

## ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: MOVING BEYOND COMMON PARADIGMS OF LEADERSHIP: UNDERSTANDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF ADVANCED LEADERSHIP IDENTITY

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In both formal and informal ways, leadership is woven into the fabric of higher education. Developing students into leaders who meet the demands of an increasingly interconnected world is a message found in institutional mission statements, program objectives, and learning outcomes. As such, scholars highlight the need for using relational, process-oriented, and socially responsible leadership paradigms with college students (Dugan, Kodama, Correia, & Associates 2013; Dugan & Komives, 2010; Higher Education Research Institute, 1996). Yet, despite educator efforts, most college students maintain approaches consistent with leader-centric and hierarchical paradigms (Haber, 2012). In order to design interventions that broaden students' leadership perspectives, educators must better understand how students develop their understanding and practice of leadership.

The Leadership Identity Development (LID) Model (Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005, 2006) is a stage-based model demonstrating development toward interdependent notions of leadership, or, how a person moves beyond leader-centric paradigms toward more relational and process-oriented approaches. Though, research on what prompts development toward later stages of the model is limited, indicating the need for further exploration. The purpose of this study was to understand the factors and forces in educational experiences that contribute to advanced stages of leadership identity development. Case study methods were used to explore the experiences of seven participants with leadership identities consistent with the later stages of the LID Model.

Participant narratives indicate leadership learning immersion programs, peer facilitation experiences, and academic courses as transformational. Within these experiences, experiential learning, developmental sequencing, and learning about relational leadership broadened participants' leadership perspectives and practices. Participants with consistent engagement in leadership learning from adolescence through college developed advanced leadership identities earlier than other participants, and earlier than those in previous studies. In addition, aspects of social identity development influenced participants' development toward later stages of the LID Model.

Findings of this study suggest educators should focus on the value and timing of leadership learning in educational interventions throughout the lifespan, as well as the opportunity for students to cultivate leadership learning in others. Educators should also give further consideration to the interaction between social identity development and leadership identity development.

MOVING BEYOND COMMON PARADIGMS OF LEADERSHIP:  
UNDERSTANDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF ADVANCED LEADERSHIP  
IDENTITY

by

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## DEDICATION

To the delegates, staff members, coordinators, board members, volunteers, and all “magic-makers” who are a part of the Ohio Association of Student Councils. It is you who showed me as a child the value of meaningful, authentic, supportive, *real* relationships, and the vital part they play in the joy and challenge of leadership. In so many ways, it is your influence, spirit, and love that has carried me to this place and this work. “We are the lucky ones; some people never get to do all we got to do...” I hope that in even some small way, what is written here helps communicate the importance of our work (and play) to develop the kind of leaders who build a more compassionate, prosperous world for all.

To the moon and back, always.  
Rocco

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In both formal and informal ways, leadership is woven into the fabric of higher education. Statements of the purpose of higher education and the mission statements of institutions across the United States are laden with narratives that place high importance on leadership and preparing the leaders of the future in all aspects of society (Astin & Astin, 2000; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999). Across academic disciplines and professional fields, leadership continues to be a primary learning outcome and desired skill (Seemiller & Murray, 2013). In response to this call for leadership, college campuses have seen an influx of student programs and courses designed with the intention of developing college students into leaders (Komives, Dugan, Owen, Slack, & Wagner, 2011).

What exactly is meant by the term “leadership” can vary depending upon personal experience, context, and knowledge of the scholarship resulting from the study of leadership throughout history. What does leadership look like? Who can be a leader? Is leadership synonymous with power or position? Are leaders born or made? These are just some of the common questions guiding the thousands of definitions of leadership seen in both scholarly literature and popular discourse about leadership. The body of literature that addresses the study of leadership throughout history shows trends and patterns in approaches to leadership over time. A leadership approach explains a set of assumptions related to the questions listed above regarding what leadership is, who can claim the identity of “leader,” and potentially how one becomes a leader. A leadership approach typically refers to a family of definitions with common themes.

Western approaches to leadership through history show a progression from the nineteenth century to present day, beginning with heredity-based views, through skill and behavior-based approaches, and on to modern-day approaches featuring collaborative and process-based leadership (see Bass, 1990; Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013; Rost, 1993; Stogdill & Bass, 1981; Yukl, 2006; Van Fleet & Yukl, 1989).

Heredity-based approaches are grounded in Darwinist principles of natural-born power, strength, and survival of the fittest where leadership is passed down through a hierarchical system of class-based power (Stogdill & Bass, 1981). According to heredity-based leadership, leaders are quite literally born as such, and only into families with social status and power (e.g. royalty, aristocracy). As Western society moved beyond social and political structures dependent on heredity for leadership, focus turned to the personality traits, skills, and behaviors required of a leader. A trait-based approach says that all leaders possess a certain list of qualities and physical attributes. For example, leaders are intelligent and persistent men of grand physical stature, who have loud voices and exude confidence. Similarly, skill and behavioral approaches to leadership, developed around the time of the industrial revolution, focus on how successful one is in completing activities, roles, functions, and responsibilities at work. A skills-based approach to leadership assumes that, for example, leaders complete tasks most efficiently or have mastered the art of public speaking. Those who do not possess those particular skills cannot be leaders, and what they do is not considered leadership. Neither trait nor skill-based approaches to leadership consider situational factors, follower motivation, or group process (Komives, Lucas, and McMahon, 2013).

Modern-day approaches to leadership, those focused on the relationship between people rather than the characteristics of an individual, were not developed until the 1970s. The earliest of the modern approaches, such as transformational leadership (Burns, 1978) and servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977), focus on reciprocity between leaders and followers while still identifying the two roles as separate (Rost 1993; Stogdill & Bass, 1981). For example, transformational leadership posits that leaders and followers engage in a relationship that goes beyond transactional tasks, and actually helps both the leaders and followers grow and develop personally and professionally (Burns, 1978). In servant leadership, a person with commitment to bettering their community and engaging in service to help others emerges as “the leader” (Greenleaf, 1977). In both examples, the relationship between leaders and followers is reciprocal and mutually beneficial, but the distinction between one who leads and others who follow is still maintained.

More recent research reflects a departure from the leader-follower dichotomy, instead highlighting leadership as a fluid and dynamic process dependent upon shared responsibility (see Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2009; Astin & Leland, 1991; Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013; Komives & Wagner, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Rath & Conchie, 2009). These approaches posit that leadership happens when individuals contribute their unique perspectives, collaborate with one another, consider context and multiple stakeholders, and work toward a shared vision of positive change in communities and organizations. Formal positions are not required for leadership. Even if present, leadership is not reserved for those with the title. All members of a group could be labeled as “leaders” as they equally engage in processes and activities that contribute to the group’s cause. For example, the person who speaks on behalf of the group to the

public is engaging in leadership, but so is the person helping to write the speech, as is the person who organizes the event, and the person who serves as emotional support for group members throughout the process. Each piece is considered vital to the greater leadership process that makes the group successful.

The progression of leadership approaches throughout history of western society has important implications for how people develop leadership and our understanding of how to engage in leadership development work with college students. Wren (2001) states that “the unique nature of leadership requires its study to be a combination of intellectual inquiry, behavioral innovation, and practical application” (p.5). College student leadership programs, both curricular and co-curricular, have outcomes associated with all three, but the specific approaches to leadership used in programs are also of major importance. Determining what leadership outcomes students develop as a result of curricular and co-curricular programs depends upon how leadership is defined by those creating and evaluating the program.

Those who study leadership in higher education largely support emphasizing modern relational approaches to leadership with college students (Komives et al., 2011; Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013). This paradigmatic alignment can be attributed to two major factors; (1) a long-stated purpose of higher education has been to develop the whole student, leading to an array of student development theories that place cognitive complexity and social interdependency as developmental goals for college students (see American Council on Education, 1937; Brown, 1972; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Keeling, 2004, 2006; Parker, 1978; Rodgers, 1990), and (2) advanced stages of human development align with the more modern approaches to leadership grounded in

collaboration, inclusivity, and relationship-building (see Bass, 1990; Northouse, 2015; Rost, 1993; Stogdill & Bass, 1981; Van Fleet & Yukl, 1989; Yukl, 2006).

A variety of leadership theories and models for college students have been developed out of the research that connects student development and modern leadership approaches. For example, the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) (1996) calls for leadership programs that teach students how to collaborate with others in a process of fueled by individual, group, and societal values. Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (2013) discuss the importance of teaching students how to develop shared purpose, make ethical decisions, empower others, and attend to group dynamics and relationships in leadership. Kouzes and Posner (2012) cite over 25 years of leadership research that supports emphasis on values congruence, developing shared visions, encouraging others, incorporating diverse perspectives, and challenging assumptions to transform organizations and communities. The Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL), a national exploration of college student leadership development, shows overwhelming consistency in student outcomes regarding development of socially responsible leadership, including the capacities of consciousness of self, congruence, commitment, collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, and citizenship. The MSL also indicates the potential for leadership programs to develop cognitive complexity, prompt critical self-reflection and identity development, as well as increase self-efficacy for socially responsible leadership (Dugan & Komives, 2007). Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, and Osteen (2005, 2006) and Owen (2012b) discuss the critical impact of the college experience on helping students move from leader-centric views to understanding leadership as an inclusive process not bound by position.

It would follow, then, that understanding how one develops leadership consistent with the approaches listed above is important for the educators responsible for creating and implementing leadership curriculum both within and outside of the classroom. The Leadership Identity Development (LID) Model (Komives et al., 2005, 2006) was developed to help educators working with college students better understand how an individual comes to understand and exhibit leadership that aligns with relational, process-oriented approaches. The model utilizes student development theories of psychosocial and cognitive development to demonstrate how an individual's understanding of leadership develops along a continuum throughout the lifespan. The model incorporates an individual's multiple approaches to leadership across its stages and highlights a developmental pattern similar to the historic progression of leadership theory. As an individual becomes more complex along cognitive and psychosocial dimensions, they shed thoughts of leadership as individual position and begin to understand leadership as a relational, collaborative, interdependent process with others that can take on many different forms depending on culture and context.

### **The Leadership Identity Development Model**

The Leadership Identity Development (LID) Model (Komives et al., 2005, 2006) is similar to other human development models in that it is directional, involves the differentiation and integration of the various parts of the self, and describes movement from simple to more complex ways of knowing and being (see Baxter Magolda, 2008; Erikson, 1994; Kegan; 1994; Kohlberg, 1969). Informed by a life narrative study with thirteen diverse college students who had been identified as exhibiting relational leadership, leadership identity development theory and the LID Model essentially place



the contextual lens of leadership over other theories of human development (Komives et al., 2005, 2006, 2009). The theory suggests that just as individuals move from dependent, to independent, to interdependent ways of meaning-making along other dimensions of human development, they also gradually develop an understanding of leadership following a similar pattern. For example, an individual who developmentally relies on the direction of external authority figures to determine what is right and wrong (Kohlberg, 1969) may also believe that leadership is external to the self; that only those with authority can show leadership, and that they themselves are not leaders.

The LID Model (Komives et al., 2005, 2006) demonstrates how an individual's understanding of leadership develops along a continuum throughout the lifespan. The model incorporates multiple approaches to leadership across its stages, similar to the historic progression of leadership theory, rather than one set definition of leadership. Individuals gradually shift their understanding to more relational, collaborative, and process-oriented conceptions of leadership as they become more developmentally complex humans. The model includes six stages:

1. Awareness: A dependent view of leadership where an individual does not have language to describe leadership, but rather notices “something different” about an authority figure, present or historic.
2. Exploration/Engagement: A dependent view of leadership where an individual learns to engage with others and explore many interests, but does not yet refer to these interactions as leadership.

3. Leader Identified: A dependent moving toward independent view of leadership where an individual identifies others and eventually themselves as leaders based on position, title, or hierarchy.
4. Leadership Differentiated: An interdependent view of leadership where an individual understands that leadership goes beyond titles toward a shared group process to which anyone can contribute in diverse and unique ways.
5. Generativity: An interdependent view of leadership where an individual focuses on enabling and empowering others and commits to the grander purpose of organizations.
6. Integration/Synthesis: An interdependent view of leadership where an individual has incorporated a leadership identity into their self-concept and has the self-efficacy to engage in leadership across contexts throughout life (Komives et al., 2005, 2006, 2009).

Development past stage three indicates a leader identity that is interdependent, incorporating systems views of leadership that recognize and value the contributions of diverse others in a leadership process (Komives et al., 2009; Wielkiewicz, 2000). As one moves from stage four and into stages five and six of the model, they are increasingly able to hold what O'Conner and Day (2007) refer to as individual, relational, and collective leadership identities concurrently. One is able to remain confident in their personal ability to lead in a variety of situations with or without a title, continues to learn and adapt their own style and contributions based on group needs, and increasingly engages in leadership by developing others rather than solely executing on tasks.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Despite research on leadership identity development in college students and the call for helping students develop increasingly complex leader identities consistent with relational, process-oriented approaches, cultural hegemonic factors continually reify general western assumptions that leadership is leader-centric and hierarchical. This preserves leadership for a select, privileged few. Leaders lead others; leaders are presidents and CEO; leaders are the ones at the front of the room; leaders have traits and talents that make them stand out. When asked “who is a leader?” people respond with examples of great men and women throughout history who overcame great odds or led national movements (Northouse, 2015). It is easy to define leadership in this way because one can see it, point at it, and easily discuss it in an instant. The leadership is literally right in front of us, embodied in a single person.

Yet, leadership identity development research shows that when an individual’s perspective of leadership as position is challenged, they are able to recognize that leadership happens as a result of different types of contributions from diverse others (Day & Harrison, 2007; Komives et al, 2005, 2006). The individual is then able to acknowledge the role that communities play in advancing the same causes for which our famous figureheads receive the credit. They notice that who emerges as a leader depends on the situation, and that power and influence transfer almost constantly. Leadership becomes a series of interactions between many people all working towards a shared goal.

Context, however, is a powerful force, which means that developing relational and process-oriented leadership in institutional and societal cultures that perpetuate leader-centric views is both paradoxical and challenging. Roberts (2007) notes that this

inconsistency is particularly troublesome for leadership development work with college students in the United States. In the process of figuring out who they are how they want to contribute to the world, college students see flawed leadership everywhere; in business, government, and education, as well as within their own communities and organizations. They are part of systems and structures at home, school, and work that reinforce individual over community. Fad literature that saturates the popular media reduces leadership to simple steps or static traits that often lacks scholarly support and intentional philosophy. Students explore their personal values and goals to discover how they might be different from, and better than, those who have come before them or who they hear about from around the world (Roberts). With so many conflicting messages, it is no wonder that students are left feeling confused or excluded in their search to understand and develop leadership (Arminio et al., 2000).

The limited research that has been done on student understandings of leadership shows that leader-centric culture does have an effect on student leadership identity; most college students maintain perspectives of leadership that are leader-centric and hierarchical (Haber, 2012). Even those students who can describe leadership in more relational and process-oriented ways often still engage in leadership that aligns with leader-centric approaches (Komives et al., 2005, 2006, 2009). Again, paradigms drive outcomes, which could indicate that college student leadership programs are either designed to emphasize leader-centric paradigms, or are not effective in attempts to teach and develop student outcomes that align with more complex paradigms of process-oriented leadership. Without intentionally designed opportunities for education, critical analysis, and reflection that interrogate dominant paradigms and commonly held notions

of leadership, individuals will resort to defining it as it is generally accepted in western culture; as leader-centric, reserved for the few, and synonymous with position, power, and authority (Dugan & Komives, 2010; Kodama & Dugan, 2013; Komives et al, 2005, 2006).

Research that helps explain leadership development across the life span is imperative if educators are to help students re-frame the way they think about and employ leadership. Recent studies in leadership development conceptualize “leader” as a social identity, perceived by the self and others (Lord & Brown, 2004; Lord & Hall, 2005; Ruderman & Ernst, 2004; van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Yet, research on leadership identity is minimal and mostly focused on adolescents and career adults (Reichard & Paik, 2011; Day & Harrison, 2007). The research on leadership identity that resulted in the LID Model (Komives et al., 2005, 2006) is the only study to date that examines leadership identity development with college students, combining the unique experiences of the college environment with the human development processes of young adults to better understand changes in leadership understanding and behavior over time.

Follow-up studies utilizing the LID Model are minimal, as well. Those who have attempted to validate the LID theory and model or applied it to specific populations note the lack of compelling examples of leadership identity development beyond stage four, or preliminary understandings of leadership as a process (Gonda, 2007; Komives et al., 2005, 2006, 2009; Wagner, 2011). While LID is not an age-based model, the lack of examples of leadership identity in later stages across studies leads scholars to hypothesize that most individuals never advance past stage three, holding a leadership identity consistent with hierarchical, leader-centric approaches to leadership throughout their lives

(Komives et al., 2009). A better understanding of the later stages of the LID Model, the individuals who hold views consistent with advanced leader identities, and the learning and development experiences that have been influential in those individuals' leadership development is critical. Without this further research, we will be unable to create educational experiences that help students understand and practice leadership at more complex and interdependent levels both within and beyond the college experience.

### **Purpose of this Study**

The purpose of this study is to better understand the factors and forces that contribute to the leadership identity development of current and recent undergraduate students with advanced leadership identities. Specifically, I use case study methods to learn more about the formal and informal educational experiences that participants identify as being influential and transformative in contributing to an understanding and practice of leadership as a generative, integrative, and interdependent process; an approach to leadership consistent with advanced stages of leadership identity development (Komives et al, 2005, 2006). Specific research questions include:

1. How do individuals at advanced stages of leadership identity development describe, understand, and engage in leadership?
2. What specific learning and development experiences do individuals believe to be meaningful and influential in their development of advanced leadership identity?
3. How and why do those learning and development experiences promote transition through leadership identity development toward more complex stages?

## **Summary of Methods**

Case study methodology is appropriate for this study, as it is often used when the researcher seeks to gain deep understanding of the experiences and meaning-making of a particular group of people (Merriam, 1998). For this study, current and recent undergraduate students with understandings and practices of leadership consistent with advanced stages of leadership identity development are considered a bounded population, a key marker for the use of case study methods (Merriam), because of the noted challenge of finding study participants at later stages of leadership identity development (Gonda, 2007; Komives et al., 2005, 2006; Wagner, 2011). Each individual participant is considered a case, with attention paid to the life experiences of each individual and how those experiences contribute to the individuals' development of an advanced leadership identity. To deepen understanding of the learning and development experiences that promote advanced leadership identity development, cases were compared to one another through cross-case analysis to yield common themes (Merriam).

Further, the interpretive nature of case study methods contributes to the appropriateness of this study, as it drives the researcher to develop "conceptual categories or to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to the data gathering" (Merriam, 1998, p.38). While some initial theories and assumptions have been made about advanced leadership identity development, those conclusions have risen from limited and incomplete research. The descriptions of LID stages five and six and understanding of how individuals develop generative and integrative leadership identities have not been fully realized due to lack of research and the struggle to find adequate

examples. An interpretive case study approach helps clarify and deepen understanding of the leadership identity development process.

Purposeful sampling was utilized through participant recommendations from student leadership educators at various higher education institutions who are familiar with the research on leadership identity development. These recommenders identified seven participants, one current college student and six college graduates up to three years out, who exhibit thought and behavior indicative of advanced leader identity, and also represent diversity in cultural, racial, and gender identity. Purposeful sampling combined with the comparative case study approach allows the reader to better apply the study findings to their own experience, which increases external validity and generalizability, (Merriam, 1998).

A semi-structured interview was conducted with each recommender. Through this interview, the recommender was asked to describe their interactions with and observations of the participant that are consistent with later stages of leadership identity development. This provided clarity regarding the fit of the participant for the study, as well as provided an important perspective on the participant's process of leadership identity development. Participants were confirmed as appropriate for the study via data gathered in the recommender interviews. Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant, the first regarding the participant's understanding of leadership and life experiences that contribute to that understanding, and the second diving deeper into the learning and development experiences both within and outside of the educational environment that have been influential in participants' leadership development over time. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Data was analyzed for salient points and



common themes both within and across cases using narrative analysis, which focuses on participants' stories and meaning-making of personal experiences in their leadership development journeys (Glesne, 2011).

### **Significance of this Study**

For better or worse, society looks to “leaders” to take action and make change. It is troubling, then, that the dominant leader-centric and hierarchical paradigm of leadership only labels people with certain identities, traits, privileges, and titles as leaders. Allowing this paradigm of leadership to thrive means we exclude from leadership the diverse voices and contributions that are necessary to solve the complex problems facing our organizations and communities. At the same time, the enterprise of higher education has taken on the challenge of developing leaders. As King (1997) states, “Helping students develop the integrity and strength of character that prepare them for leadership may be one of the most challenging and important goals of higher education” (p. 87). Students' involvement experiences across institutional functions play a part in developing their leadership capacity, and students generate their perspectives of leadership from what is espoused, intentionally or unintentionally, from across the educational environment (Astin & Astin, 2000; Dugan & Komives, 2010; Owen, 2012a). The question, then, is whether or not our efforts contribute to the deconstruction and shifting of the dominant paradigm of leadership.

While educators claim to understand the importance of emphasizing relational, inclusive leadership approaches with college students, campus programs and initiatives continue to fall short, often reducing leadership development to simple skill-building and ignoring the crucial elements of human development and context that greatly influence

how we perceive and practice leadership (Day & Harrison, 2007; Owen, 2012a). Though, shifting paradigms of leadership is more than a matter of creating more programs or picking the “right definition” of leadership to emphasize. Years of student development research notes that for learning experiences to be effective, the cognitive, psychosocial, and identity development processes of students must be considered in the creation and implementation of those experiences; the entire field of student affairs has been built upon this notion. Applying this foundational idea to the topic of leadership, Hall (2004) indicates that “Identity is probably the most important aspect of leader...development” (p. 154). We have to understand the developmental and contextual factors that influence student leadership identity development if we are going to design interventions to broaden students’ leadership perspectives.

Developing interdependent views and practices of leadership consistent with the later stages of the LID Model helps increase students’ self-efficacy to engage in inclusive, relational leadership across diverse contexts and beyond the college experience (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Thus, understanding the factors and forces that drive leadership identity development toward later stages is key for educators. With the knowledge gained from this study, educators will be better equipped to design developmentally appropriate leadership curriculum and properly challenge and support students to reexamine and reconstruct their views and practices of leadership. With more effective educational interventions, students will be better equipped to practice relational leadership despite contradictory messages and examples that surround them, as well as help others in their workplaces and communities re-frame what it means to be a leader and engage in leadership.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following literature review is comprised of four main sections. First, an explanation of the progression of leadership approaches helps illuminate the changing paradigms and perspectives on leadership in western society. The more modern, post-industrial approaches to leadership align with the leadership identity development processes that are the focus of this dissertation, as will be further discussed in this chapter.

The second section discusses the development of leadership: both overarching approaches to leadership development, as well as theories of human development that inform the development of a leadership identity. Particular emphasis is placed on cognitive development processes, as they serve as a primary theoretical frame for the present study.

The third section provides an in-depth look at the Leadership Identity Development (LID) Model, the first and only conceptual model to date that examines the identity development processes that inform what one believes about leadership and how one engages in leadership. The original study conducted with undergraduate college students, as well as validation studies and applications to various contexts are discussed.

The fourth section provides a further explanation of the later stages of the LID Model. Current research has limited examples of study participants that exhibit leadership identities consistent with stages five and six of the LID Model. It is these two stages that are of particular interest in the research study described in this dissertation, so it is appropriate to discuss what is currently known about these stages as well as the developmental constructs that inform their construction.

## **Leadership Approaches and Leadership Identity**

Leadership approaches are related to leadership identity, but the concepts are distinct from one another. An approach seeks to define leadership and often determines who can claim the identity of “leader.” A leadership approach typically refers to a family of definitions with common themes. Approaches are external to the individual, meaning they describe what leadership looks like, not how individuals understand it or how it is developed, which leadership identity would help explain. Approaches can, and typically are, influenced by discipline, historical context, or environment.

Leadership identity development theory incorporates a variety of leadership approaches that have developed throughout the history of the study of leadership in Western society. The theory explains that as an individual becomes more developmentally complex, they identify with and practice leadership approaches that are also more complex (Komives et al., 2005, 2006, 2009). The leadership approaches described below help illustrate how an individual would progress in their understanding of leadership as they develop more advanced leadership identity. The approaches move from static and absolute conceptions of leadership toward approaches that consider environment, context, and diversity in both people who engage in leadership and situations where leadership can be found.

### **Progression of Leadership Approaches**

The overarching progression from a heredity-based leadership approach of the nineteenth century, through skill and behavior-based approaches, and on to modern-day approaches featuring collaborative and process-based leadership is well established in the literature (see Bass, 1990; Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2008; Rost, 1993; Stogdill &

Bass, 1981; Yukl, 2006; Van Fleet & Yukl, 1989). I review the varying approaches in the sections below. It is important to note that while the discussion below outlines a historical progression of paradigms throughout the scholarship, current thought and practice of leadership in Western society does not necessarily align with this progression. In practice, many of the historical approaches to leadership are prevalent today, particularly approaches that are leader-centric or rely on static skills and traits (Haber, 2012; Northouse, 2015). Thus, it is important to understand each of the paradigms discussed below, as their use varies in today's society dependent upon individual understanding and development, as will be discussed in later sections of this literature review.

**“Great Man” approaches.** The first theories of leadership on record were developed in the nineteenth century and center on Darwinist principles of natural-born power and strength and survival of the fittest (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013). At the time, leadership was thought to only exist in men born to royal or aristocratic lines. According to the “Great Man” approach, leadership is not something that can be developed, rather it is believed to be passed down the generations through intermarriage of the fittest, resulting in the creation of a hierarchical system of class-based power (Stogdill & Bass, 1981). As western society has moved beyond structures that depend exclusively on royalty for leadership, the Great Man approach is difficult to use in modern times, as it limits the potential for leadership to a select few. In addition, research has shown that leaders are not born with innate characteristics that certainly predispose them to be leaders, as environment and context both affect who emerges as a leader (Gardner, 1990; Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 1993; Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013).

**Trait approaches.** In the early 1900s, views of leadership moved away from bloodlines and toward a focus on innate traits. A trait-based approach says that while one does not necessarily have to be born into power to be a leader, all leaders possess a certain list of qualities and physical attributes. The leader can only be one type of person, for example, tall, loud, intelligent, and confident. Those who do not have these traits cannot be leaders or engage in leadership (Bass, 1990; Stogdill & Bass, 1981; Yukl, 2006). Critiques of this approach include recognition of how traits are too obscure or abstract to measure or scientifically link to effective leadership (Rost, 1993). In addition, trait approaches do not consider leader behavior, situational factors, or follower motivation in leadership. (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013).

**Behavioral approaches.** Industrialization of the western world led the view of leadership away from innate qualities toward a focus on managerial behavior. Behavioral approaches to leadership do not claim that a leader needs to have specific characteristics, but that effective leadership is based on how successful one is in completing activities, roles, functions and responsibilities at work. Behaviors, unlike traits, can be developed. The field of psychology largely influenced studies of the behavioral approach to leadership in the 1950s and 1960s (Yukl, 2006). For example, the studies that emerged from Ohio State University researchers Stogdill and Coons (1957) describe leadership as the extent to which managers display care and concern for subordinates' needs and well-being (consideration behaviors) balanced with a manager's ability to define and structure his role and the roles of his subordinates toward achievement of group work goals (initiative behaviors). A series of studies conducted by University of Michigan researchers Katz, Maccoby, and Morse (1950) identified three effective leader behaviors;

task-oriented behavior, relationship-oriented behavior, and participative leadership.

Overall, behavioral approaches still ignore the influence of environmental and contextual factors in leadership, failing to identify the leadership behaviors that prove most effective in particular situations. (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013).

**Situational approaches.** Contextual influences sit at the core of situational approaches to leadership that developed out of earlier behavioral theories. Rather than assuming that the same leadership behaviors are appropriate for all contexts, a situational approach suggests that effective leadership arises out of a leader's ability to alter behavior based on the situation: for example, the nuances of a particular interaction, the people involved, the type of organization, or the particular work environment (Yukl, 2006). Further, the situational approach is the first in the history of leadership theory that recognizes the influence of factors outside of the individual leader on leadership effectiveness. Situational approaches such as the Contingency Model (Fielder, 1967) and Path-Goal Theory (House & Mitchell, 1974) introduce the more robust role of subordinates to the leadership conversation, acknowledging that the skills, needs, and motives of subordinates affect the ability of the manager to lead the group in accomplishment of work tasks (as cited in Van Fleet & Yukl, 1989). Still, the focus of situational theories is still on the individual leader's actions and leader-follower dyadic relations. This approach ignores the possibility of those outside of the identified leader or manager participating in leadership. In addition, the large variety in potential contextual variables makes it difficult to study which leadership behaviors are most effective for which situations (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013).

**Influence theories.** Influence theories represent an approach to leadership that focuses on the charisma of the leader, or the leader's ability to influence followers rooted in the followers' belief in the leader's innate, unique, and exceptional qualities (Yukl, 2006.) The influence-focused body of leadership theories stems from Max Weber's (1947) exploration of charisma as being central to leadership, more so than traditional power and formal authority. A greater interest in charismatic leadership grew from political, social, and religious movements of the twentieth century through which a major crisis would give rise to a single leader with a grand vision for resolution (Bass 1990; Yukl, 2006). House (1977) conducted research on charismatic leaders that identified unique behaviors and qualities distinct from other forms of leadership, as well as the conditions under which charismatic leadership is likely to thrive. Still, charismatic leadership and the general body of influence theories situate the individual leader as the focus, at times with so much deference to their power that leadership turns negative. Charismatic leaders' misuse of unquestioned power given to them by followers has resulted in destruction of organizations and even death of members in the most extreme cases (Yukl, 2006; Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013).

**Reciprocal leadership approaches.** In the 1970s, as the western economy became more service-driven with jobs that require complex cognitive skill, theories of leadership that considered the relationship between leaders and followers began to emerge. Unlike earlier approaches, the reciprocal leadership approaches focus on interpersonal dynamics, shared goals, and the motivations of both leaders and followers. This school of thought also introduces leadership as a shared process to which multiple people contribute, rather than simply something that a leader does to followers. For



example, Burns (1978) defined transformational leadership, a reciprocal theory, as “a process where leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation” (p. 20).

Another reciprocal theory, Servant-leadership (Greenleaf, 1977), focuses on the leader’s commitment and desire to serve the needs of others and the larger community. Kelley (1988) uncovered patterns in reciprocal approaches to leadership in which followers were able to manage themselves, felt committed to their organization and a greater purpose, built their knowledge and skills to contribute to shared goals, and displayed honesty, courage, and credibility. Commitment to developing individual core values and aspirations toward higher self-actualization, as well as focus on larger philosophical commitments to society such as humanitarianism, justice, and equality are all factors involved in the reciprocal leadership process. While the focus on reciprocity between leaders and followers is present in these earlier models of post-industrial leadership, the two roles are still viewed as separate, reserving leadership for a single person in the relationship (Rost 1993; Stogdill & Bass, 1981).

**Relational approaches and process-based leadership.** The most recent research on leadership reflects approaches that depart from the focus on a singular leader and view leadership as an interdependent process owned by all members of a group collectively (see Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2009; Astin & Lelan, 1991; Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013; Komives & Wagner, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Rath & Conchie, 2009). Approaches such as the Relational Leadership Model (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013), and Social Change Model of Leadership (Astin & Lelan, 1991; Astin & Astin, 2000; Komives & Wagner, 2009), were designed for college students

specifically and highlight the unique contributions of diverse individuals with shared responsibility leadership. According to these approaches, leadership is a group process that requires a sense of interdependency among all members. Each individual's contributions to the group are of value and propel the group forward, regardless of role or title. Leadership is episodic, happening from moment to moment, taking the form of both progress toward task completion and attendance to group dynamics. Individuals in the group each contribute their unique perspectives, feel a sense of shared ownership over the group's vision, mission, and goals, collaborate with one another, consider context and multiple stakeholders in decision making, and work toward a shared vision of positive change in communities and organizations.

### **Leadership Development**

Leadership development refers to the process through which individuals and organizations increase the capacity for engaging in leadership (Allen & Roberts, 2011; Roberts, 1981). While the general population is likely to believe that leadership aligns with just one of the approaches described above, leadership scholars assert that leadership is something that is more dynamic, and can be developed in people and organizations over time. Leadership is a part of the self-concept and not just an outcome reached by exercising certain skills or traits (Komives et al., 2013; Yukl, 2006). Still, many models used in schools and workplaces describe leadership development as a process of acquiring skills or learning behavior through short-term experiences, rather than a life-long process (Lord & Hall, 2005; Day & Harrison, 2007).

Viewing leadership as simple set of skills or behaviors to be developed is limiting because it assumes that learning is summative; that developing leadership means to

collect knowledge and experience (Dugan, 2011). Evidence shows that leadership is developed over time through meaningful interactions and exposure throughout the lifespan, some of which comes from specific leadership development programs in educational and professional environments, and some that comes from more informal interactions (Antonio, 2001; Dugan & Komives, 2010; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Smart, Ethington, Riggs, & Thompson, 2002). This more robust view of leadership development takes an identity-based approach, suggesting that understanding of and approach to leadership changes over time as individuals develop other aspects of their identity, increase in cognitive complexity, and experience new contexts.

### **Identity and Leadership Development**

There are important connections between leadership approaches, leadership development, and human identity development. Leadership approaches reflect the definition of leadership a person holds as true at a certain point in their process of leadership development. How and why one changes their approach to leadership over time is informed by one's increasing developmental complexity, or identity development. The intersection of leadership approaches, identity development, and leadership development is what scholars refer to as *leader identity* and *leadership identity*.

Day, Harrison, and Halpin (2009) explain that, in terms of general human development processes, individuals develop identities related to a variety of social roles they hold throughout their lives. A leader identity, then, refers to how one's attributes, values, knowledge, experiences, and overall self-perceptions inform how they view themselves as a leader. Leadership development is embedded in the development of

personal and social identities, as well as in cognitive development processes (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009; Dugan, 2011).

Work by Komives et al. (2005) adds another layer to the identity-based approach to leadership development, illustrating that leadership identity includes not just the self-perception in the role of leader, but also includes how one views the self in relation to others in the process of leadership. Komives et al. (2005) found that as the self develops through group interactions, one's view of self with others changes, and then broadens one's view of leadership, gradually being able to see a variety of individual, group, and community skills, behaviors, and perspectives as leadership. The process by which one develops a leadership identity is appropriately referred to as leadership identity development (Komives et al., 2005). Below are further descriptions of the aspects of the identity development process that inform the leadership identity development process.

### **Identity Development Process**

Psychologist Erik Erikson (1994) describes the process of identity development as a series of stages involving confrontation with challenge that forces an individual to renegotiate their self-concept, resulting in increased developmental complexity, typically incorporating the views of others into the self-concept. As identity develops, individuals increasingly recognize and incorporate the perspectives of others, ultimately enabling one to feel grounded in their self-concept while still placing value on collaboration and interdependence (Sedikides & Brewer, 2001). The description of the changing nature of approaches to leadership over time addressed earlier in this literature review shows a similar progression to the identity development process, gradually moving from a focus on the individual toward incorporating others in a collaborative leadership process.

**College student development.** Emphasis on the importance of attending to human development within the context of higher education started in the early twentieth century, with educators calling for holistic learning that responds to the individual needs of college students (American Council on Education, 1937). Informed by identity development models throughout the lifespan (Erikson, 1994), psychologists began to study human identity development in college students and how the college environment influences progress toward developmental complexity. The creation of the theories of student development soon followed (see Chickering, 1969; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Kohlberg, 1969; Perry, 1970), which serve as the foundation of the student affairs field today (Baxter Magolda, 2009; Strange, 1994).

Theories of student development seek to describe “the ways that a student grows, progresses, or increases developmental capacities as a result of enrollment in higher education” (Rodgers, 1990, p.27). While each theory of student development examines a particular aspect of human development (i.e. cognitive development, moral development, psychosocial development, various social identities), there are general features characteristic of most student development theories and models. First, they are primarily stage-based, with each stage building upon the previous stages. Movement through stages is propelled by a student confronting a challenge to their previously held notions of reality. If a challenge is successfully navigated, the student moves into the next stage of development. When a challenge is not fully resolved, a student will not completely move into the next stage, and a process of recycling may occur in which challenges from previous stages may resurface. Students may also use knowledge and rationale from a previous stage even if they have completely advanced to more developed stages in a

model (Erikson, 1994). Finally, movement through student development models also shows progression in meaning-making processes, from dependency on external values and authority to make meaning of the world, toward using one's individual voice independent of others' views, toward a sense of interdependency where one is confident in their own voice while still incorporating the perspectives of others in the meaning-making process (Baxter Magolda, 2008; Kegan, 1994).

Research on leadership identity development has been connected to a variety of student development theories. For example, Komives et al. (2005) notes the connection between psychosocial development, or the impact of social experience on development of personal identity, and the process of developing a leadership identity. Beyond simply experiencing key leadership events, the psychosocial development processes embedded within those experiences were found to propel leadership growth. Chickering and Reisser's (1993) vectors of developing interdependence, establishing healthy personal relationships, and developing confidence in one's sense of self can all be found in the leadership identity development process (Komives et al., 2005). In addition, evidence of developing what Baxter Magolda (2001) refers to as self-authorship, or the internal capacity to define one's own beliefs, identity, and interactions with others, can be found in the transitions between LID stages (Komives et al., 2009). For example, higher degrees of self-authorship are required for more advanced stages of leadership identity development, because recognizing leadership as a process rather than a position requires the ability to filter through dominant narratives of leadership (Komives et al.)

**Social identity development.** Research on leadership identity development also indicates connections to social identities, or identities connected to a person's

membership in certain social groups (e.g. race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation) (Torres, Jones, & Renn: 2009). Research indicates that these identities develop in a dynamic process, intersecting with one another and changing in relative salience as a result (Jones & McEwen; 2000). No single identity can be fully understood without considering the influence of other identities and the contextual factors that inform how individuals interpret and display their identities (Jones & Abes, 2004; Jones, Abes, & McEwen, 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000). Applying this perspective to leadership identity development, Komives et al. (2005, 2009) suggest that social identity can be a key contextual influence on the leadership identity development process. For example, they suggest that students of color and women may experience and engage in leadership in more collaboratively based on cultural norms and gender expectations (Komives et al.). Similarly, Onorato and Musoba (2015) found that Hispanic [sic] women were less likely to identify as leaders because of the disconnect they felt between paradigms of positional leadership and cultural expectations for them to engage in more supportive ways. Komives et al. (2009) suggest that stages of racial identity development for students of color may impact their experiences in group situations and, therefore, affect how they engage in leadership.

**Cognitive development.** Cognitive development theories focus on one's intellectual development; how they think, reason, and make meaning of various experiences (Piaget, 1952; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2009). Cognitive theories of development included in the larger body of student development theories are structural in nature, meaning they have stages that correlate with a set of assumptions a person uses to adapt to and organize their environment using cognitive processes at a

particular point in their development (Evans et al., 2009). Scholars call attention to cognition and cognitive development as being influential in prompting movement through transitions in the leadership identity development process, and specifically highlight Kegan's (1982) Orders of Consciousness model (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009; Komives et al., 2005).

**Orders of Consciousness.** Kegan (1982) refers to meaning making as the primary process of cognitive development. Individuals make sense of the world around them by continuously balancing and rebalancing their sense of self and sense of other. This is also referred to as the subject-object distinction. Parts of life that are subject for an individual are the parts they cannot see; what is subject for us comprises us. Because we cannot see it as external to us, we cannot control what is subject for us, nor reflect on it. Object, then, is that which, through meaning-making processes, one is able to see as separate and distinct from the self.

Five Orders of Consciousness (Kegan, 1982, 1994), or ways of knowing, explain the mental organization of thinking, feeling, and relating to self and others. Movement through the five orders begins at birth, where babies cannot differentiate between the self and others. Through childhood individuals begin to recognize others as different and distinct and are gradually able to develop relationships with others. From here, individuals begin to identify as being members of a community and rely on the structure, rules, and validation of others. Higher orders of consciousness occur when an individual is able to see connections across multiple abstract concepts and move into systems-based thinking. They become their own internal authority while still incorporating the perspectives of others. At the highest order of consciousness, one's thinking transcends



individuals, others, and systems and is fully self-authored (Kegan). As with other stage-based models, an individual incorporates the meaning-making capabilities from earlier orders into their current ways of knowing, signifying a more inclusive and cognitively complex order of consciousness. The ability to self-examine also becomes more complex, as what is viewed as subject in a stage shifts to object in transition to the next stage.

Progressing to a new stage of development means that individuals are able to see themselves in the previous stage as object, meaning they can discuss the former version of themselves as if that were another person to observe and discuss. The former identity is no longer a part of the self; it is now viewed as other. The individual has developed a new sense of identity that is more developmentally complex (Kegan, 1994).

Research on leadership identity development specifically notes parallels with Kegan's (1982, 1994) third and fourth orders of consciousness. In the third order, one views the self as independent from others. An individual develops a personal point of view, values, and beliefs. While individuals in the third order identify as members of groups and communities, they are still dependent upon structures of external authority, not yet able to take action or affect change themselves without working inside the construct that has been set for them (Kegan, 1994; Love & Guthrie, 1999). In the fourth order of consciousness, individuals are able to free themselves from external expectations and begin to develop a sense of self-authorship, including the ability to coordinate, integrate, and take action on the values and beliefs determined in the previous order. Thinking becomes abstract, capable of generalizing and differentiating across contexts and no longer requires a concrete set of consistent rules (Kegan, 1994; Love & Guthrie, 1999).

The ability to shift one's view of leadership from leader-centric paradigms to leadership as an interdependent process aligns with the shift from the third to the fourth order of consciousness (Komives et al., 2005, 2006, 2009). It is through this fourth order of consciousness where one is able to understand that they can exhibit leadership without being "the leader." Capable of interdependent thinking, an individual in the fourth order understands that their own contribution to leadership is not overshadowed, but rather enhanced, by the contributions of others (Komives et al., 2005, 2006, 2009).

It is estimated that approximately one-half to two-thirds of the adult population never fully reaches the fourth order of consciousness, and the fifth order of consciousness is even more rare to observe. An individual in the fifth order describes the self as being interconnected with others in a larger system. Individuals capable of cognition on this level have an established identity, but also know they are never truly finished learning and developing. They are able to comfortably deal with contradiction and paradox, rather than feeling the need to choose one side of a continuum. The self is constructed through relationships with others, and thus is dynamic and ever changing (Kegan, 1994).

Scholars suggest that developing a more advanced leadership identity requires cognitive development characteristic of what Kegan (1994) describes in the fifth order of consciousness; the ability to synthesize multiple perspectives and approaches to leadership, to maintain a consistent sense of leadership self-efficacy even in unknown contexts, and a commitment to life-long leadership learning and development (Komives et al, 2005, 2006, 2009).

**Higher order cognitive skills.** Certain higher order cognitive skills have been found to promote leadership identity development processes. For example, leadership

self-efficacy, or one's internal belief regarding their capacity to successfully engage in a leadership process (Holly et al. 2008), is critical in order for one to develop the motivation to engage in leadership and to increase their leadership capacity (knowledge and skills). Leadership self-efficacy is largely developed through social perspective-taking and critical self-reflection (Dugan, Kodama, Correia & Associates, 2012).

The cognitive skill of social perspective-taking, or the ability for one to take into consideration the thoughts and feelings of another and incorporate them into one's own view, is vital for understanding and practicing interdependent approaches to leadership associated with more advanced leadership identity development. In the leadership process, social perspective-taking often mediates one's ability to incorporate group values and perspectives in conjunction with their own individual values (Dugan et al., 2012).

Metacognition is another higher order cognitive skill connected to leadership identity development. Metacognition allows one to engage in the process of "thinking about their thinking." If cognition is the overarching process by which an individual engages in mental tasks, such as acquiring new knowledge, then metacognition is the act of monitoring the cognitive process itself (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009).

Metacognition is required for tasks such as critical self-reflection, whereby one acknowledges their thoughts, examines and questions their thought patterns, and then integrates any resulting new perspectives into previously held beliefs; an entirely new way of knowing, being, and doing results (Mezirow, 2000). Scholars specifically note the importance of this type of reflection for college students in the development of leadership

self-concept and a sense of interconnectedness with others (Park & Millora, 2012; Torrez & Rocco, 2015).

Metacognition is also required for self-regulation, or the ability to inhibit, override, or alter behavioral responses (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009). Scholars note that those who are better able to self-regulate are more ready for leadership identity development, in that they can manage their emotions and responses in leadership situations, are more open and responsive to feedback, and therefore are better able to notice the developmental effects of various experiences and set appropriate developmental goals (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009; De-Waele, Morval, & Sheitowyan, 1993).

Further, Lord and Brown (2004) note that self-regulation depends upon a person's currently active identity being individual, relational, or collective. Individual level identities focus on one's differentiation and uniqueness compared to others. Relational identities include others in the definition of self and are defined by roles in relationships and groups. Collective identities define the self in terms of larger groups, organizations, or systems. Each level of identity creates an "alternative basis for self-regulation" (Lord & Hall, 2005, p. 596) and therefore informs the way in which one approaches leadership (Hogg, 2001; Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003). As leaders develop, they shift in focus from individual identities toward collective identities both in their own perception of self and in their perception of the identities of others in their groups and organizations (Lord & Hall, 2005).

## **The Leadership Identity Development Model**

The developmental considerations discussed above (student development theories, identity development, cognitive development, leader identity, and leadership identity) serve as the foundation of leadership identity development research. Like other student development models and theories [e.g. Chickering and Reisser's (1993) vectors of psychosocial development, Kegan's (1994) orders of consciousness, Baxter Magolda's (1999, 2008) theory of self-authorship)], leadership identity development (Komives et al., 2005, 2006) is also directional, involves the differentiation and integration of the various parts of the self, and describes movement from simple to more complex ways of knowing and being. Informed by a life narrative study with thirteen diverse college students who had been identified as exhibiting relational leadership, leadership identity development theory essentially places the contextual lens of leadership over other theories of student development (Komives et al., 2005, 2006, 2009). The theory suggests that just as individuals move from dependent, to independent, to interdependent ways of meaning making along other dimensions of human development, they gradually develop an understanding of leadership following a similar pattern. For example, an individual who developmentally relies on the direction of external authority figures to determine what is right and wrong (Kohlberg, 1969) may also believe that leadership is external to the self; that only those with authority can show leadership, and that they themselves are not leaders.

The LID Model (Komives et al., 2005, 2006) was created from the leadership identity development research to demonstrate how an individual's understanding of leadership develops along a continuum throughout the lifespan. The model incorporates

multiple approaches to leadership across its stages, similar to the historic progression of leadership theory, rather than one set definition of leadership. The LID Model is rooted in the assumption that leadership in its most advanced form is relational, co-constructed by all those engaging in a process that considers individual, group, and community values. Yet, the model also acknowledges the legitimacy of other views of leadership depending on individual development and contextual factors. Similar in philosophy to the human development models discussed above, the LID Model perpetuates the notion that the system in which one lives, combined with the way an individual experiences the world around them influence one's sincere belief of what leadership is and whether or not others, they themselves, or a collective group may go about engaging in leadership. Thus, according to the LID research, multiple people in the same experience will make different meaning of the leadership happening in that experience.

Specifically, the LID Model (Komives et al. 2005, 2006) illustrates that as an individual becomes more developmentally complex, they shed thoughts of leadership as individual position and begin to understand leadership as a relational, collaborative, interdependent process with others that can take on many different forms depending on culture and context. The LID Model includes six stages:

1. Awareness: A dependent view of leadership. The individual believes that leaders exist, but leadership is external to self. Leadership is seen in authority figures, present or historic. Leadership may not be defined using specific terms, but the individual recognizes something special and different about those with power and authority, and notices those individuals making an impact. For example, an individual at this stage may look up to parental

figures and may recognize the President of the United States as being important.

2. Exploration/Engagement: A dependent view of leadership, characterized by the interest and involvement in group experiences. The individual learns to engage with others and explore many interests, but does not view their engagement as leadership. Time is spent developing relationships with peers. For example, the individual would join a scouting troop, a community choir, and/or a soccer team as a way of exploring potential hobbies and testing out their ability to interact with others toward accomplishing a common goal, but would not identify as a leader.
3. Leader Identified: A dependent moving toward independent view of leadership. The individual views leadership as actions of a positional leader. Hierarchy determines who leads and who follows. The individual could view themselves as a leader or may only be able to see others as the leader until it is suggested by another that they, too, can be the leader. For example, the individual may pursue election to student council office and win, and therefore view themselves as a leader and the rest of the students as followers. Or, the individual could recognize their friend who is captain of the soccer team as a leader over the rest of the team.
4. Leadership Differentiated: An interdependent view of leadership. The individual views leadership not just as a position but also as a shared group process. The individual believes that engaging in leadership does not require a formal title. Even in a positional role, the individual takes on a facilitative

rather than directive style, and pays attention to group dynamics. For example, even as a student council officer, an individual in this stage would understand that the student council members' contributions to projects and initiatives is also leadership. Similarly, in groups where the individual does not have a formal title but contributes in informal ways, the individual would still believe they were engaging in leadership along with others in the group.

5. **Generativity:** An interdependent view of leadership. The individual shows leadership through developing others and working to sustain their groups beyond their time as members. Focus is on enabling and empowering others. Interests developed in earlier stages become commitments to more transcendent purposes. For example, an individual narrows their campus involvement to one organization to which to fully engage because they feel a connection to the organization's purpose. They may begin helping to assimilate new members to the organization and step back in order to allow new people to learn and contribute.
6. **Integration/Synthesis:** An interdependent view of leadership. The individual claims a leader identity across contexts with or without a position, and articulates a view of leadership as an interdependent process. Includes a developed sense of self-efficacy to lead in unknown situations. The individual believes leadership learning is a life-long commitment and strives for continual development. For example, an individual who is graduating from college and leaving their known groups and organizations would have confidence that whatever was next for them, they would be capable of



engaging in leadership in that new space. They would also be excited about the opportunity to learn and grow in these new leadership experiences while contributing their own leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities (Komives et al., 2005, 2006, 2009).

Most traditional age college students enter college at stage three. Some students experience stage three in a dependent way, meaning that they need others to identify them as a leader before actually claiming the “leader” title. Other students experience stage three in an independent way, having experiences that provide a sense of self-confidence that helps a student claim the leader identity for themselves (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Generally speaking, leadership identity development research shows that college provides ample opportunities to help students move from stage three “leader identified” to stage four “leadership differentiated,” a developmental experience described as the *key transition* (Komives et al., 2005, 2006; Wagner, 2011). With college providing a variety of experiences that promote peer education and teamwork, students often look to each other for guidance, collaboration, and support. This makes college an ideal time and place for helping students develop a leadership identity that recognizes multiple ways to lead and the potential in themselves and their peers to engage in leadership as a group process. Beyond the key transition, however, we know much less about development through the LID Model. Researchers note a lack of examples of individuals who have progressed to LID stages five and six in the current research (Komives et al., 2005, 2006; Wagner 2011). To date, no attempts have been made to explicitly examine leadership identity development at these later stages.

## **Forces and Factors that Promote LID Model Transitions**

Consistent with central beliefs of student development theory regarding the relevance of student individuality and diversity in developmental processes (American Council on Education, 1937; Gilligan, 1982; Josselson, 1987; Parker, Widdick, & Knefelkamp, 1978), the LID Model does not prescribe specific experiences that prompt development to certain stages. The LID Model leaves open the possibility that many different types of experiences could help a student develop towards a later stage, depending on their personal experiences influenced by context and identity elements. For example, while solving a group conflict without the assistance of an advisor or positional leader might propel one student into stage four “leadership differentiated,” deep reflection from a peer-led service-learning trip may be the catalyst for another student moving into stage four.

While leadership identity development occurs as a result of a diverse range of experiences unique to individuals, Komives et al. (2005) suggest that those experiences promote development through the LID Model in five general categories: developmental influences, the developing self, group influences, changing view of self with others, and broadening view of leadership (Komives et al., 2005). These categories are key to understanding how an individual transitions through the LID Model stages, as well as important for applying the LID Model across contexts.

**Developmental influences.** The first category, developmental influences, highlights the important role that adult influences, peer influences, meaningful involvement, and reflective learning play in leadership identity development over time. The impact that each of these four influences has on leadership identity development

looks different depending upon the LID stage. For example, meaningful involvement for students early in their leadership journey can be found in joining a number of organizations to explore interest and fit. Meaningful involvement later in an individual's leadership journey translates to more in-depth responsibilities with one or two organizations or communities (Komives et al., 2005).

**Developing self.** The second category, developing self, refers to personal growth throughout the leadership identity development process. As an individual deepens their sense of self-awareness, builds self-confidence, establishes interpersonal efficacy, applies new skills, and expands motivations beyond personal gain toward commitments to others and communities, they also advance in their leadership identity development (Komives et al., 2005).

**Group influences.** The third category, group influences, addresses how individuals change how they engage in groups, learn from membership continuity, and change their perceptions of their groups as a part of the leadership identity development process. For example, in the original LID study (Komives et al., 2005) individuals who had narrowed their involvement to a few key groups over time had reached later stages of the LID Model. With more focused group involvement, individuals were able to develop more meaningful connections to other group members, and thus had more experience dealing with group conflict and sustaining the group through change, which then further propelled their leadership identity development.

**Changing view of self with others.** The fourth category, changing view of self with others, refers to the cognitive development processes discussed earlier (see Kegan, 1982, 1994) by which individuals move from viewing themselves as dependent on others

and/or being independent of others, to being interdependent with others. An individual's ability to view leadership as a process rather than solely as position is facilitated by the awareness that they can engage in leadership, so can everyone else in the group, and that leadership requires the contributions of all; in essence, interdependency.

**Broadening view of leadership.** The fifth category, broadening view of leadership, refers to an individual's "changing construction of leadership and the mental models that frame that construct" (Komives et al., 2005, p. 605). For example, an individual in early stages of leadership identity development does not yet view leadership as a personal identity. They likely first see only authority figures as leaders, then broaden their view of leadership to include peers, and eventually are able to see themselves as leaders. With each of these new understandings of leadership, the individual's leadership identity becomes more complex. As an individual recognizes that one person cannot do everything on their own in a group, they broaden their definition of leadership again to include others in the group without specific authority or title. This new definition of leadership is thus incorporated into the individual's leadership identity, again making it more complex. As the individual gains experience with different types of people engaging in leadership collectively, they begin to see how leadership can be learned, and they develop confidence in their ability to lead in a variety of situations. At this point, leadership becomes a part of their self-concept, no longer dependent upon external structures such as group involvement or positional role.

The five categories of leadership identity development influences are specific to the LID Model and the grounded theory study (Komives et al., 2005). While other scholars have written about influences on the process of leader identity development (see

Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009; van Knippenberg et al., 2004) the focus of this work is on an individual's self-perception, personal competency building and effectiveness, rather than the developing self in relation to others. Contrastingly, the five categories of *Leadership* identity development provide insight into how and why an individual's view of self in relation to others in leadership changes over time.

### **Variations in the Process of Leadership Identity Development**

**Diversity and Cultural Considerations.** A common critique of the LID Model (Komives et al., 2005, 2006) is that it does not take into consideration the influence of gender, race, ethnicity and other aspects of identity on leadership identity development. The original grounded theory study (Komives et al., 2005) was done with thirteen students with diversity in age (two sophomores, nine seniors, two recent graduates), race (eight White, three African American, one Asian American, one African immigrant), sexual orientation (two gay-identified, others did not identify or identified as heterosexual), and religion (Muslim, Bahai, Jewish, Christian, and non-religious all represented, numbers not indicated in the original study); a sample appropriate for qualitative methods. Results did highlight differences between how students from different backgrounds experience certain stages. For example, students from more collectivist cultures tend to move through stage three "leader identified" rather quickly, or bypass it completely, better aligning with the more collaborative view of stage four "leadership differentiated." Still, with only a few studies examining the leadership identity development process with specific identity groups (e.g., Gonda, 2007; Onorato & Musoba, 2015; Renn & Bilodeau, 2006), researchers have indicated the need for additional inquiry (Komives et al., 2005, 2006, 2009; Owen, 2012b).

While the collective body of research on student leadership identity development to date may not provide deep analysis regarding specific student populations from different backgrounds, it is important to recognize that the five major developmental categories (developmental influences, the developing self, group influences, changing view of self with others, and broadening view of leadership) can be interpreted with a variety of identity lenses and contexts. For example, a study shows that specific aspects of Hispanic [sic] culture, such as struggling with being labeled, the influence of family members, and negotiating cultural gender expectations serve as catalysts for leadership identity development in Hispanic [sic] women (Onorato & Musoba, 2015). These cultural aspects can be connected to the broader categories of factors influencing leadership identity development. For example, struggling with being labeled is an example of the role peers play in one's development, possibly reflecting the first category, *developmental influences*. The *group influences* LID category connects to the finding that family members influence one's leadership identity development. Further, the influence of family members is likely realized through reflective learning processes, again connecting to the *developmental influences* category. Gender role expectations relate to both peer influence and adult influence in one's life, two more examples of *group influences*. The *changing view of self with others* LID category relates to the struggle with being labeled as a leader as well, as this could be described in LID terms as a dependent view of leadership. Similarly, a Hispanic [sic] woman's comfort and ability to negotiate gender role expectations might change as she increasingly sees herself as interdependent with, rather than dependent on, others.

A second example of how to apply and interpret leadership identity development theory across contexts comes from a study using the LID Model with LGBT identified students. Here, student activism and involvement in identity-based organizations were found to be catalysts for leadership identity development (Renn & Bilodeau, 2006). Characterized by student collaboration and challenging adults and legacy policies, student activism connects to the *developmental influences* of changing roles of peers and adults. Engaging in student activism is also indicative of the *broadening view of leadership* category, as activism extends beyond leadership as authority and hierarchy. Identity-based organizations provide opportunities for meaningful involvement (*developmental influence*) largely because of their influence on self-development and the changing view of self with others, which are also addressed by the LID categories.

Leadership identity development theory does not place value on particular developmental influences over others or attempt to note what is most important for all individuals' development (Komives et al., 2005), which is often a critique of developmental models created with research samples that do not adequately represent diverse and marginalized populations (Strange, 1994). For example, the *broadening view of self with others* LID category notes how an increasingly interdependent view of self with others is necessary to reach more advanced LID stages (Komives et. al, 2005). Family can be used as an example of others in this case, and Bordas (2007) notes that there are cultural differences in level of family involvement throughout an individual's life, and thus the degree to which family interactions influence one's leadership development. While some individuals may place less value on family perspectives in their leadership journey as they start lives and careers away from home, some may stay

close in proximity and relationship to family, and thus continue to seek family perspectives. For example, an individual from a culture where adult children live at home with their parents may discuss leadership and group experiences with a parent regularly as a form of reflection. Rather than viewing the parent's opinion as the ultimate authority, as they might in their younger years, an adult child could see the parent's opinion as just one of many to consider as they develop their own personal perspective. Whether the opinion comes from a parent, family member, a friend, a mentor, or a co-worker, leadership identity development theory places less importance on which others' opinions are being considered, and more on how those opinions are considered and whether or not they overshadow or are incorporated with personal views of leadership.

**Experiencing the LID key transition later in life.** Gonda (2007) found slightly different results than the original LID study (Komives et al., 2005) regarding the key transition from stage three "leader identified" to stage four "leadership differentiated." In Komives et al. (2005), college students were chosen through a nomination process, whereby faculty and staff were asked to identify current undergraduate students who consistently practiced relational leadership. Gonda (2007) also sought out relational leaders, but from a population that had already graduated and were considered to be early to mid-career professionals. While the original research indicates that the undergraduate college experience is prime for the transition from leader-centric views (stage three) to viewing leadership as a group process (stage four), Gonda (2007) found that participants experienced the key transition much later in life, up to ten years beyond their undergraduate experience. Participants spoke in detail about using either stage three perspectives or stage four perspectives in their careers depending upon the context. For



example, using power, position, and authority to describe and engage in leadership when it was convenient or deemed necessary, but then knowing when to switch to approaches that utilized collaboration among group members as deemed appropriate. The important distinction here is participants' ability to articulate conscious choice in flipping between perspectives. Conscious flipping between stages in the key transition was not nearly as pronounced in the original LID study.

Gonda (2007) also notes the lack of formal leadership education and training experienced by participants in the post-college sample. This may have affected participants' ability to articulate actions and thoughts consistent with stages five "generativity" and stage six "integration/synthesis" (Gonda, 2007; Wagner, 2011). Common Western language labels LID stage three concepts such as position and task-related action as leadership behaviors, but does not apply the term "leadership" to behaviors such as developing others and making commitments to causes, which are associated with LID stages five and six (Komives et al. 2005, 2006; Northouse, 2015; Roberts, 2007). Without formal leadership training or experiences that introduce stage five and six actions as examples of leadership, the participants in the Gonda (2007) study would not think, nor had the language, to articulate these actions as such when asked to describe the ways in which they lead. They would not consciously view leadership as generative and integrative (stages five and six), even if they actually do exhibit generative and integrative leadership behaviors in their leadership practice. In order for an individual to be considered at a certain stage of the LID Model, they have to be able to consistently exhibit and articulate leadership in ways consistent with that stage (Komives et al., 2005, 2006, 2009). Even if participants in the Gonda (2007) study did hold beliefs and behave

in ways consistent with stage five and six, they may not have identified those experiences as important to disclose to the researcher in discussion about their personal approach to leadership, because they did not consciously associate those beliefs and behaviors with leadership.

### **Validation Study of the LID Model Stages**

Wagner (2011) conducted a validation study of the full LID Model that examined 39 college students and career professionals regarding their viewpoints on leadership over time. Using a card sort method, Wagner asked students to indicate their thoughts on various statements about leadership by sorting the statement cards based on their level of agreement. Response themes indicate clear differences between students' understanding and practice of leadership in stage three "leader identified" and stage four "leadership differentiated," which are the two stages of the LID Model that mark the key transition in leadership identity development most often experienced by students during their college experience.

In Wagner's (2011) sample, participants clearly spoke of specific leadership preferences aligning with stage three, such as valuing hierarchical forms of leadership, believing that single leader is responsible for the group, and that leadership means getting tasks accomplished. Findings from Wagner's (2011) study regarding how individuals experience stage three in either an independent or dependent way also aligns with the original LID study (Komives et al., 2005). Of stage three participants in Wagner's (2011) study, some were comfortable claiming the leader title for themselves (independent stage 3), while other participants required the leader label from others before they could see themselves as leaders (dependent stage 3) (Komives et al., 2005).

Participants in Wagner's (2011) study also articulated distinct preferences for leadership approaches that align with stage four, "leadership differentiated." For example, participants indicated a dislike for hierarchical approaches to leadership and preferred more collective forms where all members of a group could contribute. They also expressed comfort with more fluidity between the roles of "leader" and "follower." Participants noted still feeling valued when not labeled as "the leader" of a group.

Wagner's findings regarding stage five "generativity" and six "integration/synthesis" of the LID Model were consistent with Gonda's (2007) study; responses did not provide clear differentiation from stage four "leadership differentiated." While some participant statements indicated general belief in leadership as a process, it was not clear whether or not any of the students truly held interdependent views of leadership characterized by development of others and leadership self-efficacy across contexts, for example, as they are outlined in stages five and six.

### **Examination of LID Stages Five and Six**

As noted above, both the original research on leadership identity development and research that attempts to validate and/or apply the LID Model to particular populations indicate limitations in specific and consistent findings regarding the most advanced stages of leadership identity development (see Gonda, 2007; Komives et al., 2005, 2006, 2009; Wagner, 2011). Stage five, described as "generativity" and stage six, described as "integration/synthesis," in the LID Model are characterized by a sense of interdependence and cognitive complexity. Both are difficult to find in a college student population (Komives et al., 2009; Wagner, 2011), as well as amongst early to middle career adults (Gonda, 2007). Wagner (2011) also notes that delineating between the last three stages of

the LID Model – stage four “leadership differentiated” along with stages five and six – was difficult to do using the data from her LID Model validation study. Participant responses generally noted awareness and understanding of the importance of group leadership, but there were not enough unique factors to validate movement beyond this general process-oriented perspective, nor to validate the three distinct stages described in the original Komives et al. (2005) study. Thus, scholars have called for further study regarding the later stages of the LID Model with current undergraduate students, as well as looking to graduate students and recent alumni as potentially appropriate participants.

As the focus of the proposed study focuses on LID stages five and six, more detailed information on the findings regarding these stages is outline below. Included in the discussion is additional information regarding the generative nature of leadership, the full integration of a leadership identity, and synthesis of leadership approaches to inform that identity; all aspects of the later stages of the LID Model as it is currently understood.

**Stage five: generativity.** The importance of helping others to develop leadership in order to sustain groups and organizations began with Burns’ (1978) transformational leadership and continues to be embedded in modern leadership approaches (Ghislieri & Gatti, 2012). Stage five of the LID Model is labeled as “generativity” because individuals in this stage can articulate greater purpose and connection to causes often informed by their group memberships, and devote much of their leadership effort to developing other group members. Values and beliefs determined in previous stages are now articulated as a primary motivator for personal passions. With this passion at top of mind, individuals in the generativity stage not only recognize the value of others in completing tasks and maintaining the group in the present, but also note the role that others will play in

ensuring the successful future of the group or cause beyond their own time as members (Komives et al., 2005, 2006).

Outside of the leadership context, generativity is a central construct discussed in adult development and lifespan development generally. Generativity is often not of developmental concern until full adulthood, requiring that an individual has overcome only caring for oneself and can fully focus on and appreciate the importance of caring for others (Erikson, 1950; Zacher, Rosing, Henning, & Frese, 2011). Today's traditional-aged college students, who are in their late teens to early twenties, are largely considered to be in a stage of development called "emerging adulthood," focused on personal exploration of values, expectations, and life course trajectories (Arnett, 2000; Masten, Obradovic, & Burt, 2006; O'Connor, Sanson, Hawkins, Letcher, Toumbourou, Smart, Vasallo, & Olsson, 2011). The focus on self in the emerging adult keeps an individual's attention on their own thoughts and actions, rather than on the developmental needs and experiences of others, which is at the core of generative concerns. College students going through the developmental markers of emerging adulthood, then, may not be developmentally ready for a leadership identity characterized by generativity.

**Stage six: integration/synthesis.** Individuals who reach the final stage of the LID Model have fully integrated the identity of leader into their overall self-identity. For them, leadership is a daily process, something they engage in constantly in whatever way they deem appropriate and needed for the context (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). This creates a true sense of leadership self-efficacy, or one's internal belief that they can engage in leadership even in unfamiliar situations and in future experiences yet to be determined (Dugan, Kodama, & Gebhardt, 2012; Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Leadership

self-efficacy creates a sense of agency in individuals to personally take action as well as to encourage and build agency in others (Bandura, 2000; Holly, Avolio, Luthans, & Harms, 2008).

In addition to having high levels of leadership self-efficacy, individuals in stage six are able to fully incorporate the leadership views and practices of previous LID stages into their current leadership approach. This synthesis helps the individual to recognize the purpose and value of good positional leadership where appropriate, to be “the leader” when needed but also confidently and comfortably contribute in other ways, and to see how various approaches to leadership interact within a group experience. They are able to assess the situation, read contextual factors, and engage in leadership in a way that they have determined would be most effective in that moment or space.

### **The Need for Further Understanding Advanced Leadership Identity Development**

Current research indicates limited understanding of advanced leadership identity development for a variety of reasons. First, research on leadership identity as a developmental process is fairly new, and has only been addressed in a small number of studies and unpublished dissertations. Those that have attempted to study the leadership identity development process have done so with a focus on the process overall, rather than narrowing in on specific stages of the LID Model. Further, the majority of the leadership identity development research has been done with undergraduate students, whom researchers note are often not developmentally ready for understanding leadership beyond leader-centric approaches (Komives et al., 2005, 2006, 2009). Researchers have struggled to find individuals both in undergraduate and alumni populations who understand and exhibit leadership consistent with stages five and six of the LID Model.

Members of the original research team note the importance of finding appropriate samples to fill these gaps in the LID Model research (Komives et al., 2005, 2006; Wagner, 2011). Therefore, the present study aims to further explore the nuance of the later stages of the LID Model, both how these stages present in individual's thoughts and behaviors, as well as the learning and development experiences that are influential in helping individuals develop leadership consistent with those stages.

### **Summary of Literature Review**

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a framework for examining the process of leadership identity development. Paradigms in leadership approach were outlined to inform the array of beliefs and practices in leadership throughout history and in today's society, as well as to highlight the progression of complexity in approaches to leadership over time. The process of leadership development was also discussed, with a focus on the intersections of identity development and human development in the leadership development process. An overview of the Leadership Identity Development (LID) Model followed, specifically addressing stages, and connections to leadership approaches and identity development processes. Follow-up studies and a validation study of the LID Model were also discussed to highlight the need for further research on the more advanced stages of the LID Model. A detailed description of stage five generativity and stage six integration/synthesis was provided along with key identity development frames and constructs embedded within the stages. Finally, gaps in the literature were summarized and the relevance of this particular study was presented.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The limitations in the extant research on leadership identity development drove the design of this study. First, current research suggests developmental categories and influences that spark transition through stages of the LID Model generally, but has yet to delve into the specific nuances of learning and development experiences for reaching certain stages of the model. Second, studies on leadership identity development to date are lacking in adequate samples of participants who understand and exhibit advanced stages of leadership identity development consistent with stages five and six of the LID Model (Komives et al., 2005, 2006), and therefore cannot provide insight into these stages specifically. Further, previous studies have all sought to explore the entire LID Model, rather than specific stages. While the findings of previous studies discuss the absence of those with leadership identities at stage five and six in the study, there is not a record of any proactive attempt to seek out individuals who exhibit stage five and six leadership with the specific purpose of engaging in a study about advanced leadership identity.

### **Research Questions**

Accordingly, this study helps to fill gaps in the current research by exploring the developmental process of individuals who exhibit leadership understanding and practice consistent with stages five and six of the LID Model (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Specifically, this study explored the factors and forces that appear to drive leadership identity development in seven current and recent undergraduate students who have developed leadership identities consistent with stages five and six. The study illuminates salient learning and development experiences, meaning-making processes, and contextual



and environmental factors that contribute to leadership identity development in participants. Specific research questions were as follows:

1. How do individuals at advanced stages of leadership identity development describe, understand, and engage in leadership?
2. What specific learning and development experiences do individuals believe to be meaningful and influential in their development of advanced leadership identity?
3. How and why do those learning and development experiences promote transition through leadership identity development toward more complex stages?

I used qualitative methods to explore these questions, specifically conducting a comparison of multiple case studies for the purposes of finding patterns and themes across various participant experiences in their processes of leadership identity development.

### **Epistemology**

This study has been developed through the epistemological lenses of social-constructivism and, more specifically, interpretivism. Social-constructivism indicates that reality is created through human interaction, and that personal values help shape that reality (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014). Researchers who identify with social-constructivist world views are interested in learning about the meaning people create rather than finding a singular and absolute truth about a phenomenon or population. Research from the social-constructivist lens is qualitative in nature, meaning they seek to understand and explain, rather than prove or solve (Creswell, 2013). Interpretivists, still

within the purview of social-constructivism, emphasize the meaning people make and aim to uncover the hidden aspects of phenomena (Crotty, 1998; Pascale, 2011). The lived experience of participants is of primary interest, placing value on individual interpretation of phenomena even if those interpretations differ or are contradictory between participants (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998). This interpretive research process uses insight and understanding from the lived experiences of participants to build theory and inform practice (Merriam, 1998).

The more time I spend observing people engaging with one another in learning communities within university, community, and business settings, the more I see how individual understandings of leadership change with the progression of human development, experience, and changing environments. These personal observations are supported by the literature on identity-based approaches to leadership, which present leadership as a social construct that can be developed and interpreted in different ways by an individual and across individuals over time (Billsberry, 2009; Day & Harrison, 2007; Grint, 1997; Komives et al., 2005, 2006, 2009; Lord & Hall, 2005). Most studies on leadership development define leadership in one particular way, thus labeling beliefs and actions as either leadership or not leadership. Highlighting leadership as a more dynamic construct, leadership identity development research acknowledges a variety of leadership definitions and approaches. At any given time, what an individual believes about leadership, what they label as leadership, and how they enact leadership is based upon a variety of contextual elements (e.g. past experiences, upbringing, personal values, cultural influences, other aspects of one's identity, and the present situation and environment). This perspective on leadership development aligns with the tenets of

social-constructivism, holding each person's perspective as valid and valuable in constructing leadership. Therefore, in this study I did not aim to define leadership, but viewed leadership conceptions as fluid. I sought to better understand how and why individual perceptions of leadership changed overtime, and the developmental processes that influence how individuals identify with leadership.

### **Case Study Design**

A case study is a form of qualitative research that involves inquiry into a “contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” particularly when boundaries between the phenomenon and context cannot be easily defined (Yin, 1994, p. 13). Context serves as boundary that informs and influences the phenomena within. Merriam (1998) describes these boundaries as a hypothetical “fence” that provide focus for the researcher, a set example through which to study the phenomenon of interest. For example, in educational research, a case could be an individual student, a class, a program, a school, or a school system. The phenomenon of interest is then studied within the boundaries of the case, e.g. teaching practices within a particular school system, or psychosocial development of a particular type of student in a select campus program.

### **Boundedness and Limits**

An important consideration for case study design is whether or not the unit of measure and topic of study are bounded (Merriam, 1998). For example, leadership identity development is an internal developmental process, connected to other elements of human development and identity all bounded by the individual in which the development occurs; no one person experiences development exactly the same way as another. Thus, the unit of measure for this study, the individual, was bounded because

each individual's process of leadership identity development is unique. Each individual was a separate case.

Case study methods are also deemed appropriate when there is a limit to the data that can be collected (Merriam, 1998). For example, leadership identity development research to date has offered few examples of individuals who exhibit the generative and integrative leadership associated with advanced leadership identity development (Gonda, 2007; Komives et al., 2005, 2006; Wagner, 2011). These approaches to leadership are associated with advanced cognitive skill seldom found in the general population (Kegan, 1994; Komives et al. 2005). In this way, the population of interest is considered limited; there is a limit to the number of people that could be studied, and thus a limit to the data that can be collected regarding the topic of advanced leadership identity development.

### **Applicability**

Case study methods, particularly those with a focus on psychological processes, have provided important insight into learning and cognitive development throughout the history of educational research (Merriam, 1998). A case study can reveal important insight not just into a learning or development phenomenon itself, but also about what the phenomenon might represent on a larger scale, including how the phenomenon shows up in a population and how particular groups of people solve problems and interact in the world around them (Merriam, 1998; Shaw, 1978). Given the limited research conducted on leadership identity development, and the even fewer examples of individuals who have developed leadership identities consistent with generative and integrative approaches to leadership, conducting case study analysis with individual participants who

fit this description was important for better understanding leadership identity development at more advanced stages.

As Merriam (1998) describes, case studies “illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study” (p. 30). In this study, the phenomenon was leadership identity development. While the reader may have basic knowledge of the phenomenon, a case study helps them to examine the phenomenon more holistically and develop deeper understanding. The reader makes new connections to the phenomenon, often making new meaning, discovering new patterns and relationship, and potentially leading to a rethinking of the phenomenon all together. This illumination can increase the reader’s capacity for and likelihood of applying the research (Merriam, 1998).

Some scholars have even described case study methods as “entrepreneurial” (Shaw, 1978, p.2), illustrating that case study design is especially helpful for solving practical problems due to the deep focus on a specific entity or phenomenon – not just what it is or what it does, but how it is and how it got to be that way– as well as the sense of agency it often creates in the reader (Stake, 1981). Diving into the learning experiences, developmental catalysts, and meaning-making processes of those with advanced leadership identities through case study design helps educators better understand how to design programs and educational interventions that are ripe for developmental movement at various stages of leadership identity development.

### **Comparative Case Studies**

This study was a multi-case study, with each individual participant being viewed as a unique case. This allowed for a search for themes and patterns both within and across cases. This cross-case approach is often referred to as comparative case study

method. Findings are presented as an examination of multiple, individual cases as well as a comparison of cases to one another to further inform understanding of the phenomena being studied. Comparative case studies provide the opportunity for deeper and more complex interpretation than what can be gleaned from a single case example. Finding themes, patterns, and even contradictions in a range of cases strengthens the precision, validity, and stability of the interpretation (Merriam, 1998, Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Comparative case study methods are appropriate for studying leadership identity development for two main reasons. First, as previous research indicates, the specific experiences that prompt developmental transition in leadership identity development processes vary from person to person, but catalysts for those transitions follow similar patterns across diverse individuals (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Having narrowed the focus to individuals who have developed more complex leadership identities, it was helpful to see how this same pattern of different experiences with similar learning and development catalysts emerged. Second, establishing a stronger understanding of the nuance of leadership identity development at later stages was one of the major purposes of this research project. Data from a cross-case analysis provided a more detailed picture than a single case could have provided.

## **Methods**

### **Sampling Strategy**

Participants for this study were identified through purposeful sampling, a practice in which the researcher seeks out “information rich cases” that fit particular criteria and allow for in-depth study of the phenomenon (Patton, 1990). Purposeful sampling aligns with the qualitative assumption that research is intended to help discover, understand, and

gain insight into something specific (Merriam, 1998). Purposeful sampling was appropriate for this study because leadership approaches of participants needed to be generative and integrative in nature, as these are key markers of advanced leadership identity development (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Illuminating how and why one comes to develop an advanced leadership identity required that these developmental criteria must be met in each case.

Further, conducting this study required what Merriam (1998) refers to as a unique sample, characterized by “rare attributes or occurrences of the phenomenon of interest” (p. 62). In this study, the rarity is the development of advanced leadership identity. Previous studies indicate that it has been difficult for researchers to find examples of individuals who have developed leadership identities specific to the later stages of the model (Komives et al., 2005; Gonda, 2007; Wagner, 2011). Since this a difficult population of people to identify, a participant recommendation process was used for this study. Staff and faculty members at various higher education institutions who are familiar with the leadership identity development research were asked to recommend current and former students who exhibit leadership thoughts and behavior that align with generative and integrative approaches to leadership. For a study intended to deepen understanding of the later stages of the LID Model, participants who exhibit those stages consistently was crucial. Using faculty and staff as recommenders was an intentional way to seek out the most appropriate participants for the study, as it increased access to participant pools at various institutions and increased the likelihood of finding participants at later stages of the LID Model.

The importance of finding recommenders for this study who were familiar with the LID Model cannot be overstated. While previous studies on leadership identity development also used faculty and staff recommendations for participants, this study was the first to intentionally seek out faculty and staff who understood the LID Model. This procedure was essential for finding appropriate participants due to the nuance often present in the leadership identity development process. Komives et al. (2005, 2006, 2009) note while individuals may be able to talk about relational, process-oriented leadership from a theoretical standpoint, their behavior and personal examples of leadership in practice often indicate that they still operate in a positional or single-leader paradigm. Thus, it is common to find individuals who can talk about leadership consistent with later stages of the LID Model, who do not yet practice leadership in those ways. For a study specifically designed to examine the later stages of the LID Model, it was important for participant recommenders to have the knowledge and skill to identify participants who truly exemplified leadership, in both their words and actions, as it is described in those later stages. Further, Wagner (2011) notes that the LID Model is widely used by leadership educators on college campuses, but often not fully understood. While there are many individuals who faculty and staff may label as “advanced leaders” because of their positions in campus organizations or level of involvement with administrators, those criteria do not necessarily indicate a particular level of leadership identity development. Recommenders for this study needed to be able to distinguish between labels and development in order to appropriately recommend participants.

Given the specific needs of this study and challenges with identifying appropriate participants noted above, I sought out staff and faculty who have conducted research on



leadership identity development and their close colleagues to serve as participant recommenders. These individuals were found through professional networks connected to national associations for leadership educators and student affairs professionals. Once recommenders were identified, I discussed with each of them the key features of the LID Model and the nature of generative and integrative leadership that characterizes the later stages of the model to ensure their understanding.

### **Sample Criteria**

Each recommender was asked to suggest participants who were current or recent college graduates up to three years out who exhibited leadership understanding and practice consistent with later stages of the LID Model. I engaged each recommender in an initial conversation about their recommended participants to help in the selection of a diverse participant pool. As Patton (1990) notes, finding common themes between diverse cases is even more meaningful, as they “derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity” (p. 172). A wide variety of identity development processes influence the development of a leadership identity, as discussed earlier in this dissertation (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Thus, it was important for the selected participants to represent diversity along various dimensions (e.g. gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation), while the most important selection criteria remained solid development of leadership identity consistent with LID Model stages five and six.

Year in school or years graduated was also a consideration in selecting participants. The extant leadership identity development research suggests the need to study students later in their undergraduate careers or recent graduates in order to find leadership identities consistent with later stages of the LID Model (Komives et al., 2005,

2006; Wagner, 2011). Thus, from the recommended participant lists, seven final participants were chosen; one current undergraduate student entering their final year of college, and six recent graduates between one and three years post-college.

There is no clear dictate for the number of participants appropriate for a comparative case study. As Merriam (1998) notes, the boundedness of the topic being studied compels the researcher to delve into one or a few cases with specific, unique criteria. More important than sample size was the depth with which each case was explored. Seven participants was a realistic number for the duration and purpose of this study; to understand the unique developmental processes and experiences of people with advanced leadership identities. With a smaller sample size, it was possible to engage in data collection in multiple ways and gain more descriptive and nuanced understanding of each individual.

### **Data Collection**

Case studies allow for data collection through a variety of methods common across qualitative approaches (Merriam, 1998). For this study, data was collected using person-to-person interviews. This type of data collection is common in qualitative research when the researcher cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how a participant interprets and makes meaning of the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 1998). Interviews were therefore appropriate for seeking to further understand development associated with aspects of identity, which at the core involve cognitive and emotional processing.

Each case included data from three one-on-one interviews: one with the faculty or staff member who recommended the participant for the study, and two with the

participant directly. Interviews were conducted in-person to the greatest extent possible. If in-person meetings were not feasible (e.g. due to monetary or geographic constraints) virtual interviews were conducted using online videoconferencing software to maximize interviewer-participant interaction and data quality (Winters & Winters, 2007, Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009). At the beginning of each interview, recommenders and participants were provided with an overview of the research project as well as a copy of a consent form to read and sign (see Appendices A and B). The consent form provided recommenders and participants with information about the confidentiality of the study, the use of pseudonyms on all documentation, and the participant's right to withdraw from the study at any point. Each interview employed a semi-structured design (Merriam, 1998) that included a set of open-ended questions and list of topics to be explored during the interview. This semi-structured interview format is common in qualitative research because it places value on personal meaning-making processes (Merriam, 1998). The protocols, further discussed below, served as guides for conversation rather than prescribing specific wording or order.

Each recommender was interviewed for between thirty minutes and one hour regarding each participant they had recommended for the study. As mentioned earlier, I first asked each recommender about their knowledge of the leadership identity development research and the later stages of the LID Model to confirm their understanding. I then asked each recommender to explain why they were recommending their suggested participant for this study. I engaged each recommender further about the participant, asking them to describe their interactions with and observations of the participant in leadership situations, and why they believed the participant's thoughts and

actions aligned with generative and integrative approaches to leadership (see Appendix C). This interview provided clarity regarding the fit of the participant for the study, as well as provided an important perspective on the participant's process of leadership identity development. All seven participants were confirmed as appropriate for the study.

Two ninety-minute interviews with each participant were also conducted. I asked participants in the first interview to reflect on their life experiences related to leadership through a short writing and drawing activity with the intention of generating initial thoughts and stories. Participants each developed a symbolic map, illustration, or timeline of key experiences and influences on their leadership identity development from their own perspective as a personal reflective tool, and then explained what they drew and why each piece was important to their leadership development process. Following their explanation, participants were asked to share their current beliefs and assumptions about leadership and how those beliefs and assumptions have been informed by their past experiences (see Appendix C).

The second participant interview went deeper into the learning and development experiences both within and outside of the educational environment that have been influential in participants' leadership identity development over time. As participants shared their experiences, follow-up questions were asked to gain further understanding of responses. Follow-up questions used were based on participants' initial responses, but in general were focused on: the reasons why they believed that certain experiences, individuals, programs, or organizations were instrumental in forming their present-day approach to leadership; and how specific experiences influenced their meaning-making

processes and encouraged more complex ways of thinking about and engaging in leadership (see Appendix C).

In both the first and second participant interviews, additional questions were asked as-needed to help the participant elaborate on their responses. These additional questions focused on topics including but not limited to: formal leadership program experiences, informal learning about leadership, leadership mentors, family and friend influences on leadership, catalysts for changing perspectives of leadership, and pivotal leadership learning moments.

Each interview concluded with the chance for participants to share any additional thoughts on their own leadership development process, and for participants to ask me any questions they may have about the conversation that just took place or anything related to the topic of the study. Finally, I offered my thanks to the participants and informed them of next steps in the research process, including my intention to transcribe the recording of the interviews, reach out to the participants with any follow-up questions, and allow the participants to review the transcripts as desired.

### **Positionality**

Before discussing the data analysis process for this particular study, it is important to note my positionality as the researcher. As Merriam (1998) notes, the researcher is the tool of analysis in qualitative research, acting as a filter to determine the meaning of what participants share related to the phenomenon being studied. Thus, disclosing researcher positionality helps the reader to understand how the researcher interprets the experiences of participants and why particular findings, themes, and patterns may be of interest (Merriam, 1998).

I have spent the majority of my life involved somehow with leadership learning and development, beginning with positional leadership roles in my elementary school student council. I continued to hold positional roles in student organizations throughout middle school and high school, but found my most meaningful leadership learning and development to occur while mentoring and teaching others as a summer camp counselor in high school. The opportunity to learn about collaborative leadership and then apply that learning to build community amongst a group of peers for whom I had much respect and love sparked further interest in learning about leadership and how people develop their understanding of leadership. I continued to seek out leadership learning opportunities in high school and college. My first job out of college was as a consultant for my sorority, traveling to college campuses around the country helping undergraduate women understand leadership dynamics in their chapters and develop as more inclusive and relational leaders themselves. A brief experience working for a large, international business consulting firm helped me recognize the need for leadership education and development opportunities that emphasized the collaborative and inclusive approaches to leadership I grew up learning about; most of the positional leaders in the large corporations I worked for focused on power and money, dismissing the value of people and relationships in their organizations' successes. At this point in my early career, I realized that my knowledge and talent would be better utilized working in education, where I could reach people earlier in their lives and hopefully help to change their leadership paradigms before they reached full adulthood and started their careers.

I began studying leadership when I went to graduate school for my Master's degree in higher education and student affairs. This experience helped me make

connections between the human development research that sits at the core of the student affairs field to leadership theory and practice. Graduate school is also where I learned how to interrogate dominant paradigms and master narratives of leadership, and where I was exposed to the student leadership development research that emphasizes relational, process-oriented approaches with college students.

My professional experience within higher education has provided me with multiple opportunities to apply my theoretical knowledge in my every-day life, including coordinating campus leadership programs, designing leadership learning curriculum, and teaching leadership studies courses. I currently work as a course instructor and curriculum designer for a leadership studies academic program at the University of Maryland. Throughout my time as a doctoral student at Maryland, I have researched and written about leadership education and development through a variety of lenses, including identity development, social justice, learning theory, and both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Spending the majority of my adolescent and adult life attending leadership programs, creating leadership curriculum, and facilitating leadership learning experiences has largely contributed to my love for and scholarly interest in the field of leadership education and development. It has also contributed to how I developed and executed this study, specifically how I framed my research questions, the questions I decided to ask in interviews, and how I interpreted participant stories. For example, my practical and scholarly experiences combined have helped me learn how to see important leadership learning moments in almost any personal or educational experience, regardless of

whether or not that experience is explicitly labeled as having the purpose of leadership development.

Aspects of my social identity are also connected to my research. Having the financial and emotional support from family to participate in extra-curricular activities and higher education provided me with access to leadership learning throughout my life. I was able to develop interest in leadership and pursue this interest without monetary concern and with encouragement from the most important people in my life. In addition, my gender identification as a woman and social expectations of women in the United States have likely contributed to my propensity for relationship-building and collaborative leadership approaches. Further, connection and collaboration have been major themes throughout my personal life, and thus inform the leadership approaches I value and my own leadership identity development. I learned about the importance of relationship-building in leadership as an adolescent, as this approach was emphasized in my extra-curricular group activities and summer leadership camps. My parents also emphasized these values at home. Given these factors, I had likely reached LID stage four by the time I entered high school. Having had the chance to serve as camp counselor helped me develop passion for developing leadership in others and designing intentional learning environments. This not only helped me develop a leadership identity consistent with LID stage five by the time I left for college, but was also a catalyst for my interest in leadership education and student affairs work. Overall, I place high value on relational approaches to leadership because of my scholarly knowledge, professional experience, and personal background.



My personal leadership identity development journey also contributes to why I am drawn to the LID Model; it is a framework designed to help educators organize and understand an individual's life and leadership experiences that propel them toward relational leadership approaches (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). I had to be sure I gave participants time and space to thoroughly discuss their experiences and meaning-making through the parts of their lives where they viewed leadership as something other than relational. I do not believe that hierarchical, position-based forms of leadership are the most effective and meaningful way to lead; however, I do recognize that there is value in a person's experiences with position-based leadership as they develop toward more relational and process-based approaches. I have also developed respect for the role that diverse leadership approaches play in the developmental process overall. As discussed earlier in the literature review, I believe that because of basic cognitive development needs, an individual must first understand leadership as external to the self, then as a title or position, before they are able to recognize leadership as a group process, and further, a responsibility to educate and develop others. Each approach has value in place and time, helping individuals to gradually build more complex leadership identities.

### **Data Analysis**

As Merriam (1998) notes, it is crucial for qualitative researchers to analyze data throughout the research process, both in the field and upon reviewing recordings and transcriptions. It is in the spirit of this iterative process that I engaged in data analysis for this study.

## **Narrative Analysis**

I approached the data through narrative analysis, an approach rooted in understanding people's stories. This approach allows participants to discuss whatever is most salient and relevant for them and to describe their experiences without the confines of pre-determined answer choices (Glesne, 2011). In the context of this study, a narrative approach allowed participants to discuss what they found to be meaningful and formative in their leadership journeys, leaving room for a variety of responses. Narrative analysis considers the link between past, present, and future elements of a person's story, as well (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014). Participants were asked to discuss their leadership experiences across their lifespan and discuss future thoughts and plans, so it was important to use a method that values and connects various parts of a participant's leadership journey. Looking closely at a portion of the LID Model to further identify and explain the nuance of experiences and elements of individual's lives that brought them to the later stages required the depth of inquiry that a narrative analysis offers.

## **Transcription and Memos**

Following each interview, I had the data transcribed verbatim using a transcription service provider. Throughout the process of data collection, I wrote analytic memos to document and reflect on the emergent themes and patterns in the data, codes and coding schemes, and how the overall inquiry process was developing. As Saldana (2013) indicates, each of these pieces eventually led to the development of new insights, generalizations, and theories about the phenomenon being studied. Analytic memos often take the form of words or phrases in a journal or blog, a place for the researcher to note their thoughts and questions throughout reading the transcribed data. In this study, I took

electronic notes using a word processing software. The memos became a conversation with myself about the phenomena. Memos included my thoughts on what I was hearing in interviews and reading in the transcripts. The memoing process helped me challenge my assumptions, make connections, and note how my personal perspective shaped what I was seeing emerge from the data (Saldana, 2013; Mason, 2002). Memos were dated and then later labeled and categorized in order to track my thinking and analytic process (Saldana, 2013).

### **Coding**

Memoing, coding, and categorizing are not distinct processes in particular order, but should occur in a more fluid, dynamic process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As memos led to new codes and categories of data, I wrote additional memos which led to more nuanced codes and categorization, for example. Both the memos and the data themselves were coded and categorized.

Codes were generated through both an inductive and deductive process. First, deductive codes came from reviewing the extant literature on leadership identity development and the study of leadership approaches (Saldana, 2013). These codes were compiled prior to data collection to help in preliminary organizing of participant narratives and later note connections to the research questions and existing literature. Inductive codes came from participant interviews and review of the interview transcripts (Saldana, 2013). Inductive coding happened in two cycles and established categories and subcategories through which themes and patterns in the data emerged. As the study examined multiple cases, coding happened for each individual case, as well as across all

cases in order to establish overall themes and patterns regarding the phenomena of leadership identity development (Merriam, 1998).

In the first inductive cycle, I examined participant responses both in the process of the interviews and upon analyzing the interview transcriptions to develop initial codes. These codes were descriptive in nature and served to split participant narratives into segments or broad categories for consideration and reflection (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldana, 2003, 2013; Wolcott, 1994). The initial codes were then placed along with the deductive codes into a code book as a way to begin to sort the data and help inform subsequent interviews (Saldana, 2013). As interviews progressed and new themes were found within and across cases, codes were added and the code book was adjusted.

Second cycle coding occurred later in the data analysis process by comparing initial codes to one another, determining linkages, and further focusing codes into categories and organizational schemes (Saldana, 2013). Within this second cycle, I generated subcodes and axial codes. Subcodes stemmed from initial codes and were used for deeper examination of participant experiences and responses. Axial codes were used to and organize the initial codes and subcodes that may revolve around center points and establish categories (Saldana). Throughout this organization process in the second cycle, simultaneous coding was utilized to code data points into more than one category, for example, if a data point was both descriptive of the participant and also illuminated a particular instance of meaning-making for the participant (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### **Generating Themes**

Codes from the deductive and inductive coding process were used to generate the code book and overarching categories. I used qualitative data analysis software to apply

codes to quotations and organize the data. Quotations within and across cases labeled with the same code(s) were examined and reflected upon as insight into themes and patterns regarding the development of advanced leadership identity (Saldana, 2013). A pattern matching technique (Yin, 1994) was used to connect patterns from the data to existing theory and research on leadership identity development and to uncover new patterns related to the later stages of the LID Model (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Combining categories, patterns, and memos and making comparisons and connections helped articulate participant experiences, as well as, uncover additions, elaborations, and contradictions to existing theory about the process of advanced leadership identity development.

### **Trustworthiness**

As Merriam (1998) notes, internal validity points to the congruency of research findings with reality. In qualitative research where reality is believed to be socially-constructed, validity depends upon how well the data collected and analyzed speaks to reality as it is interpreted by the participant and by the researcher, who is ultimately the tool of analysis. When reality is viewed in this manner, qualitative research has high internal validity, as the mean-making abilities of a human researcher regarding socially-constructed phenomena far outreach the abilities of a machine or computer (Merriam, 1998). Still, certain data collection and analysis techniques can be used to help limit researcher bias in data interpretation (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998).

To ensure that data collected accurately reflected participant narratives, interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed prior to coding and analysis. I then provided participants with the opportunity to engage in member checking, a process where

participants could review the transcription of their interviews and further clarify any points they feel have been misinterpreted or misrepresented (Creswell, 2013). All participants were sent their transcripts and provided time to review as desired. Two participants chose to complete the reviews.

The process of placing codes into a codebook to record and organize codes mentioned earlier in this section also assists with trustworthiness because it helps ensures rigor in data analysis. In addition, the combination of pre-determined questions, specific procedures for coding and analysis, and multiple case studies also increased data trustworthiness. Documenting the specifics of the research in these ways helps others understand my approach in determining findings (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldana, 2013; Yin, 1994).

I also utilized a peer review process, or the external checking of my data interpretation, by having another scholar familiar with the leadership identity development research review my data collection, analysis, and interpretation process. The peer reviewer also made sure I did not overlook exceptions or variations in the data that would challenge my interpretation or conclusions (Creswell, 2013; Eisner, 1991). This helps to demonstrate the credibility of my research (Eisner, 1991).

### **Transferability**

As Merriam (1998) simply states; “In qualitative research, a single case or small nonrandom sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many” (p. 208). Erikson (1986) further notes that external validity, a major goal of quantitative researcher, is not an appropriate goal for interpretative research. The nature of external validity is the

generalization of findings across a population. This implies a static, universal application that undermines the qualitative belief that reality is social-constructed. The qualitative researcher should be concerned with case-to-case transfer, or the extent to which a study's findings apply to others in similar situations to study participants (Firestone, 1993, Merriam, 1998). Transferability also implies that the reader is able understand how and what to apply from a study to their own situation.

The multiple, comparative case study approach used in this research design assists with transferability of the findings. This approach maximizes the opportunity for a more diverse range of readers to apply findings to their specific situations by providing more examples than just a single case with which readers may identify. In addition, the comparison across cases helps illustrate for the reader how the phenomenon being studied plays out in a variety of situations and lived experiences. Common findings can be mapped to multiple different cases. By exploring multiple unique individuals as a way to understand a common phenomenon, rather than relying on a single case, there is a higher chance that readers will find a connection to the research (Merriam, 1998). I have also used rich, thick description of the themes and patterns from the findings, including detailed examples from each case, in order to help the reader determine how individual cases or cross-case findings connect to their own personal experience (Merriam, 1998).

### **Limitations and Scope of Study**

There are some limitations of this research that should be noted. First, using faculty and staff recommendations and leadership educator professional networks for participant recruitment potentially excluded potential participants who may not have close relationships with members of those networks. However, knowledge and

understanding of leadership identity development was key for the participant recommendation process, and the research on leadership identity development is only intimately known to a small group of people. Second, while the extant research does indicate that development of leadership identity is informed by the developmental processes along other dimensions of identity, such as race, gender, culture, and sexual orientation (Komives et al., 2005, 2006), the primary focus of this study was to gain a deep understanding of experiences and development of individuals at later stages of the LID Model. Thus, efforts to maximize the diversity of the participant pool were secondary to finding participants who have developed advanced leadership identity. Further, questions during the interview process did not focus on aspects of social identity. When influence of experiences rooted in other identities arose during data collection it was discussed, and resulting data were analyzed and included in the findings appropriately, though understanding the intersection of other identities with leadership identity development was not the purpose or core focus of particular study.

Third, this study was designed to examine developmental processes and meaning-making structures regarding leadership identity, and the broad educational and pedagogical approaches that were influential in participants' leadership identity development. It was not intended to define leadership, nor to assess the leadership outcomes of individuals or specific programs. Findings from this study can, however, offer insights into markers of advanced leadership identity development and pedagogical approaches that appear to propel that development in current college students and recent graduates.



A limitation of the life narrative approach is that it presents challenges with participant memory and recall. Participants were asked to reflect on childhood, adolescence, and earlier adult experiences, and to articulate details about those experiences including logistics, thoughts, and emotions. They were also asked to recall and articulate their meaning-making processes regarding those experiences. Participants were given ample time to think and reflect in the interview process, ask clarifying questions, and to review their interview transcriptions to edit or adjust to better reflect reality. Though, it is still possible that limitations of participant memory had some effect on the level of detail participants were able to provide in their stories, or that memories were inaccurate or skewed based on the passage of time.

The sample in this study included one current college student and six recent graduates up to three years beyond their college experiences. Thus, the one college student did not have any post-college experiences to share, which had to be considered when examining patterns across cases. In addition, the recent graduates have been removed from their college experience and may not have had as vivid recollection of college experiences, while the college student has not had the benefit of reflection time regarding their college experience to the same extent as recent graduates. Using participants from varied institutions presents similar limitations for comparison, in that participants did not have identical programmatic experiences or campus environments. To minimize this limitation, I engaged participants in deep reflection about the factors and forces within their unique experiences that have been instrumental in their leadership identity development. While the logistical and operational elements of participant experiences did differ between educational and vocational spaces, pedagogical

approaches and philosophies embedded in those experiences transcended those differences.

Another potential limitation is how my personal background and identity may have influenced data analysis and interpretation in this study. While my personal leadership journey and beliefs serve as key motivators for my research, it is important to remember that there are unique and specific experiences that propel individuals through leadership identity development processes; no one person's process is identical to the next (Komives et al., 2005, 2006, 2009). I have personal affinity for certain types of leadership experiences and programs because of the formative role they have played in both my personal life and my career. Though, what I experienced was not necessarily what the participants in this study experienced as most meaningful in their leadership journeys. Further, participants also have identity elements and life experiences that have made their leadership identity development journeys different from my own. This is why seeking out the most diverse participant group possible was so important to the legitimacy of this study. Given these individual differences, I took care during data collection to ask participants about a variety of experiences and influences and looked to each participant to realize and describe what has been most formative for them and why. I also had to make sure I was giving fair weight to each individual participant's experiences as I looked for themes within and across their stories. As discussed earlier, I used a peer reviewer to check through my coding and analysis to help limit bias in data interpretation.

Finally, my positions as a current leadership educator working with curricular and co-curricular programs, and one of the few scholars studying leadership identity

development, add a layer of potential bias to the research process. The network of scholars who are sufficiently familiar with the leadership identity development, and thus recommended participants for this study, are also colleagues of mine who have had some of the same students in their programs and classes. Students who are currently in my classes were not be utilized for this study; however, the participant pool did include students with whom I have worked with in the past. While measures to ensure validity and transferability as previously outlined were taken, my own knowledge and observation of participants, separate from what participants shared in the interviews, could have influenced my analysis and interpretation of the data.

### **Summary of Methodology**

This study utilized comparative case study methods to gain deep understanding of the leadership approaches and influential educational experiences of one undergraduate student and six recent college graduates with understandings and practices of leadership consistent with advanced stages of leadership identity development. As the research on those who exhibit leadership in this way is limited and incomplete, a comparative case study approach helped to uncover important details of the phenomenon of leadership identity development within a unique sample (Merriam, 1998).

A nomination process utilizing the recommendations of student leadership educators who are familiar with the research on leadership identity development was used to identify the seven participants in this study as exhibiting thought and behavior indicative of advanced leadership identity. A semi-structured interview was conducted with each recommender to determine participant fit for the study. Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant regarding their understanding and

practice of leadership, as well as the learning and development experiences both within and outside of the educational environment that were influential in their leadership identity development over time.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Memoing led to coding that was used to analyze data for salient points and common. Coding occurred in two cycles both within and across cases in order to illuminate themes and patterns in the data. Processes for ensuring validity and transferability were identified and employed. A plan was also created and employed for using themes and patterns arising from data analysis to elucidate learning and development experiences that contribute to participants' advanced leadership identity development.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

In this chapter I present the major findings of my inquiry into the factors and forces that contribute to the leadership identity development of students with advanced leadership identities. To begin, I provide introductions to each of the seven participants in this study, each of whom shared stories of their personal journeys in leadership over the course of their lives. While individually unique, participants' stories share themes that provide important insight into the leadership identity development process. I first explain patterns in how participants understand and practice leadership today. From there, I discuss three leadership learning experiences common across participant stories, and the factors and forces within those experiences that seem to have been influential in participants' leadership identity development processes. The data show that experiential learning, increasing complexity in experiences over time, and learning about relational leadership are particularly effective and meaningful. Moving beyond the context of formal educational experiences, I then discuss the contextual factors that shaped participants' leadership journeys, including family influences, social identity, and mentoring relationships.

### **Research Participants**

According to the LID Model (Komives et. al, 2005, 2006), individuals gradually shift their understanding of leadership to more relational, collaborative, and process-oriented conceptions as they become more developmentally complex. Development past stage three indicates a leader identity that is interdependent, incorporating systems views of leadership that recognize and value the contributions of diverse others in a leadership process (Komives et al., 2009; Wielkiewicz, 2000). As one moves from stage four and

into stages five and six of the model, they are increasingly able to hold what O’Conner and Day (2007) refer to as individual, relational, and collective leadership identities concurrently. One is able to remain confident in their personal ability to lead in a variety of situations with or without a title, continues to learn and adapt their own style and contributions based on group needs, and increasingly engages in leadership by developing and supporting others rather than solely executing on tasks.

This study examined the experiences of seven current undergraduate students or recent graduates who exhibit an understanding and practice of leadership consistent with the later stages of the model, stage five “generativity” and stage six “integration/synthesis.” Both stages indicate an interdependent view of leadership, where an individual self-identifies as a leader and simultaneously recognizes others as leaders, understanding that leadership requires unique contributions from many and is never solely the product of a single person. In stage five “generativity,” an individual shows leadership through empowering and developing others, as well as working to sustain their groups beyond their time as members. The interests they developed earlier become commitments to more transcendent purposes, passions, or causes. In stage six “integration/synthesis,” an individual claims a leader identity across contexts, with or without a position, and engages in leadership as an interdependent process; they rely on and recognize the contributions of unique individuals while maintaining confidence in their personal contributions to the process. The individual also has a developed sense of self-efficacy to lead in unknown situations. They believe that leadership learning is a life-long commitment; they know they are never “done,” and are open to feedback and

opportunities to further develop in their understanding and practice of leadership (Komives et al., 2005, 2006).

Each of the participants were recommended by a faculty or staff member who is familiar with the existing research on leadership identity development and who knows and has observed the student in leadership situations. Participant eligibility was determined based upon the faculty or staff member's recommender interview, as well as through the analysis of student responses during the first of two participant interviews. Below is an introduction to each participant and a summary of why the participant was recommended for and included in the study. Participants are listed in alphabetical order by first name.

### **Adarsh**

Adarsh identifies as a queer, Indian-American man. He graduated from a large, four-year, public, land-grant institution in the Midwest. Adarsh actually finished his undergraduate experience a year early because felt that he needed a new and more challenging environment in which to learn and grow beyond the confines of the classroom and his campus involvement. Following graduation, Adarsh spent three years overseas, designing and implementing leadership programs in developing nations for an international community service agency. At the time of our interview, Adarsh had just completed his assignment and had returned home to prepare for his upcoming move; he would be starting a graduate program in arts advocacy in the coming fall semester.

According to his recommender, Adarsh came to college having an already well-developed understanding that leadership did not have to be position-centric; that it could and often does happen within communities for the purpose of positive change. She notes

that Adarsh was not interested in leadership for personal recognition or titles, but sought to bring people together under a common goal and to bring out the potential in others. He feels compelled to engage in leadership whenever his particular talents might enable and empower others, whether at home or abroad.

### **Dana**

Dana identifies as a White female. She grew up in a small, rural town in a family that was incredibly involved in their local community. At the time of this study, Dana was beginning the fourth and final year of her undergraduate experience at a mid-sized, four-year, private, Catholic institution in the Midwest. Playing sports her entire life, Dana is now an exercise science major and hopes to stay close to home after graduation. She would like to work with physical therapy and recreational programs for students with special needs in local school systems.

The faculty member who recommended Dana for this study emphasized Dana's self-confidence, authenticity, and maturity, particularly in comparison to her peers. She notes that Dana has been coordinating week-long leadership programs for high school students since her sophomore year of college, a role that is typically reserved for career adults. Dana maintains a delicate balance of mentor and friend with her peers, and displays competence in supporting groups and organizations through complex situations. Dana shows leadership through her unwavering loyalty and commitment to causes, as well as her service to others.

### **Holly**

Holly identifies as a White, middle class, heterosexual female of Mexican and Italian ethnicity. At the time of the study, Holly had just returned from her fourth summer



leading service-learning trips for college students in Ghana. She is the third of her four siblings to graduate from the same large, four-year, public land-grant institution in the Midwest. Holly stayed at the same institution to immediately begin graduate school in social work. In the fall, she would begin her third and final year of her graduate program.

Holly's faculty recommender notes her keen sense of self, developed early in her college career. Holly was more interested in community advocacy work than traditional leadership positions on campus, which she felt were unnecessarily exclusive. Motivated by her passion, she independently designed and implemented a global service-learning program in Ghana for her peers. She eventually started her own foundation to support future trips and sustain the work in Ghana. Ultimately, campus administrators reached out to Holly to include her service-learning program in their University-wide alternative breaks offerings.

### **Jamie**

Jamie identifies as an African American female. She graduated from a large, four-year, public land-grant institution in the Mid-Atlantic. Her time in the residence halls association and work as a campus orientation leader sparked her interest in a career in student affairs. Immediately following her undergraduate program, Jamie began a graduate program in higher education and student affairs at a large, four-year, public, land-grant institution in the Midwest. At the time of this study, Jamie had recently graduated with her Master's degree and just begun her first job as a student activities coordinator at a regional state institution in the Mid-Atlantic.

Jamie's faculty recommender notes her confidence and determination in leadership and life. She also notes Jamie's ability to apply a wide array of leadership

theories to a variety of settings and circumstances. The recommender notes that Jamie came into graduate school knowing a lot leadership theory, and that she frequently engaged her peers in critical examination of their leadership assumptions and those present in various social systems. Jamie sought out opportunities to discuss these critiques with others and was always willing to listen and learn.

### **Kim**

Kim identifies as female, straight, and White. She graduated from a large, four-year, public land-grant institution in the Midwest, located in the same city in which she grew up. Kim attributes much of her ambition and drive to her mother's influence; she pursued a career in accounting while Kim's father stayed home to raise Kim and her brother. Kim also majored in business and secured a marketing job for a global retail company headquartered just twenty minutes from her parents' home. At the time of this interview, Kim had been working in this first job for a year and a half.

Kim was recommended for this study by a staff member in her undergraduate institution's leadership office. He notes Kim's maturity and conscientiousness in her academic and co-curricular pursuits. Kim was also dedicated to developing others' leadership potential. She was excellent at mentoring her peers, letting them take chances and answer questions, even when she knew she could take care of things on her own. He also notes that Kim was an invaluable resource to helping him understand and advise the lateral, collaborative culture of a peer leadership cohort he was new to advising.

### **Teagan**

Teagan identifies as a White, queer, able bodied individual who prefers the pronouns they/them/theirs. They graduated from a large, four-year, public, land-grant

institution in the Southern Atlantic region. Through the encouragement of campus student affairs professionals, Teagan developed interest in a career in higher education. Upon graduation, Teagan immediately began a Master's program in higher education and student affairs at a different large, four-year, public, land-grant institution in the Southern Atlantic region. At the time of this study, Teagan had just moved to their new institution and began training for their graduate assistantship as a residence hall coordinator.

Teagan was recommended for this study by a faculty member in their leadership studies program who notes Teagan's interest in empowering others and more inclusive leadership style, even from their early years in college. Despite having a solid understanding of leadership theory coming into their college experience, Teagan constantly expressed interest in learning more, particularly from their peers. Teagan also articulated a fascination with learning how others develop leadership and spent a lot of time in the campus leadership office. In class, Teagan would often challenge peers to think more critically about leadership and help the faculty member with class activities.

### **Zane**

Zane identifies as a straight, White, male in the lower middle class. He graduated from a large, four-year, public, land-grant institution in the Midwest and immediately began medical school at another large, four-year, public, institution in the same state. At the time of this study, Zane was entering his fourth and final year of medical school. Zane takes particular interest in mentoring others and sees himself as engaging in leadership as a doctor by helping people through the recovery process. At the time of this study, he was hoping to one day open his own practice.

A staff member from the leadership office at Zane's undergraduate institution recommended him for this study, noting his particular interest helping his peers develop their potential to engage in leadership in various ways across the university. Zane was particularly discerning in choosing student organizations in which to invest his time, seeking out only those that fostered a strong sense of community rather than a hierarchical, power-based culture. He wanted to help others feel welcome and included in leadership experiences, and unintentionally made a name for himself on campus by contributing to organizations in meaningful ways without formal title or recognition.

### **Themes Across Participant Narratives**

Throughout two in-depth semi-structured interviews, participants in this study shared how their understandings and practice of leadership changed over time, providing insight into the experiences that prompted their development. Overall participants believe that leadership is about relationships, and that developing leadership in others is an important element of their leadership practice. Participants cite formal educational experiences including leadership learning immersion programs, peer leadership facilitation experiences, and academic courses as meaningful experiences throughout their leadership journeys. These experiences were particularly effective through experiential learning methods, providing opportunities for increasingly complex involvement, and exposing participants to relational leadership theories, models, and approaches. Participants also cite the influence of their family dynamics, social identities, and mentor relationships throughout their leadership journeys. The following sections further explain these themes across participant narratives.

## **Understanding and Practicing Leadership as a Relational Process**

In discussing what they believe to be true about leadership, participants in this study continually reference the importance of relationships. Jamie simply states; “The first thing I think of when I think of leadership is relationships,” and further explains that leadership requires “working together and enabling other people to work together.” Leadership does not happen through the actions of one person, but through the combined efforts of many. Adarsh notes that his view that leadership is “very people-centric” and requires “being connected to the world around you”; language that signals a relationship-focused approach to leadership rather than one focused on simple attainment of title or position. Adarsh goes on to explain that people who engage in leadership are “the ones who are really emotionally intelligent and invested in the people around them.” For Adarsh, engaging in leadership requires awareness, understanding, and consideration of others. Beyond the general notion of relational leadership, participants discuss two key components of their leadership approaches; building and maintaining relationships, and developing others.

### **Building and Maintaining Relationships**

Consistent through participants’ discussion of relational leadership is the notion that building strong relationships between group members helps establish commitment to group success beyond personal interests. Leadership, then, becomes the responsibility of the group as a whole. Kim claims that one of her first leadership lessons was that beyond “being in charge” and advancing a personal agenda, leadership was about “learning how to build relationships with people.” As Dana explains: “a lot of leadership comes from being able to rely on others in building that trust and connection” which requires

investing time and energy in getting to know others outside of the task-related purpose of a group or organization. She notes that leaders “not only lead a group to finish a task, but also lead the group to grow closer together.” Similarly, Jamie explains that the goals of leadership cannot happen without building personal relationships:

Leaders need to be *people*. In order to engage in, I think, meaningful, transformational, effective leadership, you need to be able to work with people, and part of that is creating cultures and community where people want to work together, where people want to be around each other.

Jamie emphasizes that leaders are real people with personalities, interests, and insights beyond formal authority or job role. Successful leadership could only happen in an environment where people felt comfortable with one another and connected to each other personally. Creating this kind of environment requires that participants in the leadership process open up to one another, and get to know each other as individuals outside of their roles and responsibilities. Holly explains that building personal relationships with others has been key to her successful leadership in new and unfamiliar contexts. She notes that her ability to lead groups of her peers on service-learning trips to Ghana was dependent upon her willingness to open up and let people get to know her as a person, not just as the trip manager; “I tried really hard this summer to allow them to get to know me more than just the person leading the trips. I think in leadership that's important because it builds trust and closer relationships, so I think you can better work together in what you're doing.” Holly noted that this ultimately did make a difference in how the team worked together. As they got to know each other better, they were more invested in the group and more effective in their work because they felt personally connected to each other and the

community. Teagan discusses a similar approach, noting that getting to know others' needs and wants helps them feel connected to others and to the group purpose or goal. Teagan says: "I'm going to ask how you're doing. I'm going to ask all the questions about how you engage and what you engage about and what you want to talk about, I'm going to also try to adapt to who you are, which I think goes to just building authentic relationships." Rather than assuming they know the best leadership approach for the entire group, Teagan asks others about their goals, interests, personalities, and expectations. Everyone knows each other better, and feels a part of the leadership process, therefore being more willing to contribute to the overall success of the group.

Participants indicate that while differences in style and opinion are inevitable between people, leadership requires intentional effort to hear others and connect on an overall goal or purpose. When people feel heard, they are more willing to contribute and collaborate with others. Kim shares that facilitating conversations about controversial topics such as leadership and politics in middle school helped her learn that leadership involves knowing "how to work with different people and how to respect people while still trying to move everything forward." She goes on to explain: "I don't see leadership very much as somebody in charge. I see it as more of a collaborative group. That as a leader, if I want to get something done, I can't just do it. I have to have everyone involved." The effect of a single person is limited; accomplishing group goals requires everyone's input. Dana holds similar beliefs, adding that if people are not willing to learn about and embrace each other's unique talents, then the group as a whole suffers. Dana explains:

[The work] is going to get done with the most skill sets and the most brain power behind it rather than just the one person kind of taking the hits for all of it or taking all the fist bumps and the applause for it.

According to Dana, collaboration in leadership yields more successful results and a better personal leadership experience. Connecting leadership and his medical school rotations, Zane describes the importance of collaboration in leadership using his team of doctors, nurses, and medical technicians as an example:

Everybody matters in that hospital, because we all care about the patient. We are all on the same team, because we want people to get better. In that way, I see myself as a leader because the doctors are the ones “responsible,” *and* everybody’s a leader in that situation because whoever is face-to-face with the patient, that person is immediately the person that (the patient) is trusting, and that’s a huge moment.

According to Zane, regardless of role, experience, or formal power, each individual in the group has something vital to contribute to the overall purpose. Leadership, then, lies with the group as a whole rather than a single individual.

Overall, participants in this study do not only see relationships as nice for leadership; they see them as a necessity for successful leadership. As illustrated in their examples, relational leadership is not just about the individual connections a positional leader has with others, but also about fostering the connections between people and developing a cohesive team. Leadership happens when people feel connected to one another and welcomed to contribute to the process.



## **Developing Others**

Participants also widely discussed the responsibility and privilege of developing leadership potential in others. This is the notion of generativity, or preparing the next generation of leaders (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). While at earlier points in their lives they believed leadership was about completing and rallying a group around task-related goals, each participant later engaged in experiences that showed them the value of attending to a group's process and the growth of individual members.

Participants believe that developing others is as much an act of leadership as accomplishing tasks. "Leadership can happen in two ways; I can be the spark, or the mirror that reflects it," notes Dana. She cites this as a quote that has stayed with her since middle school. It reminds her that leadership is not just about being the person who does all the work or makes the big speech, but that amplifying, supporting, and spreading leadership to others is just as important. Similarly, Adarsh notes that "a leader should make you feel empowered to better yourself... 'I want to learn from them,' that to me is how a leader should make you feel." Recalling an experience where her contribution to a group of peer facilitators was to identify each facilitator's strengths and weaknesses and properly assign them to facilitation opportunities, Kim remembers thinking "This is our group." She explains further; "I knew every facilitation that was happening and I could easily just put myself in everyone and facilitated all of them, but I wanted everyone else to do it. Get everyone else involved." Kim recognized that each individual facilitator had something unique and important to contribute to the group, and that her contribution was identifying talent and learning needs in others. Kim explains that "it was the best leadership experience I received; that I can affect things without being 'the person,' being

in a support role. I don't need the name on it." Kim was able to recognize that connecting her peers to the most developmentally appropriate facilitation opportunities was just as important to the group's mission as actually facilitating the programs. Associating the practice of developing others with leadership is a key marker of advanced leadership identity development, often not noted in individuals until at least the college experience, if at all (Gonda, 2007; Komives et al., 2005, 2006; Wagner, 2011).

Participants in this study came to realize the value of developing others in leadership in varying ways and at varying times. For some, the realization came in high school through peer facilitation experiences, which required participants to shift focus from their personal needs and focus more on the educational and developmental needs of others. For example, Adarsh reflects on his experience in high school facilitating leadership learning immersion programs for middle school students noting, "I don't know up until that point in my life, if I felt like I was doing something as meaningful until that point." Holly also notes her experience as a peer facilitator in high school as the point in which she recognized the importance of developing the leadership potential in others. She remembers thinking to herself, "Okay, these are people we're now mentoring and trying to instill leadership in them for their own journeys." Teagan recalls a similar thought process from their time as a peer facilitator for a youth leadership development organization starting their senior year of high school. Teagan notes, "I think that was one of the first times I really grasped the understanding of it not being my story or my experience anymore and it being about the people I was serving." Dana also indicates that her peer facilitator experience in high school taught her how to engage in leadership through stepping back and developing others. She also experienced the positive impact of

her co-facilitator taking interest in her personal leadership development: “he pretty much made it so that the whole week was focused on challenging me to step out and take those risks so that when I came back next year I could do that for somebody else.” While focused on implementing an educational experience for others, Dana also experienced developmental support to learn and grow in her own leadership capacity with the support from her co-facilitator. Further, she was able to learn from him as he modeled ways to develop others.

Other participants made the connection between developing others and leadership in college. When he was not chosen to be president of one of his student organizations his sophomore year, Zane instead took on the responsibility of being a peer mentor for a small group of freshman members. One of his mentees, Karen, ended up being president of the organization the following year. He notes; “I could see that I had obviously contributed something to her growth and her passion for the group and her wanting to be a leader for others.” Zane was proud that he had contributed to helping Karen develop such a passion for the organization. Jamie notes being introduced to the idea of developing others as an undergraduate and further internalized it into her leadership practice during graduate school. As an undergraduate orientation coordinator, she was responsible for training orientation leaders. Jamie conceptually understood the purpose of developing others, although she still often found herself doing the work in group situations, not trusting her peers, and most concerned about completing the task. Jamie recalls having to reexamine the connection between leadership and developing others in graduate school when she began advising a student leadership council in a living-learning program. She explains: “I had to remind myself, ‘You are not an undergraduate student

anymore. Your job is now to help facilitate learning.” Working through her graduate school advising experience helped her incorporate developing others into her understanding of leadership. She is now able to keep mentoring and advising at the center of her leadership practice as a full-time professional working with college students.

The meaning some participants found in their initial experiences helping others discover and grow their leadership potential became a source of motivation, encouraging involvement in organizations and causes with developing others as a major focus. In this way, developing others became a passion that further informed how participants chose to engage in leadership moving forward. For example, Dana has continued to work with the leadership learning immersion programs she attended in middle school and facilitated in high school, now as an undergraduate program director. Dana explains: “I want to help others learn and experience in the amazing way that I was able to through the programs.” As a director, Dana now designs educational curriculum and trains new facilitators. Zane notes that his experience with his mentee becoming organization president “sparked this passion for the group and her,” and prompted him to continue to seek out the chance to mentor and craft educational experiences for others as a peer facilitator for undergraduate leadership programs through his campus leadership office. Later in medical school, Zane ran for class president because he wanted to help advocate for his peers’ learning needs as medical students. He notes “I want to have my classmates and myself feel comfortable with who their voice is going to be.” While past class presidents got caught up in the professional access the role gave to them personally, Zane was more concerned with helping his classmates learn and develop.

Adarsh and Holly continued to engage in leadership by developing others in a global context. Following his high school and college experiences as a peer facilitator for various leadership experiences, Adarsh spent three years working for a volunteer international development agency in Morocco designing and facilitating leadership programs “to create opportunities for youth to explore possibility.” He remembers this as an experience that further solidified his passion for developing others, noting: “this is what I'm good at. It's where I feel strongly and where I feel like I'm pursuing my strengths.” Holly indicates that her high school and college peer facilitation experiences laid the foundation for her community development work in struggling nations as an undergraduate student. On a service-learning trip to Ghana focused on helping communities become economically self-sufficient, she remembers thinking, “in these new settings that I'm in, how can I start instilling leadership in others and sharing my passions with them?” Holly later planned and implemented her own trips to Ghana and took fellow college students with her to continue the development work. In these examples, Adarsh and Holly simultaneously exhibit commitment to developing leadership potential in others and passion for causes beyond their own communities and personal experiences; both markers of advanced leadership identity (Komives et al., 2005, 2006).

### **Transformational Leadership Education Experiences**

Participants discuss a number of educational experiences throughout their lives that have contributed to the way they understand and practice leadership today. Beyond providing opportunities to hold leadership positions, these experiences offered opportunities to learn about leadership and develop leadership skills and practices. They

expanded participants' definitions of leadership, broadened their view of who could be a leader and what leadership looks like in practice, helped them discover how they could most effectively contribute to leadership, and increased their self-efficacy for leadership. While participants engaged in these experiences at varying times throughout their lives, each experience helped move participants toward the relational leadership approaches that are now centered in their leadership identities. The three types of experiences that were most referenced across participants include leadership learning immersion programs, peer facilitation experiences, and academic courses.

- **Leadership Learning Immersion Programs:** Five participants (Adarsh, Dana, Holly, Kim, and Teagan) discussed their involvement in immersion programs affiliated with youth leadership development organizations. These programs brought together students from middle schools and high schools across a particular state or region of the United States to learn about leadership, focusing on teamwork and citizenship through experiential learning. Programs vary in length, including one-day workshops, weekend overnight retreats, and week-long overnight summer camps. Participants engaged in programs of various duration, but largely discussed the impact of week-long summer programs. For the purposes of this study, the term “immersion programs” is used to reference these week-long programs. All five participants attended the programs as middle school and high school students.
- **Peer Facilitation Experiences:** Six participants (Adarsh, Dana, Holly, Kim, Teagan, and Zane) note that their experience as peer facilitators for student leadership programs helped them develop a more advanced and inclusive

understanding of leadership. Adarsh, Dana, Holly, Kim and Teagan facilitated the same immersion programs they had attended as middle school and high school students. In addition, Adarsh, Holly, Kim, Teagan, and Zane were members of peer facilitator cohort groups in college, sponsored through their campus leadership offices. As cohort members, participants learned about and developed leadership in two ways: they had the opportunity to design and facilitate leadership workshops for a variety of student organizations and student populations across their campuses; and they also received training on leadership theory and facilitation skills.

- Academic Courses: Six participants (Adarsh, Dana, Holly, Kim, Teagan, and Jamie) discuss undergraduate academic courses as influential in expanding their understanding of leadership. Some courses taught leadership theory and practice, particularly focusing on relational and collaborative approaches. Others were courses in field-specific disciplines that discussed elements of relational leadership, citizenship, and inclusion. The courses employed a pedagogy focused on discussion, reflective writing, and experiential learning rather than emphasizing lectures and exams. Through these courses, participants were encouraged to apply theory to their past and present leadership experiences, as well as to their personal lives.

While understanding the general structure of these experiences is important, the learning and development approaches within these experiences is what made them so influential, helping participants to incorporate new perspectives on leadership into their leadership identities over time. Participants discuss both the content taught as well as

pedagogical techniques used within these educational experiences, and how and why those learning and development approaches made an impact. These factors and forces include: engagement in experiential learning; increasing developmental complexity in experiences over time; and learning about relational leadership.

### **Leadership Learning Immersion: The Importance of Experiential Learning**

Participants note that the experiential learning methods used in their educational experiences helped them understand and practice relational leadership, and helped them connect the value of community to leadership, as well. Planned, hands-on activities such as simulations, structured team experiences, and personal and group reflection were common parts of the curricula designed to teach particular lessons or highlight certain ideas and perspectives.

While activities often included a group task to complete or problem to solve, the way that participants engaged with others throughout the activity was the primary learning goal. In engaging in these activities, participants developed a sense of community with their peers and experienced phenomena and feelings similar to those they may experience in real-life leadership situations. Holly explains: “You’re not sitting there in the classroom studying leadership... You’re doing hands-on activities and being put in small groups and basically being given activities that let you learn more about yourself and working with others.” She goes on to describe how the activities often appeared to be “just a game” on the surface, and that “you don’t actually even understand sometimes that you’re learning something,” but through the process of working with her peers she “[learned] that leadership comes in many different forms and ways.” In Dana’s words, the activities “foster this environment of quick, on your feet, high intensity



learning that requires a thought process and bouncing ideas off of each other.” She describes how many activities in her immersion programs could only be solved if the entire group worked together, and the importance of feeling the emotions that accompany working through a challenge with others: “We could sit in a room and talk about it, but [the group] is not going to understand [how to work together] until they feel what it feels like.” Dana benefitted from feeling the uncertainty, frustration, and eventual satisfaction that comes with working through group challenges so that she could understand how to more effectively work with others in the future.

In addition to collaborating with peers in structured experiences or simulations, reflection and discussion opportunities also helped participants analyze, synthesize, and apply what they had learned about leadership to real-life contexts. In Adarsh’s words, this took the form of “talking about what just happened with people around you and making sense of that. Then, having people challenge you to relate it to the outside world.” Similarly, Teagan recalls being prompted to think about and discuss “how does this experience inform your role in the community? How does this inform your personal values?” Holly notes the “very intentional activities” in her middle school immersion programs that helped her reflect on her own leadership approach and working with others. She describes these as activities “where you’re mapping out ideas about yourself and ideas about group experiences” that helped her learn how to have conversations about leadership approaches in groups outside of the immersion experience. She explains “you naturally begin to have those conversations, not only at the [immersion programs], but also when you hang out with your friends outside of them.” Overall, participants gleaned new insights about their leadership understanding and practice in new contexts

through this cycle of engaging in an activity, then reflecting on the experience and discussing it with others.

**Modeling and practicing relational leadership.** Participants note that experiential learning activities were particularly helpful for modeling and practicing specific relational leadership concepts such as inclusive leadership, communication, and trust. For example, Holly recalls doing a personality assessment with other small group members in one of her middle school immersion programs that helped her recognize people's varying leadership styles and unique contributions to a team:

It was one of those instances where you can see leaders are all different types of people... leadership is how you play on those different types of people and bring them all onto one team, because you need different expertise and different skill sets brought to the table.

The conversation that Holly engaged in with her peers about their diverse personalities helped her realize the value each person could bring to a group and how to engage with leadership styles different from her own to maximize group effectiveness. Similarly, Dana recalls completing a logic puzzle with her small group at a middle school immersion program, and feeling energized as all members of the group worked on parts of the puzzle and shared their ideas. She explains: "I remember those the most because it was the understanding that leadership isn't always who's talking the loudest or who's saying the right things at the right time." This experience helped Dana realize that leadership required contributions of different kinds from different people, and was not limited to the person speaking or directing. She further explains how the experience changed her perspective on successful leadership: "I think that [the activities] were

structured to show that the team is best when everyone participates - it gives a different idea of success.” She had realized through the activity that successful leadership is not just about task completion, but how the task is completed; the best results happen when everyone’s contributions are encouraged and included in the process. Exploring the deeper connections that happen when people engage in relational, collaborative leadership, Adarsh describes a series of activities designed to demonstrate the importance of trust in teams during one of his middle school immersion programs. He and a small group of students helped each other through physical challenges, including blindfolded walks and trust falls into each other’s arms. Adarsh explains that “knowing what it felt like to fall and be caught” helped him understand the value of trust between people working together. Through conversation with his peers following each activity, he notes realizing “that feeling can be replicated in every community.” Adarsh felt a sense of trust with his group members through the activities, and was able to connect that feeling to team experiences in other contexts.

Experiential activities also provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on and receive feedback about how their leadership approaches could impact others. Jamie recalls engaging group communication activities in her leadership studies academic courses in college. This is how she first realized that her tendency to dominate conversations was keeping others from engaging in the group process:

We would talk a lot about the impact of when people take over a conversation. I started to be more cognizant and aware of, “am I taking over the conversation or monopolizing or making other people feel like they can't speak?” I started to think about “how am I making other people feel?”

Having the chance to reflect on her actions in group activities during class and get feedback from her peers helped Jamie recognize on the negative impact she could have on groups and understand the importance of including others. Similarly, Teagan notes that candid conversations after team activities in high school immersion experiences prompted them to recognize when they were being overbearing during group work. These conversations helped Teagan be more cognizant of their tendencies in the moment, offering opportunities to reflect and consider whether “I’m talking very much in this conversation. This conversation has somehow turned, I have somehow turned this conversation into being about me when it’s not.” This realization helped Teagan become a better listener and leave room for others’ input.

Experiential learning activities also helped participants recall and apply relational leadership lessons beyond programmatic contexts. Teagan remembers an evening reflection activity in one of their immersion experiences in high school during which a facilitator spoke about the importance of “everyday heroes” and recognizing the value of others. The facilitator shared a “song about heroes and then asked each person in the audience to name their hero, or someone they looked up to, and why.” Having the chance to think about what they valued in a leader and who exemplified those values helped Teagan connect their immersion program learning to life back home. Adarsh remembers a similar activity in one of his middle school immersion programs. Students and facilitators would work together to put on a final reflection presentation, where each group would share a story and small token with their peers to help reinforce their most important leadership lesson from the experience. Adarsh explains:

That was always one of my favorite parts of the week, getting to just hear all of these people's thoughts and songs and stories and little gifts and trinkets, and reflecting on "Why is this important for the future? What is this little trinket that they're giving me? Why is it important to me?" I would go home, and I would keep this bag somewhere with all of my little trinkets from the week. Whenever I felt like I needed it, I would go through and be reminded of all these lessons.

The activity provided Adarsh with time to synthesize his learning from the program and develop a strategy for recalling learning as needed. Overall, experiential reflection activities connected cognitive learning with personal experiences, helping participants incorporate key lessons as a part of their leadership understanding and practice moving forward.

**Connecting the value of community with leadership.** Engaging in experiential learning also helped participants create a sense of community with their peers, particularly in immersion experiences. Kim explains that experiential activities helped her and her peers “talk about our problems in a healthy way and talk about disagreements and talk about our values.” Engaging in meaningful and purposeful conversation helped Kim develop strong relationships with others. She explains:

I could be friends with those people and have good experiences with them and learn and grow with them together in a more personal way than I ever could with my friends from home. I just felt I had these closer relationships.

Teagan explains the strong community they experienced in their high school immersion programs: “It was always one of the strongest senses of community I ever felt. You just have this group of a hundred or so people who are super connected and really care about

[the immersion program], and really value [the experience] and value each other.” Adarsh explains that his experience in middle school immersion programs helped him feel connected with others around a shared interest in developing as leaders, and that being in that “community of leaders” was “transformational.” Adarsh notes that the experience helped him associate feelings of “belonging and community” with leadership. He says: “I’ve learned to identify [that transformational feeling] with belonging and community, and [leadership] is all about learning how to provide this to others.”

Activities that encouraged authentic expression also helped create a sense of community in participants’ immersion experiences. Participants felt heard and seen in ways they had not previously experienced, which led to them creating meaningful personal connections with their fellow program attendees. With all of this happening in the context of a leadership program, participants began to associate authenticity, sense of belonging, and inclusivity with leadership. Dana remembers that facilitators and returning attendees from her first middle school immersion program were comfortable engaging in more playful or silly activities, seemingly without concern for what others would think. She describes an energetic and welcoming atmosphere where people could “be themselves” rather than needing to mask their personalities with indifference out of fear of rejection in new environments:

That’s typically when (the facilitators) really try to get the energy up. They’re crazy all week because that’s really their job, to foster that sense of ‘you can be yourself.’ You can have fun here... They are challenging, and urging, and motivating students to give as much as you can. Do the best that you can.

Constantly reassuring, ‘We know it’s scary. We know it’s weird. We know it feels

uncomfortable,’ And promising and ensuring that it’s going to be the best week ever in trying to light that little fire within that makes them want to jump all in. Seeing her peers authentically express their excitement about a week of leadership learning helped her feel comfortable fully expressing herself while engaging in later activities. Dana now strives to create this same atmosphere as a program facilitator and director. In a deeper experience with authenticity, Holly recalls a small group activity in her middle and high school immersion programs where each student was invited to share personal stories and thoughts about topics related to leadership, family, friends, life goals, and their hopes for the future. She explains; “That activity, I think, is important because it’s not only teaching you to process about yourself, it’s also teaching you to be vulnerable enough to process that with other people.” Sharing her story and listening to others helped Holly feel connected to her group members. They were able to work more effectively together throughout the rest of the immersion program. Adarsh remembers self-disclosure activities from his middle school immersion experiences during which he heard diverse peers reflect on how the lessons they were learning about leadership applied to their lives back home. An Indian-American male from a wealthy suburban area, Adarsh explains that these activities helped him develop friendships with a Latina female from a middle class urban area and a White male from a disadvantaged rural area. In sharing their individually unique stories, Adarsh and his peers developed stronger connections. The self-disclosure activities helped Adarsh understand that “everybody feels and processes experiences differently. If somebody takes the conversation somewhere, you should honor the feelings that are creating that direction.” Experiences

like this taught him how to engage in conversation with people about “things that mattered,” which helped him feel a strong sense of community with diverse others.

### **Increasing Developmental Complexity in Experiences Over Time**

Many of the leadership learning experiences participants discussed were structured with varying levels of curriculum at gradually increasing levels of complexity. For example, as participants’ commitment to immersion programs and peer facilitator cohorts grew over time, the nature of their involvement and ways in which they participated in leadership in those experiences shifted. Initially, participants were program attendees and new members, on the receiving end of leadership learning and development efforts of facilitators and more experienced members. Eventually participants began to take more ownership for their leadership development in those experiences, relying less on the direction of facilitators and experienced members and more on co-creating learning with and for their peers. Some participants later focused their time and energy on developing leadership in others by becoming program facilitators and designing leadership learning and development curriculum. This progression helped advance participants’ leadership identity by shifting their understandings of the purpose of leadership from self to others, and broadening the ways in which they practiced leadership.

**Immersion Programs.** As immersion program attendees, participants note the increasing depth of activities and discussion with each level of programming. For example, Dana recalls the variance in how volunteer staff members facilitated group discussion in the middle school programs compared to the high school programs:



I feel like with the younger students it was more of a guided discussion where you're really trying to get them to zone in on what the main points of the activity are, where I feel like once they move into high school, they have a little bit better idea of what the point of the activity is and it's not so much a guided discussion there as much as it just is a discussion.

Dana's comment shows that as participants got older, they were encouraged to engage in dialogue, empowered to work through activities themselves, and able to come up with their own leadership lessons rather than rely on the teachings of an external authority. Similarly, Teagan participated in small "values groups," designed specifically for certain grades in her immersion programs. Each group would discuss topics and engage in activities appropriate for their age. Teagan explains: "The younger ones would often do smaller, easier team-building activities, learning relationship-building through those activities... a little more basic." The high school groups engaged more often in dialogue about applying leadership lessons from activities to students' lives and communities. Teagan notes: "[The facilitators] find ways to talk about what is relevant in your life and 'how does this connect to your role in the community?' Developing your personal values and all those kinds of things." The activities and conversation became more complex as did the learning outcomes, from the basics of relationship-building toward developing big-picture understanding of how to lead with personal values and developing commitment to a community.

Beyond experiencing increasingly complex leadership development as students, multiple participants had the opportunity to facilitate programs for their peers, which served as a first experience in developing the leadership potential in others. In high

school, Adarsh, Dana, Holly, Kim, and Teagan became peer facilitators for the immersion programs they had attended previously, working with groups of both middle school and high school students. As facilitators, participants were responsible for role-modeling and teaching about relational leadership approaches, as well as guiding students through leadership skill workshops, experiential activities, and reflection and discussion. Dana explains that facilitating gave her a new perspective on the purpose of leadership: “I went from somebody that was participating in the programming to somebody that was fostering an environment for growth for the people that were actually going through it.” Thus, for Dana, the primary motivation for engaging in leadership became the growth of others. Teagan notes that becoming a facilitator for immersion programs was the catalyst they needed to understand how stepping out of the spotlight to help create and maintain a meaningful learning environment for others was an act of leadership. Teagan remembers thinking: “It's your responsibility as an older member of this organization to start cultivating the community that you felt [as an attendee.] Everyone's focused on the younger students, and that's because it's now my responsibility to take ownership in that community.” Teagan’s commitment shifted toward enabling the leadership potential in others to build a strong community just as they and their peers had done previously.

Creating learning environments and teaching leadership to their peers also helped participants improve their leadership practice and learn how to effectively engage others in the process. Dana recalls that working with a co-facilitator during immersion programs was enlightening, particularly when she was paired with individuals with different facilitation styles from her own. She explains:

I'm extroverted and I'm a bit of a dreamer so I was usually put with somebody that was more grounded and a little more introverted just so we balanced out nicely. It was a lot of trying to work with that dynamic and do what was best so that both of us were challenging ourselves because [facilitating] was also a learning experience for us.

Dana had to figure out how to collaborate with her co-facilitator to make sure they both had the opportunity to contribute and develop their talents while still working together to best facilitate learning for others. Similarly, Adarsh gained self-awareness and improved his communication skills through facilitating. He recalls that as a high school-aged facilitator, he needed to learn how to best connect with the middle school students in his immersion programs. Adarsh received feedback from his co-facilitators and program directors on his communication skills throughout his facilitation opportunities with the middle school attendees. As he got better, he would take on more challenging parts of the curriculum to facilitate. Adarsh notes: "Through the continual feedback process and all of that, I grew into something completely different by the time I was a senior staff member in that program, and was able to lead confidently." Facilitating gave him the opportunity to practice, receive feedback, and hone his skills to the point that he felt confident facilitating leadership learning and development processes for others.

Adarsh, Dana, Holly, and Kim continued to facilitate immersion programs into their college years. Toward the end of their undergraduate experiences, they moved into adult educator roles, directing or co-directing entire programs and overseeing the selection, training, and mentoring of younger peer facilitators. Directing programs helped participants learn the value of leadership in a support capacity, as they were no longer

working directly with groups of attendees. Instead, they led by empowering the peer facilitators and fostering productive leadership learning environments. For example, Holly explains her shift from peer facilitator to director as “not self-gratifying in the sense of, you're not always the one out there in the front... but you learn that leadership can be a background role, it's just as important.” She goes on to explain that leadership in the director capacity was about enabling the peer facilitators to “make the magic happen.” Dana says that helping her group of facilitators develop as leadership educators and learn how to help attendees develop their leadership capacity is meaningful work. She explains: “I take a lot of pride and enjoyment in just watching the staff that I get to spend time with in programs over the summer and during the weekends continue to develop, and giving them feedback or just letting them know that their contributions are valued.” Kim notes that the co-director role challenged her to use the knowledge she had gained about leadership and facilitating others’ learning to create and implement a new immersion program. She explains “[My co-director] and I were changing the curriculum and deciding what was and wasn't important.” She notes that as a peer facilitator she was unaware of all the preparation and thought that went into creating meaningful leadership learning for a group of diverse attendees. Kim notes that as a co-director, “you started to see what it actually took to make the learning happen.” Directing programs helped participants understand a much larger leadership process that included not only those engaging in and facilitating the experience, but those working to provide the ideal environment for meaningful learning and development.

**Peer facilitator cohorts.** The purpose of participants’ undergraduate peer facilitation cohorts – to develop leadership in others by facilitating leadership learning

opportunities – in and of itself shifts the focus of leadership from self to other. Beyond this fundamental focus, participants also note increasing developmental complexity in their engagement with the cohorts over time. As new members of peer facilitation cohorts, participants facilitated workshops designed by more experienced members and leadership office staff. From there, participants began designing their own curriculum, using the leadership theory they had learned and facilitation skills they had developed as cohort members. The chance to design leadership curriculum helped promote participants' identification with developing others as a part of their leadership practice.

Beyond teaching lessons and facilitating activities, participants were able to explore how others learned and understood leadership, and how they could help further that development in meaningful and intentional ways. For example, Zane remembers getting to a point in his cohort experience where his advisor was “entirely, almost hands off where [they] let us know what kind of facilitation we needed and what the broad overarching topics needed to be covered for these organizations, but I could do whatever I wanted to convey those messages and those meanings.” Adarsh explains how after his first year facilitating programs, he sought out an intern role with his cohort that gave him the chance to design leadership curriculum and consult with student organizations on their leadership development needs. He remembers being challenged “to look at goals and objectives and retro-plan curriculum based off of those.” These experiences helped Adarsh learn how to observe and analyze leadership processes happening across entire organizations, and use his leadership knowledge and experience to help organizations create better opportunities for the growth of their members.

Some participants note getting even further involved in the sustainability of their peer facilitator cohorts by working with advisers on overall programming and training strategies. Teagan recalls having the opportunity to shape their cohort's leadership program offerings by the time they were a senior; "I had enough freedom that I was able to say 'these are things that I see are cool, and here are the holes in things that we're not talking about, things that could be a part of our programming.'" In this way, Teagan was helping enhance the leadership development opportunities for students on campus and ensure the continued growth and relevancy of the cohort. In a similar experience, Kim recalls helping her cohort's adviser figure out the curriculum and timing for facilitator training and conducting a training needs assessment for the cohort. She explains:

Starting to learn that and then starting to see all the ways that we can actually teach leadership in the college experience, and how are we actually getting to more people than just the people who are seeking it out themselves. It was really interesting.

This advanced level of training helped keep Kim invested in the cohort and continuing to seek out leadership learning opportunities throughout college.

### **Learning About Relational Leadership**

While experiences such as being on sports teams or serving as positional leaders in student organizations may have provided environments for participants to practice leadership, they did not offer the opportunity to learn about leadership theories, models, skills, and approaches. Participants' experiences in immersion programs, peer facilitator cohorts, and academic courses included curriculum specifically designed to teach and emphasize relational, process-oriented views of leadership. This learning helped

participants recognize leadership as more than just position or authority beginning as early as middle school, and helped them develop leadership practices that align with relational approaches moving forward.

**Immersion programs.** With an intent to develop leadership understanding beyond power and hierarchy, immersion program activities emphasized community building and collaboration as key components of “good” leadership. Participants note that facilitators and program directors discussed leadership as an inclusive practice open to all, and equated leadership with being kind to everyone, seeking out diverse perspectives, actively listening, and working together to make positive change. Dana remembers clearly the message of “anyone can be a leader” from her experiences in middle school immersion programs. Adarsh credits his experience attending and facilitating immersion programs with helping him understand “leadership is accessible to anybody who's willing to invest in it,” and that people lead not through title or position, but by taking action that aligns with their passion and values, or, as Adarsh says: “living out things that you care about.” Kim recalls her immersion program facilitators continually asking “How can we become better listeners? How are we becoming better problem solvers? And how are those helping us become better leaders?” Facilitators were constantly reinforcing the idea that leadership involved listening to others and working together to solve problems. Kim and Teagan both note the explicit connections between leadership, listening, and the values of acceptance and inclusivity found throughout their immersion program activities. Kim explains that the activities taught her to be confident in her own ability to lead and, at the same time, more open to hearing others’ approaches, experiences, and perspectives. Kim says “[the activities] helped you believe in yourself and accept

yourself and accept others, and then at the same time, brought you closer to people that you would never have met before, who taught you their values because they were from different places.” Teagan recalls one of their most meaningful conversations about “being able to look at perspectives, or things you might not know about others and that we assume about others, and being vulnerable with people in a healthy way.” The message that leadership required engaging with and listening to diverse others was clear for Teagan.

Having been intentionally exposed to collaborative and inclusive notions of leadership in their immersion programs, participants began to engage in leadership congruent with these notions in their schools and communities. Even in spaces where peers and adults still structured leadership as positional and more competitive, participants retained and practiced leadership congruent with their new beliefs. For example, Adarsh explains that upon returning home from a middle school immersion experience, he was determined to implement a more inclusive membership policy in his middle school student council:

After coming back, we decided to do away with homeroom elections... We changed student council to be more inclusive in terms of leadership and people's want to be a part of it. Instead of electing people from each homeroom, it was open invitation to anybody who was willing to be dedicated to being a student leader. That was cool and that was really inspiring.

The traditional process for being a student council member required a popular vote from classmates, limiting who could be members of student council and creating a dichotomy of “leaders” and “non-leaders” in the school. The new open membership policy allowed



anyone with the interest in school leadership to join student council, aligning more with inclusive leadership approaches. Holly had a similar experience, noting the contrast between her relational views on leadership from her immersion experiences and that of the sports teams she was a part of growing up. Holly explains how she felt when she went back to sports practices after her first immersion experience in middle school: “I felt like [what we learned] was very much conflicting with the traditional forms of leadership of feeling like you constantly have to be competing with each other and, in some way, tearing each other down. [Sports], to me, felt like a negative example of what leadership is and should be.” Holly notes that she tried to emphasize with her teammates that “you can be a lot more productive in leadership when you're supporting each other and each other's dreams in the process,” but her efforts proved futile. She eventually gave up sports to focus more on activities that aligned with her relational approach to leadership, including becoming more invested in her immersion programs in subsequent years. Teagan shares that learning about conflict resolution in their high school immersion programs helped them navigate controversy and repair relationships between members of their school choir and theater club. They note: “I was able to work amongst my peers to try to mitigate negativity and drama that was going on.” Teagan did not have a leadership position in either organization but remembers thinking at the time “Sometimes you don't make it to the front of the room, but is that the place that you need to be to be a leader?” Thus, because of their experiences and learning, Teagan had the confidence to work toward positive change in those organizations, even without formal authority.

**Academic Courses.** College academic courses provided participants with the chance to learn about a variety of leadership theories while emphasizing relational

leadership approaches. Participants took both leadership studies courses and discipline-specific courses that discussed leadership in a particular context. Courses covered topics such as: the importance of leadership for social change; developing collaborative teams; identifying and using group members' talents; emotional intelligence; including diverse perspectives and people; the intersections of advocacy, activism, and civic engagement; exploring your personal leadership style and philosophy; and the process of leadership identity development. Jamie notes that learning about leadership as a relational process has had a meaningful impact on how she engages in leadership today in both her personal and professional life:

Relational leadership really stuck with me, because relationships are important to me. I think at the end of the day when I'm working with students, when I'm working with myself, I'm thinking about "how is the work I'm doing impacting other people?" "How am I building or destroying relationships in my position or just in life in general?"

Jamie's understanding of relational leadership helps her pay attention to the effect her leadership practice has on others and how she can develop and maintain positive relationships across contexts. Adarsh recalls a valuable lesson on "viewing leadership from the balcony," or how to observe and analyze the leadership process across an entire group or team. This skill helped him broaden his perspective on what leadership looked like in complex organizations, or, as he explains, "what leadership looks like when you take a step back and try to view things in a holistic way." Adarsh notes that the lesson helped him understand how to assess conflict and struggle in organizations, and that

effective leadership requires setting aside assumptions and seeking to understand all perspectives.

Participants were able to go more in-depth with their leadership learning and practice in co-curricular experiences because of what they were learning in academic courses. Developing more formal language about leadership theory, skills, and phenomena was one helpful outcome. For example, Adarsh shares; “I was able to express and use that new toolkit of vocabulary that I had. In terms of the actual process of learning, my freshman year of courses had a huge influence.” Teagan notes: “I had an opportunity to learn about leadership lingo in different ways, but definitely a lot in class and in the readings.” Having leadership language helped Teagan become more interested in relational leadership approaches and prompted her to then develop relevant student organization workshops as a peer facilitator for her campus leadership office. Navigating complexity in student organizations also became more manageable when applying lessons from academic courses. Kim notes that she took a class on leadership in groups and teams at the same time that she was president of her sorority. She explains:

I relied really heavily on those (classes) and whatever we were learning. When we would talk about group behaviors and how groups work together, I would start to try to apply that to my executive board or I would start to pick out the things that were happening and try and fix that with the knowledge that I was gaining from classes.

Learning how to recognize and name various group dynamics in class, Kim was better able to communicate with sorority members and fellow officers about issues. This led to

better conflict management overall and a more collaborative and effective executive board.

Learning from academic courses also helped participants gain new insights about their leadership practice beyond campus. For example, Dana's experience in a social justice class her freshman year helped her better understand the cultural and socio-economic differences between the students in the immersion programs she was co-directing at the time, and how to discuss those differences to better prepare the peer facilitators. Holly explains that her undergraduate courses in social work discussed leadership as helping to lift up struggling communities and sparked her interest in service-learning in Ghana. She remembers thinking "'Okay, I do love this profession, I like where it's going and again, I like the concepts I'm learning.' I just felt this calling to do something in Africa." Connecting her passion for developing leadership in others with her desire to help struggling communities was the next step Holly was yearning for in her leadership journey. Kim took a public policy course that framed civic engagement and advocacy as a form of leadership. The professor brought in a community organizer from the local area to discuss the process of revitalizing urban neighborhoods without displacing long-time residents. As she listened to the speaker, Kim remembers thinking: "How do you go in and help (the residents) build (the neighborhood) up without making them feel like you're pushing them down and not letting them have what they're used to? How do you build up a community together?" The organizer's story sparked Kim's consideration of leadership as a community-driven process through which regular citizens could come together to make positive change. Overall, the opportunity to discuss leadership in connection to social issues and community needs helped participants see a

broader purpose for leadership beyond campus involvement or the structure of organizations. They began to understand how relational approaches to leadership could spur local, national, and global change.

**Peer facilitator cohorts.** In addition to providing participants with the opportunity to foster leadership development in their peers, college peer facilitation cohorts also helped participants develop their own leadership skills and further their understanding of leadership theory. This then helped them become better peer educators about leadership. Zane recalls that his training on leadership theories and models as a peer facilitator helped him better understand his own leadership experiences and explain leadership approaches to others:

It's such an educational experience to learn the words and the terminology and the skills and the different tools to describe different parts of leadership. It helped me work on different things that I needed to work on. At the same time, I was bringing those same tools and terminology to other students that also needed it.

Zane could use leadership language to help students analyze the leadership development needs in their organizations, increasing his effectiveness in developing leadership in others. Similarly, Teagan notes learning about relational leadership approaches such as the Social Change Model of Leadership (HERI, 1996) and Relational Leadership Model (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013) through their peer facilitator cohort and then incorporating those approaches into the workshops and programs they were designing for students on campus. Holly notes that joining her college peer facilitation cohort as a sophomore was “an opportunity to really get back into leadership theory” and expand upon what she had learned from her middle school and high school immersion programs.

She felt that her freshman year leadership experiences were lacking without also learning about leadership theory. She explains:

I felt like my first year of college was less of learning and studying leadership again and more so just being involved in different organizations... Getting back into it through [the cohort] my second year was a chance to really start studying it again and thinking about new concepts and ways they could be applied.

A more robust leadership learning experience than her other campus activities, the peer facilitator experience helped Holly more deeply examine her understanding and practice of leadership. She was also able to better apply theory and models in the leadership consulting she was doing for other students and student groups.

Some participants also received training that helped them learn how to use and design tools to help demonstrate, teach, and develop relational leadership practices. For example, Kim and Teagan learned about the group dynamics and leadership implications associated with certain heuristic tools. Kim notes learning about “True Colors,” a personality assessment designed to help people understand how to work with diverse others. Teagan learned about the connection between relational leadership approaches and “StrengthsFinder,” a talent inventory that is often used to promote the celebration and inclusion of diverse contributions to a leadership process. Teagan notes: “I must have been through, like, twenty [StrengthsFinder] workshops by the time I graduated. I was able to develop a really advanced understanding of strengths-based leadership because I got to analyze it from a different perspective every time.” Adarsh recalls receiving training in his peer facilitation cohort on assessing organizational culture and how to craft leadership learning experiences for different audiences. He says:

Part of that role was working on coming up with retreat curriculum, workshop curriculum, consultation meeting agendas for different organizations on campus that had different leadership needs. [The cohort] covered a lot of that curriculum during our time together.

Learning how to design and implement leadership learning experiences was a “big learning point” for Adarsh because it made him more effective in his efforts to develop leadership in others.

### **Contextual Factors in Developing Leadership Identity**

Beyond the nature, structure, and timing of leadership learning experiences, environment and context also play a role in leadership identity development (Komives et. al. 2005, 2006). Participants in this study note realities of their everyday lives that were not necessarily connected to a formal educational experience, but made an impact on their personal leadership journeys. While the types of contextual elements vary between participants, most note at least one element as relevant to their pursuit of leadership learning and development opportunities or the evolution of their personal philosophies of leadership. Specifically, participants discuss the influence of family dynamics, social identity, and mentors.

#### **Family Dynamics**

Adarsh, Dana, and Zane discuss the influence they believe their family members had on their leadership development and interest in leadership learning. Adarsh says that his parents gave him the freedom to express himself and pursue his own interests, which developed his self-confidence to try new things and question the status quo.

[My parents] told me when I graduated college that one of my teachers in elementary school in a parent-teacher conference told them that I'm "not good with parameters." My parents had the choice to act upon it or let me do my thing. They chose to take the path of letting me do my thing. Which I think is really cool... That idea of expressing something different and doing something different isn't my definition of leadership, but I think the willingness and courage to do so is, I think, an integrated part in it.

Challenging the status quo and contributing unique talents for the betterment of communities are a part of Adarsh's leadership practice, and he credits his parents with instilling those values in him at an early age. Dana's parents have been particularly supportive of her leadership education and development pursuits. Because her parents were educators, sports coaches, and local business leaders, they understood the value of Dana's school leadership roles and participation in state-wide leadership learning immersion programs. Dana's parents were also in a place to support her involvement financially, particularly when it came to attending immersion programs in other parts of the state. They also at times helped other students from the local area attend programs. Zane's parents motivated him to engage in leadership learning in a different way. While Zane was growing up, his parents would constantly say to him, "Zane, you're a leader." He never quite understood what that meant, so in college he started attending leadership development programs and taking leadership classes. Despite their assertions about Zane's leadership potential, Zane's parents did not understand why he was so interested in learning about leadership and were not supportive of his pursuit of leadership education. He explained his frustration, sharing, "I don't understand how they don't see



what they said when I was young as a direct cause-and-effect for why I was interested in this in college.” The lack of support from his parents served as a catalyst for Zane to engage in even more leadership learning, particularly sparking his desire to develop leadership in others.

### **Social Identity**

Holly, Kim, Teagan, and Jamie all discuss the impact of their social identities on their leadership identity development, particularly how they view themselves as leaders, and how they defined and practiced leadership at various points throughout their lives. For Holly and Kim, social identity overlaps with family influence on leadership understanding. Holly notes that from an early age she connected leadership with a commitment to serving others because she constantly saw her parents supporting young families who had just immigrated to the United States. Some of the families even lived with Holly’s temporarily. Holly explains that this value of community comes from her Mother’s Mexican heritage:

I think it's just my mom being from Mexico and growing up in such a community-based culture where you don't just help your nuclear family, you help your neighbors, you help, I don't know, anybody that you make some connection with.

She goes on to explain how her mother’s the value of community has shaped her own perspective that leadership is not a selfish endeavor, but should be focused on serving others:

That taught me a lot about what it means to give without expecting anything in return. That is something that I attributed to a way you can lead. . . you're not

doing it necessarily for a personal reward, you're doing it to better the lives of other people.

Throughout middle and high school, Holly would mentor the children in these families and help them acclimate to their new schools. She started to think about how developing others and contributing to a community could be considered leadership:

I think that's what got me interested in leadership. Because, from such an early age, I was taught, and started thinking about, and I associate leadership a lot with thinking about and developing other people. Constantly having people in and out, and also understanding that the people who are coming in that you're helping, sometimes they also teach you a lot and give you things that you might have not expected. I don't know, I think it was just more so starting to think about “this world is bigger than me, and what does that look like in terms of how I can contribute to it?”

As early as middle school, Holly could already see herself as a leader and recognize her and her family's contributions to supporting others as a form of leadership. Moving forward Holly began reflecting on larger questions about how engaging in leadership could help her make an impact on the world.

Kim discusses her gender identity and how growing up with parents in non-traditional gender roles helped her have the confidence to claim the identity of “leader.”

She explains:

I came from a family where my parents, it's like reverse gender roles. My dad works from home. My dad does laundry. My dad does the garden. My dad cooks.

My dad does all that and my mom works ten to twelve hour days and works all the time and is incredibly successful in her job.

Kim's family dynamic helped her build confidence that she could do challenging things that were against traditional norms. Kim began to view this as leadership, in part because of her mother's example. She shares:

I think I got my leadership qualities from my mom. She always taught me that as a woman, I could do anything. There was never a question that I couldn't do absolutely anything. Seeing [my parents'] relationship play out, I think, put a lot on me that as a woman, I could do that and that I could be a leader in those ways.

To Kim, her mother's confidence and courage to buck societal expectations was admirable, and one of her first examples of leadership. Kim, therefore, felt comfortable and supported in pursuing whatever leadership opportunities she desired.

Teagan notes that their coming out process in graduate school as a member of the LGBTQ community created a new level of complexity to their leadership identity.

Teagan says "I think just using [queer identity] as a part of my identity, but also a part of my leadership identity and how I show up in vulnerability and all that stuff has been important." The coming out process required Teagan to be even more vulnerable than usual in leadership roles with students and colleagues in particular. While the process was not always easy, it helped Teagan practice leadership in an even more authentic way than they had in the past. Teagan notes: I don't think I was not authentic in my leadership before, but I think I am more authentic now."

Social identity in Jamie's experience had more of a negative impact. Throughout high school and college, Jamie's contributions in groups were undervalued because of

racism. Jamie describes a particular experience working on a project for a class and being ignored by the White women in her group. They assigned her only a small part of the project, and she remembers thinking “Is this it? This is really all you think I’m capable of?” Jamie also notes often feeling the need to prove her worth in student organizations and positional leadership roles. This has kept her from trusting others to do good work at times, and consequently kept her from sharing leadership responsibilities. Jamie explains the connection between these experiences and her understanding and practice of leadership:

I do think that race and identity play a role when you're engaging in leadership...

I think that as a woman of color, I will always put more pressure on myself and feel like I have to work, they say ten times as hard to get the same respect.

It took Jamie until her graduate school experience to embrace that she could lead by stepping back to enable others.

## **Mentors**

While the participants in this study have served as mentors focused on developing others through formal leadership programs, some also have had positive experiences with mentors of their own throughout their leadership journeys. Mentors helped participants view themselves as leaders, encouraged their leadership learning and development, and modeled relational leadership approaches, such as community building and developing others.

Adarsh and Holly note that student council advisors played mentor roles in their lives as early as middle school, when they first began their involvement and leadership positions in school and community organizations. Adarsh recalls that student council was

his first formal leadership experience, and his middle school student council advisor helped him begin thinking about his passions and purpose in leadership. Her influence also helped him become a better mentor for others as he began to create and facilitate leadership programs in high school. Adarsh explains:

She was the one who first asked me what I cared about. I think that's a really interesting thing about student council if done right, is that a lot of students aren't ever asked what they care about. To be asked as a 10-year-old, it was like way, way transformational. It has also given me a really cool framework as to how I want to be a mentor to others.

Holly also considered her middle school student council adviser a mentor and one of the first people to encourage her to develop her leadership potential. She notes that although her adviser was a formal authority figure, she respected Holly's opinions and perspectives. She also created a welcoming environment for Holly to discuss concerns and seek advice. Holly explains:

I was comfortable with her in more of a friend way. If I had concerns, or I had something that I didn't necessarily agree with, or if I screwed up and needed to try to figure out how to fix that, I felt comfortable having those conversations with her.

Having an adult mentor who treated her with respect helped Holly navigate authority and power in leadership situations moving forward.

Jamie and Teagan describe important mentoring relationships from their college experiences. Jamie's adviser for her role as an orientation coordinator helped her understand the importance of a collaborative leadership process. At first Jamie was

reluctant to let her peers contribute to orientation projects and initiatives, but her adviser helped her understand that empowering others was part of a leader's job.

She is one of the people who told me how to breathe and trust and let go, what it means to enable others to act and what it means to know that you don't have to plan or do everything and that there are other people here that want to be a part of it too.

Her mentor's reinforcement of relational leadership practices prompted Jamie to develop more trusting relationships with other students in the orientation office. She began to recognize that her peers were just as passionate and capable as she was, and she began to encourage and value her peers' contributions. Teagan views their peer facilitator cohort adviser as a catalyst for their interest in community-focused leadership and social change. Teagan explains that their adviser introduced them to the Social Change Model of Leadership (HERI, 1996) and the idea that it was important to consider leadership from individual, group, and community perspectives. Teagan notes:

[The Social Change Model] has become super relevant to the way I view leadership, I think. Learning about the individual, and learning about how [leadership] works in a group, and then bringing that to a larger cluster – it just honed more of my pedagogical understanding.

In addition to helping Teagan understand connections between leadership and social change theoretically, their adviser also demonstrated a passion for helping the community through acts of collaborative leadership. Teagan recalls that they first met their adviser while attempting to raise money for natural disaster relief that affected Teagan's hometown. Teagan was a freshman and did not have many campus connections. Teagan

explains how their adviser reached out to connect and combine efforts. The fundraising was successful, and the experience motivated Teagan to continue working with their adviser as a peer facilitator for programs about relational leadership and social change. In describing the most important leadership lessons from their adviser, Teagan says “generosity, caring, and community pieces; definitely the community piece of valuing and honoring community.” Thus, community and helping others became a more central focus of Teagan’s own leadership understanding and practice moving forward.

### **Summary of Findings**

This chapter explores a variety of themes and patterns across seven participant cases regarding leadership identity development toward later stages of the LID Model (Komives et. al, 2005, 2006). Exploring participants’ current understandings and practices of leadership reveals that participants largely believe that leadership requires developing and maintaining relationships and is practiced through developing others. The data further reveal that across participants, three formal educational experiences were transformative in the leadership identity development process: leadership learning immersion programs, peer facilitation experiences, and academic courses.

Across these experiences, three major factors and forces were present that promoted advanced leadership identity development in participants. (1) Experiential learning activities modeled relational leadership concepts such as teamwork, communication, and inclusion for participants and provided them with the chance to practice those concepts in structured experiences and simulations with their peers. It also helped participants connect the value of community with leadership, particularly through opportunities for authentic expression and self-disclosure. (2) The experiences offered

participants the chance to learn about relational leadership theories, models and approaches. This equipped them with knowledge and language to better analyze their own views and practices of leadership, and also helped them be more competent in their work developing leadership in others. (3) The experiences offered participants the chance to remain engaged over time through involvement opportunities that gradually became more developmentally complex, including opportunities to facilitate leadership learning for others and design leadership curriculum.

Finally, the impact of contextual factors outside of structured educational experiences on leadership identity development was also explored. Patterns indicate that supportive families can positively contribute to participants' leadership identity development and pursuit of leadership learning. Social identity had varying effects on participants' leadership understanding and practice; the celebration and positive reinforcement of a social identity can promote leadership identity development, whereas stereotyping and implicit bias related to a social identity can have limiting effects on leadership identity development. Mentors helped participants realize their leadership potential, encouraged their leadership learning and development, and modeled relational leadership approaches for participants.



## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

### Overview of the Study

*Helping students develop the integrity and strength of character that prepare them for leadership may be one of the most challenging and important goals of higher education*  
(King, 1997 p. 87)

The quote above summarizes a widely-supported view of the purpose of higher education, which is still relevant today. Mission statements across institutions tout messages of their goal to develop the future leaders of society (Astin & Astin, 2000; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999). Literature and best practice calls for student leadership outcomes to meet the challenging demands of an increasingly interconnected world, highlighting the need for relational, process-oriented, and socially responsible paradigms (Dugan et al., 2013; Dugan & Komives, 2010; HERI, 1996; Komives et al., 2011). Yet, the limited extant research on students' understandings of leadership show that most college students maintain approaches that are leader-centric and hierarchical, even if they can describe leadership in more relational and process-oriented ways (Haber, 2012; Komives et al., 2005, 2006, 2009). Further, while educators claim to center relational leadership approaches in leadership education and development efforts, programs continue focus on leader-centric skills and characteristics (Day & Harrison, 2007; Owen, 2012a). This suggests a disconnect between espoused and enacted leadership approaches on college campuses.

Developing leaders who include diverse perspectives, value collaboration, and seek opportunities to develop others is crucial to creating lasting change in organizations and communities. But, how do we help students understand and practice leadership beyond power, position, and authority in a Western culture that perpetuates this paradigm

almost exclusively? Research on leadership identity development connects what we know about identity development processes and leadership approaches to help educators answer these questions.

Erikson (1994) describes the process of identity development as a series of stages, where individuals confront challenges that force them to renegotiate their self-concept, resulting in increased developmental complexity and an interdependent view of self with others. The identity development process can be connected with research on leadership development to better understand how people's perspectives and practices of leadership change over time, and what prompts them to develop these new views and approaches. As an individual develops cognitive and psychosocial maturity, they shed thoughts of leadership as individual position and begin to understand leadership as a relational, collaborative, interdependent process. This process is appropriately referred to as leadership identity development (Komives et al, 2005, 2006).

The Leadership Identity Development (LID) Model (Komives et al., 2005, 2006) describes how an individual's perception of self as a leader, and their view of self in relation to others in leadership, change over time. LID was created to help educators apply identity development theory to create appropriate interventions that help students develop more interdependent views and practices of leadership. The six stages of the model include:

1. Awareness: A dependent view of leadership. The individual believes that leaders exist, but view others as leaders. Leadership is seen in authority figures, parents, or public figures. Leadership may not be defined using specific terms, but the individual recognizes something special and different

about those with power and authority, and notices those individuals making an impact.

2. Exploration/Engagement: A dependent view of leadership characterized by the interest and involvement in group experiences. The individual explores various group and team experiences, develops relationships with peers, and works toward goals with others but does not view their engagement as leadership. Leadership is still something that other people do.
3. Leader Identified: A dependent moving toward independent view of leadership. The individual views leadership as actions of someone with a title or position. Formal roles determine who leads and who follows. The individual could view themselves as a leader or may only be able to see others as the leader until it is suggested by another that they, too, can be the leader. Leadership is viewed as a dichotomy; if one is not “the leader,” then they are a follower.
4. Leadership Differentiated: An interdependent view of leadership. The individual views leadership not just as a person or position, but also as a shared group process. The leader-follower mindset fades; everyone can contribute to leadership at the same time with or without a formal role. Leadership actions are more facilitative rather than directive, and the individual pays attention to group dynamics.
5. Generativity: An interdependent view of leadership. The individual shows leadership through developing others and working to sustain their groups beyond their time as members. Leadership actions are focused on enabling

and empowering others. Interests developed in earlier stages become commitments to more transcendent purposes.

6. Integration/Synthesis: An interdependent view of leadership. The individual has integrated the identity of “leader” as a part of their self-concept and has the self-efficacy to engage in leadership across contexts and in new situations. The individual continues to seek out leadership learning opportunities and views learning about and developing leadership as a life-long commitment (Komives et al., 2005, 2006, 2009).

Research suggests that most traditional age students enter college at stage three “leader identified”, and that the college experience provides ample opportunities to help students move from toward stage four “leadership differentiated” (Komives et al., 2005, 2006; Wagner, 2011). Beyond the transition between stages three and four, however, we know much less about development through the LID Model. Researchers note a lack of examples of individuals who have progressed to LID stages five and six and difficulty clearly distinguishing the last three stages (Komives et al., 2005, 2006; Gonda, 2007; Wagner 2011).

A better understanding of individuals exhibiting development consistent with later stages of the LID Model and the learning and development experiences that have been influential in those individuals’ development are critical. This research can enable us to create educational experiences that help students understand and practice leadership in more complex and interdependent ways both within and beyond the college experience. This study was developed to contribute to our understanding of advanced leadership identity development and help educators address the issues described above

through both scholarship and practice. Specifically, this study further explores the experiences of individuals at the later stages of the LID Model; stage five “generativity” and stage six “integration synthesis.” Three questions guided this study:

1. How do individuals at advanced stages of leadership identity development describe, understand, and engage in leadership?
2. What specific learning and development experiences do individuals believe to be meaningful and influential in their development of advanced leadership identity?
3. How and why do those learning and development experiences promote transition through leadership identity development toward more complex stages?

I used qualitative, comparative case study methods to explore these questions and the leadership identity development processes of seven individuals who exhibited leadership understanding and practice consistent with the later stages of the LID Model. Participants included one college student and six recent graduates up to three years post-college who were recommended by faculty and staff members familiar with the leadership identity development research. Two semi-structured interviews were held with each participant, focusing on their present understanding and practice of leadership and the learning and development experiences both within and outside of the educational environment that have been influential in their leadership journeys over time. Cross-case analysis was used to reveal themes across cases regarding: participants’ current perspectives and approaches to leadership; the educational experiences that influenced their leadership identity

development; the factors and forces within those experiences; and contextual factors influencing development.

In this chapter, I share the key findings from this study. First, I discuss how the study findings address the research questions and how findings connect to the extant research on leadership identity development. I also offer insight into how this research builds upon what has already been explored about the development of leadership identity at later stages of the LID Model. I then discuss the unique contributions that this study adds to the body of literature on leadership identity development. Finally, I discuss how this study can be used by leadership educators and scholars to inform research and practice.

## **Discussion of Findings**

### **The Process of Leadership Identity Development**

This study reveals patterns that are consistent with, expand upon, and differ from extant research on the LID Model stages and the process of leadership identity development. First, participants discuss leadership as a relational process throughout their narratives. They believe that leadership does not happen solely through the actions of one person; it requires the combined efforts of many. This is an interdependent view of leadership consistent with the leadership perceptions of individuals in stages four through six of the LID Model (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Two foundational ideas ground participants' understanding and practice of leadership as a relational process: leadership involves building and maintaining relationships and an emphasis on developing leadership capacity in others. These ideas are consistent with LID Model stages four and five.

Stage four “leadership differentiated” is the first stage in which individuals acknowledge and practice leadership as a process rather than a position and approach leadership in more collaborative ways (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Building relationships with others was seen as increasing the level of collaboration and trust between group members. Participants also discuss the importance of getting to know group members personally, listening, and valuing diverse perspectives. In their view, when people do not feel connected to one another, they will not contribute to the leadership process. Without the contributions of many, goals cannot be met and change cannot happen.

In stage five “generativity,” individuals maintain the foundational understanding of leadership as a relational process, but shift their focus toward helping develop leadership capacity in others. Participants in this study note that beyond building trust and collaboration with others, helping others discover and develop their leadership potential is important, and is a primary way in which they engage in leadership. Extant research suggests that interest and engagement in developing leadership in others is a sign of generative thinking, indicating a commitment to sustaining groups and organizations by helping to develop younger or newer group members (Komives et al., 2005, 2006; Ghislieri & Gatti, 2012). Patterns in their leadership experiences throughout high school and college demonstrate a shift in engagement, from participating to facilitating programs for their peers and designing leadership program curricula. Today, participants find themselves engaging both in professional and volunteer leadership experiences, with a primary focus on identifying and understanding the developmental needs of others and helping them grow as leaders.

Participant narratives also align with LID Model stage six “integration/synthesis.” According to the original leadership identity development research, stages one through five are marked by increasingly broadened definitions and practices of leadership, while stage six is marked by self-efficacy for leadership across contexts, interest in continual leadership learning, and an established interdependent view of self with others in a leadership process (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). From this description, stage six can be interpreted as more of an integration point of leadership views and practices in previous stages, rather than a single, distinct stage through which individuals develop. While the model still indicates stage six as a full stage following directly after stage five, participant experiences in this study show leadership engagement consistent with stage six as they were developing through stages four and five. This suggests that stage six manifests differently than the other stages, and can be understood more as a pattern throughout the later stages of participants’ leadership identity development than only appearing after stage five.

For example, self-efficacy for leadership across contexts and continued interest in leadership learning were present throughout the leadership journeys of five of the seven participants. These participants attended statewide and regional leadership learning programs in middle school and high school. The programs emphasized relational and collaborative approaches to leadership through experiential learning, which gave participants the chance to both learn and practice leadership consistent with these approaches. Participants applied what they learned back home, building better relationships with those in their student groups and creating more inclusive membership policies. With confidence in their ability to engage in relational leadership, these same



participants later facilitated leadership programs for their peers in high school and college. Developing leadership in others became the focus of their leadership engagement throughout their various college involvement experiences and expanded into their work after college. At the same time, some sought opportunities to learn how to design leadership learning experiences, direct full programs, and mentor groups of facilitators. After college, some expanded the boundaries of their leadership engagement to global contexts, developing leadership programs and experiences for communities in developing nations.

While the progression through stages four (leadership as a relational process) and five (developing others) are clear in these narratives, there is also a pattern of continued interest in learning about leadership, finding new ways to apply leadership knowledge, and finding new environments in which to practice lessons learned. Participants' narratives suggest that their self-efficacy for leadership and commitment to lifelong leadership learning grew throughout their development beginning around stage four, rather than happening only after stage five. In other words, participants in this study experienced all three of the later stages of the model, but experienced stages four and five distinctly, and stage six more integratively and organically.

Further, the presence of all three of the later stages of the LID Model within the pool of participants is a departure from the extant research. Komives et al. (2005, 2006) suggest in their original LID Model study that further research should be conducted using post-college participants in order to fully understand the later stages of the model. Gonda (2007) applied the LID Model in a study of early to middle career adults, and found it difficult to determine development beyond stage four, noting a lack of participant

examples of leadership consistent with the later stages. Wagner (2011) conducted a validation study of the LID Model with both college and post-college participants, and had difficulty delineating between the last three stages of the model. Wagner's participants generally displayed awareness and understanding of the importance of group leadership, but there were not enough unique factors to validate movement beyond this general process-oriented perspective. The participants in this study were in college and up to three years out of college, and the findings indicate clear presence all three of the later stages. This suggests that beyond age and educational progression, participant experiences and other contextual factors may have more significant impact in promoting transition through stages of the LID Model.

### **Experiences that Promote Leadership Identity Development**

Three types of leadership learning experiences show up as themes across the narratives in this study: leadership learning immersion programs, peer facilitation experiences, and academic courses. While participants engaged in a variety of student organizations and other team and group experiences throughout their years in middle school, high school, and college, these three key experiences were most influential in helping them identify as leaders, broaden their view of leadership, discover new ways to engage in leadership, and increase their leadership self-efficacy.

**Leadership learning immersion programs.** Experiential learning, learning about relational leadership, and early exposure to interdependent leadership approaches were the three broad factors in leadership learning immersion experiences that were most influential on participants' leadership identity development. Sponsored through youth

leadership development organizations, programs brought together students from across states and regions to engage in day-long workshops and week-long camps focused on teaching and developing relational leadership. Through experiential learning, participants worked with peers in small groups to solve problems and achieve goals through team activities and simulations designed to mimic real-life leadership challenges and emphasize the value of collaboration. With opportunities to reflect on and discuss their group experiences and the connections to their own leadership understanding and practice, participants gained new insight that helped them engage in more inclusive and collaborative leadership back home in their schools.

Immersion-style pedagogy for leadership learning is not widely discussed in the literature. The limited research in this area indicates participants in these activities have outcomes consistent with later stages of the LID Model, including: viewing leadership as a reciprocal process between people, motivation to engage in leadership for community gain, and increased leadership self-efficacy (Rosch, Stephens, & Collins, 2016). Further, the benefits of experiential and immersive learning in general are well documented in the literature. Scholars suggest that people learn best through experience, and that the process of engaging in an activity and reflecting on that process are key for individuals to internalize knowledge and make it a part of their practice moving forward (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Immersing students in a new environment requires them to engage in critical thinking to make sense of a new place, establish relationships with new people, and use resources and support from each other to overcome obstacles (Eyler & Giles, 1999). The outcomes from experiential learning and immersion education align with what Komives et al. (2005) refer to as “meaningful involvement,” in the

original LID Model study. The scholars found that group experiences which provided opportunities for individuals to collaborate with diverse others, develop and practice new skills, reflect on their leadership approaches, and build community with peers were particularly influential in helping individuals develop through the LID Model.

While immersion program pedagogy and the resulting student outcomes are key to leadership identity development, the timing of engagement in immersion experiences is also important. Immersion experiences not only helped participants embrace relational and collaborative approaches to leadership, they also exposed them to these ideas earlier than participants in previous studies. Komives et al. (2005, 2006) indicate that the college experience is when most students are developmentally ready to begin viewing leadership not as a single person, but as a process between people in relationship. Accordingly, they advise educators to design leadership learning programs focused on helping students make this transition. Most participants in this study were engaging in leadership learning focused on helping them make the transition to more relational leadership approaches as early as middle school. For example, Adarsh refers to the environment of his immersion program as a “community of leaders,” a description that is inherently interdependent. He remembers feeling supported in his leadership journey more in his immersion experiences than any other involvement experience at the time, and he credits this to the fact that he was exploring his own leadership potential, as others were also exploring theirs, while they were all engaging in leadership together through immersion program activities. This illustrates the unique environment of participants’ immersion programs, one in which participants grew more confident in their own identity as leaders (LID stage three) while learning about and practicing leadership as a collaborative process with peers

who they also valued and respected as leaders (LID stage four). Being able to simultaneously view oneself as a leader and others as leaders is an interdependent view of leadership consistent with later stages of the LID Model, beginning with stage four (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). This suggests that participants were developing leadership identities consistent with stage three and four simultaneously, an experience not discussed in previous studies. Further, exposure to interdependent approaches to leadership prior to college suggests that participants were developmentally ready for developing others (LID stage five) through the high school and college peer facilitation experiences described in the next section.

**Peer facilitation experiences.** Peer facilitation experiences provided participants increasingly complex ways to engage in leadership throughout high school and college. The five participants who had engaged in leadership learning programs in middle school and high school transitioned into facilitating small groups for the same immersion programs in high school and college. Six participants in this study became members of peer facilitator cohorts through their campus leadership offices, and took on responsibility for facilitating and later designing leadership education and development programs.

Facilitation experiences helped participants understand how to practice leadership through developing leadership capacity in others. Their narratives also indicate that they found more transcendent motivation for engaging in leadership through developing others; facilitating leadership programs was a way to give back to groups and causes they care about. Facilitation experiences cultivated an interest in expanding their leadership practice, and over time developed their passion for enabling and empowering others in

leadership. Engaging in leadership through developing others and being motivated by personal passion to engage in leadership are two key markers LID stage five “generativity” (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Participants continued to seek out opportunities to engage in leadership as facilitators, curriculum designers, and even leadership program directors in various contexts throughout their college experiences and in their personal and professional lives after graduation. This interest and confidence in engaging in leadership in new environments is a marker of LID stage six “integration/synthesis” (Komives et al.).

Facilitating leadership learning experiences for peers is not explicitly discussed in the literature on leadership identity development, although scholars do note that evolving engagement in groups promotes transition through the LID Model. As individuals spent more time engaging in particular groups or experiences, the nature of their engagement in groups changed, and they began to care for the overall well-being and sustainability of that experience by mentoring younger peers (Komives et al., 2005; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005). Research suggests that being the recipient of peer mentoring or education assists with the development of leadership skills and capacities, but the literature does not address the influence or impact on the individual doing the mentoring or educating (Campbell et al. 2012; Dugan & Komives, 2010; Komives et al., 2005). Thus, the findings from this study suggest a connection between facilitating leadership learning and the development of advanced leadership identity, which is worthy of further exploration.

Another theme found in this study not addressed in the extant literature is the value of learning how to effectively develop leadership capacity in others. Participants’ interest in developing their peers was connected to their growing commitment to groups

they were working with over time; however, participants did not just begin to develop others informally, as suggested in previous studies (see Komives et al., 2005; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005). Rather, their interest was cultivated through developmentally sequenced curricula. In both their immersion experiences and peer facilitator cohorts, participants engaged in further learning about leadership and learning theory, group dynamics, and facilitation skills in order to better understand and serve the developmental needs of their peers. The structure of these programs also provided those who were ready with opportunities to mentor younger facilitators one-on-one and design leadership curriculum of their own. Developmental sequencing of leadership program curricula is discussed in the literature as a high impact practice (Dugan, Bohle, Woelker, & Cooney, 2014; Dugan et al., 2013). Offering increasingly complex and challenging educational interventions maximizes learning and ensures that individuals have meaningful ways to engage in leadership, no matter their stage of development (Dugan et al., 2013; Dugan et al., 2014). Given that participants in this study seem to exhibit LID stage five more prominently than those in previous studies (see Gonda 2007; Wagner, 2011), purposefully designed opportunities for students to facilitate and design leadership learning programs, learn how to develop leadership in others, and mentor their peers may be particularly effective for advancing to later stages of the LID Model.

**Academic courses.** Participants in this study also discuss the influence of undergraduate academic courses in expanding their understanding of leadership. Participants learned about leadership theory in their courses through discussion, reflective writing, and experiential learning, and were encouraged to explore connections between theory and their co-curricular leadership experiences. Class-based opportunities to learn

about leadership theories, models, and approaches helped participants develop the leadership language to identify various phenomena in their leadership experiences and discuss it with others. This helped them examine their own leadership practices, reconsider assumptions, and navigate complexity and conflict. Previous work suggests learning about leadership through co-curricular programs and classes provides students with the language and frameworks necessary for discussing and assessing their leadership behavior in group situations. This helped individuals be more reflective about their leadership engagement overall (Komives et al., 2005; Onorato & Musoba, 2015). Studies on developing leadership capacity in college students note the impact of both curricular and co-curricular leadership learning for the same reasons (Dugan & Komives, 2010). Thus, the impact of academic courses on leadership identity development in this study align with the extant literature about the impact of leadership learning.

**The value of leadership learning.** Beyond just academic courses, the findings from this study indicate that learning about leadership in both curricular and co-curricular experiences is important for leadership identity development. Learning about leadership was a central theme in this study, serving a major pedagogical component for the educational experiences that prompted participants' transitions through the LID Model. Leadership learning is noted in the original LID Model study as one of many catalysts for leadership identity development, but it was not discussed as a unique influence separate from the broader category of reflective learning. Further, participants in the original study largely discussed lessons and insights from a variety of student organization and involvement experiences, not necessarily those designed with a specific focus on leadership learning or leadership development (Komives et al., 2005). Comparatively,



participants in this study had multiple, transformative experiences with leadership learning before and during college. Leadership learning was a central outcome of participants' immersion programs, peer facilitator cohorts, and academic courses. These experiences were designed to teach leadership theory, develop skills and practices consistent with relational approaches to leadership, and build self-efficacy for engaging in leadership. This suggests a stronger connection between leadership learning and advanced leadership identity development than noted in previous research.

**Timing of leadership learning experiences.** The findings of this study also suggest that the points at which participants engage in certain leadership learning experiences, and a pattern of consistent and increasingly complex involvement in leadership learning over time, make a difference in the leadership identity development process. Five of the participants in this study show similar patterns in their leadership learning experiences. Adarsh, Dana, Holly, Kim, and Teagan, who were noted earlier as having exhibited signs of LID Model stage six more frequently, also engaged in leadership learning focused on relational approaches to leadership in middle school and through high school. These experiences helped them claim a leader identity (LID stage three) within the context of an interdependent community of leaders, while learning about and practicing leadership consistent with relational approaches (LID stage four). Developing a passion for these programs and seeking the opportunity to provide similar experiences for others, those same five participants became facilitators for their immersion programs in high school, learning how to engage in leadership by developing others (LID stage five). Thus, before these five participants went to college, they had

already been experiencing and engaging in interdependent forms of leadership consistent with the later stages of the LID Model.

Once in college, these same five participants continued to develop within the later stages. They all continued to engage in leadership as peer facilitators. They pursued further leadership education through their peer cohort programs and academic courses. Within and beyond college, these participants have continued to engage in leadership through developing others in new contexts, seeking out opportunities to design and facilitate leadership programs in their professional communities and through global development initiatives. In summary, the five participants all had similar leadership learning experiences at similar times in their lives. They were exposed to and developed an understanding and practice of leadership consistent with stages four and five of the LID Model by the time they had left high school. They demonstrated extensive leadership understanding and practice consistent with stages five and six of the LID Model as college students and graduates.

The other two participants in this study (Jamie and Zane) also show signs of the later stages of leadership identity development, though not to the same extent nor as clearly as the other five participants. They also did not seem to progress through the various stages of the model as early. These differences may be rooted in the fact that Jamie and Zane did not demonstrate the same patterns of leadership learning engagement early in their educational pathways. Their experiences with leadership learning were also more sporadic, as neither Jamie nor Zane had regular, consistent involvement with leadership learning from adolescence through college like the other five participants. For example, while Jamie and Zane both engaged in various group experiences and student

organizations in middle school and high school, neither engaged in leadership learning of any kind prior to college. Jamie and Zane's narratives indicate that they were not introduced to relational leadership approaches until their college leadership learning experiences. In addition, neither had structured opportunities to develop leadership in others or facilitate leadership learning for their peers prior college, with Jamie's first experience happening in graduate school.

The timing of when the Adarsh, Dana, Holly, Kim, and Zane exhibit the various LID Model stages is also early compared to findings from previous studies. Komives et al. (2005, 2006) note that how, when, and why individuals develop through the stages of the LID Model can vary. However, they do discuss a general pattern of developmental timing, noting that stages one and two typically happen in adolescence (middle school and high school years), with individuals entering college at stage three. They discuss the "key transition" between stages three and four in more detail, noting that the college experience often provides the meaningful group experiences that help individuals move beyond perceptions of leadership as a single person and accept more interdependent views of leadership as a process between people. They further note that individuals may or may not reach stages five and six; only some of the participants in their original study did. Participants in Wagner's (2011) study with college students and career adults and Gonda's (2007) study with career adults did not show signs of stages five and six distinctly from stage four. Zane and Jamie show development generally consistent with the original LID Model study (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Though, the other five participants in this study show earlier developmental patterns than the extant research describes.

The common developmental pattern for the five participants compared to those of the other two and the general patterns from the extant research suggest that learning about relational leadership in adolescence is influential in the leadership identity development process. This allows participants more time within educational environments to engage in further leadership learning experiences that prompt development toward later stages of the LID Model. Further, single experiences with leadership learning may not be as influential as consistent involvement in a succession of leadership learning activities over time. Thus, developmentally sequencing leadership learning experiences is also a key factor. Providing leadership learning experiences that appropriately challenge individuals toward the next LID Model stage is important throughout the developmental process.

### **Contextual Influences on Leadership Identity Development**

Participants in this study discuss the influence of three contextual factors that have influenced their leadership understanding and practice over time: family influence, social identity, and relationships with mentors. These three factors were not necessarily a part of any one educational experience, but have been present enough in participants' lives to make an impact on their leadership identity development.

Findings suggest that supportive families can positively contribute to participants' leadership identity development and pursuit of leadership learning. Adarsh's parents instilled in him the value of being authentic in his leadership practice. Dana comes from a family of engaged community members who were fully supportive in her pursuit of leadership learning experiences both emotionally and financially. Zane's family voiced their belief in his leadership capability, but did not support his pursuit of leadership experiences. This disconnect motivated Zane to continue learning about leadership and

help others develop their leadership capacity. Previous research does note the role of family in leadership identity development process, but offer a distinct perspective. Onorato and Musoba (2015) discuss the importance of family encouragement for engaging in leadership specifically for Latina-identified women. Komives et al. (2005) discuss family as sounding boards for reflection before individuals develop peer and adult relationships.

The findings of this study also suggest that the development of social identity can intersect with leadership identity development. Komives et al. (2005, 2009) indicate that it is important to consider how the salience of multiple identities, including leadership identity, shift in relative salience depending on contexts and relationships. This is consistent with research on the intersection of identities, which notes that no single identity can be fully understood without considering the influence of other identities and the contextual factors, such as social norms and stereotypes, that inform how individuals interpret and display their identities (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000). In this study, participants' processes of social identity development appeared to either encourage or hinder their pursuit and practice of leadership. This is supported by extant research indicating that social identity influences individuals' perceptions of their capacity for leadership, and thus affects their self-efficacy to engage in leadership (Dugan, Kodama, & Gebhardt, 2012; Kodama & Dugan, 2013). In this study, the influence of social identity development on the leadership identity development process varies between participants. Thus, the discussion here does not mean to imply that all those with a certain social identity have the same experience with leadership identity development as study participants with that same social identity. Rather, participant

experiences suggest that two developmental processes (social identity and leadership identity) have the potential to influence one another in various ways.

For example, Onorato and Musoba (2015) and Bordas (2007) note connections between social identity and the role family members play in emphasizing cultural norms around leadership. This relates to both Holly and Kim's experiences. Holly, who identifies as Latina, indicates that her mother's work to support their local immigrant community helped her value collaborative and service-directed approaches to leadership from an early age. Previous research notes that individuals from collectivist cultures tend to move through LID Stage three "leader identified" more quickly, preferring the more relational and collaborative approaches characteristic of LID stage four "leadership differentiated" (Komives et al., 2005). Kim's family's feminist values helped her feel confident in her leadership potential and encouraged her to challenge norms that often keep women from pursuing leadership opportunities. This connects to research on leadership identity development indicating that a desire to challenge gender stereotypes served as motivation for some participants to engage in leadership (Komives et al., 2009).

Teagan learned the importance of vulnerability in their coming-out process, and notes that learning was also helpful in their leadership experiences, helping them develop closer and more authentic relationships with others. In a study applying the LID Model to LGBT-identified college students, Renn and Bilodeau (2005) note that the coming out process for LGBT-identified encouraged participants to seek out leadership and involvement opportunities connected to their LGBT identity. However, they do not discuss the application of lessons from the coming out process to leadership practice in general. Teagan's ability to apply lessons from the coming out process across leadership

contexts suggests that there is more to explore regarding how the social identity development process influences leadership beyond the context of identity-related involvement and advocacy.

Jamie, who identifies as black, notes being ignored and under-valued in groups and organizations growing up. This made it hard for her to trust her peers and kept her from fully embracing inclusive and shared approaches to leadership until later in life. This is different from previous research that notes individuals with marginalized identities tend to share leadership so others do not feel excluded (Komives et al., 2005). More consistent with Jamie's experience is research noting that black students often feel the pressure to prove themselves capable and worthy in educational environments as a way to combat stereotypes (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002). While this research has not been explored with the development of leadership identity, the "proving process" relates to Jamie's experience in this study. Feeling the need to constantly prove her own ability may help explain her hesitancy to empower and engage others in leadership.

Participant experiences also indicate the impact of mentors in promoting leadership identity development. Mentors engaged with participants as respected equals, lessening their reliance on adult authority and helping them have confidence in their own leadership potential, an important step toward LID stage three. Mentors also modeled and emphasized the relational leadership approaches that are foundational for leadership identities consistent with later stages of the LID Model. Further, mentors encouraged participants' continual engagement in leadership learning experiences, which is associated with LID stage six (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Extant literature supports the

role of adult mentors discussed in this study, noting that adult mentors often serve as important role models, coaches, and meaning-makers in the leadership identity development process and in developing capacity for engaging in relational leadership (Campbell, Smith, Dugan, & Komives, 2012; Dugan & Komives, 2010; Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Further, mentor influence may also have contributed to participants' early exposure to ideas associated with the various LID Model stages, as some participants note developing the mentoring relationships described here as early as middle school.

### **Implications for Practice and Research**

#### **Centering Leadership Learning and Relational Leadership in Educational Experiences**

While previous research notes leadership learning as one of many influences on leadership identity development (Komives et al 2005, 2006), leadership learning was a major force in the leadership identity development journeys of participants in this study. It is the common thread within and across participants' narratives about the educational experiences that were most influential in their leadership identity development process. Learning about leadership theory and practicing leadership consistent with relational approaches helped participants develop an understanding of leadership as an interdependent process and deepened their practice of leadership to advance to later stages of the LID Model. Other common educational experiences such as student organization involvement, team sports, and similar group-based activities may offer opportunities to practice skills associated with relational leadership (e.g. teamwork, conflict management, communication). However, they do not necessarily teach leadership theory related to those practices or help participants reflect on their



experiences to make explicit connections to leadership. The reflection component of the learning process is key, as it helps individuals identify lessons from their experiences, re-examine their existing frameworks and assumptions, and incorporate new ideas into the self-concept leading to more complex identity (Erikson, 1994; Kolb, 1984, 2005).

Applying the reflection process to leadership identity development specifically, leadership learning helps individuals develop language to identify and discuss various phenomena in their experiences, which assists with the critical reflection process necessary for leadership identity development (Komives et al. 2005).

Further, leadership learning is also not necessarily included in educational experiences labeled as “leadership programs.” Many group and team experiences use this label because they offer students the opportunity to have leadership positions, involve a certain level of task or program management responsibility, or provide opportunities for supervising others. This inadvertently associates the term “leadership” with positional and hierarchical conceptions, rather than emphasizing that leadership can happen outside of formal roles and that anyone in a group can engage in the leadership process. Even programs that do engage students in leadership learning are often lacking in this regard. Research indicates that leadership educators in higher education generally support using relational leadership approaches with college students, but that in reality programs neglect to incorporate leadership theory at all, and often focus on personality assessments and other heuristic tools that reinforce skill and trait-based approaches to leadership (Owen, 2012a).

These findings have important implications for leadership educators; those tasked with designing and implementing programs with the expressed purpose of developing

leadership in students. First, leadership educators should seek out resources about offering insights into how to use leadership theory with students. Research on college student leadership conducted over the past 30 years has yielded a variety of types of literature, written specifically for college students, about relational approaches to leadership. Books and online resources are also available to help leadership educators design and implement programs using leadership theory and models. Understanding the literature, resources, and best practices for leadership learning can then help leadership educators review and assess their existing leadership programs. Educators should consider whether or not leadership learning is a part of existing curricula, and what assumptions about leadership various elements of the program support or reinforce. Appropriate adjustments should be made to infuse relational leadership ideas, concepts, and approaches into these programs. For example, leadership conferences could include sessions on leadership models and engage students in experiential activities designed to emphasize practices associated with those models. Workshops could include introductory reading material or short presentations and discussion about relational leadership to provide a framework for the rest of the workshop activities. Speaker series could include speakers who share stories about relational leadership approaches in practice. Opportunities to reflect on connections between theory and practice should also be included in programs. For example, facilitated discussions following team activities provide an opportunity to introduce a theory or model with components that connect to what students experienced in the activity. Reflection questions to help students connect their group experiences and the theories or models to everyday leadership practice are also useful. Facilitator guides and related online blogs associated with the literature offer

questions and activities for reflection that can be infused into any activity, program, or course. Finally, review, assessment, and adjustment of current leadership programs could also reveal a need for new programs, which should be developed to supplement where adjustments cannot be made to existing programs.

Research indicates that involvement in group and team experiences across institutional functions has the potential to impact the development of students' leadership capacity (Dugan & Komives, 2010). Thus, a wide variety of student programs, not just those labeled as "leadership programs," could also incorporate connections to relevant leadership theories and models. Educators across functions and disciplines should provide time and space in programs and organizations for students to learn about leadership theories and reflect on connections between their involvement experiences and leadership. The literature and resources discussed above are appropriate tools that would allow educators not familiar with leadership theory and pedagogy to learn more. Creating partnerships with leadership offices or leadership studies programs are also key. Faculty and staff in these areas can serve as consultants, designers, and facilitators to assist with incorporating leadership learning into any program, organization, or curriculum. For example, resident advisor and orientation leader trainings could include short readings, presentations, or activities to introduce leadership theory and relational leadership approaches. Student government advisors can use theories and models to frame conversations in meetings. Athletic coaches can include relational leadership concepts in their pre-season team-building activities and conversations. If formal activities and programs are not possible, then educators can introduce leadership theory and emphasize relational leadership through one-on-one interactions with students. For example, they

can share leadership literature that introduces relational approaches with their student and ask how it relates to their team or organization. Educators can facilitate explicit conversations about how to engage in leadership in groups and activities without a formal role. They can also help students identify their unique talents, skills, and knowledge that can contribute to leadership in the program or organization. In these examples, educators do not leave the leadership learning to chance; they help ensure that students are developing more complex understandings and practices of leadership both within and outside of formal leadership programs.

### **Intentionally Cultivating Interest in Developing Leadership in Others**

Findings from this study and previous research indicate that facilitating leadership learning and helping others develop leadership are meaningful and important ways for students to engage in leadership (Komives et al. 2005, 2006). Yet in practice these more supportive and behind-the-scenes efforts are not often acknowledged or fully cultivated. Common practice on college campuses is to consider the attainment of the highest position in their student organization or captain of their team as the peak of a student's leadership experience. It is also common for the students who do the most task-related work in an organization or excel at managing large projects to be labeled as "student leaders" by faculty and staff. While these are certainly notable achievements and appreciated efforts, we know from the literature that these are not the only indicators of leadership capacity, nor the only ways to engage in leadership. The leadership identity development research helps us understand that people are capable of engaging in leadership as a process in interdependent relationship with others. Further, it acknowledges that helping to empower and develop leadership in others is just as

important as running meetings, managing projects, and making speeches. By giving the leadership attention to formal roles or the leadership credit for doing the most work, we are underestimating our students' capacity for leadership. The findings in this study suggest that with intentionally designed programs and opportunities, students are capable of understanding leadership in deeper and more complex ways, engaging in more collaborative and community-focused leadership, developing a grander purpose for their leadership practice.

Facilitating leadership learning programs for peers was an important opportunity that helped participants in this study understand how to engage in leadership by developing it in others. Facilitating leadership learning programs for their peers helped participants develop an understanding and practice of leadership consistent with stage five, a stage that previous studies indicate difficulty confirming in their participants (Gonda 2007; Onorato & Musoba, 2015; Wagner, 2011). Further, findings from the original LID Model study indicate that developing others often happened more informally, where individuals take on this new responsibility on their own accord with or without guidance on how to be effective. Findings from this study indicate that participants not only expressed interest in developing leadership others, but that they 1) engaged in groups and organizations that encouraged them and offered opportunities for them to do so, and 2) they engaged in additional leadership learning about how to assess learning needs and design interventions to effectively develop others' leadership capacity.

Ultimately, intentional reinforcement of the importance of developing leadership in others, opportunities to do so, and training to be effective in the process are all key for

advanced leadership identity development. Educators should emphasize the responsibility of developing others as a leadership practice and teach best practices for how to develop leadership in others. Further, educators do not need to do all of the leadership education themselves; they should engage students who are ready for the challenge in developing and facilitating the leadership learning opportunities discussed earlier. Efforts like these can help broaden students' perspectives of leadership and make developing others a part of the culture in student programs and organizations.

### **Areas for Further Study**

**The influence of specific educational experiences on leadership identity development.** The findings from this study suggest a need for additional studies on the influence of specific educational experiences on leadership identity development. While the general body of literature on college student leadership development indicates types of educational experiences that promote leadership outcomes for specific approaches to leadership (see Dugan & Komives, 2010; Dugan et al., 2013; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999), inquiry into educational experiences that promote the development of leadership identity has not been pursued. In the few leadership identity development studies that have been conducted, focus has been on specific populations or identity groups. While contextual factors and participant identities are important to explore and consider in the leadership identity development process, findings from this study suggest that certain educational experiences are also influential on leadership identity development across diverse participants. Studying the impact of leadership learning immersion programs, peer facilitator cohort experiences, and academic courses on leadership identity development, for example, would help educators further understand

what factors and forces are present within those experiences that make them influential for participants. Thus, educators would be better informed on how to design, implement, and sequence student experiences to promote leadership identity development.

### **Intersections of social identity development and leadership identity**

**development.** Participant narratives in this study indicate that in addition to key leadership learning experiences, the contextual influence of social identity development plays a part in the leadership identity development process. While Komives et al. (2005) discuss social identity as one of many influences on transitions through the LID Model, and indicate the need for further exploration, few studies have been conducted with the intention of interpreting the LID Model through the experiences of participants with specific social identities (see Renn & Bilodeau, 2005; Onorato & Musoba, 2015).

Further, studies have yet to be conducted to explore the experiences and impact of social identity development and leadership identity development occurring in tandem. Topics to address in future studies that connect social identity and leadership identity should include: exploring the LID Model with additional identity groups; specific effects of racism, sexism and other forms of marginalization on the leadership identity development process; and the dynamic interaction of the social identity development and leadership identity development processes, or how these processes influence and affect each other. Deeper understanding of these topics would help educators understand how to tailor educational interventions to specific populations to maximize potential for both leadership identity development and social identity development, and could affect how the LID Model is conceptualized for various populations and contexts.

**Leadership identity development and adolescents.** This study also demonstrates the value of leadership learning programs for participants prior to college. Learning about and practicing relational leadership as middle school and high school students helped participants claim a leader identity and embrace leadership as an interdependent process, setting them up for advanced stages of leadership identity development. This pattern indicates that there is more to learn about leadership identity development in middle school and high school students.

Scholars note that the majority of leadership programs for adolescent youth are designed to mimic adult programs with less intense activities or in shorter time frames. They are rarely designed considering identity formation or adolescents learning needs. Further, while leadership development is a focus on college campuses, many students come to college without ever having the chance to engage in a leadership program (Van Velsor, 2011). The LID Model is designed as a lifespan model, and Komives et al. (2005, 2006) suggest that at least the first two stages are most likely to occur in adolescence, but studies on the LID Model using a sample of pre-college students have not yet been conducted.

Possible topics to explore in a study on leadership identity development in adolescence would include: the nature of leadership learning programs available to middle school and high school students; how adolescents understand and practice leadership; influential programs and experiences for leadership identity development; and contextual factors that influence leadership identity development. Further understanding of these topics would help validate or disconfirm what is currently presumed about leadership identity development in adolescents. It would also help educators design and



implement appropriate leadership learning experiences for middle school and high school students that prepare them for more advanced understanding and practice of leadership in college and beyond. It could also shed light onto ways that K-12 institutions and higher education institutions could collaborate on leadership education initiatives, for example; mentoring programs that provide college students the opportunity to facilitate developmentally appropriate leadership learning for middle school and high school students, or programs that provide a continuous learning experience from high school into college.

**Institutional factors and student leadership.** Research indicates that institutional definitions and approaches to leadership inform leadership program curriculum and influence how students understand and practice leadership (Owen, 2012a). Participants in this study represented four different institutions. Yet, while participants in this study were asked to describe how they believed their institutions framed leadership, their responses overall revealed little participant knowledge about the topic. Participants either answered the question in regards to specific programs, or indicated that they did not believe their institution had an identified approach or definition of leadership. Though, this study took a narrative approach focusing on individual's personal stories, and thus may not be the most appropriate approach for answering questions about institutional-level phenomena. Further research using other methodological approaches could explore institutional influence on leadership understanding and practice, including factors such as institutional type, institutional priorities, and decentralization of leadership programs across the institution (Owen, 2012a).

**Conceptualization of specific LID Model stages.** As noted earlier in this discussion, stage six “integration/synthesis” does not present as a distinct stage immediately following stage five for participants in this study. Participants appear to develop stage six elements such as a commitment to continued leadership learning and self-efficacy to engage in leadership across contexts beginning as early as stage four. In addition, the original description of stage six by Komives et al (2005, 2006) indicates stage six is marked by the integration of a leadership identity into the self-concept and synthesis of multiple approaches to leadership developed through previous stages. Given both the findings in this study and the differing nature of stage six from the other stages in the original research, stage six may be conceptually distinct from the other five stages, beginning more organically and gradually increasing in frequency and strength as an individual advances through the later stages of the LID Model. Further research is needed to explore whether or not this same developmental pattern is present in other individuals generally, with specific populations, or with participant engagement in specific experiences.

In addition, the expressed focus of this study was on the latter stages of the LID Model, and therefore designed to focus on data collection and analysis about understandings and practices of leadership related to the later stages, and to inquire about experiences that prompted development towards those stages. Any recommendations to adjust the LID Model as currently conceptualized would require specific inquiry into other stages, as well. Focusing research efforts on the individual stages would provide a deeper level detail on how individuals develop and practice leadership consistent with those stages, and the experiences that prompt development toward those stages. Findings

would also help scholars better conceptualize the full LID Model and better understand the process of leadership identity development overall. Educators would be able to use these findings to create more intentional, developmentally appropriate leadership learning experiences for students at all ages and stages toward ultimate development of advanced leadership identity.

### **Conclusion**

*We may never have a perfect world, but it is not romantic or naïve to work toward a better one.*

*Steven Pinker*

As I conclude my work on this study, I find myself reflecting on this quote. To me, it exemplifies the spirit and motivation of Adarsh, Dana, Holly, Kim, Jamie, Teagan, and Zane to lead. Hearing them speak about leadership is inspiring. Consider the collection of themes and thoughts below, gathered from throughout their narratives:

*Building community. Helping others find their passions. Listening. Challenging assumptions. Thoughtful reflection. Selflessness. Connectedness to the world.*

*Empathy. Including and embracing diverse others. Collaboration. Authenticity.*

*And learning. Always learning.*

These seven individuals are special – not because they are extraordinary or born with some rare quality, but because they have had the opportunities to learn and develop leadership consistent with these words and phrases. It is their opportunities that are, unfortunately, rare. What if we could provide those opportunities to more, or even all, of our students?

We live in a world with complex and overwhelming challenges that cannot be solved by anyone alone. And yet, too often our nations and communities become further

divided because of “leaders” who fight against the very diversity of background and thought that could be our greatest strength. This dominant paradigm of leadership dismisses the critical contributions of those with diverse voices and experiences, and ignores the power of community to make real, lasting change. As educators, we have the opportunity to challenge the dominant narrative and teach the next generation about leadership that is inclusive and collaborative; the kind of leadership necessary to solve national and global issues. Though, we cannot just hope that our students will somehow come to understand the value of interdependency. We cannot just hope that they become inclusive, compassionate leaders like the seven participants in this study.

The research presented here provides insight into real, tangible ways that we can help develop the kind of leadership needed to solve our greatest problems and unite our communities. The findings shed light on the educational experiences, pedagogy, and contextual influences that promote the development of relational, process-oriented approaches to leadership. Understanding this developmental process is vital for educators within and beyond leadership education roles and across institutional types. Students learn about leadership through various educational experiences, not just at certain institutions or through activities labeled as “leadership programs” (Astin & Astin, 2000; Dugan & Komives, 2010; Owen, 2012a). Moving forward, the findings of this study must be utilized in program review and design, course development, policy, and strategy related to leadership education and development efforts in educational institutions. We must continue to explore the factors and forces that help our students identify, dismantle and rebuild perceptions of leadership. If we do not, we may not see the end of the world, but we certainly will not be “working toward a better one.” We will, however, continue to

perpetuate paradigms of leadership that emphasize and celebrate individual over community gain, moving us and our communities further apart from one another. That is not a world that I want to live in, or the world I want to provide for those who come after us. I think we can do better, and reshaping the way we think about, practice, teach, and develop leadership is an important step toward that goal.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Consent Form for Recommenders

<b>Project Title</b>	Moving beyond common paradigms of leadership: Understanding the development of advanced leadership identity
<b>Purpose of the Study</b>	This research is being conducted by Melissa L. Rocco at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you have been identified as a faculty or staff member who is knowledgeable about the Leadership Identity Development model, and has experience working with an undergraduate student or recent graduate who both demonstrates advanced leadership identity and is a potential participant in this research project. The purpose of this research project is to learn more about the experiences in individuals' lives that have made an impact on the way they understand and exhibit leadership.
<b>Procedures</b>	<p>The procedures involve one interview with me, the principal investigator, and any follow-up conversations as needed following the interview. After you agree to participate, I will contact you to set up a date, time, and location that are feasible and comfortable for our interview. You will be asked to consent to audio recording of the interviews. If we are unable to meet in-person, video conferencing technology may be used to supplement. In this case, you will be asked to consent to video and/or audio recording.</p> <p>Participation consists of engaging in conversation with me, guided by a series of interview questions. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. Interview questions will ask you to share about your interactions with and observations of the student/recent graduate that you know who is a part of this research study. Questions will ask about the student or recent graduate's understanding and behaviors of leadership. Sample questions include: "What would you say is this student/recent graduate's leadership definition or philosophy?" and "Tell me about the experiences you have had with this student/recent graduate that lead you to believe they have developed a leadership identity consistent with later stages of the Leadership Identity Development model."</p> <p>You will be informed of the researcher's wish to audio record and/or video record the interview for purposes of accuracy; however, participants will have the right to decline being audio and/or video recorded. All participation will be voluntary, and you may withdraw from participation at any time. You will be asked to sign a consent</p>

	form to participate in the study.
<b>Potential Risks and Discomforts</b>	There are no known risks to participating in this study.
<b>Potential Benefits</b>	There are no direct benefits from participation in this research. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study by using the findings to create and implement better leadership development programming and courses for college students.
<b>Confidentiality</b>	<p>In order to protect privacy, the identities of participants and institutions will remain confidential. Interviewees and institutions will be randomly assigned a pseudonym, and actual names will not appear on interview data. The key linking the real participants and institutions to pseudonyms will be kept in a separate document on the Principle Investigator's computer, in a password protected folder. Information identifying the participant will be disclosed only if the participant gives his or her consent to provide such information. Data, including transcripts, notes, and audio and video recordings, will be securely stored on the principal investigator's computer and external hard drives. Computers and hard drives will be password protected to guard participant data. Hard copies will remain in a locked file cabinet. All data will be destroyed (shredded or erased) after ten years, or when their use is no longer needed, whichever comes first.</p> <p>If I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</p>
<b>Right to Withdraw and Questions</b>	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you are an employee and/or student, neither your employment standing nor academic credit will be affected by your participation or non-participation in this study. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator:</p> <p>Melissa Rocco 1110 Stamp Student Union College Park, MD 20742</p>

	216-832-6897 <a href="mailto:mlrocco@umd.edu">mlrocco@umd.edu</a>	
<b>Audio Recording</b>	Please indicate your selection by checking below: <input type="checkbox"/> I <b>agree</b> to be audio-recorded <input type="checkbox"/> I <b>do not</b> agree to be audio-recorded <input type="checkbox"/> I <b>agree</b> to be video-recorded <input type="checkbox"/> I <b>do not</b> agree to be video-recorded	
<b>Statement of Consent</b>	Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.  If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.	
<b>Signature and Date</b>	<b>NAME OF PARTICIPANT</b> <b>[Please Print]</b>	
	<b>SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT</b>	
	<b>DATE</b>	



## Appendix B: Consent Form for Participants

<b>Project Title</b>	Moving beyond common paradigms of leadership: Understanding the development of advanced leadership identity
<b>Purpose of the Study</b>	This research is being conducted by Melissa L. Rocco at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you have been identified as a student leader by a faculty or staff member. The purpose of this research project is to learn more about the experiences in one's life that have made an impact on the way they understand and exhibit leadership.
<b>Procedures</b>	<p>The procedures involve two interviews with me, the principal investigator, and any follow-up conversations as needed following the interview. After you agree to participate, I will contact you to set up dates, times, and locations that are feasible and comfortable for our interviews. You will be asked to consent to audio recording of the interviews. If we are unable to meet in-person, video conferencing technology may be used to supplement. In this case, you will be asked to consent to video and/or audio recording.</p> <p>Participation consists of engaging in conversation with me, guided by a series of interview questions. Each interview will take approximately 60 minutes. Interview questions will ask you to share about various leadership experiences throughout your life and your definition of leadership. Sample questions include: "What is your personal leadership definition or philosophy?", "Tell me about the people in your life who you view as models of leadership. What makes them a good example?", and "Tell me about the experiences you have had that you believe contribute to the way you understand leadership today."</p> <p>You will be informed of the researcher's wish to audio record and/or video record the interview for purposes of accuracy; however, participants will have the right to decline being audio and/or video recorded. All participation will be voluntary, and you may withdraw from participation at any time. You will be asked to sign a consent form to participate in the study.</p>
<b>Potential Risks and Discomforts</b>	There are no known risks to participating in this study.
<b>Potential Benefits</b>	There are no direct benefits from participation in this research. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study by using the findings to create and implement better leadership development programming and courses for college students.

<b>Confidentiality</b>	<p>In order to protect privacy, the identities of participants and institutions will remain confidential. Interviewees and institutions will be randomly assigned a pseudonym, and actual names will not appear on interview data. The key linking the real participants and institutions to pseudonyms will be kept in a separate document on the Principle Investigator's computer, in a password protected folder. Information identifying the participant will be disclosed only if the participant gives his or her consent to provide such information. Data, including transcripts, notes, and audio and video recordings, will be securely stored on the principal investigator's computer and external hard drives. Computers and hard drives will be password protected to guard participant data. Hard copies will remain in a locked file cabinet. All data will be destroyed (shredded or erased) after ten years, or when their use is no longer needed, whichever comes first.</p> <p>If I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</p>
<b>Right to Withdraw and Questions</b>	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you are an employee and/or student, neither your employment standing nor academic credit will be affected by your participation or non-participation in this study. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator:</p> <p>Melissa Rocco  1110 Stamp Student Union  College Park, MD 20742  216-832-6897  <a href="mailto:mlrocco@umd.edu">mlrocco@umd.edu</a></p>
<b>Audio Recording</b>	<p>Please indicate your selection by checking below:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I <b>agree</b> to be audio-recorded</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I <b>do not</b> agree to be audio-recorded</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I <b>agree</b> to be video-recorded</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I <b>do not</b> agree to be video-recorded</p>

<b>Statement of Consent</b>	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</p> <p>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</p>	
<b>Signature and Date</b>	<b>NAME OF PARTICIPANT</b> <b>[Please Print]</b>	
	<b>SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT</b>	
	<b>DATE</b>	

## **Appendix C: Interview Protocol for Recommender Interviews**

### **Introduction**

Hello, and thank you for being here today! My name is Melissa, and I am a doctoral student at the University of Maryland. I appreciate your recommendation of \_\_\_\_ [*insert student/recent graduate name*] \_\_\_\_ for participation in my study about the development of advanced leadership identity. Our time today will be spent discussing the student/recent graduate's leadership understandings and behavior.

I would like to address some logistics of our time together:

- Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If at any time you wish to stop the interview, please let me know. You may withdraw at any time without consequence.
- To facilitate my note taking, I would like to audio/video record our conversations today. Only researchers on the project will be privy to the recordings. You have the option to decline from audio recording on the consent form.

**Review study overview and details on consent form. Have individual sign.**

### **Demographic Information**

Ask individual to identify the following for record-keeping purposes only.

- Name
- Title
- Institution
- How you know the student/recent graduate being discussed today? (brief statement)

### **Potential Questions/Topics (semi-structured)**

The purpose of the recommender interview is to learn more about the recommender's interactions with the student/recent graduate they recommended for the study, and why they believe the student/recent graduate's thoughts and actions align with later stages of the LID Model. This interview will provide clarity regarding the fit of the participant for the study, as well as provide an important perspective on the participant's process of leadership identity development. Following the recommender interviews, participants will be confirmed as appropriate for the study or removed from the potential sample, if necessary.

- First, let's talk a little bit about the Leadership Identity Development Model. What is your current understanding of this model? What do you know about the later stages? (listen for key words characteristic of LID stages five and six).
- Tell me more about your interaction/relationship with this student/recent graduate.
- Why did you recommend this particular student/recent graduate for this study?
- What would you say is this person's leadership definition or philosophy? How do you know?

- Tell me about the specific interactions you have had with this student/recent graduate that demonstrate this leadership philosophy.
- Tell me about the things you have observed this person doing that lead you to believe they are at advanced stages of leadership identity development.
- Tell me about the things you have heard this person say that lead you to believe they are at advanced stages of leadership identity development.
- Within specific examples, the following can be asked to probe further:
  - How does this person interact with their peers?
  - How does this person interact with older adults or mentors?
  - How does this person interact with others when in a leadership role? When not in a leadership role?
- Are there certain educational or life experiences that you believe have been influential in prompting this person's development toward advanced stages of leadership identity development?
- *Why* do you believe those particular experiences have been influential in promoting advanced leadership identity development for this person (e.g. pedagogy, people involved, learning styles, activities and curriculum, program type)?

### **Conclusion**

- Anything else I should know about this person? Their understanding and practice of leadership?
- Any questions for me?
- Thank you for your time!

## **Appendix D: Interview Protocol for Participant Interview 1**

### **Introduction**

Hello, and thank you for being here today! My name is Melissa, and I am a doctoral student at the University of Maryland. I appreciate your participation in my study about leadership identity development. Our time today will be spent discussing your personal leadership development journey and your understanding/philosophy of leadership.

I would like to address some logistics of our time together:

- Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If at any time you wish to stop the interview, please let me know. You may withdraw at any time without consequence.
- To facilitate my note taking, I would like to audio/video record our conversations today. Only researchers on the project will be privy to the recordings. You have the option to decline from audio recording on the consent form.

**Review study overview and details on consent form. Have individual sign.**

### **Demographic Information**

Ask individual to identify the following for record-keeping purposes only.

- Name
- Age
- Institution (current or most recently graduated)
- Year in school/# years since graduation
- How do you prefer to be identified? Race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, SES, etc. List all that you are comfortable including.

The purpose of our first interview is to explore the experiences throughout your life that you believe have influenced you as a leader, as well as, your understanding and practice of leadership. We will also explore your personal views, assumptions, and understanding of leadership over time, including your present philosophy of leadership. I will be recording your answers, but they will also be kept confidential.

### **Primer Activity**

- I would like to ask you to engage in a drawing activity about your leadership experiences and current understanding of leadership. This will help you recall your past experiences and serve as a tool to guide the rest of our discussion today. Are you ready to begin?
- Please draw for me your “leadership lifeline.” So, a visual representation of the important moments, experiences, and people in your life that influence how you have thought about and practice leadership over time. You can use both pictures and words, and organize it however makes sense to you.
- Then, somewhere on the page, personal definition/approach of leadership today.

**Give participant approximately 10 minutes to draw.**

### **Potential Questions/Topics (semi-structured)**

For this section, interviewer should use the participant's drawing and explanations to generate discussion.

- Please explain to me the pictures you drew/moments you listed and their importance/significance to your leadership journey.
- What did they teach you about leadership? What would have been your definition of leadership at that time in your life?
- How did that person/program/institution define leadership? Who in those environments was considered to be a leader?
- How does this person/experience inform your personal approach to leadership today?
- Elaborate for me on your personal philosophy/understanding of leadership.

For this next section, questions are designed to 1) understand more detail about their leadership identity development over time 2) confirm their leadership identity development stage currently and 3) identify specific learning and development experiences that have shaped their development of a leadership identity (the *what*, in preparation for exploring the *how* and *why* in the second interview.)

- Tell me more about the people in your life that you view as models of leadership. What makes them a good example? Why?
- Let's talk about your experiences in groups. How do you feel about working in groups? Have you ever worked with a group to accomplish a goal? Talk about this more; your role in the group, others' roles, and where you saw leadership in this group. Have you seen your role in groups change over the years? How?
- What do you think are the most important things for leaders to remember when working with others?
- Talk about a time when you were not "the leader" in a group. How did you contribute? How did this feel?
- How would you describe your relationships/interactions with various members of your organizations (e.g. peers, advisors, supervisors)?
- What are some leadership challenges or difficulties you are currently facing? How are these different than challenges you may have faced in leadership in past experiences?
- What are the most important lessons you have learned on your leadership journey thus far?
- Why are you involved in your programs, groups, and organizations? What are you passionate about?
- Have you thought about what happens to your programs, groups, and organizations once you leave them? If so, tell me more about your thoughts on that.
- Think about your experiences outside of college moving forward (job, grad school, etc.) What do you think your leadership journey will look like in those spaces moving forward?

- What are you excited for?
- What are you nervous about?
- How do you think you can address those feelings?
- If I told you that tomorrow you will be in a meeting with colleagues of all ages in your field of study and asked to engage in conversation about a new strategic plan for your field - how does that make you feel right now? How would you react? What would you do in that situation?

### **Conclusion**

- Anything else you would like to cover today with the time we have remaining? Any questions for me?
- I will keep your drawing for us to use during our next interview (if virtual interview, ask participant to scan and email a copy to interviewer, and to bring with them for second interview.)
- Thank you for your time!



## **Appendix E: Interview Protocol for Participant Interview 2**

### **Introduction**

Thank you for meeting with me for a second interview! Today I'd like to talk about why you believe that you view and practice leadership according to the leadership philosophy you outlined in our last conversation. We will also further explore the experiences you noted as being influential in your leadership journey.

Again, as a reminder, I will be audio/video recording today's conversation.

### **Potential Questions/Topics (semi-structured)**

The last interview focused on what experiences were influential in developing the participant's leadership identity. The purpose of the second interview questions is to explore how and why those experiences were particularly influential for the participant.

- Tell me about each of these experiences more in detail.
- Why did you include this experience on your "leadership lifeline?"
- How did you get involved in this experience (e.g. informal interaction, educational program, student organization, etc.)?
- What about this experience really made a difference for you? What were the forces and factors that made this experience particularly unique?
  - Why/how did this experience help you develop and practice leadership?
  - Why/how did this experience help you learn about leadership?
  - What specific activities, approaches, structures, or other pedagogical/curricular elements may have been particularly effective?
  - What were relationships like between those involved in this experience?
  - How did you/others create the culture or group dynamic that was present in this experience?

For this next section, questions aim to explore the participant's awareness of different leadership approaches and the complexity of leadership consistent with those in stages five and six of the LID Model.

- What does your leadership look like compared to others in your groups, communities, and organizations? Why do you think that is?
- How did you become aware of the different leadership approaches of the people around you? How did you learn to notice them?
- How do you decide when to contribute to leadership? And how to contribute?
- What relationships are influential in your continued learning and development of leadership at this point?
- Have the experiences from your lifeline changed the way you believe you will exercise leadership in the future? Why or why not? How so?

### **Conclusion**

- Anything else you would like to cover today with the time we have remaining? Any questions for me?

- Once I have transcribed our conversations, I will provide you with the chance to review the transcription if you would like.
- Thank you for your time!

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