AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF EMPATHY ON PROPENSITY TO LEAD

by

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to contribute to the body of literature related to organizational leadership by investigating the relationship between propensity to lead, as determined by cumulative incidents of leadership and empathy, as measured by the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale. Contemporary literature relevant to the subject suggested a dearth of information regarding the relationship between these variables. The sample population, male students who were active members of college social fraternities in the southeastern region of the United States, represented existing social groupings wherein leadership and empathy could be tested and results compared within and between sample clusters. Results, though statistically inconclusive, provided evidence that a positive relationship may exist between empathy and leadership propensity. This relationship suggests that one's empathetic capacity may, to some extent, predict one's propensity to assume leadership, especially when one's empathy remains within social norms.

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines who proudly serve our nation as defenders of the principles established within the Constitution of the United States of America. Let us never confuse patriotism with blind loyalty, nor forget the importance of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Scholars and practitioners alike have sought to gain a deeper, more contemporary insight into the nature of leadership (Bass, 1990). They hope that this insight might result in the development of more effective approaches to improve leadership both in terms of predicting who among us possesses greater than average potential to lead effectively, as well as in terms of improving the skills of current and future leaders. This chapter contains a detailed explanation of the purpose of this study into the nature of the relationship between empathy and the propensity to lead. Chapter 2 will present an overview of the available literature that outlines the contributions of other scholars relevant to the present research. Chapter 3 will present the research design and methodology that will ensure the fidelity of the study.

Problem Statement

Organizations spanning the full range of social enterprises, from for-profit corporations to government agencies, expend extraordinary effort and resources to identify, encourage, and develop leadership potential among members and prospective members (Fiedler, 1996). Scholars recognize their responsibility to support practitioners' efforts by engaging in rigorous empirical research dedicated to finding practical, sustainable, and cost-effective models that may be used to identify and develop future leaders before their entrance into the workforce (Campbell, 1971; Fiedler, 1996). Contemporary leadership literature increasingly reports evidence of a strong, positive correlation between competencies related to emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness (Everding, 1998; Goleman, 1998b). There is, however, a disturbing dearth of empirical data relating to the potential link between empathy, which is an important subcomponent of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998b), and leadership propensity. This lack of information creates a void in the annals of scholarly literature concerning the leadership that

may have a significant impact on the content and effectiveness of leader development programs in college curricula.

Background

Despite the fact that the concept of leadership has been of interest to scholars and practitioners throughout the history of humankind (Bass, 1990), it has only been the subject of empirical research since the beginning of the 20th century (Chemers, 1994). Guided by the belief that leaders are physically or emotionally different from the rest of society, in early empirical studies, researchers sought to identify specific traits that caused some people to emerge as leaders (Chemers, 1994). Later, researchers began to explore the possibility that leadership was more complex, involving behavioral and situational aspects (Harrison, 1999).

Fully aware of the complexity of the concept, Burns (1978) lamented that "Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth" (p. 2). In a more specific complaint, Metcalfe (1982) offered that theorists had spent too much time and effort developing esoteric, macro-level leadership theories that do not offer practical models for developing effective leader training programs. Literature on leadership training, Campbell (1971) decried, "is voluminous, non-empirical, non-theoretical, poorly written, and dull" (p. 565). Speaking for like-minded scholars, Metcalfe (1982) challenged researchers to find specific elements that, when developed, may be useful in creating training situations and programs to show managers how to become more effective as leaders. Fiedler (1996), agreeing with Metcalfe's challenge, also called for more meaningful and rigorous research, reasoning that because leadership is critical to success, organizations willingly spend a great deal of time and money on training programs despite that few of them are based on sound research. Scholars and researchers, he demanded, have a responsibility to conduct more focused and rigorous studies.

Discounting past research focuses, Fiedler (1996) noted that intelligence and experience have been found to be unrelated to leader effectiveness. If those concepts cannot account for leadership effectiveness, other factors must be explored. Cherniss (2002), offering a different path of inquiry, proposed that emotion is essential to leadership, explaining that underlying the study of emotional intelligence is the agreement in principle with Fiedler's assessment that leadership success cannot be explained through rational intelligence alone. Rosenthal (1977), seemingly in support of this path of study, had already found that adults who are able to predict the emotional reactions of others tend to be more successful at work and have more satisfying interpersonal relationships. Cherniss (2002) warned though that emotional intelligence alone is not the proximate cause of leader effectiveness. Instead, it supports a foundation upon which other competencies may be developed.

Accepting the concept that emotional intelligence refers to self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill, Goleman (1998b) believed that it is the fundamental factor that allows for the understanding of oneself and others well enough to move people towards goal accomplishment. Cherniss (2002) noted that though emotional intelligence is generally considered to comprise 20 different competencies, one need not excel at all of them to be an effective leader.

Human relationships are bound by the need to be understood (Kunyk & Olson, 2001). Increasingly, more evident social diversity and awareness of cultural differences make emotional intelligence, and more specifically, empathy, which is a primary subcomponent, a legitimate focal point for empirical research designed to identify effective and practical methods to teach leader development (Everding, 1998). In keeping with Metcalfe's (1982) challenge to researchers, empirical support, gathered through psychological and developmental research,

suggests that emotional intelligence is not only key to leader effectiveness, but also trainable (Fisher, 1998; Goleman, 1998a; Hays, 1999; Weisinger, 1998).

Some researchers (Aspy, 1975; Benack, 1988; Harrison, 1999; Yager & Hector, 1980), utilizing a more narrowly focused approach, provides evidence that the most effective way to meet the challenge of creating practical leader development programs is to concentrate on empathy. Empathy, they argued, is critical to emotional intelligence, which is, in turn, crucial to leadership effectiveness and is trainable. Of course, practitioners seek to understand how to develop leadership in themselves and others, but, equally important, they need to know how to identify people with high leadership potential (Bass, 1990; Mumford, Zaccaro, Connelly, & Marks, 2000). If empathy can be used to increase leadership effectiveness, can it also be used to predict leadership potential and determine whether individuals with high empathetic capacity gravitate toward leadership roles?

Purpose

The purpose of this quantitative, correlation study was to analyze the relationship between the propensity to lead and empathy among active members of college social fraternities in the southeastern region of the United States. The dependent variable was propensity to lead, which was assessed through self-reporting of cumulative experience in formal leadership positions within organized social enterprises, spanning an individual's high school and college career, wherein leaders are elected or appointed by members of the organization. The independent variable, empathy, was objectively measured using the Balanced Emotional Empathy scale (Mehrabian, 2000).

Significance of the Study

The research has the potential to provide empirical information that may contribute to both the practical and theoretical discussions of leadership and leader effectiveness. Data from this study may potentially be useful to practitioners in several distinct ways. First, it may help to provide focus for current leader development programs, which may make them more cost effective. Specifically, this research has the potential to provide support for or against the continued research into the feasibility of the use of empathy as a focal point for improved organizational leadership. Second, it may provide the same type of focus for individuals interested in self-improvement. Information from this study may also provide insight into whether one's degree of empathetic skill is significantly related to increased opportunities to lead.

Third, this correlation analysis may be used as a test of the usefulness of the Balanced Emotional Empathy scale (BEES) as a predictor of leadership propensity. If results indicate a correlation between the BEES scores and the propensity to gravitate toward leadership opportunities, organizations may use it as a screening tool to predict leadership potential among members and prospective members. Because of theoretical links between empathy and leadership effectiveness, using the BEES as a predictive tool should encourage organizational success by improving the quality of leadership throughout the organization.

Finally, there is a desperate worldwide need for leaders who are ethical and moral (Hosmer, 2003). Empathy has already been shown, convincingly, to be highly correlated to pro-social moral reasoning (Mehrabian, et al., 1988). Research that may lead colleges and universities to use objective measures of empathy to more accurately identify potential future leaders, may have a profound and lasting effect on organizations and society at large. If only one

great future leader is identified early and encouraged to lead on sound moral and ethical principals, the course of the humankind may be altered.

Significance of the Study to Leadership

The study's significance to scholars may be somewhat different, but no less important, from its significance to practitioners. It has the potential to provide three significant contributions to contemporary leadership literature. First, it may be useful as foundational support for further inquiry into the development of practical approaches to teach individuals how to become leaders and how to improve their leadership skills. This research may be used to advance the debate about the feasibility of teaching leadership by manipulating this single competency that is theoretically linked to effectiveness (Goleman, 1998b) and is trainable (Harrison, 1999).

Second, this research may serve as a contribution to leadership literature by providing deeper insight into the nature of leadership. Trait and behavioral theorists suggested that leadership resides within individuals, either as innate personal traits or through their behavior respectively (Bass, 1990). Situational and environmental theorists proposed that leadership does not reside within an individual but instead is bestowed upon individuals based on the situations in which they find themselves or on the desires of the constituency (Bass, 1990). If the score of the BEES is found to be correlated to propensity to lead, there may be additional support for the conception of trait theorists that leadership is inherent in individuals and manifests as a result of the influence of specific individual traits. If no correlation is found, the study may be considered supportive of situational or environmental theories that suggest that leadership is not inherent in people, but rather is a result of some other situational or environmental variable.

Finally, generally speaking, greater experience and more training in any skill results in a more effective application of that skill. So too is leadership effectiveness affected by experience and training. The earlier a person can be made aware of his or her exceptional potential to lead, the more opportunity the person has to focus on improving relevant skills contributing to the art of leadership. This research has the potential to provide empirical support for an objective measurement of one's empathetic skill in relation to leadership. The knowledge could be used to inform potential leaders very early in their college careers, allowing them more time to focus on developmental experience before they enter the workforce.

Nature of the Study

This quantitative, correlation research was used to investigate a possible relationship between propensity to serve in positions of leadership and the degree to which an individual is capable of empathizing with others. The research population consisted of active, undergraduate members of college social fraternities in the southeastern United States.

A primary objective of this study was to provide foundational support for further research about the development of leader development programs that may be incorporated into the curricula of colleges and universities, such that students may be better prepared to assume leadership roles when they enter the workforce. Keeping that objective in mind, it was only natural to concentrate on college and university students. Furthermore, Adams and Keim (2000) noted that more than 600 colleges and universities in the United States include leader development in their curricula, many of them even include this intent in their mission statements.

Using college social fraternities as a target population provided two distinct advantages. First, these organizations represent relatively homogeneous groups of people who elect leaders from among their membership. Second, contemporary literature suggests that fraternity and

sorority involvement provides members with increased opportunities to develop leadership skills that are useful beyond college (Astin, 1993; Hughes & Winston, 1987; Kuh & Lyons, 1990; Strange, 1986). In this way, fraternities represent a pool of potential future organizational leaders.

The researcher mailed questionnaires to 10 southeastern chapters, of a single national fraternity. This technique provided a cluster sample of active, male, undergraduate members of college social fraternities in the southeastern United States. Because the focus of this research was on leadership and empathy, both interpersonal social phenomena, the use of naturally occurring social enterprises, rather than randomly selected individuals, complemented the research. Borg and Gall (1989) supported the use of cluster sampling when it is more appropriate to study naturally occurring groups.

The researcher contacted chapter leaders to encourage them to distribute the questionnaires to chapter members just before or immediately following a regularly scheduled chapter meeting, asking members to complete and return the survey packets at that time. Individual respondents, therefore, represented a convenience sample of the active, male, undergraduate members in southeastern chapters of one national college social fraternity. The use of convenience sampling is considered acceptable when there is no requirement for a representative sample (Leedy & Ormond, 2001). This research compared respondents to one another; it was therefore unnecessary to select a representative sample of the research population.

The nature of the problem, with which this research was concerned, made it ideally suited for quantitative analysis. The research consisted in an inquiry into the relationship between two objective and measurable variables. A quantitative versus a qualitative methodology may provide a more significant contribution to future research about leadership development.

Although correlation analysis does not provide convincing evidence of causation, it does indicate the existence of relationships variables. This knowledge assists researchers by allowing more focused investigation into causation between variables that are shown to exhibit strong correlation. This research was intended to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between empathy and leadership propensity, such that its findings may be useful in the creation of more effective leader identification and training programs in colleges and universities.

Research Question and Hypotheses

Research Question

Leadership practitioners have called for researchers to develop more effective methods of teaching leadership (Fiedler, 1996; Metcalfe, 1982). To achieve that objective it is necessary to identify leader competencies that, when manipulated, have a significant impact on leadership. Empathy has been identified as having the potential to be that type of leader competency (Aspy, 1975; Benack, 1988; Yager & Hector, 1980; Harrison, 1999); however, there seems to be a dearth of empirical data that describing the nature of relationship between these two concepts. This research is guided by the question: What is the nature of the relationship between empathy and the propensity to serve in positions of leadership? The answer to this question will contribute to the understanding of the nature of the relationship between empathy and leadership.

Hypotheses

A person's success in social situations is mediated by competence at social skills (Cherniss, 2002; Condren, 2002; Goleman, 1998a). Evidence indicates that empathy is a skill that is correlated with social success and personal satisfaction (Condren, 2002; Kunyk & Olson, 2001). Regardless of whether leadership is a personal trait or behavior, it is also, by definition, a social construct (Bass, 1990). As a social construct, leadership represents a role that individuals

fulfill within social enterprises (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). Empathy has been found to be highly correlated with leadership effectiveness (Goleman, 1998b). It seems reasonable to assume that empathy is also highly correlated with an individual's tendency towards positions of leadership, whether from a personal attraction for leadership or from a tendency of others to recruit the individual to fill leadership voids.

The alternative hypotheses were used to test the theoretical relationship between empathy and leadership propensity. The alternative hypothesis, and its sub-hypotheses, hold a positive correlation between the two variables, such that high a propensity to serve in leadership positions should predict a high score on the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (BEES).

- H_1: Propensity to lead is positively related to empathy.
- H_{1a}: High propensity to lead is significantly related to high empathy.
- H_{1b}: Low propensity to lead is significantly related to low empathy.

Hypothetical statements cannot be proven conclusively (Creswell, 1994). As a result, researchers are relegated to finding support, or lack of support, for hypothetical statements by testing converse statements--null hypotheses. Showing a lack of support for a null hypothesis suggests that it is probable that its alternative is true (Creswell, 1994). To determine the accuracy of the alternative hypotheses, the research tested the following null hypotheses:

- H_0: There does not exist a significant, positive relationship between empathy and propensity for leadership.
- H_{0a}: High propensity to lead is not significantly correlated to high empathy.
- H_{0b}: Low propensity to lead is not significantly correlated to low empathy.

Conceptual Framework

The framework upon which this study was based incorporated conceptual relationships between theories about leadership, human psychology, and social interaction. The logic of the research was that leadership is a social activity, and those who are most adept at social skills should be most ideally suited for success as leaders of social enterprises. Individuals who possess the most potential for leadership success should be drawn to leadership positions, either as a result of an internal search for leadership opportunities or an external appointment to fill leadership voids. Empathy is a social skill; therefore, individuals who exhibit a high degree of empathy should be drawn to leadership positions. Leadership development and social involvement theories served to guide the research design and population selection for the study. Contemporary leadership development theorists suggest that college fraternities represent a leader training ground for their members (Kuh & Lyons, 1990). Social involvement theorists postulate that participation in social activities, such as fraternities and sororities, during college provides positive future outcomes related to work and life (Astin, 1993).

Operational Definitions

Leadership Experience

Bass (1990) complained that there are as many definitions of leadership as there are people who attempt to define the concept. Whether the concept refers to a human trait or behavior, a group process, or the exercise of power, it is necessarily a social concept that people generally consider to be a desirable quality (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). In this study, leadership experience was defined as any formal leadership role within any organized social enterprise throughout an individual's high school or college career wherein members of the organization elect or appoint leaders from their ranks.

Emotional Intelligence

Concepts related to emotional intelligence have been found in popular literature for over 60 years (Cherniss, 2002). The term refers to a combination of competencies including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill that contribute to one's ability to function in social situations (Caudron, 1999; Goleman, 1998b). Goleman (1998b) defined emotional intelligence, which he also called interpersonal intelligence, as the ability to monitor, understand, and respond appropriately to one's own and others' emotions well enough to move people towards goal accomplishment.

Empathy

Empathy has been defined in many ways (Howe, 1980), but two definitions have prevailed in popular literature (Mehrabian, Young, & Sato, 1988). Both describe empathy as a personal trait or state of being (Churchill & Bayne, 2001); however, the first emphasizes a cognitive ability to understand another person well enough to predict that person's thoughts, feelings, and actions (Dymond, 1949). The second focuses on the ability to vicariously experience another person's reality such that one is able to identify with that person's state of mind (Stotland, 1969; Warren, 1934). These two definitions of empathy highlight that empathy exists in both cognitive and affective forms. In this study, the researcher utilized a common definition that is general in nature and incorporated both cognitive and affective aspects of the concept. Jarrad (1956) defined empathy as an ability to predict the behavior or reaction of others based on identification with that person's state of mind.

Assumptions

The validity of this research was predicated on the assumption that respondents would honestly and accurately report leadership experiences despite the natural tendency of individuals

to wish to identify themselves and their personal experiences with leadership. The researcher attempted to compensate for this self-reporting bias by providing a very clear and narrow definition for leadership experiences that are relevant to the study. Leadership experience was defined as formal positions of leadership within organized social enterprises, wherein organization members elect or appoint leaders from within their ranks.

Scope, Limitations, and Delimitations

Scope

This descriptive research was designed to analyze the relative impact of empathetic skill on propensity to serve in leadership positions among undergraduate, male members of college social fraternities in the southeastern region of the United States. It was an investigation into the interaction of two variables and their impact on the dynamics of normative social groupings of people. This research was not intended to measure the relative empathetic capacity of one population over another, nor was it a test of the future potential of fraternity members to exhibit leadership in society at large. It was simply an inquiry into leadership as a crucial aspect in organization theory, and the emergence of leaders as a function of group dynamics. Therefore, the results found among this population should be generalizable to other normative organizations throughout society.

There is a precedence for the use of undergraduate college students, even male fraternity members, as research populations for the study of social interaction and group dynamics. Fredrickson, et al. (2003) selected undergraduate college students as the sample population to test their proposition that positive emotions are an important factor in the development of strong coping skills and the ability to thrive despite adversity. Littlepage and Mueller (1997) also studied undergraduate students for their examination of how characteristics and behavior of

experts influence recognition and utilization of their expertise. Zacarro and Collins' (1988) study of organizational commitment, organization rank, and the process of social interaction featured a population that is nearly identical to the one that will be used in this research--male, undergraduate members of college social fraternities.

Limitations

Two primary limitations are inherent in the design of this study. First, the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (Mehrabian, 2000) provides only one general measurement of empathy despite that popular scholars tend to agree that empathy exists in both affective and cognitive forms (Mehrabian, et al, 1988). As a result, this research design can only be expected to test for the existence of a relationship between empathy as a unified construct, as opposed to being useful in determining whether affective or cognitive empathy are independently related to the propensity to serve in positions of leadership.

Second, this descriptive design assumes that causation has already occurred. Therefore, this research will not be useful as a tool to determine whether the degree to which a person is able to empathize with others causes that person to gravitate to leadership. Instead, this study was intended to provide evidence for, or against, the potential use of empathetic capacity as a predictor of leadership propensity. Regardless of causation, evidence of the existence of a relationship between the subject variables provides support for deep investigation into the potential utility of empathetic capacity as a predictor of leadership propensity.

Delimitation

Two significant delimitations are inherent in the research design. First, the sample population consisted solely of male college students, despite the fact that researchers acknowledge that women have significantly greater empathetic skill (Mehrabian, 2000). The

research did not seek to determine how respondents felt about the importance of empathy or leadership, but rather how those variables may relate to each other. Just as leadership has a significant impact on effectiveness, regardless of the composition of the group (Bass, 1990; Fiedler, 1967), group composition should be similarly unimportant to the effect of any relationship between empathetic capacity and propensity to lead.

The second delimitation manifests in the definition of leadership. To accurately measure propensity to lead, it was necessary to clearly define leadership experience. For this study, leadership experience was defined as formal leadership positions spanning an individual's high school and college career in organized social enterprises wherein members elect or appoint leaders from within their ranks. This limited definition clearly excluded many experiences wherein people exhibited and exercised leadership. Expanding the definition, however, may have contaminated the research by allowing leadership experience to become a nebulous concept, which might have resulted in respondents considering many dubious experiences to be legitimate leadership experiences.

Summary

As presented in the preceding chapter, scholars and practitioners have expressed concern for their collective failure to provide more practical and effective methods for organizations to improve both predictive and developmental leadership tools. Particularly of note to the current research is the disturbing dearth of empirical information that might describe the nature of the relationship between empathy and leadership. The researcher proposed to contribute to the field of leadership by presenting deeper, more contemporary insight into the relationship between empathy and leadership. The results of this study will either provide further support for continued research about the potential to use empathy as a predictor of leadership and a tool for

leader development, or it will provide evidence of the impracticality of that sort of research. In Chapter 2, the researcher will present an overview of literature that is relevant to the current study. The literature review will be followed by a presentation of the methodology, results, and research conclusions in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the background and problem about the dearth of information concerning the relationship between empathy and leadership. This quantitative, correlation study serves to analyze the relationship between empathy and the propensity to lead among active members of college social fraternities in the southeastern region of the United States. The literature review will provide an overview of the scholarly contributions relevant to this research.

Leadership

Thorlindsson (1987), investigating productivity in a longitudinal study of fishing boats operating under identical conditions at sea, found that the leadership skill of the captain accounted for 35-40% of the vessel's productivity. In a separate study of workplace satisfaction, Lawshe and Nagle (1953) found that leadership contributed significantly to employee satisfaction and productivity. These are two relatively recent examples of empirical research that highlight the importance of leadership as a field of inquiry. Throughout history though, scholars have taken notice of the impact leadership has on society. In fact, Bass (1990) supposed that the subject has occupied the thoughts of humankind from the earliest days. As scholars developed a greater understanding of the concept and gathered more insight into the impetus for leadership, their focus seems to have shifted from the leader (Bird, 1940) to the situation or environment (Hersey & Blanchard, 1973) and, finally, to the interaction of the leader with the situation or environment (Yukl, 1971).

Classical Concepts of Leadership

Classical leadership theorists seemed to assume that leadership resides within certain individuals. Early exploration into the nature of leadership was an attempt to distinguish how

leaders differ from the rest of society (Bass, 1990). Trait theorists sought to determine which personal or character traits led to leadership (Bernard, 1926; Kohs & Irle, 1920; Tead, 1929). Bird (1940), following the example of earlier trait theorists, examined the results of 20 psychological studies to establish 79 personal and character traits common to leaders.

An underlying assumption in trait theories of leadership is that the concept cannot be learned. For them, people are born with qualities that will either make or not make them suitable leaders (Bass, 1990). Behaviorists, unwilling to accept the deterministic quality inherent in trait theories, sought to gain a better understanding of how leaders behave (Bass, 1990). Pigors (1936) proposed that leaders behave either as masters or trainers. Bales and Slater (1955) analyzed leader behavior relative to a group-based orientation, as opposed to the follower-focused orientation Pigors (1936) described. They suggested that leaders focus either on group productivity or group cohesion. Cattell and Stice (1954) examined behavior from still another perspective. They postulated that leader behavior may be categorized in four ways, based on the leaders' motivation for service to the group. Leaders may behave as (a) persistent problem solvers, (b) influence peddlers, (c) sociometric leaders who maintain group cohesion, or (d) elected leaders who focus on getting reelected. Freud (1922) and other psychoanalytic theorists (Erikson, 1964; Frank, 1939) were also interested in examining leader behavior but through the prism of the leaders' personal histories and childhood experiences. The leader, psychoanalysts supposed, may be understood to represent a father figure or source of love or fear (Bass, 1990).

As one of the primary objectives of understanding leadership is to learn how to help develop the skill and potential of others, the psychoanalytic approach provides no more promise than trait theories. An individual is no more able to change his or her personal history or childhood than he or she could change innate personal traits. Theorists of the modernist school

recognized this dilemma and determined that people could perhaps be taught to interact more effectively with followers, the situation, or the environment in order to perform more effectively as a leader.

Modern Concepts of Leadership

The humanist approach conceives of leadership not as something that resides within an individual, but instead as something that flows from appropriate management of followers (Bass, 1990). McGregor (1960) proposed theory X and theory Y management to address two styles of leadership based on basic assumptions about followers. Theory X leadership refers to directive leadership designed to counteract employees' natural tendency to avoid work and resist change. Conversely, theory Y management is participative and intended to nurture the natural motivation and willingness of employees to contribute to organizational goals.

Argyris (1957) also followed a basic assumption about employees, except that in his conception the problem is a fundamental conflict between organizational and individual goals. The organization, Argyris (1957) proposed, tends towards a desire to structure the participation of members and control their performance, whereas people have a natural tendency towards a desire for self-direction and self-actualization. The ideal manager, according to Argyris' (1957) maturity-immaturity model, is one who is able to build congruencies between the two conflicting objectives, such that people can work towards self-actualization while contributing effectively towards organizational success.

Both McGregor's (1960) and Argyris' (1957) conceptions of the nature of leadership allow for individuals to learn to be better leaders by understanding the needs of followers. Maslow (1965), on the other hand, postulated that understanding is not enough. Leadership, in Maslow's (1965) Eupsychian management theory, should not be left to those who seek

leadership, but should instead be reserved, on a strictly ad hoc basis, for those who generate spontaneously democratic input to earn followership from other organizational members. Although Maslow's focus remained on followers' need for self-actualization, his emphasis on the requirement for genuine and spontaneously democratic leadership hinders its usefulness as a leader development tool.

Humanist theorists used the relationship with followers to explain one's transition into leadership roles and subsequent potential for success, whereas Stogdill (1975) and other situational theorists (Bogardus, 1918; Bennis, 1961) alleged that leadership is the result of the convergence of circumstances. As early as 1918, Borgardus departed from the path of other scholars by maintaining that the type of leadership that develops in groups depends on the problems the group faces. Schneider (1937) echoed that sentiment by offering that individuals are only bestowed with leadership because they are able to exhibit behavior that is appropriate to the situation and desires of followers. Murphy (1941) extended that notion and claimed that leadership is resident not in individuals but in occasions. Bennis (1961) presented a more detailed observation of the way leadership emerges when he suggested that one must consider factors such as (a) bureaucratic interaction, (b) the informal organization and the inherent interpersonal relationships contained therein, (c) relationships between superiors and subordinates, (d) job design, and (e) congruence between individual and organizational goals.

Postmodern Concepts of Leadership

Critics argue that both classical and modernist conceptions of leadership are simplistic and inaccurate. They consider leadership to be a more complex phenomenon resulting from the interaction of personal behaviors and characteristics of the leader, dynamics of the group, as well as situational and environmental circumstances. A precursor of later postmodern theorists

Westburgh (1931) proposed that leadership is the combination of affective, intellectual, and action traits of leaders as well as the conditions under which they operate. This rudimentary postmodern conception hints at the complexity of leadership but continues to concentrate attention on personal traits.

Kahn and Quinn (1970) and Hemphill (1954) exemplified postmodern conceptions of leadership with their leader-role theory and leader role attainment theory, respectively. Kahn and Quinn (1970) stressed the interaction between individuals and the situations in which they find themselves; whereas Hemphill (1954) stated that leaders emerge based on their willingness to act on personal perception of the needs and desires of the group. Fiedler (1967) presented his contingency theory of leadership, which postulates that effectiveness of leaders, whether they are task-oriented or relations-oriented, is determined by the situation. Some situations demand task-oriented leaders to provide structure, whereas other situations call for relations-oriented leaders who are able to nurture the social interaction of group members (Fiedler, 1967).

Graen (1976) provided an even more comprehensive theory of social interaction. Vertical-dyad linkage, also known as leader-member exchange theory, proposed that the leader-follower-group relationship is marked by exchange between parties. Followers make contributions to the group that represent costs to themselves (Graen, 1976). The price for continued relations with the organization is the receipt of some benefit from group participation. The leader's role is to regulate the exchange between members and the group, which is a role that is subject to the same theory of exchange.

Classical, modern, and postmodern concepts of leadership support, to different degrees, the concept that there is potential to train leadership. Classical theories suggest that leadership can be taught only insomuch as the concept of leadership refers to particular behaviors.

Individuals can be taught to behave in ways that are conducive to leader effectiveness. Modern concepts defend the trainability of leadership so long as potential leaders can be taught to identify the peculiarities of followers or the situation. Postmodern conceptions accept that leader effectiveness may be influenced through improving personal behavior and social skill, but those factors only partly represent and influence the concept of leadership.

Leadership Development

A great deal of literature on leadership and leader development exists (Bass, 1990), but a surprisingly small portion of that literature is based on empirical approaches to the study of leadership training (Burke & Day, 1986). Burke and Day assessed, as a result of their extensive meta-analysis of training studies, that most were not based on credible performance measures and could not be accurately evaluated for usefulness to organizations. Over a decade earlier, Goldstein and Sorcher (1973) bemoaned that traditional leader development programs do not work because they focus on changing the attitudes of trainees without ensuring that fundamental behavior change will occur. They proposed that a more effective way to ensure the success of leader development programs is first to focus on changing the behavior of trainees to exhibit effective leadership. Attitudinal changes Goldstein and Sorcher (1973) said will follow.

Goldstein and Sorcher (1973) warned that reversing the order of traditional training processes by teaching attitude rather than behavior, is not, in isolation, sufficient to develop effective leader development programs. They proposed that it is equally important to understand that people change over time (Goldstein & Sorcher, 1973). Not only will requirements change for leader development programs because leader trainees will need different types of training, but there will also be change among employees (Goldstein & Sorcher, 1973). It is therefore necessary for leadership training designers to engage in double-loop type learning to ensure that

the training will not only be effective, but also that the training itself will be relevant and useful (Goldstein & Sorcher, 1973). Their work is interesting from a theoretical perspective; but Burke and Day's (1986) complaint applies. Goldstein and Sorcher provided no empirical data to support their postulate.

In contrast, Harrison (1999) conducted empirical research to test a hypothesis related to leadership development. Harrison supposed that leadership style may be related to cognitive development as presented by Kohlberg (1984), who had proposed that individuals progress through stages of cognitive development that allow them to increasingly understand the attitude and mental state of others. Harrison (1999) concluded that there was no evidence of a significant relationship between leadership style and cognitive development. According to his findings, emotional intelligence, which depends upon cognitive development, is not related to leadership style.

Mumford, Zaccaro, Connelly, and Marks (2000) would probably not be surprised by Harrison's findings. They proposed that when an individual enters a new organization, the leader development process may take as many as 20 years before that individual is prepared to address novel leadership issues. During that time, new leaders learn to understand and operate within the culture of the new organization as they gradually experience progressively more complex leader tasks. Unfortunately, Mumford et al. (2000) fell into the common trap of providing no empirical data to support their propositions.

Because current research is designed to explore the feasibility of using empathy as the subject of leader training programs to increase leadership effectiveness and potential, it is relevant to note the conflict between Harrison's (1999) findings and anecdotal evidence in popular literature, which suggests that emotional intelligence, and empathy in particular, is

essential to leadership. The ability to understand other people, both leader trainees as well as followers, is critical to Goldstein and Sorcher's (1973) conception of how leader development programs should be designed. Mumford et al. (2000) addressed empathy and emotional intelligence, if tangentially, when they explained that newcomers to an organization must become acquainted with their environment before they are equipped to make substantive contributions as a leader.

Emotional Intelligence

Specific aspects of leadership as well as the requisite competencies to be an effective leader continue to be in debate among theorists who contribute to the field of leadership study (Bass, 1990). A commonality between them, however, is that leadership is necessarily a social function (Condren, 2002)--leadership cannot be expressed in isolation. As a social function, leadership effectiveness and tendency to lead are regulated by an individual's social skill (Condren, 2002). More specifically, leadership is a social competency in its ability to assess when and how to express leadership, which is directly related to leadership effectiveness (Condren, 2002). The ability to assess when and how to express leadership is the result of another social competency, referred to as social intelligence (Thorndike & Stein, 1937) or emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

In the 1980s, scholars began to realize the possibility that intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences, including Thorndike and Stein's (1937) conception of social intelligence, are as important to personal and social success as the type of intelligence that is measured by the test of intelligence quotient (IQ) (Cherniss, 2002). Salovey and Mayer (1990) coined the term emotional intelligence to describe the ability to monitor, understand, and respond appropriately to the one's own and others' emotions. Goleman (1998b) popularized the term and added to its

definition that emotional intelligence requires understanding oneself and others enough to guide people towards goal accomplishment (Goleman, 1998b).

Current research supports logical and anecdotal evidence suggesting that leadership effectiveness, the ability to guide people towards goal accomplishment, is highly correlated to emotional intelligence (Sosik & Megerian, 1999; George, 2000). "Science is proving that emotional quotient (EQ), more than raw brainpower alone, underpins many of the best decisions, the most dynamic businesses, and the most satisfying lives" (Wigglesworth, 1997, p. 135). Goleman (1998b) echoed that sentiment with the assertion the EQ represents the single most important factor contributing to leadership effectiveness.

Goleman (1998a) surveyed managers in 200 large, global companies and found that emotional intelligence, the most recognizable component of which is empathy, was linked to leadership effectiveness and strong performance. Condren (2002) provided contradictory evidence with the results of his survey of school principals based on teacher perception surveys. Data did not support a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness except when controlled for the educational level over which the subjects presided (Condren, 2002). Even then, findings suggested a negative relationship between high empathy and leader effectiveness for high school and middle school principals (Condren, 2002). These findings run counter to similar research (Goleman, 1998a; Sosik & Megerian, 1999; George, 2000), and therefore contributes to confusion about the issue.

Many researchers have determined that emotional intelligence is trainable--that individuals can increase their competence at monitoring, understanding, and reacting to emotions within themselves and others well enough to guide people in the accomplishment of goals (Weisinger, 1998; Fisher, 1998; Hays, 1999). Because emotional intelligence seems promising

concerning its usefulness to improve leader effectiveness, more research on the subject is required.

Empathy

Increased globalization of business activities, greater reliance on the use of teams, and more intense competition to retain talented employees are among the many reasons that had made empathy become an important subject of inquiry among scholars of organizational leadership (Goleman, 1998a). A clear benefit to greater empathetic skill, from an organizational leadership perspective, is an increased ability for leaders to become aware of the similarities and differences in relationships and to acquire the capability to act on those differences appropriately (Everding, 1998).

Unfortunately, a great deal of confusion exists among scholars and practitioners, about the nature and role of empathy as a result of theoretical ambiguities, methodological problems, disagreement of findings, and neglect among researchers to explore key areas (Churchill & Bayne, 2001). Several scholars have attempted to provide clarity on the subject (Goleman, 1998a; Mehrabian et al., 1988), especially for the benefit of those connected with the nursing profession (Kunyk & Olson, 2001). The present review of available literature is designed to highlight key conceptual aspects of empathy and theoretical links with leadership and leadership development.

What is Empathy?

Churchill and Bayne (2001) may have been right to speculate on the degree of confusion about the nature and role of empathy, but one thing that seems to be of little doubt is that human relationships are bound by the need to be understood (Kunyk & Olson, 2001). That need is satisfied by empathy. Salovey and Mayer (1990) described the concept as "the ability to

comprehend another's feelings and to re-experience them oneself" (pp. 194-195). Plutchik (1987) added "empathy is not a separate emotion by itself, but a kind of induction process by which emotions, both positive and negative, are shared, and which increase the chance of similar behavior in the participants" (p. 43).

Scholars connected to the field of nursing have recognized how important it is for nurses to vicariously experience emotions. As a result, those scholars have taken a leading role in the exploration of the concept (Kunyk & Olson, 2001). In their meta-analysis of the subject, Kunyk and Olson (2001) have assessed that there are five basic conceptualizations of empathy that they portray as (a) a human trait, (b) a professional state, (c) a communicative process, (d) caring, and finally (e) a special relationship. Their taxonomy illustrates both cognitive and affective aspects of empathy.

Similarly, Mehrabian, Young, and Sato (1988) proposed two distinct forms: cognitive empathy and affective empathy. Cognitive empathy reflects an intellectual understanding of social perceptiveness (Mehrabian et al., 1988) that relates directly to the human trait, the professional state, and the communicative process to which Kunyk and Olson (2001) refer. Affective, or emotional empathy, is a primal sense that allows people to experience the emotions of others "as if through contagion" (Mehrabian et al., 1988, p. 1). Their conception of emotional empathy relates to Kunyk and Olson's description of empathy as a caring and special relationship between people. Parker and Axtell (2001) offer a simple illustration of relationship between the two forms of empathy. They postulate that cognitive empathy refers to a perspective taking that allows individuals to vicariously experience another person's reality and leads to an affective response, which represents the common connotation of the word, empathy.

Physical Manifestations

A review of relevant literature illustrates a number of physical outcomes of empathy that encourage further exploration into the phenomenon for its potential usefulness to the field of leadership. High empathy has been found to be correlated to signs in humans of becoming aroused, signs such as greater skin conductance, increased heart rate, increased tendency to display emotion, and the inclination to weep (Mehrabian et al., 1988). Wiesenfeld, Whitman, and Malatesta (1984) corroborated those findings in their study relating the reaction of women to the facial expressions and emotional reactions of infants. Results showed significantly different physiological responses in women who scored high on measures of empathy, as compared to those who had low scores, to the facial expressions and emotional reactions of babies. When babies displayed signals that one might interpret as stress or discomfort, women that scored high in empathy exhibited greater stress reactions including skin conductance and increased heart rate (Wiesenfeld, et al., 1984).

Notarius and Levenson (1979) explored empathy in a study wherein they categorized subjects into two groups, natural expressers and natural inhibitors, based on their reactions to an accident film, as measured by the subjects' tendency to display facial expressions, as they watched. In a subsequent session, subjects' facial expressions were measured again, this time before, during, and after they were led to believe that they might experience a painful electric shock. Natural expressers tended to remain calmer when they had exhibited lower heart rate and respiration before the expected shock. Notarius and Levenson then administered the Emotional Empathetic Tendency scale (EETS) to participants and found that greater expressiveness was correlated with higher empathy. They interpreted their results as suggesting that greater empathy was significantly related to the tendency to remain relatively calm in potentially stressful

situations. This reaction may indicate that people with higher empathetic skill were more able to assess that they were at little risk of actually being exposed to pain, based on the perception of unintentional cues from the researchers.

Social Manifestations

Interpersonal perceptive ability is a manifestation of social competence. Studies available in popular literature express a number of social outcomes of empathetic skill. Mehrabian, Young, and Sato (1988) determined that men are consistently less empathetic than women. Still, people with higher empathy tend to be less aggressive, exhibit more affiliative behavior, score higher on measurements of moral judgment, and are more apt to volunteer to help others. High empathy has a tremendous impact on families, such that children of people who score high on measures of empathy show greater emotion towards, spend more time with, and exhibit more tolerance for their own children (Mehrabian et al., 1988).

Empirical studies also show that people with high empathy tend to seek more social participation and are more nurturing to others (Mehrabian et al., 1988). Dymond (1950) agreed and added that empathetic people generally tend towards extraversion, optimism, warmth, emotion, and interest in others. Mayer, Dipaulo, and Salovey's (1990) findings revealed how empathy promotes these positive social outcomes. Their research showed that high empathy accounted for a greater ability within individuals to perceive of the emotional content of facial expressions and abstract designs, which enable those individuals to more accurately understand group emotions (Mayer & Geher, 1996).

People with high empathy are generally more concerned with others and are more caring (Mehrabian et al., 1988). In a study of early college students, Mueller and Waas (2002) found that those with higher scores on object measures of empathy were more prone to intervene when

presented with a hypothetical case wherein a friend exhibited symptoms associated with risk of suicide. In a similar study of caring, Mehrabian and Epstein (1972) noted that people with relatively high empathy were more likely to respond to moderately negative cues from people that they perceived to be at risk of experiencing pain.

Other social outcomes of empathetic ability noted in literature are increased capacity for pro-social moral reasoning (Eisenberg-Berg & Mussen, 1978), productivity, conflict resolution and leader effectiveness (MacMurray, 1953; Nagle, 1954; Stagner, 1948; Stogdill, 1948; Taft, 1955). MacMurray's (1953) research on labor relations showed that greater empathy was related to the ability to arrive at more equitable and lasting settlements. This finding suggested that the overall benefit to society would be tremendous if leaders throughout the workforce made an attempt to improve their empathetic ability.

Cognitive Development

Although researchers have provided evidence that it is possible to improve one's empathetic ability (Kunyk & Olson, 2001), it may be easier said than done. Hogan (1969) advised that individuals have differing dispositions for empathetic reasoning based on their experiences as children. Bartunek, Gordon, and Weathersby (1983) agreed that individuals have differing dispositions for the ability to empathize with others, but attribute the differences to maturity and cognitive development, as opposed to Hogan's more simplistic rationale.

Attempting to gain a better understanding of cognitive empathy, Piaget and Inhelder (1968) tested childrens' ability to view situations from different perspectives. The two researchers placed children in a particular spot within sight of three mountains. The children were then presented with pictures taken of the spot on which they stood from each of the three perspectives. Piaget and Inhelder (1968) found that only the older children were able

consistently to identify the mountain from which each picture was taken. Their findings indicate that perspective taking is an ability that develops as children mature cognitively (Piaget & Inhelder, 1968).

Everding (1998) presented a model by which to explain the stages of cognitive development with respect to empathy. The hallmark of stage 1 is egocentricity during which people do not attempt to identify with others and are not aware that others may think differently than they do. During stage 2, people remain egocentrically focused, in that they cannot identify with others, but they at least understand that some people think differently than themselves. Stage 3 marks the emergence of empathetic response to the feelings of others who are relatively similar to them. In stage 4, people may have empathy for dissimilar people so long as they share similar culture and values. Finally, in stage 5 people are able to separate from themselves sufficiently to vicariously experience others' points of view.

Everding (1998) extended the model to explain that as people develop cognitively, they progress through four perspectives of empathy that shape how they relate to other people, especially those who are at different stages of cognitive development. Perspective A includes the egocentric stages of development. Individuals who consider reality from this perspective may tend to be absolutist and intolerant of others. Perspectives B and C relate roughly with the basic empathetic abilities attributed to stages 3 and 4 respectively. People using these perspectives may find individuals with less empathetic skill too absolute and underexposed to reality. They might also complain that those in stage 5, perspective D, are too suggestible and equally unrealistic.

Other researchers have also investigated empathetic capacity and development (Duan & Hill, 1996; Rushton, Fulker, Neale, Nias and Eysenck, 1986). Rushton et al. (1986) proposed a

genetic basis for empathetic capacity as a result of their study of identical and fraternal twins, wherein identical twins shared more similar scores on objective measures of empathy than fraternal twins. Duan and Hill (1996) determined from a mixed method study that whether or not there is a genetic basis for empathy, several factors beyond cognitive development also mediate an individual's ability to empathize with others. Among these intervening variables are the mood of the observer, values and cultural congruence between the observer and the subject, and the observer's feelings toward the subject (Duan & Hill, 1996).

Empathy as a Leader Competency

House and Podsakoff (1994) found, in a study of leadership competencies, that outstanding leaders exhibited a greater degree of concern and sensitivity to the needs of followers--they exhibited greater empathy. Their findings, however, are not unique. Researchers have acknowledged the link between empathy and leadership as early as 1951 (Schmidt, 2001). Carter, Haythorn, Meirowitz, and Lazetta (1951) postulated that leaders must be able to step away from their own perspectives on reality to discern situational variables such as the motives, thoughts, feelings, and actions of others. Just three years later Bell and Hall (1954) published findings that provided empirical support for the linkage between empathy and leadership.

Strand's (1981) factor analysis of data collected while researching leadership competencies for community leaders provided further evidence pointing to empathy as an important leader competency. Data showed that empathy should become a major focal point for leadership training experiences (Strand, 1981). Woodall and Kogler (1982) found that predictive empathy, which is the ability to predict the emotions and behavior of others, was a significant predictor of leadership style as defined by Fiedler's (1967) Least Preferred Coworker scale.

Kellet (2002) objectively analyzed the theoretical relationship between emotional intelligence constructs, including empathy, and perceptions of leadership. As a result of that analysis, Kellet (2002) assessed that people perceive leadership ability in those who exhibit a relatively high degree of emotional intelligence. Kellet (2002) found a positive correlation between empathetic ability and perception of leadership. Despite this finding, Dymond (1949a) had warned that empathy does not necessarily foster personal regard between people. Instead, it makes communication between them more effective, which increases their ability to achieve goals and objectives together (Dymond, 1949a).

Social Fraternities and Leader Development

In the tradition of classical leadership theorists, Rawls and Rawls (1968) attempted to determine whether any biographical data could be used as a predictor of future leadership potential. They found statistically significant commonalities in the biographical data of the most successful executives who participated in their study (Rawls and Rawls, 1968). The most successful executives in the study, who tended to have been chosen to lead group activities, had belonged to more social organizations, had more close friends, and felt pride in being innovative (Rawls and Rawls, 1968). In essence, Rawls and Rawls found that early leadership experience was a predictor of future leadership and personal success.

Leadership literature is replete with evidence of the relationship between early leadership experience and future leadership (Alpert et al, 2000; Astin, 1985; Schuh & Laverty, 1983). Alpert and colleagues (2000) hypothesized that experience as chief medical residents would be a predictor of leadership later in those doctors' careers. The data supported their hypothesis with nearly 88% of the former chief residents having reported that they went on to professional leadership positions. Schuh and Laverty (1983) performed a similar longitudinal study, but of

undergraduate student leaders and found that respondents tended to attribute much of their career success to their leadership experience during college. Downey, Bosco, and Silver (1984), in yet another longitudinal study of former college students, found that those who had participated in their campus' student government association (SGA) reported higher levels of satisfaction with current social activities and jobs, as compared to those who had not participated in the SGA.

Findings related to college leadership experience as a predictor of future leadership are no surprise to Astin (1985) who postulated that the more involved students are in organized activities during their school career, the more successful and rewarding will be their learning experience and future potential. Erwin and Marcus-Mendoza (1988) provided support for Astin's proposition in a study of student involvement that showed that students who were more involved on campus and in the community exhibited greater cognitive development. Williams and Winston (1985) also found greater cognitive development in more involved students, but added that those students were more developed with regard to interdependence, education, career, and lifestyle plans.

If early leadership experience and student involvement are as important as contemporary literature suggests, it seems fitting to consider participation in college social fraternities as a developmental tool and predictor of future leadership. Matsos (1997) claimed that fraternity membership provides students with a plethora of informal leadership opportunities that may be useful in leader development. Guiding chapter operations, managing budgets, and planning events under the tutelage of older more experienced members and advisors provides an excellent training ground for leader competencies (Matsos, 1997). Dollar (1996) concluded, after comparing fraternity pledges to non-fraternity counterparts, that fraternity members exhibited a greater tendency towards leadership. Kimbrough's (1996) nearly identical research yielded

similar results, which give further credence to the conception that college social fraternities may be considered breeding grounds for future leaders.

Summary

The first chapter described the importance of and the researcher's intent for this investigation into the nature of the relationship between empathy and leadership as it relates to the existence or non-existence of a relationship between an objective measure of empathy and the propensity to lead. The literature review outlined the body of knowledge related to leadership, leader development, emotional intelligence, and empathy. It also provided rationale for the use of members of college social fraternities as subjects for this research.

Kunyk and Olson (2001) stated that empathy is innate and cannot be taught, they acknowledged that it can be identified, reinforced, and refined. Hogan (1975), however, disagreed, insisting that empathy should be relatively easy to model and train. The disparity between these two points of view alone provides sufficient incentive to conduct the present research. A more compelling reason, however, is evidenced by the dearth of recent contributions to scholarly discourse about the relationship between empathy and leadership and the use of empathy as a leader development tool in colleges and universities. The next chapter will provide a detailed description of the methodology employed during this study. Subsequent chapters will present the research and conclusions, respectively.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This research sought to contribute to the body of knowledge concerning the relationship between leadership propensity and empathy. The intent of this quantitative, correlation analysis was to analyze the relationship between the propensity to serve in leadership roles and empathy among active members of college social fraternities within a southeastern state in the United States. The first two chapters provided background information about the nature and importance of the study as well as an overview of relevant literature. This chapter will describe, in detail, the methodology the researcher used to conduct the study.

Research Design

Figure 1 provides a visual depiction of the research design. This research map illustrates the conceptual progression from identification of the problem, through the review of relevant literature, to the development of an empirically sound research design. It then charts the course of action for the collection and analysis of data, and finally, to the presentation of findings. Due to the complexity of the research variables, leadership propensity and empathy, the ability to conduct classic experimentation, where variables are isolated, manipulated, and subsequently examined, is somewhat limited. To compensate for this inherent constraint, the researcher followed a correlation design, utilizing a voluntary response survey that was administered to a cluster sample of the target population. This quantitative approach was intended to allow the researcher to analyze the status quo, assuming that causation had already occurred (Creswell, 1994). A correlation design is considered appropriate for research that is intended to analyze the relationship between variables in order to detect trends (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

A convenience sample of active members of 10 southeastern chapters of a national college social fraternity was asked to complete a survey that included the Balanced Emotional

Empathy Scale (Mehrabian, 2000) and factual information about the respondents' age and sum total of years spent in high school and college. Respondents were also asked to identify and report each of their relevant leadership experiences.

The instrument was validated utilizing a pilot study consisting of a convenience sample of active members of a college social fraternity in a major metropolitan city in the southeastern region of the United States. The purpose of the pilot study was two-fold. First, to assess whether respondents understand the questions, especially those related to their demographic and leadership information. Second, the researcher assessed whether additional demographic information would enhance the study.

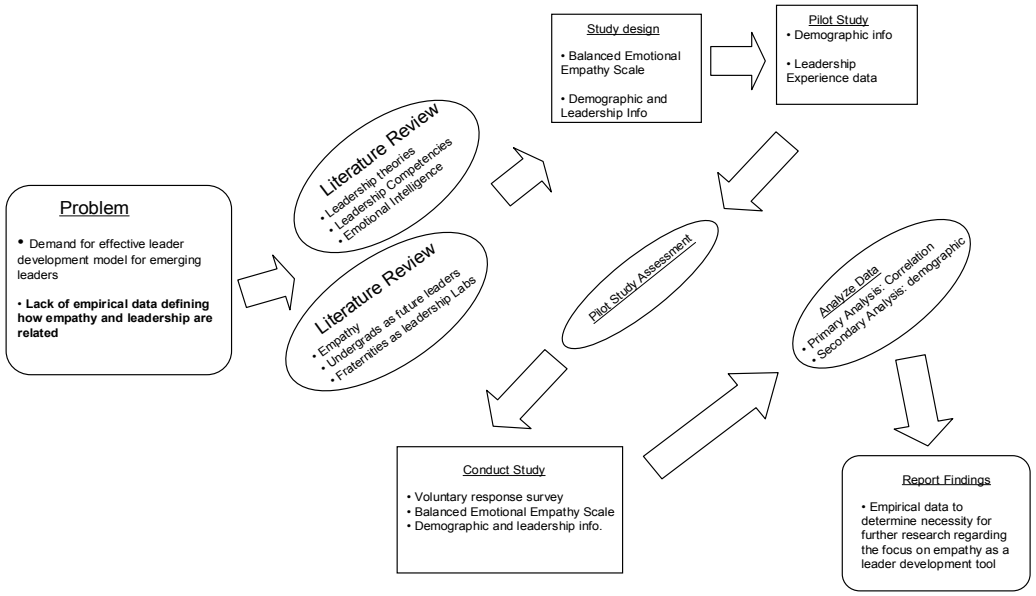

Figure 1. Visual depiction of research process.

Research Question and Hypotheses

Research Question

Leadership practitioners call for researchers to develop more effective methods by which to teach leadership (Metcalfe, 1982; Fiedler, 1996). In order to achieve that objective it is necessary to identify leader competencies that, when manipulated, have a significant impact on leadership. Empathy has been identified as having the potential to be that type of leader competency (Aspy, 1975; Benack, 1988; Harrison, 1999; Yager & Hector, 1980); however, there seems to be a dearth of empirical data that describes the nature of relationship between these two concepts. This research was guided by the question: What is the nature of the relationship between empathy and propensity to serve in positions of leadership? The answer to this question has the potential to contribute significantly to the understanding of the nature of the relationship between empathy and leadership.

Hypotheses

People's success in social situations is mediated by competence at social skills (Goleman, 1998a; Condren, 2002; Cherniss, 2002). Empathy is a social skill that has been found to be correlated with social success and personal satisfaction (Condren, 2002; Kunyk & Olson, 2001). Regardless of whether leadership is a personal trait or behavior, it is also, by definition a social construct (Bass, 1990). As a social construct, leadership represents a role that people fulfill within social enterprises (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). Empathy has been found to be highly correlated to leadership effectiveness (Goleman, 1998b). It seems reasonable to assume that empathy is also highly correlated with a person's tendency towards positions of leadership, whether resultant from a personal attraction to leadership or from a tendency for others to recruit that person to fill leadership voids.

The alternative hypothesis tested the theoretical relationship between empathy and leadership propensity. The alternative hypothesis, and its sub-hypotheses, predicted a positive correlation between the two variables, such that a high score on the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (BEES) should predict a high propensity to serve in leadership positions . The alternative hypotheses are

- H_1: Propensity to lead is positively related to empathy.
- H_{1a}: High propensity to lead is significantly related to high empathy.
- H_{1b}: Low propensity to lead is significantly related to low empathy.

Hypothetical statements cannot be proven conclusively (Creswell, 1994). As a result, researchers are relegated to finding support, or lack of support, for hypothetical statements by testing converse statements--null hypotheses. Showing a lack of support for a null hypothesis suggests that it is probable that its alternative is true (Creswell, 1994). In order to determine the accuracy of the alternative hypotheses, the research was designed to test the following null hypotheses:

- H_0: There does not exist a significant, positive relationship between propensity for leadership and empathy.
- H_{0a}: High propensity to lead is not significantly correlated to high empathy.
- H_{0b}: Low propensity to lead is not significantly correlated to low empathy.

Sample Population

The target population for the study consisted of active members of male college social fraternities in the southeastern region of the United States. The sample population consisted of voluntary respondents from a cluster sample of 10 southeastern chapters of a national college social fraternity. Participants represented a convenience sample from among the population

clusters, such that all participants were male, undergraduate students, who were over 18 years of age. In order to ensure a 95% confidence coefficient, the researcher sought to include a minimum of 120 participants such that at least 30 subjects would be of each of the four undergraduate classifications: freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior.

Instrumentation

Data were collected via a survey questionnaire containing the complete 30-item Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (BEES) (Mehrabian, 2000) as well as additional questions pertaining to subjects' demographic information and leadership experience. Demographic information was used to confirm that individual subjects met the specifications for the research population. Information about leadership experience was to be used to assess propensity to lead.

Finally, the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (Mehrabian, 2000) was to be used as a tool to measure respondents' empathy. The BEES was chosen as the instrument of choice for this research because of its singular focus on empathy as a unified construct, rather than as only one component of more general personality assessments (Mehrabian, 2000). This singular focus was intended to offer respondents the opportunity to participate with minimal commitment of time and effort. Appendix A contains the permissions granted and the stipulations imposed concerning the use of the BEES in this study.

Theoretical Foundation for the Instrument

The Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (BEES) was designed to be a more contemporary and more accurate version of the Emotional Empathy Tendency Scale (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972). Both instruments were intended to assess people's ability to vicariously experience emotion (Mehrabian, 1997). In other words, both scales measure emotional empathy which has been found to be highly related to a multitude of pro-social attributes and behaviors

including extraversion, optimism, and interest in others (Dymond 1950); less aggression, more affiliative behavior, greater moral judgment, and volunteerism (Mehrabian, Young, & Sato, 1988). Eisenberg-Berg and Mussen (1978) also attribute high empathy to pro-social moral reasoning.

Emotional empathy refers to the ability to "feel what the other person feels" (Mehrabian, 2000, pg. 1). Items on the BEES were rationally derived from aspects that are indicative of a capacity to vicariously experience the feelings of others (Mehrabian, 2000). Items are scored based on hypotheses about how ideal exemplars of emotional empathy would respond to each statement (Mehrabian, 2000).

Structure

The Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale is a 30-item questionnaire designed such that half of the questions positively relate to empathy, and half relate to it negatively in order to reduce the effect of acquiescence bias (Mehrabian, 2000). Respondents annotate the degree to which they agree or disagree with each item using a 9-point Likert-type scale (Mehrabian, 2000). Mehrabian reports the average time subjects take to complete the entire 30-item questionnaire is approximately 10 minutes.

Additional Questions

Participants were asked to provide factual demographic information that was used to ensure that subjects met specifications for the intended research population. Specifically, participants were to be men who are age 18 or over and undergraduate members of college social fraternities. Subjects were asked to identify themselves by first name and Chapter Roll Number (pledges were identified by first name and last initial) as a means to prevent inclusion of

duplicate cases. Participants were also asked to identify chapter affiliation, which would allow for the possibility to conduct secondary comparative analyses by chapter.

The final item asked subjects to identify each incident of relevant leadership positions held since high school. Relevant leadership experience was defined as formal positions in organized social enterprises, wherein members elect or appoint leaders from among their own ranks. Because age, or rather the cumulative length of an individual's high school and college career might bias results, subjects were asked to indicate the number of years they have been in high school and college. Subjects' leadership propensity was compared with others with relatively equal time in high school and college.

Data Collection

Data were collected using a voluntary response survey administered to a convenience sample of active members of a national college social fraternity in the southeastern region of the United States. The researcher contacted the leadership of each of the 10 participating chapters to coordinate for the delivery and administration of survey packets in conjunction with a regularly scheduled chapter meeting.

Each chapter received a package containing information about the researcher, a description of the research, a request to participate and instructions for group administration, and 30 individual survey packets. Chapter leaders were asked to distribute questionnaires in conjunction with a regularly scheduled meeting and to return the completed surveys in the pre-addressed, postage-paid envelopes that were included in the package.

Individual survey packets included an informed consent form and the survey questionnaire, which included the BEES and items designed to elicit factual information regarding respondents' demographic information and leadership experience. The researcher

asked participants to complete and return the entire questionnaire en masse. The intent was for chapter leadership to collect survey packets and return them to the researcher using the envelopes provided in the package mailed to the Chapter. Once received, the researcher entered data from each subject into a computer database for analysis.

It would have been possible to conduct this research utilizing self-reporting of both empathetic skill and propensity to lead. Research indicates, however, that self-reporting of emotional intelligence competencies, such as empathy, is often unsubstantiated by objective measurements and peer-reports of those competencies (Harris, 2001). It was, therefore, the researcher's position that the use of objective measures of both empathy and leadership propensity in this correlation study may provide more reliable and useful information about the relationship between empathy and leadership propensity.

Data Analysis

The purpose of the research was to conduct a correlation analysis between propensity to lead and empathy as measure by the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale. The researcher determined the range and standard deviation of leadership experiences reported by respondents. Raw data, relating to the individual respondents' self-report of leadership experience, were entered into a database. The lowest value for leadership experience was subtracted from the highest value for that variable in order to determine the range of experiences in the subject population. The standard deviation was calculated by determining the distribution and dispersion of leadership experiences. Establishing the distribution and dispersion of data points allowed the researcher to find the variance for that variable, the square root of which represented the standard deviation. Individuals who reported leadership experience in excess of 1.0 standard deviation (SD) from the mean were assessed to exhibit high propensity to lead. Those whose

reported leadership experience equaled more than 1.0 SD below the mean were assessed to exhibit low propensity to lead. Subjects whose leadership experience rested within 1.0 SD were assessed to exhibit moderate leadership propensity.

The Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale was scored in accordance with instructions provided in the *Manual for the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale* (Mehrabian, 2000). The range and standard deviation of scores on the BEES were calculated for the sample population by using the same procedure as noted above. Raw scores on the BEES were adjusted based on standardized norms determined by Mehrabian (2000), and this adjusted score was referred to as the z-score. The results were then compared to the norms reported by Mehrabian (2000) in order to test for validation. The range of z-scores was established by subtracting the lowest z-score among the current sample population from the highest. Variance was calculated by analyzing the distribution and dispersion of data points. Finally, the standard deviation of z-scores for the sample population was identified by determining the square root of the variance. Individuals whose z-score is greater than 1.0 SD were assessed to have high empathetic capacity. A z-score that is within 1.0 SD was considered to indicate moderate empathetic capacity. More than 1.0 SD below the mean was considered indicative of low empathetic capacity. Data were entered into a 3 x 3 cross-tabulation matrix using degree of leadership propensity on one axis and degree of empathetic capacity on the other.

In the primary analysis, the researcher used individual z-scores to conduct a correlation analysis with leadership propensity using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson *r*). Secondary analyses included at least two tests. Individual z-scores were used to conduct a pairwise comparison and correlation analysis within sample clusters of empathy (z-score) and incidents of leadership experience within the fraternity chapter. The intent of this

analysis was to determine whether any notable trends existed between sample clusters. Finally, demographic information was used in regression analysis to detect the impact of those factors on empathy or leadership propensity. It seemed to be a reasonable assumption that the time an individual has spent in high school and college may mediate leadership propensity. Regression analysis was used to determine the impact of that intervening variable on both empathetic capacity and on leadership propensity.

Validity and Reliability

Validity

Mehrabian (2000) uses as evidence of the validity of the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (BEES) the fact that it is highly and positively correlated with its predecessor, the Emotional Empathetic Tendency Scale (EETS) (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972). Literature reviews of the EETS, Mehrabian claims, show strong support for the validity of that scale, which is therefore indirect evidence of the validity of the BEES.

Mehrabian (2000) notes that the BEES exhibited a high negative correlation to scales of both aggression and violence, as represented by instruments created by Maiuro, Vitaliano, and Cahn (1987) and Mehrabian (1997), respectively. It also was found to have a significantly positive correlation with the Revised Optimism-Pessimism scale (Scheier, Carver & Bridges, 1994). In fact, Mehrabian argues that the BEES exhibits a consistently stronger correlation with measures of aggression, violence and optimism than the EETS, and should therefore be acknowledged to have a stronger construct validity.

Reliability

Mehrabian (2000) indicates that the Cornbach's alpha coefficient for the BEES is .85 which is a relatively high indication of internal consistency. As compared to the .85 alpha coefficient for the EETS, the BEES is a more reliable instrument for the measurement of emotional empathy.

Summary

This quantitative, correlation research was intended to provide empirical information that may afford insight into the existence or non-existence of a relationship between empathy and propensity to lead among members of college social fraternities in the southeastern region of the United States of America. The findings were intended to contribute to contemporary leadership literature by deepening the understanding of the relationship between empathy and leadership. These findings may provide support for or against the feasibility of the use of empathy as a tool to predict and develop leadership potential. Subsequent chapters will address the research findings and conclusion.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this quantitative, correlation study was to analyze the relationship between the propensity to lead and empathy, among active members of college social fraternities in the southeastern region of the United States. The previous chapter outlined the methodology that guided the conduct of this research. This chapter presents the findings of the study in three sections. The first section offers descriptive statistics on demographic information pertinent to the sample. The second section of this chapter focuses on describing the findings related to each of the research variables and their derivatives. The final section of this chapter contains the results of correlation and comparative statistics from which the researcher drew conclusions as to evidence in support of the hypotheses.

Sample Demographics

Before beginning data collection on a large scale, the researcher conducted a pilot study using one fraternity chapter. A packet, containing an invitation to participate in the study and 30 survey instruments was sent to a representative of the fraternity. The invitation to participate provided introduced the researcher and provided background information on the nature and purpose of the study. It also provided instructions for mass administration of the instrument at a regularly scheduled meeting. Each survey instrument included a consent form and the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (Mehrabian, 2000) with additional questions pertaining to demographic information and past leadership experience. Once respondents finished the surveys, the representative collected and returned the surveys to the researcher using the self-addressed, stamped envelope that was provided.

Two primary purposes of the pilot study was for the researcher to assess the feasibility of the research design as it related to data collection, and to develop a process for data management

that supported the researcher's ability to receive, record, and analyze data from respondents efficiently and effectively. The feasibility of the research design was confirmed by the fact that there were no un-forecasted obstacles to the data collection process in the pilot study.

Data collection from the pilot study allowed the researcher to develop a practical methodology for receipt, recording, and analysis of information before receiving completed surveys from the rest of the sample population. Upon receiving completed survey packets, the researcher confirmed that each respondent met the criteria for participation and had signed a consent-to-participate form. The information from the survey packet, including demographic data and BEES item answers were transcribed into a spreadsheet. The researcher categorized and recorded reported incidents of leadership based on whether they were within the chapter, external to the chapter, or rejected as a qualifying incident. Data was then analyzed using statistical software designed to be compatible with the spreadsheet. The researcher filed the completed survey packet.

Upon completion of the pilot study, the researcher initiated large-scale data collection from the research population, which consisted of active members of college social fraternities throughout the southeastern United States. Invitations to participate were sent to 10 fraternity chapters from colleges and universities throughout Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Florida. Of the 10 chapters that were invited to participate, 6 returned completed survey instruments from a total of 124 respondents. These respondents represented a convenience sample of members that who were, by chance, present at the chapter meeting on the occasion that survey packets were distributed. Figure 2 shows how many people participated and from which chapters.

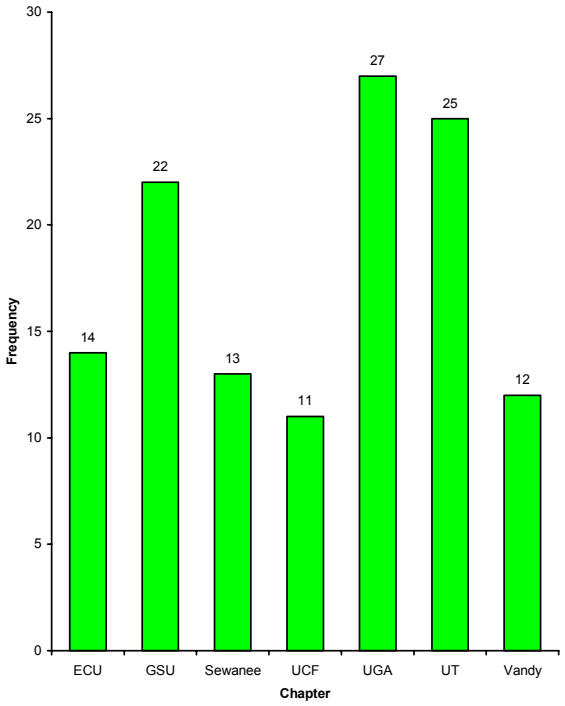

Figure 2. Bar graph showing participation from sample clusters.

Figure 3 shows that the 124 men who volunteered to participate in the study ranged in age from 18 to over 28. Because participants were advised that they should only include leadership experiences that they had gained between the time they entered high school, as a freshman, and the present, it was necessary to ascertain the length of that period. This variable was referred to as career span, the results of which are presented in Figure 4. Figure 5 graphically depicts the college classifications with which respondents most closely identified.

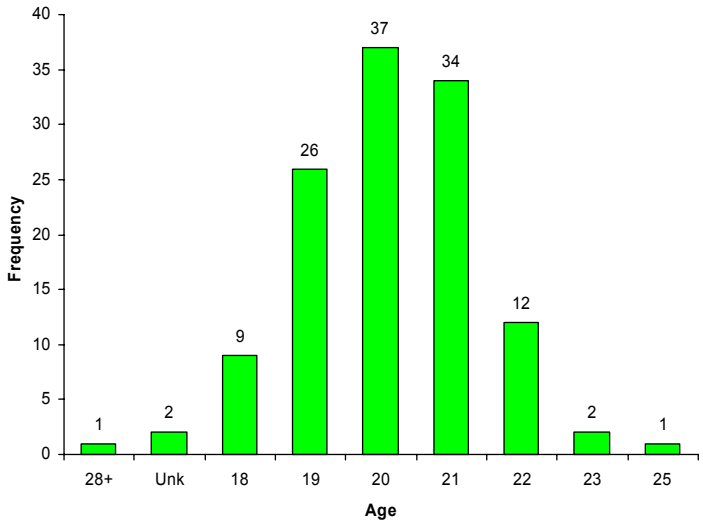

Figure 3. Bar graph showing the range of respondents' age.

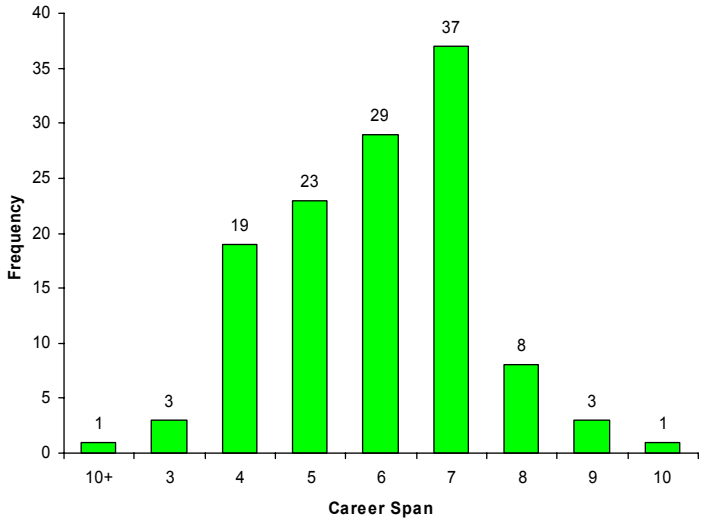

Figure 4. Bar graph showing the range of respondents' career span.

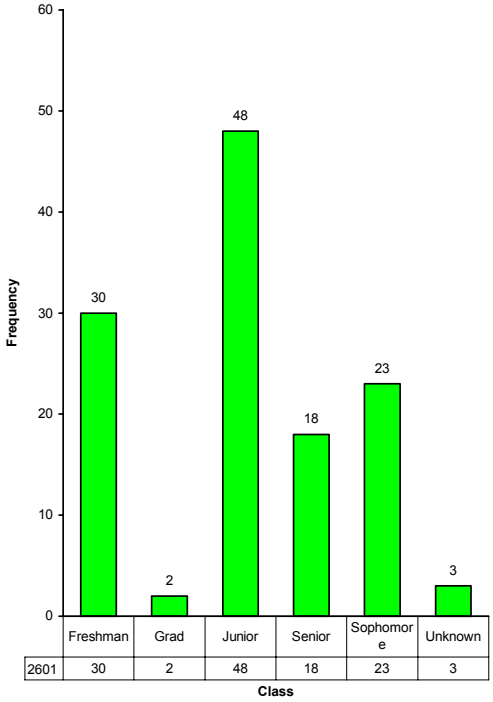

Figure 5. Bar graph showing respondents' college classification.

The Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale

Participants completed the full 30-item Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (BEES) (Mehrabian, 2000). Results showed that the sample population (n=124) had a mean score of 17.5 with a 147 point range and a standard deviation of 26.15 points. Scores for 95% of all respondents were between 12.9 and 22.2. These results are significantly lower than reported norms for the instrument, which for men is a mean score of 29 points with a 28 point standard deviation (Mehrabian, 2000). Mehrabian (2000) attests to the validity and reliability of the instrument and its norms based on comparative and correlation analyses with the Emotional Empathy Tendency Scale (Mehrabian, 1997), the Aggression Scale (Maiuro, Vitaliano, & Cahn, 1987), and the Risk of Eruptive Violence Scale (Mehrabian, 1997). Figure 6 shows the frequency curve for this population's BEES score.

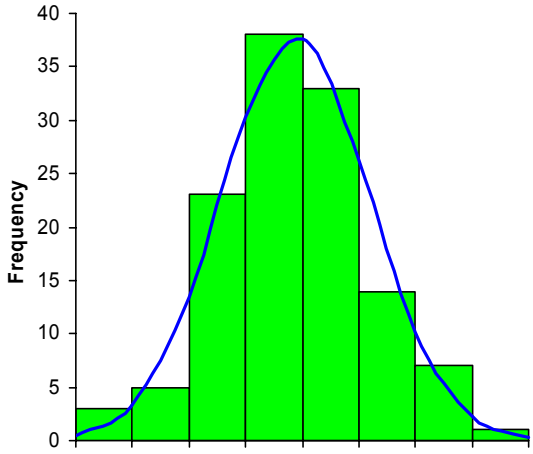

Figure 6. Bar graph and frequency curve for BEES scores.

The research design indicated that respondents would be categorized into three groups based on whether their individual BEES z-score was within a range that was greater than, less than, or equal to 1 SD of the mean. Those whose scores were greater than 1 SD of the mean were considered to have high empathy, while those whose scores were greater than 1SD were assessed to have low empathy. However, because the mean score for this population was so much lower than expected, the researcher determined that it was important to also consider respondents' capacity for empathy, relative to others within the sample population. Both BEES z-scores and "within-sample" BEES scores were calculated and analyzed. In both cases the standards for categorization remained the same. Greater than 1 SD at either extreme was the line of demarcation. Figures 7 and 8 show the results of these categorizations.

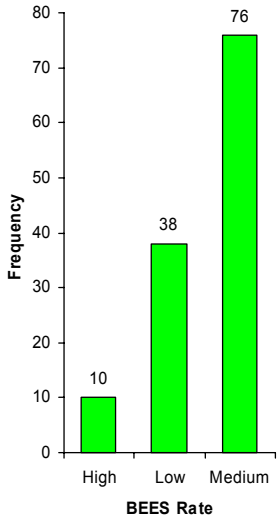

Figure 7. Bar graph showing respondents' capacity for empathy relative to all others who have taken the BEES.

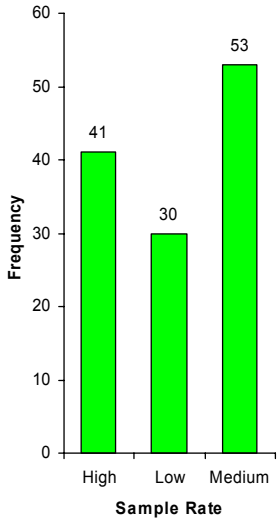

Figure 8. Bar graph of capacity for empathy relative to the sample population.

Leadership Propensity

Leadership propensity was determined through self-reports of past leadership experiences from the time the respondent entered high school to present. This approach for assessing leadership propensity is consistent with the research design in that it focused on a very restrictive definition for leadership. This restriction was intended to facilitate participant objectivity when reporting incidents of personal leadership.

Specifically, the operational definition for leadership stipulated that only formal positions within organized social enterprises, wherein members elect or appoint leaders from within their ranks, were considered to be qualifying incidents of leadership. Responses that did not clearly meet those criteria were not counted as incidents of leaderships. The researcher maintained data concerning reports of non-qualifying incidents of leadership and included them in the analyses. The primary focus of those descriptive and proportional analyses were to assess whether there were statistically significant trends related to misunderstanding the operational definition of leadership. In order to facilitate secondary analysis, the researcher further categorized incidents of leadership based on whether they represented experiences that were internal or external to the fraternity chapter.

Figure 9 shows the frequency curve for self-reports of past leadership. It shows that the sample population reported a range of 0 to 14 qualifying leadership experiences with a mean of 2.6. Hence, 95% of the population had between 2.1 and 3.1 incidents of leadership. Figure 10 shows how respondents were categorized with regard to the assessment of their propensity to lead. Those who reported leadership experiences that equaled 1 SD or more above the mean were considered to have high leadership propensity. People who reported leadership incidents that were greater than or equal to 1 SD below the mean were considered to have a low propensity

for leadership. Respondents whose reported experiences rested within 1 SD of the mean were considered to have medium propensity for leadership.

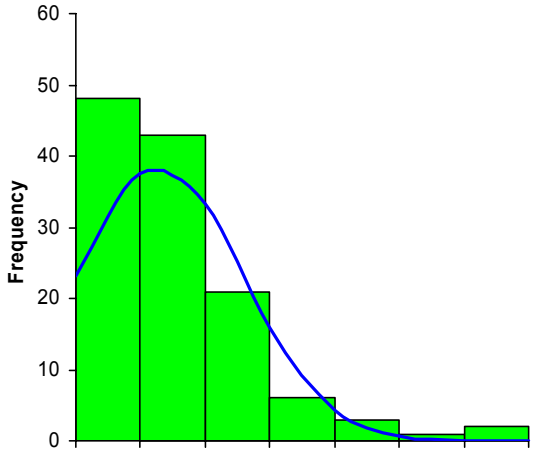

Figure 9. Bar graph and frequency curve for reported incidents of leadership.

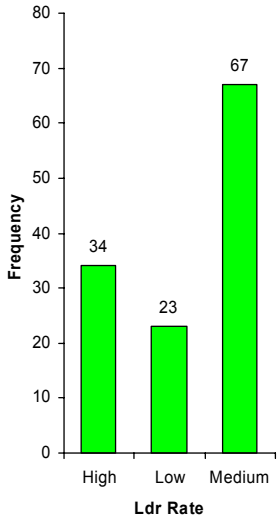

Figure 10. Bar graph of respondents' relative propensity for leadership.

The sample population consisted solely of male college students. To control a possible skew created by possibly unique social dynamics among this population, the researcher analyzed chapter leadership as an independent phenomenon. Figure 11 shows the frequency curve for

incidents of leadership within the fraternity chapter. These incidents are important because they represent opportunities wherein the research population selected leaders for and among themselves. Respondents indicated a range of 0 to 5 experiences with a mean of 1 and a SD of 1.15. Figure 12 graphically demonstrates how respondents were grouped, based on their self-reports of chapter leadership. The same criteria were used to categorize students as for total leadership. Those who report experiences that equaled 1 SD or more above the mean were considered to have high propensity. Those who reported more than 1 SD below the mean were considered to have low propensity and those who reported experiences that were within 1 SD of the mean were placed in the medium propensity category.

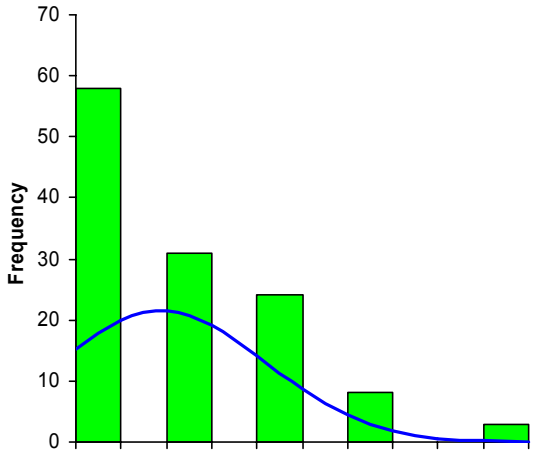

Figure 11. Bar graph and frequency curve for reports of incidents of chapter leadership.

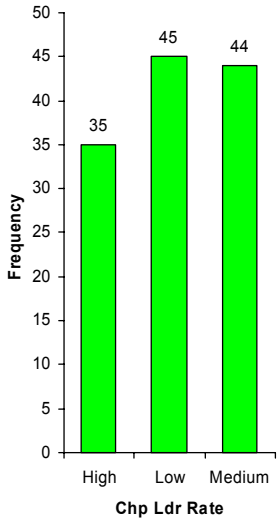

Figure 12. Bar graph of respondents' relative propensity for chapter leadership.

The intentionally restrictive definition for leadership was developed to facilitate objective reporting of incidents of leadership. Some subjects still included incidents that did not qualify as leadership experiences, given the operational definition provided in this dissertation. Examples of non-qualifying experiences included simple memberships on various committees, participation as a volunteer fireman, membership in honor societies, and certifications of training. Each of these non-qualifying experiences was rejected for inclusion in analyses of the research variables but was noted and utilized for secondary analyses.

Collectively, respondents included 58 non-qualifying experiences, which represents a 33% rate of rejection. Table 2 (Qualifying Leadership by Chapter) shows that of 124 respondents, 26 of them included at least one non-qualifying experience. The chi statistic, 8.08 is below the critical value. Table 3 (Qualifying Leadership by Class) provides data by respondents' class ($x^2 = 4.51$), which falls within the critical value for 5 degrees of freedom.

Table 1
Qualifying Leadership by Chapter

Chapter	Only included qualifying experiences: No	Only included qualifying experiences: Yes	Total
ECU	3 (2.9)	11 (11.1)	**14**
GSU	2 (4.6)	20 (17.4)	**22**
Sewanee	4 (2.7)	9 (10.3)	**13**
UCF	4 (2.3)	7 (8.7)	**11**
UGA	8 (5.7)	19 (21.3)	**27**
UT	2 (5.2)	23 (19.8)	**25**
Vandy	3 (2.5)	9 (9.5)	**12**
Total	**26**	**98**	**124**

Table 2
Qualifying Leadership by Class

Class	Only included qualifying experiences: No	Only included qualifying experiences: Yes	Total
Freshman	5 (6.3)	25 (23.7)	**30**
Grad	0 (0.4)	2 (1.6)	**2**
Junior	10 (10.1)	38 (37.9)	**48**
Senior	3 (3.8)	15 (14.2)	**18**
Sophomore	8 (4.8)	15 (18.2)	**23**
Unknown	0 (0.6)	3 (2.4)	**3**
Total	**26**	**98**	**124**

Findings

The researcher, in an attempt to answer the research question, sought to confirm or deny one hypothesis and two sub-hypotheses. This study was undertaken to determine the existence of a significant relationship between propensity to lead and empathy. To test for that correlation, the researcher used the following null hypotheses.

- H_0: There does not exist a significant, positive relationship between empathy and propensity for leadership.
- H_{0a}: High propensity to lead is not significantly correlated to high empathy.
- H_{0b}: Low propensity to lead is not significantly correlated to low empathy.

Data related to the tests of each of these hypotheses will be presented in this section.

Test of H_0

H_0 is the null hypothesis related to H_1 (propensity to lead is positively related to empathy). This hypothesis was tested using the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient with leadership z-scores and BEES z-scores as the test variables. Results indicate that, with a .95 level of confidence, the sample population (n = 124), there may exist a very weak positive relationship (r = .11). The significance level, however, is relatively weak (p = .236). Additional correlation analyses of derivative variables show similar findings. Comparing total leadership to within-sample BEES shows an r-statistic of .03 and a .712 probability of type-I error. Analysis for chapter leadership and within-sample BEES yields a similarly weak (r = .09, p = .340).

Test for H_{0a}

H_{0a} was the null hypothesis related to H_{1a} (high propensity to lead is significantly correlated to high empathy). The test variables, leadership z-scores and BEES z-scores, were analyzed for correlation using the Pearson product moment test. Among respondents who

demonstrated high propensity to lead (n = 34), results were generally consistent with those of the full sample population. In the case of subjects who exhibited high propensity to lead, the correlation analysis for leadership and BEES z-score showed a weak positive correlation (r=.08) at a low significance level (p=.660). Analysis for leadership z-score and within-sample empathy score, however, showed a much stronger relationship (r=.27) and a much greater significance level (p=.11). The null hypothesis is supported.

Test for H_{0b}

H_{0b} was the null hypothesis related to H_{0b} (low propensity to lead is significantly correlated to low empathy). Because respondents who demonstrated low propensity to lead reported zero qualifying incidents of leadership, the Pearson product moment test is not an appropriate tool to measure whether or not there exists a relationship between the test variables. As an alternative means to assess the veracity of the hypothesis, the researcher chose to use the Chi-square test, which is intended to detect whether the distribution across a 3x3 cross-tabulation matrix would yield statistical support for causation beyond pure chance. Table 3 (Leadership by BEES Matrix) shows the distribution of results for the sample population. If the distribution for the table was random, one would expect the distribution among cells of the 3x3 matrix to show that subjects with low propensity to lead should fall into the three empathy categories at the following rate: high empathy = 1.9, medium empathy = 14.1, and low empathy = 7. The actual distribution, shown in Table 1 (Leadership by BEES), is very close to the expected distribution. In fact, the chi-statistic (x^2 = 3.02) is well within the critical value for 4 degrees of freedom (9.49). There is support for the null hypothesis.

Table 3
Leadership by BEES.

Leadership Rate	BEES Rate			
	High	Low	Medium	**Total**
High	1 (2.7)	11 (10.4)	22 (20.8)	**34**
Low	1 (1.9)	7 (7.0)	15 (14.1)	**23**
Medium	8 (5.4)	20 (20.5)	39 (41.1)	**67**
Total	**10**	**38**	**76**	**124**

Further analysis of the sub-population that reported low propensity to lead showed that, collectively, they scored significantly lower on the BEES than the rest of the sample population. The mean z-score for respondents with low propensity to lead was -.54, which was a more than 14% below the mean for the larger population. Tests results are inconclusive.

Hidden Insights

Several comparative and descriptive analyses of the data revealed interesting insights into both the nature of the relationships between research variables and into the group dynamics at work within the sample population. For example, consider the following revelations. Figure 13 is a graphic depiction of the mean leadership z-scores for the sub-populations. It shows that the mean leadership score for subjects with medium empathy (n = 53, mean = .55) exceeded that of respondents who had high empathy relative to the sample population (n = 41, mean = .39) and far exceeded the group that showed low empathy low empathy (n = 30, mean = .04).

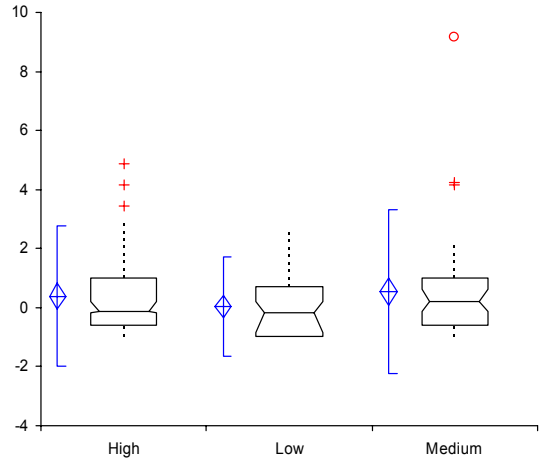

Figure 13. Comparison of leadership by empathetic capacity.

Figures 14 and 15 compare mean BEES raw scores by categories of leadership. Figure 15 shows that, relative to each other, those subjects with the lowest propensity to lead (n = 23) are also the lowest on the measurement for empathy (mean = 16.1).

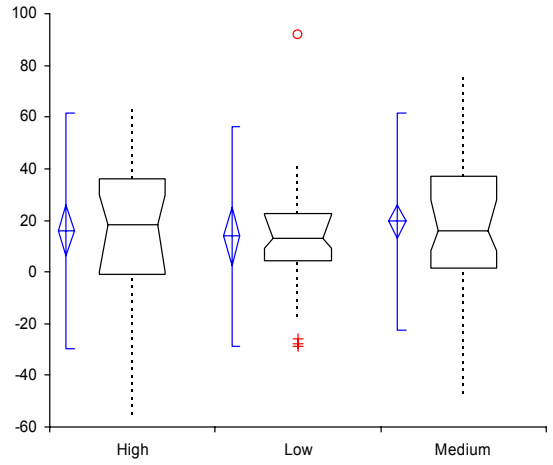

Figure 14. Comparison of BEES scores by leadership propensity.

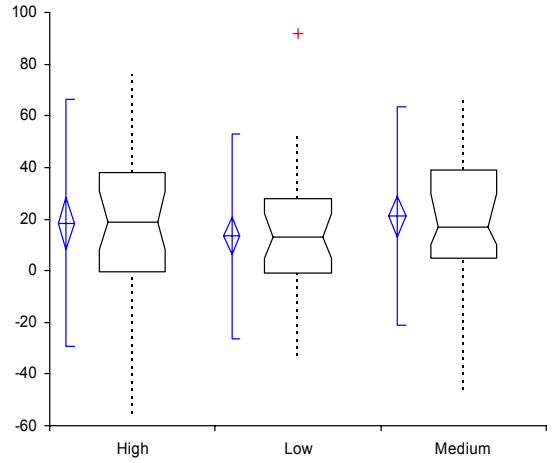

Figure 15. Comparison of BEES scores by propensity for chapter leadership.

When subjects' leadership z-scores are compared to BEES z-scores, findings indicate that a .26 correlation coefficient at a .06 level of significance—still below the 95% confidence level. Selecting respondents whose empathy rests within 1 standard deviation of the mean for the sample population and whose leadership is assessed as high, there exists evidence of the strongest relationship, yet (r=.46, p=.08).

Summary

This dissertation identified a gap in contemporary leadership literature regarding the role of empathy in leadership, more specifically, that there is a dearth of information explaining how or whether propensity to lead is influenced by one's capacity to empathize with others. The data presented in this chapter show that within the parameters of this study, there is not sufficient evidence to support a relationship between propensity to lead and empathy. The next chapter presents discussion and analysis of the research findings and concludes with a discussion of significance and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The first two chapters in this dissertation presented an explanation as to the value and purpose of this study, which was designed to provide greater insight into the nature of the relationship between leadership propensity and empathy. The third and fourth chapters outlined the methodology and presented the findings of this quantitative, correlation research. This chapter will serve as a forum for discussion as to the meaning and significance of the findings and finally, to provide recommendations for future research.

The Leadership/Empathy Link

Discussion on the Findings

So few empirical studies have focused on leadership propensity that almost no contemporary literature addresses the concept directly. As with any new area of inquiry, the first explorations may only shed light on new paths of inquiry as opposed to making monumental advancements to the body of knowledge (Kuhn, 1996). This research sought to investigate whether leadership propensity, as interpreted through self-reports of cumulative leadership experience, was significantly related to empathy. Leadership, by definition, is a social construct (Condren, 2002), as is empathy (Mehrabian, 2000). The fact that both of these constructs relate to human systems makes this relationship a difficult one to thoroughly deconstruct for analysis. Adding to the complexity of the study is the fact that empathy encompasses both cognitive and affective aspects (Goleman, 1998b; Mehrabian, 2000), which may only be isolated using very different research approaches.

Empathy, the social competency that empowers one to identify with others' perspectives and feelings (Goleman, 1998b), has been shown to be significantly related to leadership effectiveness (Bell & Hall, 1954; House & Podsakoff, 1994; Kellet, 2002). Popular literature

suggests that organizational leaders are constantly in search of leaders who have the potential to be effective (Hesselbein, et al, 1997). To the extent that this reflects reality, it seems natural to assume that people who are more equipped to be effective as leaders, through possession of exceptional personal talent or competency, would gravitate toward leadership positions. It seems that either those people would be attracted to or by organizations seeking leaders. In this way, one might say that they exhibit greater propensity to lead.

The conceptual framework upon which this study is based suggests that because empathy has been shown to be a significant leader competency (Goleman, 1998b) and that are constantly in search for effective leaders (Hesselbein, et al, 1997), there may be a correlation between empathy and propensity to lead. The research hypotheses predicted a positive relationship between the variables, such that high leadership propensity suggests high empathy and low propensity predicts low empathy. Given the parameters of the study design, multiple correlation analyses of the research variables and derivative variables provided only limited support for the existence of such a relationship.

Specifically, when results for the full sample population were tested, findings indicated a very weak and statistically insignificant relationship. Tests were conducted measuring the relationships between total leadership scores and raw scores of empathy. Tests were conducted using leadership z-scores and empathy z-scores. Tests were also performed analyzing leadership z-scores and within sample z-scores. Results of each of these tests yielded similar results – indication of a statistically insignificant and weak positive relationship.

Organizational theorists purport that people tend to like people who are like them, think similarly, and share common frames of reference (Schein, 1992). Leadership theorists have suggested that followers are more committed to leaders that the followers perceive to have a

greater understanding of them and their needs (Bass, 1990). It follows, then, that people who exhibit levels of empathy that exceed the normal parameters for any particular social grouping may be somewhat isolated from that group because followers may perceive that they do not share a common frame of reference. Proceeding along that path of inquiry, the researcher conducted deeper correlation analysis by excluding respondents whose scores on the empathy measurement exceeded 1 standard deviation from the mean in either direction.

Interestingly, correlations between leadership propensity and empathy, among that population, were noticeably stronger and more significant. The test of those people whose empathy z-scores were within 1 SD of the mean revealed an *r*-statistic of .26 and a significance of .055. Similar results were found following tests of leadership scores and empathy raw scores as well as chapter leadership scores and within sample empathy scores. Attempting even deeper analysis along that path of inquiry, the researcher further isolated those whose empathy was average but had reported high propensity to lead. The results of those analyses yielded the strongest and most significant results of the study. In that population, those variables showed a .46 correlation coefficient and a 92% significance level. These findings provide a compelling incentive to continue exploration into the nature of the relationship between theses variables. Despite the fact that this study does not evince conclusive evidence of a relationship, the anecdotal evidence warrants greater, more focused research.

Discussion on Leadership

Both scholars and practitioners have known, for a long time, that leadership is a complex phenomenon that may be influenced by many different factors (Bass, 1990) If there existed a strong correlation between leadership and empathy, one might be tempted to overstate that factor's influence on leadership and the leader/follower relationship. Consistent with

contemporary literature on both leadership and empathy, one would expect any relationship between the two to be very subtle and only a part of a complex interaction of competing influences.

Leadership, for example, is the result of the competing influences of personal traits, leader behavior, situational, and environmental factors (Bass, 1990). Among those environmental factors, is the interactive process of group dynamics. Johnson and Johnson explained that when people come together "the social interaction among them becomes patterned and leadership emerges" (2000, p. 202). Further, they postulated that two types of leaders emerge to fill specific roles, task-leadership and social-emotional leadership. Task-oriented leaders focus mainly on the mechanics of achieving goals, while social-emotional leaders concentrate on maintaining the interpersonal relationships within the group (Johnson & Johnson, 2000).

Just as people have different personalities and preferences for leadership styles, it is conceivable that they may also have preferences for particular leadership roles. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some people like to be very visible leaders while others are content with more suitable leadership roles. The concepts of task-leadership versus social-emotional-leadership provide a framework that would support individual preferences for leadership roles. It is conceivable that people who have a preference for social-emotional leadership roles may not seek formal leadership opportunities to the same extent that task-oriented leaders might. These people may prefer instead to remain unencumbered by formal authority while still exercising social leadership. The parameters of this study may have served to have underestimated the role of social-emotional leadership as an indication of propensity to lead.

Discussion on Empathy

The Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (Mehrabian, 2000) is a measure of cognitive empathy, which Dymond (1949) explains is the ability to understand another person well enough to predict that person's thoughts, feelings, and actions. Cognitive empathy, however is only half of the construct. The other half is affective empathy, which is the ability to vicariously experience another person's reality such that one is able to identify with that person's state of mind (Stotland, 1969). If cognitive empathy allows one to understand another's frame of reference, affective empathy is the ability to feel what that person feels in given situations. It is quite conceivable that the ability to vicariously experience the reality of others, to feel what they feel, is more strongly related to leadership propensity than simply knowing another person's frame of reference. Further, more focused, research is necessary in order to make that determination.

Mehrabian (2000) noted that men tend to be less empathetic than women. In fact, the mean BEES score for men is a full 31 points less than that for women. The mean score for this sample population was an additional 11.5 points below that of men in general. Mehrabian did not report differences by age when he published the validation data regarding the BEES instrument. Some unique characteristics of the target population bring into question whether the low score on empathy may have influenced leadership propensity among its members, at least since they joined the fraternity. Schein (1992) explained that organizational culture influences members as much as individual members influence the organization. If the culture of the target population encourages low empathy, it is conceivable that, given the fact that surveys were distributed in conjunction with a regularly scheduled organizational meeting, respondents may have indicated a level of empathy that is less than they may otherwise have indicated. It is also

conceivable that incidents of leadership, both within the chapter and outside leadership opportunities may be significantly influenced by a culture of low empathy.

Interestingly, research supports the links between early leadership experiences and future leadership (Astin, 1985), leadership experiences in college as a predictor of future leadership (Schuh & Laverty, 1983), and the positive correlation between fraternity membership and propensity to lead (Dollar, 1996; Matsos, 1997, Kimbrough, 1996). Only Dollar (1996) addressed propensity to lead, and he only measured whether fraternity pledges tended towards leadership at a greater rate than their non-fraternity peers. Both Matsos and Kimbrough focused on leader development, and both used less restrictive operational definitions for leadership. Further research may be warranted to ascertain whether and how the organizational culture of male college social fraternities may negatively influence leadership propensity, both in college and beyond.

Salovey and Mayer (1990) stipulated that the ability to 'respond appropriately' is an important aspect of emotional intelligence. What is considered an appropriate response to social stimuli is a product of culture and implies an understanding of the frames of reference of the people within the culture (Schein, 1992). A person that responds inappropriately may face alienation or isolation from the people within the culture. Over- or under-expression of empathy may be considered a signal that an individual is not conforming closely enough to the norms of the group and may have a negative influence on that person's propensity to lead within the group.

The findings of this study lend support to the idea that social conformity with regard to empathy is a stronger predictor of leadership propensity than empathy alone. The relationship between leadership and empathy proved stronger among those whose empathy was within 1

standard deviation of the mean for the sample population. These individuals exhibited empathetic balance as opposed to being either overly sensitive to the needs and feelings of others or being desensitized to those needs and feelings. Among that population though, the relationship between leadership and empathy was positive, which suggests that high empathy is related to greater leadership propensity so long as that person's empathetic reactions remain consistent with the rest of the population. Further research is necessary to provide deeper insight into the impact of balanced empathy on leadership.

Conclusions and Inferences

Consistent with the western tradition of scientific inquiry, scholars have, repeatedly, sought to understand the nature of leadership through persistent observation, deconstruction, and measurement (Kuhn, 1996). Researchers have identified specific traits, competencies, behaviors, and both situational and environmental factors that contribute to leadership. They have isolated, manipulated, and measured these variables, time and time again, in order to gain deeper insight into the phenomenon. Certainly, these multitudes of studies have contributed greatly to the body of knowledge regarding the science of leadership, but studies such as these, serve as a reminder that leadership is as much an art as it is a science. This reminder, however, should not dissuade scholars from continuing to pursue empirical research on the subject. Quite to the contrary, every new discovery continues to shed light on the nature of leadership, by more accurately describing the relationship between its artistic and scientific components.

This study was based on the logical deduction that greater empathy should predict a greater predisposition to assume leadership. Scientific inquiry, however, provided little support for that hypothesis. Instead, results indicated the possibility that capacity for empathy may have an effect on leadership propensity, but only in the sense that those people whose capacity is

outside social norms may exhibit a lower propensity to lead. This finding infers, then, that one factor contributing to the art of leadership, may be a skill that allows one to accurately assess and adapt to social norms regarding expectations of empathy and empathetic responses. In this way, people may increase their potential to influence others. This is, in large measure, a reassertion of findings related to the broader concept of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998b), which also point to a need for individuals to understand the expectations of others.

This research also presents interesting questions regarding the role of empathy as a social dynamic among the sample population. Empathy was shown to have far less influence on within-chapter leadership propensity than on propensity as a whole. It seems that given the opportunity to select leaders from among one's own kind, empathy was not as much of a contributing factor as it seems to be when analyzing outside leadership. It remains to be seen whether this phenomenon is unique to the dynamics of this particular population of southeastern, male, fraternity members, or whether it applies to the culture of a larger population such as men, or people from the southeast, or college students.

Significance of the Study

The results of this research provide sufficient justification for further exploration. All of the tests of the relationship between leadership propensity and empathy showed evidence of a positive relationship between the two variables. Results for the full sample population, as well as those for various sub-populations, all yielded similar positive correlations. Results of the tests that used 'within-sample' leadership incidents and those that used outside leadership experiences also revealed evidence of the existence of positive relationships between the variables.

This trend, while not yet conclusively supported by statistical probability, shows that there may be promise in continuing to explore cognitive empathy, as it may prove to be the

elusive single point of focus that may be used to manipulate leadership potential in future leaders. Detecting a single point of focus for leader development may, in practical terms provide a cost effective means by which to significantly improve leader and personal development programs. Armed with this knowledge, organizations may consolidate limited resources on the development of one leader competency, possibly empathy, in order to significantly improve leadership throughout all levels of the organization.

Organizations must be able to identify people who exhibit, not only the potential to be effective as leaders, but also the propensity to accept the responsibility of leadership. This study has the potential to substantively contribute to leadership literature by focusing direct attention to the concept of propensity to lead. An underlying assumption of all leadership study is that some people tend to assume leadership roles. Despite this assumption, most empirical studies investigate the potential to be effective as a leader, rather than the basic propensity for an individual to assume leadership roles. This is an important distinction because it is likely that there are some people who are capable of performing leadership roles effectively, but who none the less, shy away from those responsibilities or are simply tend not be selected for leadership.

The results of this research may point to the existence of a common theme with regard to high propensity to lead. Organizational leaders may take advantage of this trend as they search for future highly qualified candidates to assume leadership roles within the organization. Literature already supports the conception that higher cognitive empathy leads to greater leader effectiveness (Condren, 2002). The current research points to evidence that balance with regard to empathy may be an indicator of a tendency to accept leadership responsibility. Therefore, objective measures of cognitive empathy, such as the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (Mehrabian, 2000), may be particularly useful as a tool to screen potential leaders or managers.

Given the findings of current study, however, especially taking into account the relatively low levels of significance that were noted, it would not be prudent, without further research, to utilize tests for empathy as the sole indicator of leadership potential. Organizational leaders must appreciate the complexity of leadership as a social construct and account for that complexity by using measures of empathy in conjunction with other assessment tools.

Impact of Research Design and Execution

The parameters of the current study established that leadership should be defined as incidents of formal leadership roles within established social entities wherein members select thier leadership from within the entity. This intentionally restrictive operational definition was intended to provide clear guidance to respondents. An unintentional, potentially negative impact of using such a restrictive operational definition is that it, in order to screen against many experiences that may not be indicative of personal tendency towards leadership, such as some nepotistic assignments, many legitimate leadership experiences may have been rejected. For example, incidents of leadership at work may have been excluded from this analysis despite the likelihood that some respondents may have experienced one or more occasions to provide formal leadership that did not meet the strict criteria established for this study. This likelihood begs the question of how these unrecorded experiences may have impacted the correlation analysis.

One faces several distinct challenges when electing to assess leadership propensity through self-reports of past experiences. One must rely on respondents to honestly report their experiences despite an assumed natural tendency to want to be identified as possessing strong leadership qualities and tendencies. Participants are also expected to accurately annotate leadership incidents, such that all of their experiences are documented and each clearly meets established criteria. For example, in the current study, one respondent included membership in a

national honor society as an incident of leadership. It was rejected because there was no indication that the respondent held a leadership role within the organization. It is possible that the respondent did, in fact, hold a leadership position but failed to annotate it clearly, which might negatively impact that person's leadership score. It may be necessary to assess leadership propensity through some means other than self-reporting. Finally, respondents are expected to remember each qualifying incident of leadership. It is quite possible that one may overlook incidents of leadership that, for whatever reason, may not seem exciting or important. More problematic, is the fact that what may be considered exciting, important, and memorable differs between people. Therefore, it is likely that some people included many more qualifying leadership experiences than others, who in reality, may have had as many or more qualifying leadership experiences. It may be necessary, in order to account for this potential skewing effect, to avoid self-reporting as a means of assessing leadership propensity

Data for the current study was collected from mid-March and into early April 2004. Coincidentally, the research collection phase was interrupted by the timeframe that many colleges and universities in the southeast take spring vacation. It is possible that this conflict may have had a negative impact on the decision to participate within the research population. In cases where the invitations to participate arrived just prior to students departing for spring break fraternity representatives may have decided not to distribute the invitations and survey packets or may have forgotten to distribute them when students returned. Subsequent researchers might find benefit in avoiding this schedule conflict.

Recommendations for Future Research

Confirmation of Current Research

The results of this research provide an interesting dichotomy. The hypotheses were not statistically supportable, yet there is clear evidence of the existence of an important trend. The parameters of the current study may have inhibited the ability to conclusively confirm that there is, in fact, a positive relationship between propensity to lead and empathy. The focus of the study, however, seems to have been validated as a potentially fruitful path of inquiry.

Further research is required to determine the feasibility of treating empathy as a single point of focus for leadership development training. Correlation analyses became increasingly stronger and more statistically significant as the test population were focused more narrowly. Among those who exhibited both high propensity to lead and empathy, which was average with respect to the sample population, the relationship between the research variables was strong and fairly significant. Unfortunately, that population consisted of only 15 subjects. Future research, designed to isolate that population, is necessary in order to validate the results of this study. If these findings are corroborated, subsequent research will be required to compare that population with others, controlling for both leadership propensity and empathy level.

The results of this research indicated minor, yet noticeable, differences in the strength of the relationships between leadership and empathy when controlled based on whether total leadership was used or within sample (chapter) leadership was studied. All other things being equal, one would expect no difference between the correlation coefficients for the research variables even when chapter leadership is examined independently. The fact that differences were detected is an indication that the sample population uses different standards for selection of its own leaders than the rest of society. Further research is necessary to validate this

phenomenon, facilitate deeper understanding of it, and to assess its impact on the membership of social fraternities.

The current research was descriptive in nature, intended only to assess whether a relationship existed between the research variables. Results of the study provide incentive to conduct experimental research to determine the relative effects from manipulation of leadership propensity and empathy. In that way, it will be possible to expand the body of knowledge with regard to both variables. Knowledge generated from experimental studies may help to assess the feasibility of using empathy as a single point of focus to significantly influence organizational leadership through screening and leader development training.

Research relating to the field of nursing has found support for the conception that capacity for empathy may be enhanced and refined (Kunyk & Olson, 2001). Hogan (1975) goes so far as to say that it is a trainable competency. Future research is required to assess the feasibility and subsequent effect of teaching empathy to potential leaders. Specifically, researchers should attempt to determine whether teaching socially appropriate empathy has a significant effect on one's propensity to lead.

This study focused on cognitive empathy, the ability to conceptually understand another person's frame of reference (Goleman, 1998b). Cognitive empathy though is just one aspect of the conception. Affective empathy, the ability to genuinely identify with another person's feelings and emotional state is another (Goleman, 1998b). Future research is necessary to determine whether affective empathy is similarly related to one's propensity to accept the responsibility of leadership.

Summary

This study was designed to contribute to the body of literature related to organizational leadership by investigating the relationship between propensity to lead, as determined by cumulative incidents of leadership, and empathy, as measured by the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale. Contemporary literature relevant to the subject showed a dearth of information regarding the relationship between these variables. The sample population, males who were active members of college social fraternities in the southeastern region of the United States represented existing social groupings wherein leadership and empathy could be tested and results compared within and between sample clusters. This relationship suggests that one's empathetic capacity may, to some extent, predict one's propensity to assume leadership, especially when that person's empathy remains within social norms.

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Appendix A

Albert Mehrabian, Ph.D.

Date: Dec. 21, 03

Dear Gregory Washington

Your are hereby given permission to make hard-copy reproductions of the Balanced Emotional Empathy

scale for use with participants who you will be testing in your own experimental studies. Please note you are **not** allowed to reproduce any items of the scale listed above in **any medium** for distribution to others (e.g., dissertation, thesis, written report, journal article, book, computer program, any internet-based communications, or in any other test or test manual). Display of the scale on any web page or inclusion of the scale in email messages to study participants is specifically prohibited.

Others in your department or school who may wish to use the scale listed above need to contact me at the address below for permission to use it.

Sincerely,

Albert Mehrabian

IMPORTANT, PLEASE READ THIS SECTION CAREFULLY!

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