I guess that's it for that.

Lee went on to talk about

Cunningham's Skills, Katz's Model, Relationship Leadership Theory Model.

Those three are in there all the time. ... Transactional, Transformational Leadership is in there ... some of the new team members have to develop their identity when given a new role. So, Leadership Identity is kind of in there a little bit and definitely ... finding who you are and how to go through that process is on there, and then definitely ... the five followers, the alienated, sheep, passive, sheep, all the way down to survivor and, whatever the last one is. Those are on there ... Theory X and Y is on there a little bit. Not a whole lot but it's on there some. Writers don't recognize it as a lot, but that one, the great, but I do know it's on there and then ... I would say shows that different types of leaders at different stages in their development.

Lyra even mentioned “one thing that I really ... identify with or really like about leadership is ... the follower's ... development ... leader's ... development. Like just seeing it, because you can ... see the different levels of it in people. I've ... learned to... recognize it, maybe not learn the skill but I've learned to kind of see look where they're

at which is kind of neat ... just being able to like recognize [Situational Leadership] by like people's interactions [in shows] is something that I've learned to do.”

Public Pedagogy

Some participants discussed their experiences with leadership classes and assignments which used public pedagogy. For instance, Aaron, who would facilitate trainings for fellow Marines, discussed

a lot of times before classes we'll play like, a video. Sometimes it's just a funny kind of wake up thing but for my classes I always try to have something that coincides sort of with how I want to teach. So, for example, my speech class that I just had, I also had to present a video as well to kind of coincide with it. And so to coincide with my speech I chose, it was the *Iron Man*, it was the original *Iron Man* movie. And it's Robert Downey Junior. So he gets up there and uh, it's the part where he says "I'm Iron Man," right? So from a public speaking perspective it was horrible because, uh, and it's not, it's not perfect because, you know, he wasn't-- It's not a typical speech, right? It's just a, talking to the press but he's doing all the things that a person giving a speech is not supposed to do.” He went on to elaborate: “And so as far as that goes using movie clips, a lot of times we use more military, you know, it coincides the most. So there's *The Pacific* TV show. It's a great example. It's the Marine Corps fighting the Japanese. And so you can use like battle scenes of heroism or even the enemy in that particular scenario. You could say you know, here's a different culture fighting for their right versus our wrong. It's just different ways to look at it.”

When referring to movie clips being used in the leadership classes he had been taking as a student at Texas A&M, Aaron shared: “I would say for sure that that definitely helps because they're, they're literally telling you, ‘hey look at, look at these scenarios and look at how, you know.’ I mean, I'm not sure how exactly specifically accurate they are but within reason, you know, all that stuff could have happened, so. I think you definitely can get value out of that for sure.”

Alejandro reflected on assignments where he had to analyze a show and a film for leadership concepts and write a paper on each:

That actually really helped a lot. It was kind of like, uh, like we were talking about today applying the real world out, the real world applications. Um, that helped a lot. Especially with *The Office* ones because I, I do, I had watched, I have watched the whole entire thing of *The Office* and that one was the one that, that really stuck because, you know, that's an actual workplace. That's an actual environment that I'm looking forward to being in. So taking leadership styles from there really helped. And then the Lego movie one was a little bit tough, just because I really wasn't interested in the [*Lego Batman*] movie, but um, the, those really did help. Those really did help a lot.”

Kelly also shared “if I see things like that and I'm a hands on learner. Like videos like that. Giving a example of what kind of leader. That has helped me a lot to remember.”

Finally, Bernard reflected on an assignment where he had to analyze the film *Spotlight* for leadership concepts: “I enjoyed the assignment ... it was nice but at the same ... since it was an assignment, ... instead of just kind of passively thinking about it,

um, it was watching the movie to complete the assignment. And so it wasn't ... quite as beneficial as it probably should have been ... so when I was watching [*Spotlight*] I was focusing on Michael Keaton for that leadership aspect. Now I picked up on some other things, ... but ... I don't think that carried through with everyone else. ... I realized that I had focused almost exclusively on, ... my portion of the project and not tried to really understand the meaning, or true purpose of the assignment ... and look at leadership throughout the movie itself.”

Thesis Announcement Sparked Reflection

To some participants, simply hearing about the premise of this research study prompted them to reflect on what role entertainment media may have played in their life. Alejandro shared how “I was watching *The Goldbergs* the other day and I remembered about this interview ... and I was like looking for things and that's where I came to the conclusion about the mom, how she has that caring leadership style but sometimes, you know, the elephant can, can go out of control and she does things that, like, for example, one of the things she did, her daughter was studying for the S.A.T. and she gave her fake words so she could get a lower score on the S.A.T and wouldn't go to a college super far away.”

Kyle shared how the concept of media influencing him had not occurred to him until the researcher announced their thesis, asking for volunteer participants: “until after you had said that then I started like thinking on it and I was like, ‘oh, ok, like, that makes a lot of sense.’ ... you're like, ‘oh hey, what about, like I'm looking into this.’ And then when you did that, like, I started going through it in my head like ‘oh how could you

utilize this? All that's, that's what happens.' ... like, what would be the, um, how would you be able to implement this in the future? How can you implement this to help everybody else out? Like, how can this be placed into a thing to where people can learn about it or how could you even use this in a show to teach leadership subconsciously? Yeah. That's how my mind went with it ... And then the ducks just kind of fell into place for it ... [It wasn't] necessarily like, eye opening, but it was like, just a realization and was like ... 'I could have been affected, and probably was affected because the way that I am is actually very similar to a mixture of those three people [Yuy, Duo and Goku]; my dad and a couple of other people that had actually trained me throughout.'”

Even Mike reflected “And I think really at this point in my leadership I'm in not learning phase right now, and, um, I just say that's how my leadership has grown and evolved over the years and, I mean, I'm, from what I've learned, it's gonna keep growing and evolving even more. So that's really cool for me to think about, especially how, um, just how different things like your research, like how does that, media and things that you grew up watching on TV, how does that affect you and, um, something I'd like to reflect on more, like, what if SpongeBob made me into who I am today?”

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Media, particularly television, has repeatedly shown to play an influencing role in how children develop their understanding of the world (Kirsh, 2010). Social Learning Theory postulates children and adolescents learn through the observation of the behaviors of others (Bandura, 1973), and Decker (1986) explains this theory can be used intentionally to develop leaders: by modeling leadership behavior, others can learn what it means and what it takes to be a leader. Preda and Stan (2016) found adults do look to fictional characters as role models for leadership. However, as Harms and Spain (2016) point out, a study has yet to be conducted to explicitly explore the possibility entertainment media (referred to in this study as media consumed for entertainment, to include film, television, books, comic, video games, and similar platforms along these lines) plays a role in shaping or influencing a person's leadership identity development.

The purpose of this research is to explore the gap in both leadership literature and media effects literature in regards to how entertainment media shapes leadership identity development. This will be an exploratory qualitative study in order to understand what role do entertainment media play in influencing an individual's leadership identity development. This study may serve as the launching point for a new area of study which seeks to understand how entertainment media constructs perceptions of leadership in general, as well as perceptions of personal leadership capabilities.

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ 1: What is the impact of entertainment media and fictional characters on the Developing Self factor of the Leadership Identity Development Model?

RQ2: What is the impact of entertainment media and fictional characters on the Developmental Influences factor of the Leadership Identity Development Model?

To answer these questions, a qualitative, constructivist approach was used. A purposive sample of undergraduate college students pursuing a leadership degree were recruited. Fourteen volunteer students were interviewed for the study; seven freshmen, and seven seniors. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, with questions relating to participants' favorite shows and fictional characters, and their reflections on entertainment media's effect on their behavior when it came to their Leadership Identity Development. The following are conclusions and recommendations for practitioners based on the themes which emerged from the interviews, which are shared in Chapter 4 of this thesis. A summary is provided at the end to capture the main points of this study.

Conclusions

Developing Self

A deductive lens was used to analyze the data collected through the interviews. From the open coding process, themes emerged which fit the different aspects of the Developing Self component of the Leadership Identity Development Model.

Deepening Self-Awareness

Self Awareness

By watching shows and characters, George was able to increase his own self awareness. Lussier and Achua (2016) explain “self-awareness is the cornerstone of all insight” and how assessing one’s strengths and limitations can lead to higher self-confidence (p. 37). George noted how his behavior mirrored the behavior of the characters in *Good Luck Charlie*, and reflected how he did not like how these characters were treating their parents. He then reflected how he needed to change his behavior, and should probably not watch the show so as to not continue to emulate, in his eyes, undesirable behavior. George demonstrated how his behavior had been influenced by others, in this case characters in media, which is the basis for Bandura’s Social Learning Theory and Social Cognitive Theory. For a moment George recognized his Parasocial Identity in the characters he watched, and reflected how this was not an identity he wanted to continue to have, experiencing the opposite of Wishful Identification. Alejandro, on the other hand, was able to reflect on the connections between the mother in *The Goldbergs* and his own mother, and realized how he could relate to his mother after understanding the motivations of the mother in *The Goldbergs*. This prompted him to change how he interacted with his own mother.

Leaders need to be self-aware of their own motivations and actions, and particularly where those motivations and actions stem from. It is critical to recognize desirable and undesirable behaviors, and this can only come from reflection, and in cases, critical media literacy.

Building Self-Confidence

Inspiration from Show / Movie

Participants received the positive messages characters gave to one another, and were able to derive confidence from these positive messages. Sophia and Hannah discussed receiving a boost in self-confidence when they second-handedly received inspirational messages characters gave one another in the shows they watched. Hannah mentioned identifying with Brooke from *One Tree Hill*, and Crysta described having a parasocial relationship with Kermit the Frog.

Self-Confidence is one of the main leadership traits discussed by Northouse (2016), and encompasses having a “sense of self-esteem and self-assurance” (p. 24). These participants may not have been taught directly the importance of self-confidence or traits when it came to leadership, however they were seeing Trait Theory enacted in the shows and characters they watched. Entertainment media can serve as a source of motivation for individuals, and could inspire them into leadership positions and boost their confidence in maintaining them.

Establishing Interpersonal Efficacy

Model after Character

Participants were able to look to characters to provide examples and serve as role models. These fictional characters served as a model for them as viewers in order to determine how to act in certain situations. This reinforces Social Learning Theory, which states we learn from watching others (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961), and it

reinforces how Preda and Stan (2016) found adults do look to fictional characters as role models for leadership.

Sophia would tackle situations similar to how she thought Leslie Knope would, Aaron modeled himself and his leadership after the Sergeant in *Generation Kill*, Alejandro modeled his interactions with classmates from those of the characters of *Boy Meets World* when transferring schools, Crysta learned to let others in the way Elsa from *Frozen* allows others into her life, Kyle reflected on his integration of aspects of Heero Yuy and Duo Maxwell from *Mobile Suit Gundam Wing* and Goku from *Dragon Ball Z* into himself, and Lee shared how he would see how characters in *NCIS: Los Angeles* handled situations and interactions, modeling himself after them. Each of these participants found these characters to display the Transformational Leadership factor of Idealized Influence. This happens when “leaders who act as strong role models for followers,” cause “followers [to] identify with these leaders and want very much to emulate them” (Northouse, 2016, p. 167). Idealized Influence is “measured on two components: an attributional component that refers to the attributions of leaders made by followers based on perceptions they have of their leaders, and a behavioral component that refers to followers’ observations of leader behavior” (Northouse, 2016, p. 167). These participants demonstrated how characters both have attributional and behaviorally influenced them.

Relate with Others because of Show

The participants in this study demonstrated how they were able to connect with strangers, and even make friends, by bonding over the same shows they watched and

enjoyed. Alejandro made friends at a new school by relating to his new classmates with the shows they shared in common, Mike would play with classmates and friends on the playground as *Star Wars* characters, Kelly would watch *Bachelor in Paradise* with her roommates, and Lee would watch shows with his family; Cameron held a big Disney watch party, and Bernard shared how commonly watched shows served as “water cooler shows” to make friends with others around him.

When it comes to leadership, leaders often create dyadic relationships with their followers and team members. Leaders create in-groups based on who they can relate to and work with. Followers progress from the stranger phase, to the acquaintance phase and later to the mature phase. This process is part of the Leader-Member Exchange Theory (Northouse, 2016). It can be concluded, for this sample, that media played a role in socializing and relationship building between and among friends, family, and colleagues.

Applying New Skills

According to Northouse (2016), people can learn skills by “learning from their experiences” and thus “can acquire leadership,” and the Skills Model “frames leadership as the capabilities (knowledge and skills) that make effective leadership possible” (Northouse, 2016, p. 47). The participants of this study demonstrated their ability to learn a new skill set, along with interpersonal skills, through the vicarious experience of watching television shows and movies.

Critical Leadership Media Literacy

Critical media literacy is the ability to critically analyze entertainment media for the underlying messages being presented (Tisdell & Thompson, 2007). Some participants discussed their development of critical media literacy as a result of public pedagogy, and shared how they now critically analyze entertainment media for underlying leadership messages.

A number of the leadership classes at Texas A&M utilize public pedagogy to teach and demonstrate different leadership concepts (from leadership theories to ethics). None of these classes set out to teach critical media literacy the way a literature class sets out to teach critical literacy, but instead the development of critical media literacy was developed as a by product of students learning leadership through entertainment media. Kelly and Alejandro described how the use of public pedagogy and having homework assignments where they would analyze either a movie or a show changed the way they would engage in entertainment media outside of the classroom. They could now pick out types of leaders, communication styles, organizational roles, and ethical dilemmas in the shows and movies they watched for fun. Lyra described how Situational Leadership finally made sense for her upon analyzing the show *30 Rock*, and appreciated learning how to break down the components of the show to understand the theoretical approach to leadership.

These participants inadvertently learned a new skill through the use of public pedagogy in their leadership classes. The development of critical media literacy, or more specifically, critical leadership media literacy, could be a new skill set which aids

individuals as they develop as leaders, and assist leaders in their continual growth and refinement of their knowledge, skills and abilities.

Learned Skill from Character

Participants described learning Human Skills from the shows and characters they watched. Human Skills, as part of the Katz Three-Skill Approach, are the people skills needed to work effectively with “followers, peers, and superiors to accomplish the organization's goals” (Northouse, 2016, p. 45). Alejandro and Kelly learned conflict skills, Hannah learned how to forgive, and George learned how to talk to diverse individuals. Since shows are about individuals, be it humans, humanoids, animals or anthropomorphic objects, and their interactions with other individuals, it makes sense that viewers could observe different interpersonal techniques and skills.

It is interesting to note how with this study’s sample, participants only shared learning interpersonal skills as opposed to technical skills. For this sample, none of the participants mentioned watching cooking, home decor, or fashion shows, or any other shows designed to intentionally teach audiences different technical skills. This is not to say individuals do not learn technical skills from shows, however participants did not bring this up during their interviews. Learning skills from characters reinforces Social Learning Theory and Social Cognitive Theory.

Expanding Motivations

Motivated by Character

While characters are written to motivate other characters, they can end up motivating their audience as well. The participants of this study found themselves

motivated to take action, or even to be a leader themselves. Kyle reflected on the usefulness of motivational quotes by characters, Kelly shared how she derived motivation from Rocky, and George, Sophia and Mike shared their motivation to be leaders came from characters in the shows and movies they watched. A big part of what participants described in their interviews was seeing characters model behavior they then could replicate themselves. Lussier and Achua (2016) explain how Expectancy Theory “proposes that people are motivated when they believe they can accomplish the task, they will get the reward, and the reward for doing the task are worth the effort” (p. 88). By seeing leadership modeled in the shows and movies they watched, it is possible participants saw how leadership could be done, believed they could do leadership or be leaders, and thus were motivated to pursue leadership themselves. Again, this is Social Learning Theory and Social Cognitive Theory at work, and possibly some Identification and Wishful Identification at play as well.

Similar to Self Awareness, it is important to reflect on character portrayals and portrayals of leadership in entertainment media; there are good examples and not-so-good examples of leadership being portrayed. Viewers can learn from both, and reflect on what they could do and what they would prefer not to do.

Developmental Influences

A deductive lens was used to analyze the data collected through the interviews. From the open coding process, themes emerged which fit the different aspects of the Developmental Influences component of the Leadership Identity Development Model.

Adult / Peer Influences

Admire Character

Many participants mentioned admiring different fictional characters. Sophia admired Ron from *Parks and Rec*; George admired strong characters, particularly strong male characters but strong female characters also; Hannah admired Hermione from *Harry Potter* and Katniss from *The Hunger Games*; and Aaron admired Woody from *Toy Story*, Neo from *The Matrix*, and Grant from *Jurassic Park*. Again with Social Learning Theory, “people learn by observing and then emulating the values, attitudes, and behavior of people they find legitimate, attractive, and credible” (Johnson, 2016, p. 230). These participants described the characters they admired as either being legitimate, attractive or credible in their characterization. This echoes Cohen (2001) who shared how audience members will experience Identification with characters they have an affinity to or admire.

Hoffner and Buchanan (2005) found men to be more likely to identify with male characters “whom they perceived as successful, intelligent, and violent” while women were more likely to identify with “female characters whom they perceived as successful, intelligent, attractive, and admired” (p. 342). With the exception of Sophia, each of the other participants described admiring characters of the same gender as themselves: George primarily admired strong male characters for their strength, confidence and presence; Hannah admired Hermione and Katniss for their intelligence, boldness, strength care of others and masculine traits; and Aaron admired Woody, Neo and Grant for their loyalty,

morality, growth, leadership, protectiveness, power, adaptability, strength, values, personality, intelligence, paternalism, and selflessness.

Character Provided Example

Participants shared how they saw characters provide examples for them on how something could be done or what something looks like in practice. Roberto watched military movies to see what to expect at boot camp; Aaron saw a model wife in Mary's character in *It's a Wonderful Life*; Alejandro saw different aspects of leadership portrayed by Ned from *Game of Thrones* and Sandy Cheeks in *SpongeBob SquarePants*, and also saw how public schoolers interacted on *Boy Meets World* to prepare for transferring from private to public school; Bernard also saw different leadership styles portrayed in *Newsroom*; Crysta saw how real world issues could be addressed from watching *The Office*, *Friends*, and *To Save a Life*; Kelly saw how to interact with others from the show *Friends*, and Lee was able to make sense of a situation he had with his Dad based on a similar situation he saw on *NCIS*. In each of these instances, the characters in the shows modeled the way for viewers.

Kouzes and Posner (2008) found exemplary leaders to follow similar patterns of behavior when it came to leading teams. They took these patterns to develop a model of leadership called The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership. The first practice is Model the Way. Instead of telling others how to behave, leaders set the example with their own behavior. They serve as role models. In the case of the participants in this study, they found various characters to provide examples, model the way, for them to choose to model their behavior off of. This echoes Bandura (2001), who explained how

role models provide examples for and legitimize new practices, as well as Preda and Stan's (2016) study, which found how adults do look to fictional characters as role models for leadership.

Character and Real Example

Fictional characters are not the only influence on one's behavior, real people also play a huge role in leadership development. For some participants, they specified fictional characters and real people in their lives influenced them. Bernard learned authoritative leadership from *The Sopranos* and his Dad, George learned from shows and from his parents, Kyle learned from the characters from *Mobile Suit Gundam Wing* and *Dragon Ball Z* in addition to his Dad and Marine Corp Sergeants, and Lee learned from his parents but saw examples of what they taught him in the shows he watched. Not all influence comes from entertainment media, however as Bernard and Lee pointed out, entertainment media can compliment what real people in our lives teach us. This reaffirms Social Learning Theory and Social Cognitive Theory. For this sample, the there was a relationship between fictional characters and real people influencing them. What is interesting is each of these participants referenced their parents, which would make sense because children will imitate their parents' behaviors and speech mannerisms as they grow and develop their identities (Cramer, 2001). Bass (1990) found children who were raised with positive parental interaction were more likely to attempt leadership. This also reaffirms the original Leadership Identity Development Theory, since parents play an important role in a person's initial leadership identity development, and fictional characters can play a role as well (Komives et al., 2005).

SLT / SCT

A number of participants simply described learning from other people in their lives in addition to when they specified learning from fictional characters. Aaron learned from his fellow Marines, Lee learned from his parents, and Mike learned from fellow FFA officers. Social Learning Theory (SLT) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) were at play; media is not the only influencer of a person's development, but simply plays a role in the larger pool of influencers.

Meaningful Involvement

Real World Leadership Experience

When asked about their leadership experience, all participants mentioned real-life experiences. These experiences ranged from youth programs to work experience to military experience, to the fine arts. For this sample, there was no mention of gaining leadership experience through virtual or online platforms. This could mean these participants had constraining mental models of where they could develop leadership from (Astin & Astin, 2000), or they may not have had much experience in online communities or geographically dispersed teams to practice virtual leadership.

Reflective Learning

Names / Recognizes Leadership Concept

A number of the participants were able either clearly articulate a specific leadership theory, model or concept, or were to at least reference one even if they could not remember the name. Alejandro mentioned controlling the elephant, which is in reference to the Motivate the Elephant element of change as outlined by Heath and

Heath (2010). Bernard referenced Blake and Mouton's Leadership Grid when describing his leadership as Middle of the Road, Three-Skill Approach when he mentioned he tried not to be too technical with his leadership, and the Behavioral Approach to leadership when referencing his tendency to be task-oriented as opposed to relationally oriented (Northouse, 2016). Kyle specified his belief in the Great Man Approach, which describes the belief people are born leaders based on hereditary properties (Bass, 1981). Lastly, Lyra referenced Situational Leadership as being meaningful to her when it came to follower development; Situational Leader describes how a leader must adapt their leadership style to their follower's level of competency and commitment to a task (Northouse, 2016).

What is notable is each of these participants were seniors. Having gone through an entire degree program on leadership, the responses of these seniors affirms the findings of Williams, Townsend and Linder (2005), where their study found leadership students do retain and use leadership knowledge if connected to experience.

Names / Recognizes Leadership Concept in Media

In addition to mentioning and referencing leadership concepts in general, some participants were able to articulate specific leadership theories, models and concepts they had observed in entertainment media. Lee described the diverse presentation of leadership in *NCIS*: Relational Leadership Model, Transformational and Transactional Leadership, Skills Approaches, Leadership Identity Development, Theory X and Theory Y and Situational Leadership. Lyra shared how by watching characters interactions in shows, she was able to recognize and make sense of Situational Leadership.

What is notable again is how these participants were also seniors. Having gone through an entire degree program on leadership, the responses of these seniors affirms the findings of Williams, Townsend and Linder (2005), where their study found leadership students do retain and use leadership knowledge if connected to experience. In this case, these seniors had each experienced a leadership program which heavily relied on public pedagogy. This could imply leadership students can retain leadership knowledge through public pedagogy or through vicarious experiences through the entertainment media they had in their classes.

Public Pedagogy

For these participants, the use of public pedagogy had an impact on them: how they learned and how they taught others, and how they viewed entertainment media. Aaron, who was still Active Duty in the Marine Corps, described using public pedagogy himself when teaching his fellow Marines. Alejandro, Kelly and Bernard discussed class assignments where they had to analyze shows or movies to extract leadership and how doing so taught them to do it again outside the classroom.

With the exception of Aaron, these participants were each seniors. However Aaron was a nontraditional undergraduate student, already in his late twenties, who already had experience learning and teaching leadership through his career in the Marine Corps. The responses of these participants point to the usefulness of public pedagogy as a teaching method, which reaffirms the findings of Williams and McClure (2010) who found public pedagogy to be the most effective teaching method when it came to student retention of course concepts. When it comes to learning leadership, this makes sense:

leadership is about interpersonal skills and working with other people. Stories are about people and their interactions. By watching video clips of characters interacting with one another, you are watching other people interpersonally interacting with one another, seeing examples on how to speak, act, behave, lead, and follow. Public pedagogy is a more effective method than other forms because students see “real examples,” and also learn to learn from media (critical media literacy, critical leadership media literacy), instead of simply passively watching for entertainment.

Thesis Announcement Sparked Reflection

For some participants, hearing about the premise of this research prompted them to reflect on the role entertainment media played in their life and leadership identity development. Alejandro shared how after hearing the call for participants in class and later watching *The Goldbergs*, he was able to use critical media literacy, or critical leadership media literacy, to assess the mother’s actions and come to a better understanding of her motives. Kyle expressed his interest in the topic when the announcement was made in class, and how upon hearing it he spent time reflecting on the shows he watched and realizing the effect the characters had had on him. Mike shared his desire to continue to reflect on how the shows he watched growing up influenced him into being the person he had become.

For these participants, this thesis and research was found to be meaningful and eye-opening to a concept they had not thought of before. To them, they had not thought of entertainment media’s impact on their leadership development until the researcher had said something, which sparked their own reflection. People will advance in their

leadership development when they take time to reflect (Hughes, Ginnett & Curphy, 1993). These participants were able to broaden their understanding of their own leadership identity development through reflection, but specifically a reflection sparked by the topic of entertainment media's impact on leadership.

Entertainment media has shown to have made an impact on the sample in this study. With or without reflection, media has an impact; we are always surrounded by media. Reflection makes understanding this impact easier. Even engaging in entertainment media is a form of reflection. One reflects if they like or dislike what they are watching. Effective leaders take time to reflect (Hughes, Ginnett & Curphy, 1993), and one way to reflect can come through entertainment media.

Recommendations for Practitioners

This study has a number of implications for educators and practitioners, as well as researchers.

Educators and Practitioners

For leadership educators, there are strategies which can best be utilized to teach leadership, as well as some tips on how to better teach leadership concepts to their students.

The use of public pedagogy to teach leadership is crucial. This teaching method has been found to be effective by this study and other studies (Callahan & Rosser, 2007; Williams & McClure, 2010). The seniors in this study were able to articulate leadership concepts, but in general and in the shows they watched. They reflected on the helpfulness of video clip being used in their leadership classes, and their appreciation for

assignments where they needed to analyze a show or a film for leadership concepts. Participants also indirectly picked up the skill of critical media literacy by the use of public pedagogy in the classrooms by their instructors. If leadership educators want their students to retain what they are being taught, the use of public pedagogy is key.

When educators use public pedagogy, students are also learning critical media literacy (Tisdell & Thompson, 2007), which is an important skill to have in order to develop critical consciousness of the media they consume (Giroux & Simon, 1988; Robertson & Scheidler-Benns, 2016). People constantly consume entertainment media outside the classroom, and it is important for them to learn to be critical of the messages they are internalizing, especially when it comes to leadership. It is also important for practitioners and educators to be aware of where students are when they enter the classroom and what preconceived notions about leadership they may have derived from entertainment (and other forms of) media.

Critical media literacy is the ability to critically analyze entertainment media for the underlying messages being presented (Tisdell & Thompson, 2007). Critical leadership media literacy is being coined to describe the ability to analyze and interpret leadership models, theories, and philosophies in entertainment media. As Tisdell and Thompson (2007) point out, individuals learn critical media literacy when entertainment media (public pedagogy) is used as a teaching method. Callahan and Rosser (2007) argue for leadership educators should embrace pop culture in the classroom, and Weber (2001) and Güven & Keleşoğlu (2014) points out doing so develops critical thinking and analytical skills in students. Critical leadership media literacy should be regarded as a

legitimate skill and leadership competency educators teach students. By equipping students with critical leadership media literacy, educators will prepare students to be proactive and critical of the leadership messages they consume in entertainment media. Leadership students should be able to reflect upon what they observe in entertainment media and how they would integrate what they see into their leadership style: what worked, what did not work, what could be improved, what would I do the same and what do differently? This reflection, even in one's leisure time outside the classroom, will improve their overall leadership development (Hughes, Ginnett & Curphy, 1993).

To effectively use public pedagogy, leadership educators need to continually update the popular culture and entertainment media artifacts being used in the classroom to remain relevant to their students. Educators need to be aware of the generational differences of their students and the shows their students may be most familiar with. For example, when it came to referencing shows they grew up watching, many participants listed shows which aired on Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon and Disney Channel or other channels in the early 2000s when they were in elementary and middle school. However, with the case of Aaron, Bernard, Kyle, and Roberto, who were older, nontraditional students, they mainly referenced shows from the 1980s and 1990s. While some shows such as Family Guy and the Simpsons have prolonged air dates over decades and other shows such as Friends remain in popularity in succeeding generations, other shows remain culturally tied to the years in which they aired. Educators can survey students for their favorite shows, movies, books, comics, games, magazines and other popular culture

artifacts and take these into consideration when designing curriculum and examples for course material.

When educators prompt their students to reflect on their role models and who has influenced them, educators should specifically encourage students to think critically of their favorite fictional characters, or characters who have stood out to them, and reflect on the influences they may have had on them in addition to the influence real people in their lives have had. Educators should challenge students to include fictional character influences instead of listing them as optional additions to the real people in their lives. The participants in this study showed how fictional characters can have a significant impact on one's behavior and leadership. Given how saturated our lives are in media, students need to learn to dissect the influence media has had on them and their leadership.

Fictional characters can have a power influence on viewers, can provide inspirational motivation, and can Model the Way for viewers when it comes to what they should believe, how they should act, and how they should lead. Educators need to be aware of preconceived notions and any constraining beliefs students may have when entering the leadership classroom, and be aware of the role entertainment media may have played (Astin & Astin, 2000). Not all students will have developed critical leadership media literacy by the time they begin their intentional leadership development journey; it is important for leadership educators to be able to show different styles of leadership in the classroom and help students to learn to recognize those different styles in themselves and in others, and in the media.

When it comes to the Leader-Member Exchange Theory, leadership textbooks will describe the components of the theory instead of providing tips on how to utilize the method. Take for instance Northouse (2016) and Lussier and Achua (2016): both textbooks outline what the in-groups and out-groups are and how leaders will have limited resources to develop strong relationships with all followers, but neither describes the process of developing in-groups or how to be more inclusive towards those in a leader's out-group. Other theories may augment the Leader-Member Exchange Theory in how to develop relationships with followers or how to tailor one's leadership to their follower, however if teaching the Leader-Member Exchange Theory on its own, educators can suggest for students as leaders to find connections with their teams and followers with the shows and movies they share in common. Perhaps entertainment media, fictional characters and memorable quotes can serve as a bridge between a leader and their followers.

Along the same lines, leadership educators can teach how water cooler shows can serve as the resource leaders tap into when forming teams and relationships. During the forming stage of group development team members meet one another for the first time and clarify goals (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). By making connections with others based on shared favorite shows, leaders can form relationships with others and bring in different individuals they work with into their in-group.

There are also some recommendations for practitioners in the media industry. Content creators, such as writers, screenwriters, actors and directors should be aware of the leadership they are portraying in the stories they are telling and the possible impact

and consequences these messages may have on viewers. Is what is being portrayed going to inspire viewers, or have the opposite effect? If creators and writers wanted to have a better understanding of leadership theories styles and practices, team dynamics, and relevant and realistic portrayals of leadership, they may want to reach out to leadership educators and practitioners for consultation.

Researchers

This study did not seek to change the Leadership Identity Development model, but instead to point to the idea entertainment media may play a larger role in the process of leadership identity development than initially found. For leadership researchers, it is worth exploring the gap in research regarding entertainment media effects on leadership development, leadership identity development, and perceptions of leadership. It is time the leadership community explore this new area of research.

The participants in this study showed how entertainment media and fictional characters could impact the leadership identity development process. Future studies could explore this impact more, such as how the amount and type of entertainment media may impact this process, and how entertainment media impacts a person depending on what stage they are in the LID model: do entertainment media and fictional characters have a different impact on someone at stage one Awareness compared to Stage four Leadership Differentiated? Or stage six, Integration/Synthesis? It was beyond the scope of this study to explore this in detail.

This thesis used a qualitative methodology to explore the gap in both leadership literature and media effects literature in regards to how entertainment media shapes

leadership identity development. A duplication of this study's methods could further affirm this study's findings, and a quantitative study would be able to measure and find statistical evidence for entertainment media's impact on leadership development.

Different samples could be used, such as the inclusion of more non-White students, more females, and non-leadership students to gain their perspectives on this topic. A study could explore experts in leadership (researchers, professors, and/or practitioners) as well as novices to leadership (those with minimal or no leadership education) to further explore the impact entertainment media has on leadership. It would be interesting to understand how experts in leadership view portrayals of leadership in entertainment media compared to those who have not received formal leadership training or education. Other studies could use other theoretical frameworks other than the Leadership Identity Development Theory to explore how entertainment media impacts leader and leadership development. For instance, a Cultivation Analysis could be done, and other communication and media theories such as Uses and Gratifications Theory could be used.

Additional studies could explore what role entertainment media plays in one's leadership self-efficacy, which is "a specific form of efficacy associated with the level of confidence in the knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with leading others" (Hannah et al., 2008, p. 669). Studies could also explore the role of entertainment media in one's motivation to lead, which refers to how readily a person will seek out leadership development and accept leadership roles (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). Some of the participants in this study shared how characters motivated them, even into

leadership, however there may be others who are not motivated, possibly de-motivated, based on any constraining beliefs about leadership they may consume from entertainment media (Shertzer & Schuh, 2004).

Other studies could explore the connection between idealized leaders and characters in entertainment media when it comes to gender bias, and fictional role models in general. It would also be worth exploring the impact of entertainment media on followership and how viewers interpret what it means to be a follower. Other studies can focus on specified forms of entertainment media, such as reality shows, popular YouTube channels, and social media “celebrities.” It would also be interesting to explore if there is a difference in the impact fictional characters have on leadership development compared to characters based on real people. For instance, is the leadership portrayed in *Remember the Titans* and *Apollo 13* different and/or have a different impact than the leadership portrayed in *The Avengers* or *Star Wars*?

Researchers should also reexamine the definition of Giroux’s (2000) term public pedagogy. Pedagogy refers to youth learning while andragogy refers to adult learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Public pedagogy is the use of popular culture artifacts, such as entertainment media, as a tool to teach content in the classroom (Giroux, 2000). If popular culture artifacts, such as entertainment media, are being used in adult education settings, would the proper terminology be public andragogy? If the way you teach youth and the way you teach adults is different, would this imply the way entertainment media is used to teach youth is different than it is to teach adults? It would be worth the consideration of exploring the terminology and the implications of doing

so, as it may be more than a matter of semantics. Broadening the terminology may help fight the stigma against using popular culture and entertainment media in the classroom, giving it more legitimacy (Giroux & Simon, 1988).

Komives et al.'s (2005; 2006; 2009) research has scratched the surface on developing influences on one's leadership identity development, and leadership development overall. More research should explore what other factors influence one's leadership, with a more broad and diverse sample. Research should also dive more into the role of fictional characters, as well as characters based on real people, play in one's leadership development. As Wright and Sandlin (2009) stated:

Although there has been excellent work on popular culture within the field of adult education, and although this line of work is currently gaining momentum, adult educators and researchers need to persist in vigorous exploration of the intersections of popular culture, adult education, and adult learning, as well as to continue conducting critical textual and semiotic analysis of popular culture products in and of themselves. (p. 133)

Summary

In summary, this thesis attempted to explore the gap in both leadership literature and media effects literature in regards to how entertainment media shapes leadership identity development. As people grow and develop as leaders, they experience various factors that influence their leadership identity development. This includes their self development and developmental influences (Komives et al., 2005). In Komives et al.'s (2005) study, fictional characters were mentioned briefly as being adult influences on

youth as they see examples of leadership in entertainment media. People do learn from watching others and watching entertainment media (Bandura, 1973; Bandura, 1978; Bandura, 1986; Bandura, 1989; Bandura, 2001; Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961; Luthans & Kreitner, 1975; Williams, 1986), and do learn leadership from watching others and watching entertainment media (Davies et al. 2005; Simon and Hoyt, 2012).

The purpose of this research is to explore the gap in both leadership literature and media effects literature in regards to how entertainment media shapes leadership identity development. This was an exploratory qualitative study in order to understand what role do entertainment media play in influencing an individual's leadership identity development. This study sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ 1: What is the impact of entertainment media and fictional characters on the Developing Self factor of the Leadership Identity Development Model?

RQ2: What is the impact of entertainment media and fictional characters on the Developmental Influences factor of the Leadership Identity Development Model?

Through a qualitative study using a constructivist approach, this thesis was able to address both questions. The participants in this study showed how entertainment media and fictional characters could impact the leadership identity development process. A series of recommendations were provided based on the findings and conclusions as they related to leadership educators and practitioners.

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APPENDIX A
IRB OUTCOME LETTER

DIVISION OF RESEARCH



EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

October 02, 2018

Type of Review:	Amendment
Title:	ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA EFFECTS ON LEADERSHIP IDENTITY
Investigator:	Jennifer Strong
IRB ID:	IRB2018-0914M
Reference Number:	082752
Documents Reviewed:	IRB Amendment Version 1.0; IRB Application Version 1.3; Informed Consent v.3 Version 3.0

Dear Jennifer Strong:

The HRPP determined on 10/02/2018 that this research meets the criteria for Exemption in accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b) under Category 2: Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior unless: the information is recorded in an identifiable manner and any disclosure of the subjects' responses outside of research could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability or reputation.

Your exemption is good for five (5) years from the initial Approval Start Date of 07/24/2018. At that time, you must contact the IRB with your intent to close the study or request a new determination.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Administrative Office at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636.

Sincerely,
IRB Administration

750 Agronomy Road, Suite 2701
1186 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-1186

Tel. 979.458.1467 Fax. 979.862.3176
<http://rcb.tamu.edu>

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Deepening Self-Awareness

- What were your favorite television shows growing up?
- What are your favorite television shows currently?
- What were your favorite fictional characters growing up?
- What are your favorite fictional characters currently?
- What role has fictional TV/characters played in your life?
- Who on TV (past or present) do you identify with? Why?
- Describe your experiences as a leader
- When did you first recognize leaders in the television shows you watched?
- What leaders stood out to you?
- How has your leadership identity developed over the years?
- Did a character ever model a behavior or say something that resonated with you, inspiring you to integrate that behavior/what they said into yourself/your identity?

Building Self Confidence

- Describe a time when you changed your actions or behavior based on what you saw in a show / character?
- When was a time you tried something new based on what you saw on television?
- Describe a time when your self esteem was boosted by a fictional character?
- Tell me a time when a TV character learned a “valuable lesson” and you feel like you learned it along with him/her

Establishing Interpersonal Efficacy

- How Have you built community based around a television show or character (water cooler talk, twitter, reddit)?
- Did you ever model behavior after a fictional character? Describe
- Did interactions between characters serve as a model for how you could interact with other people?
- What interpersonal skills did you learn from television / fictional characters?

Applying New Skills

- Were there any leadership skills you learned from / modeled after television / characters?
- Did you ever turn to television / fictional characters to see how a skills or behavior was modeled when learning the skill yourself?

Expanding Motivations

- Have you ever gone and done something because you saw it on television?
- Were you ever motivated to be a leader based on what you saw in television?