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DePaul University
College of Education

**MOTIVATION TO LEAD: COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR
ROLES AS LEADERS ON CAMPUS**

A Dissertation in Education
With a Concentration in Educational Leadership

by

Jacob M. Gross

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

Student leadership in college has long been studied from the perspective of the university, and more specifically, how the university supports its student leaders in hopes of enhancing institutional reputation. With this in mind, there is little attention given to the micro-level experience of college student leaders. As such, researchers are called to shift the rhetoric on student leadership away from an institutionally-driven conceptualization to a more student-focused discourse. The central aim of this study was to gather student leader perceptions of their roles as campus leaders and construct meaning behind those perceptions. This qualitative research study examined the phenomenology behind college student leadership and the subsequent motivation to lead. Using the Motivation to Lead framework (MTL), this study added to the already dense discussion on leadership and produced a clearer understanding as to how college students make sense of their leadership experience. Findings suggested college student leaders experience the leadership phenomenon from several perspectives; acting with intention in their respective roles, how the administration impacts their role, how prior experiences shape leadership motivation, and finally, how being of service creates increased enjoyment and motivation to continue leading. As a result of this qualitative, phenomenological study, more focused attention was placed on the student leadership experience at the micro level. The findings may support future leadership development programs, program evaluation projects, and provide a better understanding of the student-administration relationship in higher education.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	ix
List of Tables	x
Acknowledgements.....	xi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Problem Statement	1
Purpose of Study.....	3
Research Questions.....	3
Rationale and Significance	4
Conceptual Framework.....	5
Overview of Methodology.....	7
Limitations of Methodology.....	10
Researcher Positionality.....	11
Delimitations.....	12
Organization of Dissertation.....	12
Conclusion.....	13
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	14
The Leadership Phenomenon.....	14
Effective Leadership.....	16
Self-Efficacy.....	18
Leadership Attributes.....	19
Student Leadership.....	20

Socially-Driven Implications on Student Leadership	24
Gender.....	25
Ethnicity.....	26
Motivation to Lead.....	27
Conclusion.....	33
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	34
Rationale for Research.....	36
Research Context	37
Research Sample & Sources of Data	38
Data Collection Methods	40
Interviews.....	40
Observations	42
Data Analysis Methods.....	43
Trustworthiness.....	46
Limitations of Study.....	48
Conclusion.....	49
Chapter 4: Findings	50
Interviews.....	51
Summary of Participants.....	51
Coding Process.....	52
Themes.....	55
Intentional Leadership.....	56

	vi
Self-Reflection.....	57
Institution-Specific Experience.....	58
Being of Service.....	59
Examples of Themes.....	61
Theme One: Intentional Leadership.....	60
Leadership as Process.....	61
Skill-Building.....	64
Theme Two: Self-Reflection.....	67
Relationships.....	67
Prior Experiences.....	70
Theme Three: Institution-Specific Experience.....	73
Advisor Support.....	73
Campus Community.....	75
Relationship with Administration.....	78
Theme Four: Being of Service.....	80
Supporting New Leaders.....	80
Volunteering.....	84
Themes Summary.....	86
Observations.....	87
Connection to Interviews.....	89
Connections to the Research Questions.....	90
Conclusion.....	91

Chapter 5: Discussion	93
Connection to Literature	93
Connection to Theme One	94
Connection to Theme Two... ..	95
Connection to Theme Three	97
Connection to Theme Four	98
Implications for Practice.....	101
Students.....	101
Student Affairs Professionals.....	102
Advisors	103
Administrators.....	105
Limitations of the Research... ..	105
Recommendations for Future Research... ..	106
Conclusion... ..	108
References	110
Appendix A: Recruitment Letter to Participants	127
Appendix B: Thank you Letter to Participants	128
Appendix C: Adult Consent to Participate in Research	129
Appendix D: Interview Protocol	132
Appendix E: Observation Protocol	134
Appendix F: Demographic Information Form	136
Appendix G: Observation Script	137

Appendix H: Facebook Post.....	viii 138
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List of Figures

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework...7

List of Tables

Table 1. Summary of Participants.....	52
Table 2. Initial Codes and Color Identifiers.....	54
Table 3. Nominal Report Frequency.....	55
Table 4. Frequency of Themes.....	60
Table 5. Response Frequency	60
Table 6. Observational Data	88
Table 7. Emergent Themes and Subthemes	92

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As an objective, leadership development is a priority in higher education (Kiersch & Peters, 2017). Student leaders are needed across many areas, creating a rich and dynamic campus culture, and the unique opportunity for leadership development during college. It is essential to continue developing competent and capable student leaders in the context of higher education, and more specifically, student development (Collinson & Tourish, 2015). Student leaders on college campuses support the important work that must be done within the institution, while promoting campus culture and representing the institution's brand. Additionally, student leaders act as a symbol of the institution's reputation so that the school may remain competitive in the field. A considerable amount of time, energy, and resources are spent on student leaders and their personal development. Stakeholders such as faculty, advisors, and student affairs professionals represent a few of the key people who invest in student leaders (Astin, 2000). In order to enhance and better understand college student development, we must first recognize and listen to what students have to say about their leadership experiences during college (Shertzer, Wall, Frandsen, Guo, Whalen, & Shelley, 2005). Once student voices and experiences are recognized at a more micro-level, professionals in the field can better meet the needs of their students, ultimately building a stronger sense of community on campus.

Problem Statement

Throughout higher education, there are numerous opportunities for students to engage with their campus and fellow students (NSSE, 2013). The engagement on campus is perhaps due to some generational differences as is evidenced from prior research on the topic (Shertzer et al. 2005). Engaging students on campus comes with little persuasion, as was evidenced by Howe and Strauss' (2000) observation regarding the Millennial generation, most often paralleled to

Generation Y (those individuals born between 1982 and 2004). Students belonging to the Millennial generation have likely come from prior settings where chances to lead were already present (Shertzer et al. 2005). As a result, many of these students stepped onto campus with a previously developed perception about leadership and their own leadership development. Howe and Strauss (2000) determined Millennials were highly sheltered and protected by parents, which may explain Millennial student's expectations about opportunities available to them during college. In comparison, Generation X (1960s to 1980s) views leadership as one's own responsibility and takes a more autonomous and self-starting approach to leadership (Bump, 2014; Shertzer et al. 2005). Given the varying degrees of generation-specific views of leadership, individual attitudes and behaviors are thus generated through these contextual experiences. To that end, an interesting shift in the literature on student leadership development has occurred recently, highlighting the behavioral implications of student leadership and how students ultimately give meaning to their inward and outward perceptions of leadership (Ariely, 2012; DeCremer, 2009). In other words, these authors are suggesting the conversation on student leadership move to a place where we investigate student leaders' internal perceptions (e.g., self-concept and identity) and how they compare to external factors (e.g., campus, peers, and co-leaders). The knowledge about student development will expand as scholars and practitioners explore the internal and external perceptions of student leaders (Baccei, 2015). Facilitating on-campus leadership opportunities for college students is a primary task of higher education (see Baccei, 2015; Caruso, 1981; Engbers, 2006) wherein Student Affairs professionals can gain stronger insight into who their students are, what their students are looking for, and how their students hope to strengthen their professional identity. Accordingly, Student Affairs

professionals will be better equipped to meet the needs of the student leaders once we are able to more explicitly define a student's lived experience as a leader in college.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative research project is to explore student thoughts, perceptions, and beliefs about their leadership experiences on campus and how these students are driven to engage at such a high level. This study deeply examined student perceptions of their leadership experiences in the context of motivation (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). The importance of this study speaks to a trend in the literature, which suggests a central aim of higher education in the United States is to develop student leaders at the collegiate level (Baccei, 2015). Educators and student leaders alike are continually looking for new and innovative ways of bringing people together to address the challenges facing our society (Miles, 2005; Ritchie & Hammond, 2005). Furthermore, the relationship students have with campus stakeholders (e.g., student body, administration, and faculty) remains largely undefined in the current literature, making room for further inquiry on the topic. As such, the proposed research study examined the lived experiences of college student leaders as it relates to their motivation to lead.

Research Questions

Institutions of higher education are continually providing students the opportunity to engage as leaders on campus. These moments of engagement are carried out by the institution with an intent to develop socially responsible leaders (Baccei, 2015). To do this effectively, educators and professionals ought to be intentional about exploring a student's passion to lead, separate from the formal leadership-centered curriculum being taught in a classroom (Cho, Harrist, Steele, & Murn, 2015). Once we place a greater emphasis on the psychological and behavioral factors that encourage a student to pursue leadership opportunities, then perhaps we

can make better sense of the student leadership phenomenon as it relates to what motivates a student to become and remain a leader on campus. Considering what we know about student leadership, it is important to address what's missing so that we may gain a more comprehensive perspective on what it means to be a college student leader. The following research questions helped to drive the research study with hopes of extending the student leadership conversation past the boundaries of the classroom and within the first-hand accounts of the student leaders themselves:

1. How do college students perceive their role(s) as leaders on campus?
2. What informs a college student's motivation to lead?

Rationale and Significance

The researcher was interested in exploring how college students perceive their day-to-day experiences as on-campus leaders so that the campus community may better support a student's efforts within their respective roles. As such, it is essential we give voice to the individualized experiences of college students. The findings from this study produced personal accounts from student leaders, conceptualizing how they perceive their leadership experience in the context of their role(s). These personal accounts helped to support the need for more research in the field. As it stands, the general contribution to the field of Student Affairs has largely been centered in how the institution develops and maintains its reputation by leveraging student leaders, however, increased attention is needed from the student perspective on how leadership development is exhibited on the college campus (May, 2009). Once the literature shifts to highlight the first-hand student experience, as this study aimed to do, Student Affairs practitioners will have a better idea as to how to effectively meet the needs of students. Ultimately, this study was designed to

uncover personal accounts of the student experience, adding new knowledge to the already dense discussion of leadership in higher education.

Conceptual Framework

As the research study unfolded, the researcher utilized a conceptual framework to help conceptualize a student's experience. The proposed research utilized the Motivation to Lead (MTL) framework by Chan and Drasgow (2001), drawing upon three types of motivation which help explore and generously define a student's leadership experience. In addition to providing detailed and rich descriptions of the students' personal accounts, the study was also set up in such a way to place emphasis on the meaning behind a student's motivation to lead. The purpose behind including a structured framework in this study was to not only explain a student's experience in a different context, but to also set the stage for future researchers who also want to apply a qualitative lens to a framework which has been historically studied from a quantitative perspective.

As a developed framework, there are three types of motivation included in the theory: Affective MTL, Social-Normative MTL, and Non-Calculative MTL (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). Persons with high levels of Affective identity receive joy out of leading others. These leaders often already considering themselves leaders, sometimes before they acquire a leadership role. In context, affective-identity student leaders are typically found in campus organizations such as Greek Life, Residence Life, and Student Government (Cho et al. 2015). Within these campus organizations, student leaders are often well-liked by peers and have a goal of highly achieving on behalf of the organization with which they belong. Secondly, leaders who practice from Social Normative MTL feel a sense of duty or obligation within their particular role. These leaders believe social structures are in place for a reason and they prefer to avoid questioning as

to why hierarchies are in place (Cho et. al. 2015). The fundamental idea behind Social Normative MTL is that leaders have already been active at home or in religious organizations, so they are bringing with them to college a preconceived idea about the roles they will obtain. For example, a college student may have helped raise younger siblings in the home, or they may have been part of a youth group at Church, Synagogue or other faith-based communities. While Social Normative-identity leaders may feel a sense of duty to lead, they will also likely be the most experienced leader. Finally, Non-Calculative MTL considers leaders who do not account for the subsequent cost or benefit of acting in a particular leadership role (Chan, 1999). In this construct, there is neither an intrinsic nor extrinsic motivation to engage as a leader. For example, non-calculative identity leaders consider leading without noting personal sacrifices being made; these leaders may choose to lead on campus out of personal convenience, ignoring any sort of benefit to possibly exist after college as a result of leading. An example of Non-Calculative MTL may exist in Residence Life among Resident Assistants; a student may choose to engage as a leader in this context for the sole purpose of receiving reduced or no-cost housing arrangements. MTL (Chan & Drasgow, 2001) will provide a foundation by which to explore the self-reported leadership experiences of college students. *Figure 1* below provides an illustration of how the conceptual framework was put to use in this study:

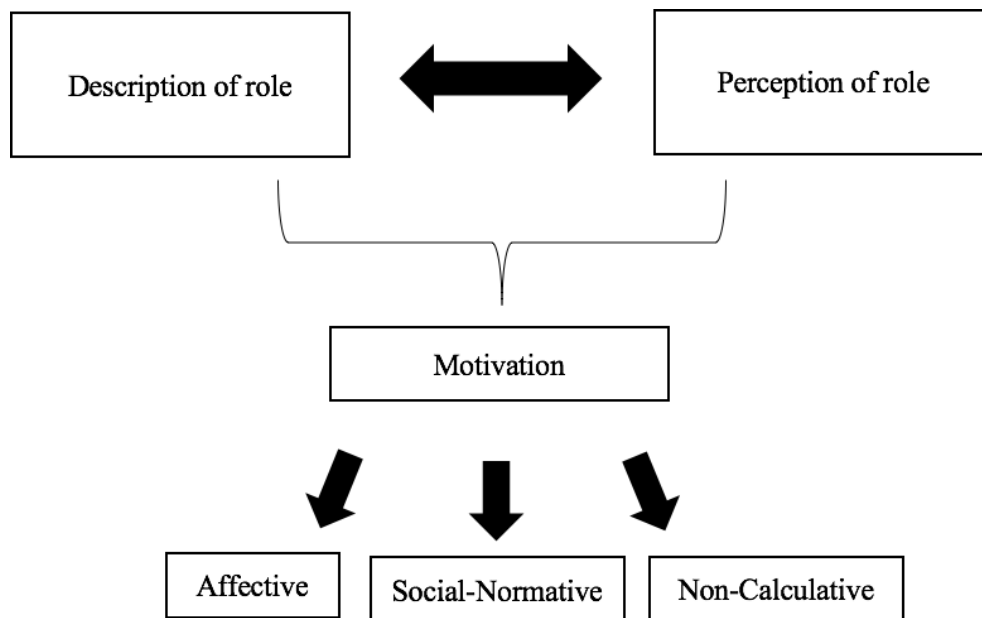


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework (Chan & Drasgow, 2001)

Overview of Methodology

This study sought to explain the lived experiences of college student leaders through a phenomenological lens. By including such a method, the researcher enhanced and legitimized the qualitative frame of the study (Scheumann, 2014). Considering the nature of Phenomenology, this study was in place to explore contextual meaning of an experience, an idea underscored within phenomenological inquiry (Creswell, 2007). To that end, Creswell (2009) underscores the importance that phenomenological inquiry may help to fill a void in which previous literature was unable to fill. As such, throughout this study, a phenomenological lens was used to help make sense of the student leadership experience.

Participants shared their perceptions of their particular role(s) on campus and how these varying dispositions became a product of their motivation to lead and continue leading (Lester, 1999). It is worth noting a central goal of this study was to give voice to participants who come

from a wide range of institutions and campus cultures including private institutions, public institutions, as well as schools containing diverse student populations with regard to race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, and year in college. Once the inclusion criteria were determined and the research plan was approved, the researcher consulted with Student Affairs professionals and institutional web pages to recruit students from diverse demographic backgrounds to participate in the study.

Because the study involved human subjects, the researcher sought approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once the researcher received approval to conduct the study, the researcher spent approximately 1.5 months recruiting participants through email communication and online postings, locating the participants' contact information either on a university webpage or through a Student Affairs Professional. In total, eight student participants engaged in the research, each of whom held specific roles on campus which they define as part of their leadership identity, which is well within the appropriate range (see Dworkin, 2012; Mason, 2010). It was at the point of completing the eighth interview that the researcher reached data saturation, which Charmaz (2006) mentioned is likely reached quicker with a smaller pool of participants and a more focused aim. Adding to Charmaz's point, the sample size may only contain a few subjects as data saturation will likely happen earlier than anticipated due to the pattern of interacting with human subjects with similar professional backgrounds (Creswell, 2011).

The interviews assisted in exploring the ways in which leadership among students is carried out in the context of higher education. As each participant was interviewed, the researcher observed that the personal accounts enhanced the rigor of the study as evidenced by the diversity of lived experience, generating a contextual experience specific to each participant

(Van Manen, 1990). During the interviews, “deep information and perceptions” (p. 1) were gathered from the students, making sure to avoid assumptions about the subjects (Lester, 1999). The researcher bracketed assumptions, avoiding the possibility of researcher bias inappropriately intersecting with the data (Tufford & Newman, 2010). In addition to gathering rich descriptions and bracketing assumptions, the researcher made sure to maximize the time spent with the participants in the interviews. In doing so, the researcher explored how each aspect of the students’ personal identity contributed to their lived experience (Palinkas, Horowitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2013). By maximizing the use of the sample during the interview process, it became clear when no new data were forthcoming, therefore, reaching the point of data saturation (Norris, 2006).

The researcher utilized anonymous semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions as a way to help conceptualize the students’ lived experiences in their roles (Nohl, 2009; Sutton & Austin, 2015). The choice to conduct the research in such a way was based on the following reasons:

- The participants were given the chance to respond to questions based on their own experiences without the added influence of another person’s role and experience.
- The semi-structured interview allowed for a narrative approach to describing a particular experience, rather than a rigid definition of an experience.
- The anonymity of the interview allowed for a safe space for participants to share, at times, negative experiences and personal perceptions of their peers.

At this point, the study transitioned from interviews to observations. Incorporating multiple methods of data collection, known in research as triangulation, is what the literature suggests is an appropriate way to be comprehensive about a particular phenomenon, adding to the process of

testing the information's validity (Blyth, Bryant-Lukosius, Carter, DiCenso, Neville, 2014). During the observations, the researcher had a goal of immersing in the real-life environment of the participants so that additional insight could emerge to support the study (Sutton & Austin, 2015). By conducting the observations in such a way, the researcher adhered to the project's goal of exploring what it means to be a student leader, and more specifically, how student leadership is viewed through a phenomenological lens. By intentionally incorporating interviews and observations as a means to collect data, the researcher was able to form various truths behind a particular experience, which was a vital part of this qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The researcher looked for emergent themes in the findings as they related to a student's motivation to lead (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Larkin, Watts, & Clifton (2006) suggested that coding data phenomenologically is not about simply providing a description, rather, it is about moving beneath what a person says to truly understand his or her worldview. The study attempted to understand the meaning individuals credit to their lived experience, so by analyzing the data in such a way, the study helped to generate meaning (Smith, 1996). The themes which emerged from the student reports contributed to new knowledge to the fields of Leadership and Student Affairs. More specifically, the data collected from the students supported the study's goal of utilizing student perceptions as a way to make sense of the leadership phenomenon. More detail about the data analysis can be found in Chapter Three.

Limitations of Methodology

The goals and setting of the study considered, there were circumstances which the researcher was unable to control. For example, the population of participants included in this study maintained busy schedules with various responsibilities, therefore, some participant interviews concluded before the expected end time so that the student could arrive on time to

another scheduled obligation. The researcher was mindful of the flexibility and sensitivity needed in order to be accommodating to the student's schedule. Another point to keep in mind is researcher bias and positionality. Because the researcher was a student leader in college, a limitation of the study could have included the researcher incorporating personal experiences as a leader as they relate (or not) to the participants' experience. Throughout the research process, the researcher continued to remind himself to detach personal experiences and biases from the study as to avoid issues of trustworthiness with the data. As another means by which to increase trustworthiness, an external auditor and peer reviewer were included in order to review the research process and product. The peer reviewer and auditor were committed to reviewing the project's product and were prompt in their respective reviews (Zaharie & Osoian, 2016). The central limitations of this study – time, setting, and researcher positionality – contributed to the structure and process of the research study.

Researcher Positionality

This research study parallels the researcher's own experience as a student leader in college. Much like the narrative of a student leader, the researcher's own experience has supported personal and professional growth. These moments of leadership generated an intense and authentic interest in the Student Affairs sector of higher education and therefore informed the researcher's positionality in this research. In addition to higher education, experience in the summer camping movement played a vital role in the researcher's decision to seek out research in the context of leadership. Working in a residential summer camp environment gave the researcher tools to execute meaningful and effective leadership strategies in order to care for the well-being of campers. As to avoid the interference of the researcher's bias, the researcher participated in peer debriefing with the peer reviewer. The authors mention that once peer

debriefing is underway, the debriefing ought to pose questions to the researcher surrounding the project's central aim, as well as confirm that the project contributes to filling specific gaps in the literature (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ultimately, the peer reviewer confirmed the clarity of the study's findings, considering what was discussed between the researcher and reviewer during the debrief. Positionality considered, as interviews were conducted in this study, the researcher maintained awareness of biases and perspectives about the student leadership experience.

Delimitations

For the purposes of this study, specific boundaries were in place to keep the process consistent and focused. The researcher avoided consultation with the student leaders' supervisors. The goal in doing so was to keep the project focused on a student-centered experience without the added influence of external parties. Furthermore, the researcher utilized aspects of Phenomenology, rather than a different approach such as Case Study or Narrative Inquiry, which can often be focused on only one participant (Starman, 2013). While other methodological approaches could have also produced meaningful findings, Phenomenology provided a comprehensive approach to lived experience, rather than simply a one-dimensional perspective (Käufer & Chemero, 2015). The study collected data individual to each student, rather than attempt to conduct focus groups. It is through this plan that individualized data were gathered, which contributed to the study's main goal. The project's delimitations helped inform the researcher's focus and plan of the proposed qualitative research.

Organization of Dissertation

The research project was organized and designed into five chapters with the hope of conceptualizing both the relevant literature and the data gathered. Chapter One provides a foundation for the study, outlining pertinent aspects of student leadership. The chapter also sets

the stage for the study by providing the central research questions, aims, and purpose of the project. Chapter Two explores existing literature on the topic as to help make sense of student leadership and its impact to the field while simultaneously stating relevant gaps in the literature. Chapter Three presents the methodological approach used in the study with the goal of navigating the project's topic appropriately. Chapter Four presents the themes which emerged from the collected data as they related to the project's research questions. The final chapter discusses the study's thematic elements as they relate to the proposed literature and stated gaps in the literature. The dissertation concludes by providing a plan for future researchers based on the findings of this study.

Conclusion

Throughout Chapter One, the researcher provided a framework through which to understand student leadership. Background information and several key concepts were shared to set the stage for the proposed phenomenon, ultimately supporting the need for further research on the topic. Furthermore, the study's research questions are essential components of the project and help build capacity and understanding of the topic. Because a central aim of this study was to give meaning to first-hand accounts, the research questions left room for new discovery and meaning-making. Phenomenological inquiry was discussed to give attention to how the proposed methodology supported the need for new discovery. Challenges and limitations were also examined in order for the study to be executed ethically and intentionally. By outlining the chapter in such a way, the researcher was mindful of presenting student leadership from a newer, more holistic perspective so that ultimately, future research on the topic can continue to bring attention to the micro-level experience of college student leaders.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership has been defined as an “art,” bringing together like-minded people to work toward “shared aspirations” (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 30). These shared aspirations are multifaceted, depending on the circumstance of the leadership experience. For example, the leader could be living an experience in the context of a student organization, a paid on-campus job, or as a Freshman Orientation Leader. To complement Kouzes and Posner’s definition of leadership, May (2009) suggested the obligations held by leaders are in place to support the group or organization, keeping the group members on track to accomplish tasks. Similarly, *student leader* is defined more explicitly as a college student who consciously pursues a certain role within a student organization and thus, has responsibilities to carry out a specific task for the benefit of the larger group (Astin, 1984). Consequently, *motivation* provides insight to the students’ perceptions of themselves as leaders. Motivation in this context will be defined as the intensity of effort put forth in a task (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). It is expected the *intensity* and *efficacy* of a student’s motivation to lead will give meaning to student leadership at a micro level (Astin, 2000). This literature review will illustrate how the discourse on leadership has developed over time, clarifying the details of student leadership and the subsequent ideas behind the phenomenon. The literature presented in this review will clarify the need for continued and innovative research on the subject, providing a window of opportunity to contribute to the leadership discourse in the context of higher education.

The Leadership Phenomenon

Dethmer, Chapman and Klemp (2014) ask a fundamental question in their text, *The 15 Commitments of Conscious Leadership*: “From what consciousness are we having this conversation” [about leadership] (p. 21)? The authors go on to discuss that leadership is two-

fold: how we respond to others and how we make sense of our own identities as leaders. The critical piece of this text explores how leaders are responding to themselves as they enact their leadership style, which, as a result, defines how leaders engage outwardly with their peers (Dethmer et al., 2014). This responsiveness to ourselves and others comes from the consciousness we bring to leadership, which parallels the discourse by Kouzes and Posner (2012) who stated leadership is about one's behavior and attitudes. In their view, behavior is the building block to the leadership conversation. Additionally, behavior is equivalent to responsibility, because when we are conscious of the responsibilities we have as leaders, we are more likely to remain in control of ourselves and the decisions we make (Dethmer et al., 2014). Bernard Bass (1999) suggested when we become people with responsibility, we acquire behaviors that speak to the examination of our experience as leaders and there is a level of intention impacting our behaviors. For a leader to be transformational, he or she must understand the moral foundations of being human: awareness of ethics, character, and decision-making (Bass, 1999). The behaviors which we bring to the leadership experience are grounded in the particular ways in which we view the world, generating unique techniques by which to become effective leaders.

The understanding one has of their role as a leader is rooted in what it means to be an effective leader. Leadership has been reviewed as a phenomenon of power and traits, raising questions around how much power a leader should or should not have, creating what others view as leadership effectiveness (Yukl, 2013). For example, Bass (1985) explained there are "idealized leaders" (p. 184) who often "deceive themselves about their competencies," (p. 187) ultimately using their power for the wrong reasons and therefore become an ineffective leader. Comparably, leaders who are intentional about reaching a desired goal, do so at the expense of

the larger group, and are acting in a grandiose fashion, harming their role as a leader and weakening the effectiveness of being a leader (Kets de Vries, 2014). Sankowsky (1995) explores a similar scenario, where a leader talks about empowering the group for the personal reasons of taking control of the group. Ironically, in this situation the leader is deeming themselves effective, however the bigger picture illustrates a leader who is hurting the group development and is thus not an effective leader. As is evidenced by the literature, leaders may encounter challenges on their way to becoming effective, therefore it is imperative to cultivate a culture of purpose behind leadership development.

Effective Leadership

Recently, scholars have spent considerable time exploring what makes a leader effective. Some individuals perceive self-awareness as a major factor of effective leadership (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman, & Combs, 2006). Self-awareness includes becoming aware of one's own values and core beliefs as leader, which the authors suggested are expectations of leaders (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). By increasing one's self-awareness as a leader, genuineness in caring to lead is enhanced, fostering "the development of authenticity in [the leader's] followers" (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 317). The authors made it clear that a leader's beliefs and values have an effect on followers, so it is critical for leaders to be self-aware of how they are communicating their values. Paralleling the discourse of leader self-awareness to the lived experience of a follower has helped to cultivate an understanding of how effective leaders impact their followers during the leadership development process.

Because the process by which becoming an effective leader appears as trial and error, Ciarrochi & Godsell (2006) underlined the idea that becoming an effective leader is a process which takes time, encouraging a commitment to growth. During this timeframe of growth, there

is impact on both follower affect, and perceptions followers have of the leader (Rosete, 2007). In fact, Kellerman (2008) noted effective leaders are the ones who start as followers, creating what is known as the process of leadership development. In the context of Student Affairs, David Day (2001) reported in his study of student leaders that it is not the Professor or the Student Affairs Professional who make students change for the better, rather, they can create “environmental conditions that facilitate learning and support” (p. 582) so students have a space to enact their desired ways of leading, and thus, lead successfully. In this worldview, even if there is a setback, the student affairs professional can step in to support the leader. It is then up to the individual to move forward with the support as they develop into more competent and effective leaders (Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999). Leadership development, no matter the context, provides a way for scholars to extrapolate how leaders are leading, and how leaders can continue practicing leadership effectively.

The literature has long debated what is attributed to becoming a great leader, discussing in particular the question of whether leaders are born or made and if leadership development is in fact occurring on a spectrum. Overwhelmingly, researchers are in agreement that effective leaders are made and that prior leadership experiences are the catalysts to becoming successful as a leader (Gentry, Deal, Stawiski, & Ruderman, 2012). Sharing this sentiment is leadership expert, Warren Bennis, who asserted that those who believe leaders are born, are buying into nonsense understandings (Bennis & Goldsmith, 1997; Kirby, 2014). Bennis believed that the social conditions built around people are what cultivate the person’s ability to lead and to do so effectively. Bennis’ approach to leadership mirrors the early literature which stated leaders are a product of the society to which they belong, and the day-to-day social circumstances develop their sense of leading (Bennis, n.d.; Spencer, 1896). It is clear that followership as well as a sense

of belonging in the world are primary paradigms by which to make sense of a leader's process of growth. Whether starting as a follower or developing a personal worldview through daily interactions, a leader's commitment to growth is cultivated through several life experiences, each experience personal in nature.

A leader's level of authenticity also influences their effectiveness. Howell and Avolio (1992) explained pseudo-transformational leaders want to gain more power, whereas the authentic leader creates power in socially productive ways. This idea explains that leaders practice in an unethical (or pseudo-transformational) manner, depicting leadership which is self-centered and inconsistent with altruistic values (Price, 2003). Similarly, Peter Drucker suggested an authentic leader is forgiven by its group of followers for mistakes but is not forgiven if there is a lack of leader integrity, highlighting Price's (2003) point that a leader ought to remain consistent with demonstrating altruistic values (Riggio, 2009). The theme in the literature surrounding what it means to be an effective leader is seemingly structured around ethical considerations and the subsequent decisions which are made as a result. Effective leadership is understood from several points of view, and it can be challenging to specify a leader's intention, how their intention is carried out in the designated role, and their perceptions about the decisions they have made.

Self-Efficacy

Leadership is tied to enacting specific responsibilities, creating the way by which the individual makes sense of their experience. Albert Bandura (1994) explored how human capabilities have potential to influence events in one's life. He suggested self-efficacy enhances a person's well-being because they can construct awareness of their own lived experience through self-reporting (Bandura, 1997). For example, Bandura considered self-efficacy as a primary

factor of constructing lived experience, resulting in “balanced efforts” and “expectations of success” (Bandura, 2005, p. 347). On the contrary, lower-scaled self-efficacy exists through unsatisfied aspirations which stem from imposing unrealistic standards on oneself, producing moments of depression (Bandura, 1994). It is important to note, no matter which side of the leadership phenomenon one finds themselves, leader or follower, self-efficacy is heightened or lowered on either side, underscoring the significance of not only leadership development, but also how acting as a follower can impact one’s progression to becoming a leader. To compare, recent literature categorizes self-efficacy as a more collaborative experience, explaining that group effort is essential in developing effective leaders (Chaleff, 2003). Therefore, the social constructs of a group are primary considerations for helping to develop the members of the group individually. In this example, the researchers are leveraging the group as a tool by which to develop the whole person, whether they are a leader or a follower. Convincingly, the literature on leadership emphasizes the importance of understanding the leader as a human being as well as how the identity of the leader (in comparison to its followers) shapes the forthcoming thoughts and feelings associated with leading effectively.

Leadership Attributes

On college campuses, student leaders are placed in positions which encourage them to become and remain change agents on campus (Bass, 1998). Through promoting positive change, leaders develop particular attributes which support their own lived experience and the experience of others (Dugan, 2011). These attributes, such as problem solving and decision making, give students the chance to engage in experiences which increase their understanding of leadership, as well as provide themselves with the tools to continue leading effectively (Dugan, 2011). Kouzes and Posner (2008) add to the discussion of leadership attributes in their text *The Student*

Leadership Challenge, suggesting there ought to be a pattern of honesty and forward-thinking among student leaders. An honest and forward-thinking student leader helps drive the mission of the institution, even at the micro level (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). The research on leader attributes underscores the importance of the on-campus Student Affairs department and the role it plays in developing effective and competent leaders.

It is critical to note that a student's attributes may not have particular meaning to the student in the context of leadership. For example, a student may report they are a creative person, but note they became a leader for the reason of feeling pressured into the role, not because they report being a creative person. This student, feeling pressured into leadership, would perhaps identify with Chan and Drasgow's (2001) Social Normative MTL. In this instance, the student's attribute of creativity is secondary to that of their leadership lived experience and ultimately helps to distinguish at what point in their experience they feel motivated to lead, if at all. Despite the pressures of becoming a leader, there is still a context as to how to conceptualize the alignment (or lack thereof) of a student's traits within the leadership experience. The experience, while subjective to each student, contributes to the leadership paradigm as a developing area of research.

Student Leadership

It is important to consider how college student leadership fits into the larger discussion about leadership. A major contributor to the discussion on student leadership is developmental theorist Alexander Astin, who studied student leadership in the context of campus groups. Astin (1984) described student leaders using two constructs: the psychological energy which is exerted on tasks (for example, *preparing* to lead a Student Government meeting) and the physical energy students exert while leading (for example, the act of *facilitating* the Student Government

meeting). According to Astin (1999), both the physical and psychological energy exerted by a student leader occurs on a continuum, considering the experience of the student. This continuum is interpreted by examining how the student utilizes their energy in an academic context bearing in mind their level of involvement. For example, in order to conceptualize one's energy toward an experience, we would begin by exploring the academic obligations of the student and compare these responsibilities to the student's level of engagement on campus. Additionally, we could explore a Student Body President's priorities when it comes to meeting the needs of their Cabinet in a timely manner, versus maintaining a specific grade point average in order to remain part of Student Government. The physical energy put into *leading* (or the *object*, as Astin refers to it) would be the President's engagement with their co-leaders, and the psychological energy would consist of the President's consciousness (or lack thereof) of balancing academics with extra-curricular activities. By conducting this comparison, we are helping to define what the student prioritizes among their responsibilities as a student and as a leader. To help gain better insight as to how we define a student's energy in their dual role as student and leader, future research ought to intentionally explore the leadership phenomenon at the micro level.

While there is research exploring the internal working of a student as a human being (see Burchard, 2009), there is little research surrounding the more explicit and personal experiences of students who are part of campus groups. It would be helpful to better understand how students in these campus groups construct meaning out of their leader or follower roles. For example, within Student Government, a student's level of seriousness as a leader would be considered in the context of to what degree the student is a leader or follower within the organization. Consequently, a leader's level of involvement is grounded in various definitions and contexts, each one viewed differently in the field of Student Affairs. Hernandez and colleagues (1999)

agreed, suggesting there are different ways of distinguishing leadership so the student's personal experience is highlighted. With a more focused and phenomenological approach on student leadership, engagement as a leader is conceptualized as a unique portrayal of lived experience. As a result, the leadership paradigm is constructed based on the unique dispositions and human behaviors that traditionally occur in student organizations.

The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA, 2004), describes the college student experience as one that explores a student's cognitive complexities, including critical thinking, effective reasoning, and identity development. To this end, the professionals supporting student leaders should help to advance humanitarianism in their work, promoting an appreciation for a diverse student body (NASPA, 2004). With the support of student affairs professionals, student leaders are then more easily able to construct meaning in their work, leading to a sense of feeling motivated to lead. Students who are motivated to lead on campus and obtain positions of responsibility are cultivating a culture that promotes student agency. An example of this comes from Richard Keeling (2004) in his argument stating student learning is to be reconsidered when discussing the college experience. Keeling (2004) goes in depth in saying students should no longer be expected to simply learn from a teacher and textbook, but we should begin to conceptualize learning as multidimensional, highlighting NASPA's (2004) explanation of a more focused approach on a student's critical thinking skills and how these skills are manifested in the development of an effective leader. According to Keeling (2004), there exists "essential integration of personal development" (p. 3) as a primary concept of acquiring knowledge and enhancing the student voice on campus. This development is perceived in several facets of the on-campus experience and becomes part of the autonomy college students acquire as leaders. Keeling's work is synonymous to Social Psychologist George Kuh (2005),

who argued out-of-class experiences are what enhances student learning, often time, more than the explicit curriculum taught in the classroom. The concepts learned outside of the classroom are perceived as the results of students wanting to lead in the first place. The central aims of Kuh's (2005) argument are first to compare and contrast the academic curriculum and out-of-class curriculum, and second, establish evidence for the leadership identity development of a college student in the context of motivation and corresponding behaviors. As was shared in the literature, there are multiple ways to make sense of a student leader's experience, and the experiences gained on campus can live within non-academic contexts. These particular contexts are what ultimately enhance a student's ability to think critically as they work to establish a foundation for their unique leader identity.

Astin (1997) also argued behavior plays a large role in student leadership. This behavior occurs on a continuum, highlighting that students exhibit different desires and motivations. Personal development also affects behavior as the leader develops (Astin, 1984). Personal development may change over time, and the meaning which the student gives to their growth may be impacted by the institution's commitment to increasing student involvement (Astin, 1984). For example, there exists a motivation within the student to engage in activities with peers, enhancing their competencies about how to work with others. Additionally, the students are engaging in a process internally, generating an understanding for the care and welfare of others on campus, specifically encouraging growth among student leaders, leading to the student defining their own worldview in the context of leadership (Hernandez et al., 1999; Kuh, 1995). This worldview is embedded in how we define a student's motivation to lead and the corresponding behaviors associated with leading (Astin, 1997; Chan & Drasgow, 2001;) It is crucial to be mindful of the impact leadership practices have on student behavior and the

subsequent realities of what it means to be a student leader among other students.

As students in college continue to lead among their peers, it is worth exploring how leaders impact the larger group. Lavery (2003) suggested students should become leaders because there is a focus on service to others. This service is embedded in promoting good, empowering students, as well as encouraging students to recognize the power one has among others for the better. Once students are affirmed in their particular roles as leaders, they feel more adequately prepared to handle the forthcoming challenges (Lavery, 2012). Karnes and Stephens (1999) supported this idea by explaining the sooner students are brought in to the leadership role, the earlier they are exposed to adult learners who enjoy interacting and engaging with student leaders. Developing a culture of supporters maximizes interactions between students and adult learners (Palmer & Burgess, 2001). This further emphasized what John Gardner said is the capacity to “place equal attention on individuals who show gifts in [the] other intelligences” (Williams-Medlow, 2008, p. 139). As the experience of leading sheds light on the larger group in the context of how the leader leads, group dynamics are given more attention, creating rhetoric on leadership which highlights service to others.

Socially-Driven Implications on Student Leadership

An interesting shift in the literature on student development has occurred recently, using theory-based discussion as a foundation to further explore practice-based discourse. While previous researchers focused on traits and behaviors, recent scholars conceptualized leadership by inviting leaders to explain their lived experiences in the context of knowledge and networking (Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005). They conceptualized leadership in terms of collaboration and intensity of action. In this worldview, leaders must be aware they exist. Existing as a leader, according to Komives and colleagues (2005), is defined as

incorporating the explicit language around what it means to make a difference or accomplish goals. The discussion surrounding the group's goals helps to bring about a leader's qualities no matter how experienced the person may be. Once the awareness is present, the students become involved in group activities which may include leadership positions among peers (Komives et al., 2005). Next, the students build a passion for the cause and for how they want to engage. At this point, the students realize leading others becomes part of their identity as students. They have invested time being with a particular group of others, who contribute to influencing the perception of student leadership. The practice-based research in the literature gave attention to lived experience as it relates to the relationships that are created within student groups.

Gender. Other aspects of individuality influence a student's perceptions and experiences of leadership, including gender and identity. Adams & Keim (2000) found within Greek Life, women were eager to collaborate with one another while men view membership and executive titles as a prideful and tangible piece to their identity. Collaboration and pride were viewed in this context as mutually exclusive, given the intensity that is placed behind a male leader's mission to hold an executive title. The men in leadership positions within Greek Life held more confidence in their respective roles while the females tend to be more judgmental about their competence as leaders (Adams & Keim, 2000). Building upon the context of extra-curricular activities on campus, Dempster, Stevens, & Keeffe (2011) conducted research on student-athlete leaders, reporting the male athletes as identifying their leadership role in the context of their relationship with the coach, whereas the females felt like leaders in the context of social variables, such as being part of a team and interacting with the other players. This example of the student-athlete leader is interesting because the exploration of lived experience is within the context of a team of people rather than a group simply brought together via student elections.

Ethnicity. It is also important to consider how a student leader's ethnic identity contributes to their leadership development. While this particular study did not incorporate ethnicity as a way to make sense of the emerging themes, the researcher nonetheless, collected demographic information for the purpose of future research projects on the topic. Therefore, it is essential to bring attention to how Ethnicity plays a role in student leadership. Komives and colleagues (2006) researched college students and found that White students felt it was necessary to have the ability to relate to diverse groups. As one of the author's participants reported,

I was always working with the same kind of people with all the exact same perspectives on everything. But coming here [to college] and working with different people has really given me a different perspective of what people that are different than myself can bring into a group (p. 408).

This student was eager to expand the ways in which they interact with other students, demonstrating the student's awareness of the uniqueness of people which exists within campus groups. Similarly, Daloz and colleagues (1997), found White students in their study were intentional in participating in "constructive engagement with otherness" (p.110). The "otherness" came in the form of different races, ethnicities, and leadership practices, which the authors argued had a profound impact on the how the group worked toward a shared goal and vision (Daloz et al., 1997). To this idea, Collins (2011) provided insight into the lived experience of students of color who were also leaders on campus. According to Collins (2011), students of color felt the need to integrate into the majority group (White counterparts) in order for their roles as leaders to be of worth and valued by the other White students. Interestingly enough, these same students in Collins' study also reported needing to be involved in identity-based campus clubs, giving consistency to the leader's identity and a heightened sense of validation of

their role. If student leaders of color were to integrate into a campus organization which was predominantly White, the student's identity as a person of color might become secondary to the experience. In other words, the student's racial identity is perhaps voided within the lived experience as a leader (Arminio, 2000). Much of what the authors mentioned in regard to a student leader of color highlighted the need for preserving the student's voice among the majority population of White student leaders (Arminio, Carter, Jones, Kruger, Lucas, & Washington, 2000). As a result, the authors shared what students of color believed to be the subsequent costs of leading among the majority group; themes emerged including level of loyalty among peers as well as how much faculty and staff support existed for students of color compared to their White counterparts (Arminio, et al., 2000).

Perhaps more is needed in the discussion of White students and students of color when it comes to the leadership phenomenon (Beatty, Bush, Erxleben, Ferguson, Harrell, Sahachartsiri, 2010). Future research ought to focus more on the social justice implications to college student leadership, perhaps extrapolating further how White students and students of color collaborate on projects and how this collaboration intersects with how the campus supports its leaders. Given the discourse surrounding student leadership and the context by which a student's identity is communicated, it is worth exploring further how one's personal identity lives within the motivation to continue leading.

Motivation to Lead

Motivation is recognized as one of the antecedents of leadership and student development, however, the literature lacks a deeper understanding of motivation as it relates to a student's lived experience in college (Murphy & Johnson, 2011). Colleges and universities across the nation have invested time researching their student leaders and how these leaders can

ultimately enhance the campus culture for the reason of institutional gain, at times overlooking the student's reported experience (Astin, 2000). If Student Affairs scholars shift to a conversation which focuses more on the student's own development as a leader, we can perhaps better understand students' motivation to pursue and persist in these roles. Additionally, student reports can perhaps be used as a tool by which to make sense of their leadership experience.

The discourse on student leadership can be enhanced as more focus is placed the reasoning behind a student's desire to lead. Therefore, motivation is a key factor to begin focusing on the phenomenon. A student's motivation to lead (MTL) is defined as the willingness they have to engage in activities (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). The willingness to engage should exist despite potential challenges, whether these challenges are among their peers or with supervisors (Hendricks & Payne, 2007). Furthermore, Student Affairs Professionals can leverage a student's eagerness to engage as a way to conceptualize their role as a supervisor and how being a supervisor to a student impacts the motivation for the student to continue leading. Assessing MTL is a fundamental way to gain deeper insight into a student's lived experience, thus, utilizing a construct which highlights motivation is an adequate approach to exploring the phenomenology behind student leadership (Chan & Drasgow, 2001).

Previous scholars have used MTL as a framework by which to understand student development. For example, Correia-Harker (2016) utilized Chan and Drasgow's (2001) MTL model, determining motivation to be experience-specific. Correia-Harker (2016) worked to determine how one's level of self-efficacy and leadership capacity was integrated into the leadership development process. Furthermore, he explored the relationship between one's experience and the context by which one understood their own leadership identity.

As a student leader's identity is explored, it can simultaneously be difficult to understand students' motivation to lead. If students were asked how they define their particular motivation to engage as a leader, the definition ought to be part of what Correia-Harker (2016) called a "particular connotation" that highlights a certain lived experience (p. 5). Therefore, students would be encouraged to include their own examples in their definition. Otherwise, a student may simply explain their perceptions of how they generally view leadership, ignoring the attributes which helped to determine a student's motivation to lead.

Since lived experience is individual to each student, motivation may actually occur on a spectrum, from high Social-Normative MTL to high Non-calculative MTL, depending on how students report their experience in their respective campus departments (Chan, Uy, Chernyshenko, Ho, & Sam, 2015). Once a leader identifies their level of motivation on the spectrum, a clearer picture is painted in predicting the students' leadership activities and subsequent performance. For example, if a student were to facilitate a meeting with the Executive Board members of a Fraternity, there could be several ways through which this facilitation is executed, perhaps providing insight into the student's own motivation. Therefore, the student may feel motivated to accomplish the necessary meeting agenda items while remaining attentive and engaged with the meeting's attendees. Similarly, this same student may come to an understanding of leadership which centers around commanding large groups of people. If this were the case, the student may ignore some of the positive outcomes (e.g., group development, task completion) in the leadership role and how these outcomes impacted future motivation to lead. No matter which point of the motivation spectrum they report finding themselves, these examples provided insight into the possibilities of what students may report

about their own experiences, incorporating a qualitative-centered perspective with a construct historically used in a quantitative way.

Chan and Drasgow, through MTL (2001), sought to explore a student-focused experience. Chan and Drasgow suggested we must first explore the dimensions of leader motivation, which include items such as behavior, personality, and demographics, because these are characteristics remaining somewhat stable over time (See Appendix E). The National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs—which supports the professional development of college student leaders—agreed with this suggestion and argued that these characteristics differ among populations of leaders, these populations consisting of those on sports teams prior to college, those who volunteered in local communities, and those who held positional roles in civic organizations (NCLP, 2006). Dugan and Komives (2006), as part of NCLP's research, sought to expand the conversation around a student leader's identity and subsequent motivation to lead. The Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS) was used among the 50,378 student participants to assess the level of confidence students had in their abilities to lead. The instrument also included fourteen demographic variables to consider, including gender. In their study, women reported more socially responsible leadership than men, however men reported a heightened level of efficacy and confidence in their respective leadership roles. Additionally, women were considered more competent in their roles and therefore more motivated, whereas the men were confident in their position, remaining motivated by position title (NCLP, 2006). Leadership outcomes of this study reported students identify most with *commitment* to their roles, while their values in *change* were low, meaning, students did not see change in their organization as something that impacted their leadership identities, rather, it was the level of adherence to remaining a leader and respect they had for their own identity which was labeled

as the most important to students. Furthermore, confidence in *leadership efficacy* was high, giving students an idea of which areas of their leadership identity to improve on. More recently, the literature shifted to discussing how program development acts with intention to adhere to diverse populations from the start, rather than how diverse populations can adapt to what is already created (NCLP, 2011). In other words, there is a sense of intentionality with leadership programs as they are added to organizations and institutions (NCLP, 2011). Although this approach was historically presented from a quantitative perspective, it is worth noting nonetheless as the ideas appropriately set the stage for qualitative research on the topic. This quantitative study is congruent with Chan and Drasgow's (2001) approach to leadership; the personality and demographics of a leader are suitable antecedents to the discussion on how to conceptualize the essence of a student leader and the drive behind becoming the leader.

Much of the literature discussing motivation to lead is centered around how college students want to develop the self (Komives et al., 2013). Personal identity is also part of feeling motivated to lead and wanting to create change (Komives et al., 2005). Ironically, development of the self is rooted in the desire to help others and engage in the welfare of others (Erickson, 1968). The longing to care for others and committing yourself to this practice are behaviors of an ethical leader (Brown & Trevino, 2006). These behaviors are embedded in treating others in the group equally, showing concern for the larger group and practicing with fairness (Resick, Hanges, Dickson, & Mitchelson, 2006). With relation to the larger group and care for others, students often feel their leadership identity was created based on prior experiences as a follower, reporting leadership as being passed down from those who preceded them (Dugan & Komives, 2007). This example generated the need for further conversation on motivation. It has been shown that situational factors, collective interest (Pruitt, 1998) and prior experiences impact and

shape a student's decision to lead (NCLP, 2006), so it is worth exploring student reports as a way to understand motivation to lead. Chan and Drasgow (2001) termed this approach as an exploration of a "social dilemma" (p. 496), having to decide on a leadership position based on the costs and benefits of the role. For example, a student may report being more eager to lead simply because the benefits of the position are high. In this case, scholars may be interested in exploring how the student navigates through the social dilemma, perhaps for selfish purposes. Despite the dilemmas that may arise, students' perceptions of leadership will continue to enhance the conversation on leadership as dynamic, multifaceted, and leader-specific.

The literature on student leadership and motivation is multidimensional, highlighting the student experience in the context of behavior, group dynamics, and social constructs. The consciousness by which we understand this phenomenon, up until now, focused on how students engage with each other and how their respective roles as leaders influence the larger group. The literature has discussed the behaviors and actions leaders have in their positions and how these traits impact the campus organization. The literature has also provided a socially constructed lens by which to make sense of leadership, however this lens is largely at the macro level, and appears to ignore what happens at the student level. The student leadership phenomenon has been conceptualized with a sociological lens, giving attention to how students develop themselves in relationship to how the group meets its goals and objectives and also how the institution meets its desired outcomes. As a result of what has already been researched, we ought to now make sense of leadership from the reports of students, rather than basing the phenomenon of leadership off of generalized behaviors of individuals.

Conclusion

Given what we know about student leadership, there is value in researching further how the leadership identities of individual students are formed, gathering information from the students as they report their lived experience in real time. Therefore, the MTL framework incorporated in this proposed qualitative study will explore the transition from a cognitive understanding of oneself in a leadership role, to more of an application-based discourse, discovering the meaning and experience of a student's motivation to lead. During this shift, the research will pay particular attention to a leader's objectives, noting what students share with regard to expectations of a role as they feel driven to lead. For example, motivation could be defined as one's intention to pursue the role in the first place: is there a desire to control others, is the student choosing to engage in advocacy for social justice, or something else? As research begins to gather more micro-level evidence of motivation in the context of leadership, we can perhaps better adhere to the needs of student-run organizations and their student leaders, allowing for continued discussion in how the literature ought to expand. Once scholars make a more intentional shift to explore qualitative reports of student leaders, student affairs practitioners can perhaps better understand how and why students engage as leaders during college. The following chapter will examine deeply each qualitative report that was gathered by the participants.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of generating the richest description of a particular experience, this study applied methods of Phenomenology which allowed for an unveiling of human experience, thus, applying the work of philosopher Martin Heidegger (1962). The ontological perspective behind Heidegger's work laid beneath the meaning of being. In other words, Heidegger questioned one's existence and the nature of the particular existence. Considering Heidegger's approach, the ontological foundation of this study explored the reality, or perceived truth, behind student leadership as the students defined it to be. More explicitly, the ontological foundation of this study was defined as exploring the interpretation behind one's lived experience and how this interpretation formed a more objective and clear understanding of one's existence (Dreyfus & Wrathall, 2007; Eatough & Smith, 2006;). Heidegger also explained that humans are part of the world with which they exist, thus, they remain connected with that world, producing a meaningful life (Heidegger, 1962). The connection made with the world, according to Heidegger, is what helped to frame the epistemological foundation of this study and supported the researcher's constructivist attitude which explained that knowledge and meaning is constructed through experiences (University of Sydney, 2018). This concept was largely criticized, notably, by Edmund Husserl, who explained that Heidegger provided an inaccurate assessment of human existence, creating what many thought to be a weak epistemological approach to subjective experiences (Crowell, 2002). Nonetheless, Heidegger sought to build meaning from humans through interpretation, becoming the basis for what is known now as Hermeneutic Phenomenology, later enhanced by phenomenologist, Max van Manen (Heidegger, 1962; van Manen, 1990). Cohen (2001) furthered the discussion on Hermeneutic Phenomenology by suggesting the process of *uncovering* details is what provides a deeper and

richer account, rather than the *accuracy* of a certain experience. To this end, Cohen suggested the researcher ought to “acknowledge implicit assumptions” as to avoid illogical interpretations (Kafle, 2011, p. 190). Highlighting the hermeneutic cycle of phenomenology allowed the researchers to investigate and reveal lived experiences as holistic, descriptive, and personal phenomena.

This Phenomenological study explored the lived experience of college student leaders. The research investigated the daily experiences of people and their connections to specific contexts. Therefore, the researcher had an opportunity to explore the “everyday ordinariness” of being in the world (Kelly, Millar, & Dowling, 2016, p. 5). According to Heidegger (1962), in order to generate an understanding of people’s existence, one must search the hidden meanings behind someone’s everyday experience. As such, this study utilized the method of Phenomenology, inviting student participants to share their perceptions of themselves in their particular role on campus and how these varying dispositions became a product of their motivation to continue leading. Throughout the study, the reported experiences enhanced the rigor of the study because they provided the researcher a chance to outline clearly a student’s perception of themselves as a leader (Van Manen, 1990). Secondly, the reports came directly from the students, which increased the study’s rigor in the context of defining a student’s lived experience. These definitions offered a space for students to explore the meaning behind their own human experiences (Creswell, 1998). Additionally, the student participants added new perspectives to the conversation on leadership, helping to expand the leadership discourse in higher education (Cohen, Kahn, & Steeves, 2000).

The significance of the study is embedded in the contextual experiences of the participants. Thus, two commonly accepted methods of data collection were used, including

interviews and observations (Creswell, 2007; Van Manen, 1990). As a Phenomenological researcher, Van Manen's intent was to approach the research as a "dynamic interplay" which strayed away from rules or methods (Creswell, 2007, p. 59). As such, this qualitative study focused on the interplay of the phenomenon of leadership within the explicit lived experience of the student. Much like Van Manen (1990) believed, approaching the study in this way allowed for an interpretive approach to the data and phenomenon, rather than a more rigid and narrow-minded perspective, which has the potential to ignore important aspects of the student leadership phenomenon. Throughout the study, each reported experience legitimized the rigor of the study, allowing for participant perspectives to generate a personal lived experience. As a result, the data collected gave the researcher a chance to consider different meanings, much like Van Manen suggested (Creswell, 2007).

Rationale for Research

While there is a significant amount of research on the study of leadership within the collegiate context (see Kuh, 2005), the research had largely been quantitative - it measured the explicit outcomes of leadership programs during a student's college experience. For example, much like other quantitative researchers in this field, Chestnut and Tran-Johnson (2013) assessed student leadership through structured evaluations where students described their experiences numerically on a formal evaluation. This approach is common among quantitative researchers; utilizing a student's numerical reports as a way to make sense of a phenomenon. While this information is valuable, it is also imperative to highlight additional qualitative accounts to student leadership in order to gather richer descriptions of their experiences. Previous qualitative research was student-focused in its approach to expand on lived experiences (see May, 2009), however, there was still a large focus on leadership program outcomes and how these outcomes

help (or hinder) the institution's place in the field (Gahagan, 2011). Because of this, it is imperative that this study help to define what has largely been undefined in previous literature; the lived experience of student leaders and what these insights mean for the future of Student Affairs and leadership development programs. In this study, the researcher went beyond reevaluating student leadership outcomes and instead evaluated the overt student reports as a means to understand leadership. By doing so, a more holistic view of student leadership and its impact on campus climate and Higher Education emerged.

Research Context

This study was conducted in the context of college students' lived experiences, particularly full-time students and those who engage on campus. The study included students from both private and public institutions, thus, the data revealed specific information about the institutions, noting how the institution influenced the student's leadership experience. Furthermore, because the context of this study was student-focused, there was significant attention placed on how the student body impacted the students' decisions to lead and continue leading. To this idea, it was imperative to maintain mindfulness of the time of the year in which the student participants were invited to report on their lived experiences. It was also important to note the contextual elements of the research study, specifically the complexities surrounding how a specific institution operates, how that institution historically supports (or does not support) its student leaders, and how living in a U.S. context influenced a student's motivation to lead. Considering the data that gathered in this study, the contextual elements (student-focused, time frame, campus operations, and campus type) played a large role in the reports communicated to the researcher which in turn impacted how each student participant made sense of their

experience as a leader. Chapter Four will delve deeper into the first-hand accounts conceptualized by participants.

Research Sample & Sources of Data

Recruiting and selecting participants for this qualitative research study was purposeful and appropriately aligned with the central research questions (1. How do college students perceive their role(s) as leaders on campus? 2. What informs a college student's motivation to lead?) as to enhance the rigor of the proposed phenomenon (Sargeant, 2012). Because the participant pool is typically small in qualitative research, it was imperative to seek out participants with similar knowledge of the field as to maximize the likelihood of rich data (Hamilton & Bowers, 2006). The participants (consisting of students who were enrolled in institutions of higher education) provided perspectives which matched specific identities being studied, often time relating to their role, experience level, and/or demographic factors (Sargeant, 2012). Upon receiving IRB approval, the initial outreach included an email message (see Appendix A) which communicated the purpose of the study in a non-threatening and low-pressure manner (Hamilton & Bowers, 2006). The email message outlined the researcher's identity, a description of the study, and the participant's role in the study. There was a secondary method of recruitment and outreach completed on Facebook, outlined in a post shared to a Facebook Group (see Appendix H). Literature suggested the sample size allow for the need to uncover the main points of the phenomenon (Gonzalez, 2009), therefore, it was ultimately concluded that eight participants supported this goal. To this end, Creswell (2011) stated studying a relatively small number of individuals is sufficient as long as data saturation is reached.

As recruitment unfolded, the researcher sent the outreach letter to potential participants, which communicated that the interview would be done in a space which was safe, confidential,

and sensitive to one's identity. Additionally, from initial outreach to the point in which the researcher met with the student, the informed consent form was shared with the student in order to remain consistent in sharing with the participants their rights throughout the study (see Appendix C). If the researcher did not receive communication from the participants after 1 week, a follow-up was initiated. For those participants who responded prior to one week's time and who had indicated interest in participating, the researcher communicated the clearly defined terms and next steps of the study as to remain transparent with the participants (Archibald & Munce, 2015). For those who did not report interest in participating and for those who expressed interest after the group of participants was selected, the researcher shared that at the current time, their candidacy as a participant was not being pursued (see Appendix B). After recruiting potential participants, the researcher contacted the students to set up a time to be interviewed.

In addition to diversity of leadership role, the researcher strived to include student participants from various campuses so that diversity of shared experience could be included in the study. The population of participants included a range of differences in leadership roles which contributed to variations in leadership perception and subsequent motivation (Palinkas et al. 2013). There was no intent to recruit participants from varying ethnic backgrounds, although demographic information was anonymously collected at the point in which the researcher met with the student and before the interview began (See Appendix F). The demographic information was not used as a factor to conceptualize the project's topic, rather, it could perhaps be used in future research. Furthermore, prior to beginning the recorded conversation, participants completed the informed consent form in order for the researcher to rightfully explain the scope of their participation (See Appendix C). The reports shared by the students expanded upon and highlighted the contextual elements of leading on a college campus. Per Creswell's (2011)

suggestion for qualitative researchers, there was continued recruitment of participants for the study until data saturation was reached.

Data Collection Methods

There were two primary methods of data collection in this study, consisting of semi-structured interviews and observations (See Appendices D & E). The researcher considered the context by which data were gathered, and that interviews and observations gave the research the most detailed and explicit information about the leaders. Interviews provided a one-on-one interaction without the added influence of peers, and the observations shed some light on student leaders in the context of the larger group (Mcnamara, 1999). Bryman (1996) suggested interviews to be semi-structured if the researcher has a clear focus and vision for the study.

Interviews. Because the approach to interviewing was semi-structured, the researcher followed an outline but also left room for more in-the-moment occurrences during the data collection. By conducting the research in this way, the researcher was able to create an atmosphere that was inviting and open, giving the participants a chance to share their personal experiences. Lofland and Lofland (1995) suggested providing room for interpretation of ideas is key to build rapport with participants. As such, meaning is developed in the interaction, generating a significant lived experience (Kvale, 2006). Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick (2008) continued this discussion by mentioning the flexibility of semi-structured interviews allows for the discovery of new information to arise. Interviews created a space for a participant to tell a story, providing the researcher with rich detail as to the lived experience and furthermore, the development of patterns and themes (McNamara, 1999).

During each semi-structured interview, the researcher left room for added insight from the participant. Implementing semi-structured interviews gave the chance for more than one

meaning to a particular phenomenon to emerge, enabling the interview to develop richer detail about a reported experience (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The developed protocol for the semi-structured interview acted as a guide for the conversation, providing a foundation for the rest of interview (Flick, 2002). An example of when semi-structured interviews were successfully used was in a study completed by Folta, Seguin, Ackerman, and Nelson (2012), which explored the leadership characteristics among women as it related to community change. Here, the semi-structured interviews were implemented as a way to examine the behavior and practices of the participants as they acted out their leadership roles. The researchers also leveraged the strength of semi-structured interviews in a way that allowed them to view the interview on a spectrum, or in other words, eliciting narratives across life stages (Folta, et al. 2012). In May's (2009) work, the same questions were asked of each participant, however the researcher was mindful of what Wengraf (2001) stated, sharing that the researcher ought to conduct interviews in a careful yet theorized way. Throughout May's (2009) research, he implemented a phenomenological approach to the data collection as to utilize open-ended questions to evoke the most detailed lived experience of the participants. As a result of May's (2009) project and the phenomenological approach used, a number of themes arose, which challenged assumptions in the current literature on student leadership development (May, 2009).

Considering the prior research completed, which successfully used semi-structured interviews, this research study did the same, drawing upon both general and specific aspects of a student's lived experience. This was done by asking questions such as, *How would you describe yourself as a college student?* and *What are the benefits of being an on-campus leader?* (see Appendix D). The goal in asking these questions throughout the semi-structured interviews was to redefine what it means to be a college student leader in present day, and how these

dispositions challenge or support prior reports on student leadership, potentially resulting in new knowledge to the field.

Observations. In addition to interviews, semi-structured observations were made to gain more insight as to the contextual experience of the student leadership phenomenon. Additionally, the triangulation of the data supported a more complete study, drawing upon more than simply interviews (Yeasmin, Rahman, 2012). Sheroz (2013) suggested that observations allow for the recording of behavior as it relates to the student's own lived experience. To this point, the study relied on eye witness accounts rather than directly communicating with the participant (Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Sheroz, 2013). Observing participants gave meaning to leadership from an outsider's perspective, which ultimately was compared and contrasted with the direct reports gained in interviews (Van Manen, 1990; Bryman, 1996). To expand on Sheroz's (2013) suggestion, each observation was a Non-participant Observation (as opposed to Participant Observation). The researcher was mindful of only observing activities and not integrating himself into those activities. Because of this, the observations were structured in the sense of intentionally making observations from afar. Sheroz (2013) explained that the researcher ought to conduct observations wherein they identify themselves to the group, therefore, at the start of each observation, the researcher read a statement to the group which communicated the researcher's presence (see Appendix G). The study included semi-structured observations, noting the point at which the researcher reached data saturation (Sheroz, 2013). Once the statement was read aloud, the researcher conducted the observation, collecting relevant observational data. Upon review of all observational data, the researcher began to notice trends and patterns in the data, which resulted in data saturation. At the point of data saturation, the researcher no longer collected additional data. Creswell (2007) and others agree that with multiple observations

included as part of the research, the researcher may have a higher potential to get lost in the data or even forget to document occurrences, resulting in a lack of data. Ultimately, the researcher did not feel lost in the data, although made sure to cross-reference the observation data with the interview data so that patterns and similarities could be identified. The observations that were conducted included a Greek Life weekly meeting, Student Activities Board weekly meeting, as well as a Student Activities Executive Board meeting.

The goal of the observations was to gather descriptions of what happening during the meeting among participants and construct those descriptions in the form of jottings (Sheroz, 2013; Creswell, 2007). The researcher was able to construct the social meaning behind the phenomenon because there were several students interacting with each other at one time. Hammersly (1992) mentions that the process of conducting observations can help to validate the researcher's theoretical approach to the study. The observations were in place to help enhance the knowledge of the phenomenon and help to draw conclusions as to the complexities of leadership in general, including, overseeing event preparation, facilitating meetings, managing the several voices in the room, and encouraging peers to contribute to the discussion during a meeting. Throughout each observation (see Appendix E), the researcher noted how meeting agenda items were communicated among student leaders and what students expect of their peers in future campus events. Each observation was split into time frames of fifteen minutes each as to help analyze the observation in the most concise way, resulting in a complete observation of approximately one hour.

Data Analysis Methods

The first step of analysis included the researcher bracketing assumptions, which is a key step to conducting phenomenological data analysis (Chemero & Kaufer, 2015). In this process,

the researcher noted and suspended judgment on the topic and instead, focused on deeply examining the reported experience of participants. Assumptions which were bracketed by the researcher included:

- Students enjoy working with their peers
- Student leadership is sought after by many students
- Student leaders feel appreciated by their institution's administration
- Student leaders rely on their staff advisors
- Student leaders easily balance their academics with leadership involvement

Bracketing assumptions led the researcher to continue the phenomenological data analysis process, which included transcribing and reviewing the transcription (Sutton & Austin, 2015). By transcribing the data verbatim, the researcher had a chance to experience the phenomenon and helped to make sense of (and prepare for) future interviews. Larkin, Clifton & Watts (2006) suggested that once interviews are transcribed and reviewed in depth, the coding process begins. This process gave the researcher a chance to identify topics, similarities, and differences among each interview, ultimately shaping the project's relevant themes (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

The interview data were organized through identifying codes, themes and patterns throughout the transcript (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Wertz (1983) suggested the researcher conduct systematic reviews of the transcripts as to reflect upon the reported phenomenon. Giorgi (2009) suggested the researcher note recurring themes in the interview data as to highlight patterns within the phenomenon. According to the literature, analyzing interview data phenomenologically meant the researcher ought to "slow down, to pause, to re-examine taken-for-granted assumptions and the idea that we already know this phenomenon" (Finlay, 2014, p. 1). The author referred to this approach as dwelling, or becoming engaged with what is being

revealed through the data (Finlay, 2014). The researcher became engaged with the interview data by sifting through each transcript to make sense of the student reports.

As the data analysis process continued, the researcher took note of emergent patterns. The researcher created hand-written codes on each transcript as well as implemented the following color legend to determine what and how the participant was communicating:

- Blue: How academics played a role in their perceptions of the leadership experience
- Orange: How the institution and/or campus impacted the leadership experience
- Yellow: Descriptions of roles and titles given as a leader
- Green: Explanations or definitions of leadership
- Pink: Anything that was perceived by the researcher as reflective or self-reflective

As the researcher implemented this system, the content was coded and categorized. Once the codes and themes were identified, they were organized into groups, based on the ways in which the student reported these key ideas in their own experiences. To this end, Taylor and Bogdan (1998) suggested that the researcher refine the codes so that the organizing of the codes is seamless and avoids misinterpretation. The researcher conducted this strategy by outlining the noted codes in a spreadsheet. This gave the researcher a chance to see all codes and themes together, supporting the phenomenological method of interpreting first-hand accounts.

Furthermore, the organized categories, mixed with the color-coded themes from the transcripts, helped identify key concepts of student leadership. After categorizing the key words, central themes began to emerge based on the expected repetition of ideas shared by the participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). This, in turn, created what the researcher, peer reviewer, and auditor verified to be as the four main themes within the data (see Chapter Four for a full description). By analyzing the interview data in a specific and intentional way, the researcher

was able to identify clear themes within the student leadership phenomenon, resulting in new knowledge to the field of Student Affairs and topic of leadership.

Considering the approach taken to analyze the interview data, the observations were reviewed and analyzed in a similar way. After bracketing assumptions, the researcher engaged in observations, made field notes, and reflected upon the observation notes in hopes of gaining deeper and richer insight to the proposed phenomenon (Finlay, 2014). Similar to the interviews, as Giorgi (2009) suggested, general themes were identified in the observation data, except this time, the themes were used more as anecdotal approaches to the phenomenon, meaning, the observations gave context to the theoretical underpinnings of student leadership practice. Incorporating observations in the study gave the researcher additional perspective to the project's central aim of how to best explain the student leadership experience in the context of lived experience (Wong, 2015). In the end, both the interview and observation data, as is noted by the literature, forced the researcher to settle within the data and to allow the ideas to linger, ultimately conveying its fullest significance (Wertz, 1985).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is imperative within qualitative research and allows the academic community to assess the degree to which a specific phenomenon has been adequately captured (Denzin & Lincoln, 2015). Trustworthiness places emphasis on whether the claims made by the researcher are warranted, considering prior literature on the topic and the ultimate findings of the study (Levitt, Morrow, Motulsky, & Wertz, 2016). In practice, since qualitative studies tend to include a smaller number of participants in comparison to quantitative research, the researcher's focus should be placed on the lived experience being studied, rather than trying to obtain a large number of participants and waiting for the experience to emerge from there (Levitt et al. 2015).

So that the researcher could obtain the richest lived experience, triangulation of data was implemented in the study, utilizing both interviews and observations. By doing so, the researcher was not relying on one method of data collection, and rather, contributed a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, which is the primary goal of triangulation in qualitative research (Creswell, 1998).

During this study, the researcher was mindful of his biases from his own prior experiences as to not implement these biases into the experiences of the participants, resulting in *epoche*, or suspending the researcher's personal views and beliefs about the phenomenon as to not influence the study's findings (Lin, 2013). This allowed the study to unfold organically, providing the researcher first-hand accounts of the student leadership phenomenon. With this in mind, the researcher used reflexivity to act intentionally during the research process, meaning, the researcher built awareness of the situational dynamics of the student leadership phenomenon as to not insert biases from prior personal leadership experience (Malterud, 2001). While the researcher detached personal thoughts and feelings from the phenomenon of inquiry, the researcher kept note of when data began repeating and patterns began to emerge in the data collected. At this point, the researcher reached a point of data saturation, or in other words, new properties of the phenomenon were not emerging as a result of the collected data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Saunders, Sim, Kingstone, Baker, Waterfield, Bartlam, Burroughs, and Jinks, 2017). Once the data was collected, and at the point of saturation, the researcher began to sift through the findings, specifically the observational findings in order to provide thick descriptions of each observation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Cohen, 2006). By doing so, the researcher was able to outline the patterns of social engagement among the participants (Holloway, 1997). Appropriately paralleling this idea is the researcher's prolonged engagement with the data. The

researcher spent adequate time with the study's population as to maintain familiarity with the phenomenon yet was mindful to rise above personal preconceptions so that they did not interfere with the data collection and analysis process (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Because there were no formal instruments being used in this study, and because the study identifies as qualitative in nature, there is a need to communicate how the study was ultimately a credible and transferable piece of research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An external auditor was brought in to review the research plan, process and findings. This auditor was another faculty member within the researcher's department. The researcher provided the external auditor an audit trail which consisted of each step of data collection and analysis, including the transcriptions and final spreadsheet which contained the four main themes. It was through the audit trail that the researcher could verify that the findings align with the project's central aims (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 2004). By incorporating an external auditor, the data can be confirmed as credible to the degree that it meets the goals of the proposed research. In addition to the auditor, the researcher included a peer reviewer, designated to review the project's ultimate findings. The peer reviewer provided insight to the emergent themes and how these themes related to the study's research questions. Once completed, it was determined that the research can be duplicated, should another study similar in nature be conducted (Simon, 2011). As such, the future researcher should be able to gain enough insight and knowledge from this study as to be able to conduct their own research with similar findings.

Limitations of the Study

While the researcher implemented the appropriate steps to enhance trustworthiness during the study, it was also worth bearing in mind the limitations of this study. Central to this method of qualitative inquiry is the process of researcher interpretation (Giorgi, 2012). As lived

experiences were gathered, it was up to the researcher to outline the various conclusions of the data while simultaneously detaching personal biases. As such, the data analysis process was largely subjective in how the researcher determined meaning of the data. The potential subjectivity could have weakened findings, which policy makers say is what limits the validity of Phenomenology (Hycner, 1985). Despite the central limitations of Phenomenology, the researcher took the appropriate steps in this study to establish trust with all stakeholders involved which made for more valid and reliable data sets.

Conclusion

The phenomenological approach to the research sought to better understand a student leader's experience on campus. By exploring the leadership phenomenon through a student-focused lens, the researcher gained insight into how students perceive their roles on campus and what motivates them to lead, answered the two main research questions:

1. How do college students perceive their role(s) as leaders on campus?
2. What informs a college student's motivation to lead?

The discussion on leadership includes several stakeholders, thus it was imperative the research focused exclusively on the students, as it can be easy for information to get lost among the larger picture of higher education and the literature on leadership. Despite the limitations of phenomenological inquiry, the researcher ultimately gathered findings which perhaps contributed to a deeper conversation about student leadership that focused more on student voice and less on institutional reputation. The following chapter will outline the project's findings and conceptualize how the researcher determined the study's central themes.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This study examined how college students make sense of their leadership experience and how this experience is defined through a motivation to lead framework. The existing literature on student leaders in college extends insofar as to explain the leadership experience of the general student body – often time from the perspective of the institution - rather than looking at a more micro-level experience of individual leaders. As such, this project sought to fill a void in the literature, supporting the future of college student development in the context of student leadership on campus. The methodology of Phenomenology was used to help fill the gap in the scholarship, allowing the researcher to obtain first-hand accounts of students' conscious lived experiences (Käufer & Chemero, 2015). The findings of this study include the personal perspectives of the student participants which ultimately helped answer the central research questions proposed for this study:

1. How do college students perceive their role(s) as leaders on campus?
2. What informs a college student's motivation to lead?

The findings shared in Chapter Four are presented as a result of the data collected from the study's eight participant interviews and three observations. The researcher engaged with the data in a circuitous manner as to revisit the data several times (DeCuir-Gunby & Marshall, 2011). By working in such a way, the researcher thoughtfully coded and categorized the data in order to conceptualize the content from the transcriptions. The researcher engaged in two types of coding when analyzing the data: open coding and axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Through open coding, meaning and ideas were gathered from the raw data. Subsequently, axial coding began once these ideas were discovered, allowing for connections to be made among the codes. As codes were developed, and in hopes of reviewing the data in a clear and intentional way, the

researcher adopted a specific codebook structure (DeCuir-Gunby & Marshall, 2011). This plan included stating the code, a description (or definition) of the code, and finally, an example from the raw data that appropriately matched the code. By structuring the analysis in such a way, the researcher was able to conceptualize the data in a simplified way and ultimately produce the central findings of the study.

Interviews

Summary of Participants

The findings from this study emerged as a result of eight face-to-face interviews and three in-person observations. Per the stated inclusion criteria for the study, the student participants were enrolled in an institution of higher education, at least 18 years of age, and either self-identified as a student leader on campus or were involved in a designated official on-campus organization in a formal positional role. Each interview was conducted on a one-on-one basis between the researcher and the participant. Conversely, each observation was conducted in a group setting, with the researcher physically placed external to the group being observed. Each observation contained a student group as small as eleven participants and as large as thirty-two participants. During the in-person interviews, the student participants were asked to fill out an anonymous demographic questionnaire, including questions about their age, sex, student status, racial/ethnic category, and the role(s) the students held as an on-campus leader (see Appendix F). This information was important to the data analysis process, specifically when considering how a participant's characteristics contributed to their own lived experience. For example, two of the participants were beyond the age of a typical U.S. college student which perhaps added to how a leadership experience was conceptualized. The participant data is outlined below in *Table 1*. Pseudonyms were used to protect participant confidentiality.

	Michael	Erica	John	Sean	Gina	Carl	Sarah	Kevin
Age	21	20	20	27	21	22	21	21
Sex	Male	Female	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Status	Junior	Sophomore	Junior	Graduate Student	Graduate Student	Senior	Senior	Junior
Race/Ethnicity	Caucasian	Caucasian	Caucasian	Asian/Pacific Islander	Latino	Caucasian	Caucasian	African American
Institution Type	Mid-Size Public	Mid-Size Public	Mid-Size Private	Mid-Size Private	Mid-Size Private	Large Private	Small Private, Liberal Arts	Mid-Size Public
MTL Construct	Affective, Social Normative	Affective, Social Normative	Social-Normative, Non-Calculative	Affective	Affective, Social Normative	Social-Normative	Affective, Social Normative	Affective
Role(s)	Resident Assistant; President, Athletic Cheering group, President, Student Tours, Vice President of Finance, Fraternity, Study Abroad Ambassador	Fundraising Director, Sorority; Orientation Leader	President, Fraternity	International Student Association; Orientation Leader, Mentor, Global Leader	Vice President, Student Government Association	Student Government VP; Student Life Chief Engagement Intern; Off-Campus Comedy Troupe; Fraternity, PR Chair	Pre-Departure Specialist, Global Education; Student Ambassador, Admissions, Sports Club; Executive Council; Student member of Lecture Committee	Student Council, Residence Life; Student Government Representative; NAACP Organization

Table 1. Summary of Participants

Coding Process

In qualitative research, assigning codes, or labels, to data gives the researcher a chance to make sense of the raw data that was collected. Miles and Huberman (1994) and DeCuir-Gunby and Marshall (2011) suggest that codes be assigned to chunks of data so that ultimately, meaning is developed from the first-hand accounts collected by the researcher. Much like the authors of

Hermeneutic Phenomenology believe (see Van Manen, 1990), the researcher ought to work to uncover specific details of an experience, therefore, by implementing a coding process, meaning is developed by becoming immersed in the data. As mentioned earlier, open and axial coding procedures were implemented in the study as to maximize the depth of meaning behind a student's reported experience, perhaps shedding new light on the student leadership phenomenon in higher education.

As the coding process unfolded, the researcher found 358 significant statements from the transcripts (averaging 44 statements per participant), each statement giving personal meaning to a particular lived experience (Schuemann, 2014). At this point, the researcher condensed the statements into codes. The codes were created based on repetition of words, actions, thoughts or beliefs (Creswell, 2013). From there, the codes were color-coded based on the researcher's perception of the code's meaning. These colors were not final determinations of the code's meaning, but rather, an initial perception of the code. Ultimately, the researcher mixed and matched codes to help simplify them into succinct and clear themes. *Table 2* outlines the codes and corresponding colors. The following colors were used to identify the codes:

- Purple: Identifying the leadership process as one where a student acts intentionally in their role, ultimately creating the leader identity
- Yellow: Identifying career-based perceptions
- Brown: Self-reflection and prior experiences as a leader
- Blue: How the student's campus/institution played a role in their perceptions
- Green: Volunteering and service
- Teal: External stakeholder involvement

- Grey: How relationships played a role in the student’s perception

MICHAEL	ERICA	JOHN	SEAN	GINA	CARL	SARAH	KEVIN
Leadership as priority over academics	Institution as place of comfort and opportunity	Familial impact on leadership	Supervisor/Advisor support	Institution as place of opportunity	Campus environment	Experiential learning	Student activism
Career-driven	Providing service to enhance reputation	Role of institution	Volunteering and service as a way to engage	Serving others	Being an advocate	Administration engagement	Student voice
Timeline; reflecting on role	Prior experiences shaping current experience	Peer dependency creating pride	Peer relationships	Leadership as an intentional experience	Taking initiative to build authority	Service to community	Keeping balance
Leadership as process	Modeling behavior	Position as a means to an end	Equal opportunity	Encouraged to lead	Administration influence	Sharing leadership experience	Leveraging campus events
Campus engagement	Career preparation	Acting diplomatically to make informed decisions	Noterity	Face of institution	Expectations of role	Curriculum integration	Maximizing relationships
Faculty and Staff support	External influences	Life experience building leadership capacity	Stakeholder perception	Self-reflection	Sense of obligation	Leadership as natural/innate	
Leadership as enhancing skills	Communication as primary competency		Alumni support	Group dynamics	Leading with consciousness	Prior experiences as a tool	
Providing service to community				Decision-making	Personal background		
Leadership challenges							
University's relationship to the student leadership experience							
Familial influences on student leader							
Leaders as positive influences							

Table 2. Initial Codes and Color Identifiers

After reviewing the codes, the researcher organized the data into succinct themes with corresponding subthemes as to give meaning to the reported experiences, ultimately addressing the study’s central research questions (Creswell, 2011). The researcher noted which codes appeared frequently throughout the data as to verify the strength of the code, ultimately becoming a relevant theme and subtheme (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, Snelgrove, 2016). While frequency of codes within data can warrant the inclusion of a theme, it is of most importance to confirm that the themes and subthemes capture the essence of the study’s research questions (Vaismoradi et al. 2016). The researcher determined the emergent themes and subthemes to be relevant to the study’s findings due to the explanations reported of leadership perception and how these perceptions shaped the leader’s motivation to lead. Table 3 outlines the frequency of responses, highlighting the subthemes which emerged as a result of responses.

The summation of both the themes and subthemes are shared below in *Table 3*, utilizing a method shared by Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997). In this method of frequency reporting, themes are communicated in one of three ways; general, typical, or variant, based upon the findings reported by the researcher (Hill, et al. 1997). The frequency report will begin with general themes (applied to all participants), followed by typical themes (applied to 5-7 cases). Variant themes, which is considered the third and final designation, were not identified in this study due to the high frequency of the emergent themes and subthemes.

Themes	Subthemes	Frequency
Intentional Leadership	1. Skill-building	General
	2. Leadership as process	Typical
Self-reflection	3. Relationships	General
	4. Prior experiences	General
Institution-specific experience	5. Campus community	General
	6. Relationship with administration	Typical
	7. Advisor support	Typical
Being of service	8. Supporting new leaders	Typical
	9. Volunteering	Typical

Table 3. Nominal Report Frequency

Themes

Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen and Snelgrove (2016) suggest themes in qualitative research are the main products of data analysis. They go further to say, much like other authors in the field, that qualitative analysis and themes development are cyclical processes, often requiring the researcher to return to data in order to fully immerse themselves in the content. In essence, the themes, or products, as the authors mention, give meaning to the study's phenomenon, working to answer the central research questions of the study. For the purposes of this phenomenological study, themes and subthemes were identified, drawing upon multiple perspectives of meaning as they related to the participants' lived experiences as leaders on campus. By including subthemes in the data analysis, the researcher was uncovering deeper insight and patterns among the shared

reports by the participants (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). More specifically, the researcher was able to make clearer determinations as to where the student fell on the Motivation to Lead spectrum, allowing for an intentional way to cross reference a student's perception with one (or more) of the three Motivation to Lead identifiers; Affective MTL, Social-Normative MTL, and Non-Calculative MTL (Chan & Drasgow, 2001).

As the researcher engaged in the data analysis process, there were four central themes which emerged from the data (intentional leadership, self-reflection, institution-specific experience, being of service), each one including at least two subthemes. These themes and subthemes, along with the chosen significant statements are what have helped give meaning to the study's central aim, which is to create a more micro-level analysis of the student leadership experience in higher education.

Intentional Leadership

The first theme *intentional leadership* explains the way in which a leader acts in their role and with others. Specifically, this leader is acting with a purpose and is conscious of their personal definition and perception of leadership. The subthemes of this central theme are important to the leadership experience as is evidenced by the reports collected during the study. For example, maintaining awareness that *leadership is a process* is an important piece to the lived experience. As such, a leader ought to know that it takes time and experience for leaders to develop the skills needed to practice the role with intention. To this point, *skill-building* is another subtheme which emerged from the data. Leaders in this capacity should be working toward building new skills or enhancing previous skills so that ultimately, the leader can address their peers effectively and communicate the needs of the organization clearly. Participants identifying with this theme tend to fall under Affective MTL and Social-Normative MTL. In

other words, participants enjoy leading due to their own leadership process beginning years prior, or they feel a responsibility to lead based on previous roles and the challenges and successes faced in those roles.

Self-Reflection

The second theme, *self-reflection*, provides deeper insight into a student's perceived experience of their leadership role. Students falling into this theme are continuously reflecting on leadership experiences of the past in order to make sense of their current lived experience as a leader in college. This in turn shapes the student's leadership identity which makes the experience specific to each leader. As such, *relationships* are a key piece to the theme. This subtheme captures the idea that student leaders often reflect on how relationships with stakeholders can be embedded within the leadership experience and that these relationships impact how the leader carries out their role present-day. Furthermore, relationships from *prior experiences* are what help the leader make sense of the ways in which they decide to maintain relationships as a leader in college. Similarly, the roles students have held prior to college are what keep the student engaged currently. Because the student has had previous experience as a leader, they are in turn able to reflect on what they did, how they acted, and the decision they made, so that they may carry out their current role effectively. Participants identifying with this theme could fall under any of the three MTL constructs: Affective, Social-Normative, Non-Calculative. Specifically to Non-Calculative, these students may not account for the subsequent benefits of leading (i.e. future jobs, salary) because they have been engaged with leading for so long that the experience is perceived as innate and part of day-to-day.

Institution-specific Experience

The third theme, *institution-specific experience*, gives attention to the student's school with which they attend. This theme outlines how the leadership experience is shaped by how the institution plays a role, considering institutional policies and programs. It is important to note that although this theme could be specific to each participant, institution-specific elements were shared from each participant, making this a relevant theme to the study. The three subthemes suggested for this central theme are important in exposing how (if at all) the student leader and institution collaborate on various projects in support of student development. First, *the advisors and staff* play a large role among the student leaders, providing feedback on events and participating in weekly meetings to name a few. These professionals are the advocates on the frontlines, working directly with students while simultaneously enforcing institution-specific policies. Secondly, *the campus community*, which could also be synonymous to student body, incorporates itself at times indirectly with student leaders. In other words, the student body's perception of these student leaders could influence a leader's own thoughts about their role, and furthermore, their motivation to continue leading. Third, *the administration of the institution* is arguably the most influential to the student leader's experience. The administration may challenge the student leadership discourse when it comes to making decisions for the institution based on a student leader's suggestion. On the other hand, the administration can engage the student leaders to support the leaders' growth and development. The participants who identify with this theme often fall into the Social-Normative MTL category because the students feel a sense of responsibility to either prove people wrong or act in the best interest of the institution. Sometimes, the student feels a sense of loyalty to their university, resulting in another reason why Social-Normative MTL is appropriate here.

Being of Service

The fourth theme, *being of service*, explores student leaders who execute initiatives that support the campus and surrounding communities. This theme examines the meaning behind students who feel a sense of obligation and joy out of giving back to their institutions. For example, students are eager to spend un-paid time engaging with their campus on initiatives that support future projects at their institutions well after the student has graduated. Speaking to the subthemes, these students want to spend time *supporting new leaders* and the potential creativity these new leaders can bring to campus. Secondly, student participants feel as though *volunteering time and effort* is what truly allows for a maximizing of the leadership role. While conscious of this unpaid time, student leaders want to fill gaps on campus where more students can get involved. Sometimes, student leaders discover new initiatives on campus and are willing to sacrifice their time in order to execute this new project. Student leaders under this thematic umbrella would usually be identified as Affective MTL and Social-Normative MTL; receiving genuine enjoyment out of leading (despite being unpaid at times) as well as feeling an obligation to give their campus what the campus has given them.

Summarized further in *Table 4* below are the total frequencies of each emergent theme, considering the response frequencies noted above. Next, in *Table 5*, the frequency of each subtheme is reported.

Theme	Total
Intentional Leadership	111
Self-Reflection	110
Institution-specific experience	87
Being of service	50
Total	358

Table 4. Frequency of Themes

Participants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Totals
Leadership as process	10	4	8	0	7	5	11	4	49
Skill-building	11	10	5	13	8	8	5	2	62
Relationships	8	6	9	19	11	10	3	4	70
Prior experiences	11	5	10	1	2	3	6	2	40
Advisor support	2	0	0	11	1	1	2	0	17
Campus community	8	4	4	2	11	7	7	7	50
Relationship with administration	3	1	2	0	0	7	5	2	20
Supporting new leaders	3	8	3	5	0	5	6	0	30
Volunteering	3	2	0	6	3	0	6	0	20
Totals	59	40	41	57	43	46	51	21	358

Table 5. Response Frequency

Participant Pseudonym Coding for Table 5: 1-Michael, 2-Erica, 3-John, 4-Sean, 5-Gina, 6-Carl, 7-Sarah, 8-Kevin

Examples of Themes

Theme One: Intentional Leadership. The first theme in this study explored the process behind becoming a student leader on campus and the corresponding skills which are developed as a result of leading. As such, it is important to note that the theme of intentional leadership is shaped based on individual experiences of the leaders. Coming together, these varying dispositions are what created the first emerging theme of intentional leadership. All participants, in some capacity, discussed the process with which they engaged, in order to become a leader or maintain a leadership role. Furthermore, the discussions on leadership process naturally created dialogue surrounding the skills needed to be an effective leader.

Leadership as process. Participants were transparent in sharing how they practiced their leadership process and the subsequent skills that were developed as a result. Michael shared,

I joined all of those the very first semester I got here, and as a Junior and in the Fall as an incoming Senior, I'm still involved in all three of those, and I hold either Presidencies or a form of Vice Presidency in all three of those and I think the reason I've achieved those titles is because I uh, followed the steps of leadership to get there.

Michael went further to share,

But I can say that I was there from the beginning and I hopefully laid the foundation for what the organization became. And I think that, that says a lot about a student leader, is that they're, they're willing to do what needs to be done for the greater of the organization or for the university.

As is evidenced by Michael's experience, he acted intentionally so that he could ultimately enhance his leadership experience by participating in more positional roles later in his college career. This idea highlights the student leadership phenomenon as a process, rather than a one-

time occurrence. Michael communicated his experience in such a way that set the stage for his future involvement on campus. Similarly, respondents shared their insight as to how the leadership process played a role in personal life experience. John mentioned,

So I kind of think about it, I re-train myself on how to take on life in general and I've become a lot stronger of a person internally, and how I present myself, um, which is definitely the biggest thing in my life that, that stemmed from that conversation with my dad.

John leveraged specific instances in his own life to better shape his view on how he practices leadership. John's example demonstrates that the leadership process may bleed into personal life experience, which for John, gave him the capacity to continue leading on campus. Participant Sean takes a different perspective on the leadership process, which for him, started to develop more fully when he collaborated with others who held the role before him. These prior leaders helped give Sean perspective on his role and how he could ultimately carry out the role successfully. He shared,

...uh, the former, uh secretary she, she helps me a lot. She's an alumni student right now so she always says, like, hey, um, if you are being in a good position for our organization, do this and don't do this, like, I'm getting the feedbacks and comments from the previous person because they already run this organization and they already know about this organization and they already hired such a people in their life, in their, in their, past life.

Some participants, such as Gina, took a more direct approach on leadership as a process, speaking explicitly to the intentionality behind the experience. Gina mentioned,

So I think you also have to be very forward-thinking and intentional with all of your actions, and, and understanding, what are the ramifications of this, how is this going to

positively impact people beyond my one year term, how am I laying a positive foundation and groundwork for the legacy of [school] to continue.

She goes on to share her transparent view of the leadership process:

Um, and so an effective leadership is like being super intentional and understanding like every possible way that a decision could go wrong. Like, you almost have to be a lawyer sometimes in the sense that you have to be willing to make a case and build an argument and not just operate with the assumption that everyone will agree with you.

Interestingly, Gina's disposition is perhaps opposite of the rest of the participants, meaning, whereas most of the participants spoke of leadership process building up to present time, Gina spoke of the process as what it can ultimately turn into, many years after the fact. Similar to Gina, Carl spoke about how there tends to be a cyclical nature of student leadership on campus, so student leaders ought to be mindful of this so that needs of the organization continue to be met.

Carl explains this type of leadership process in the interview:

I think for me, student leadership means initiative and authority. Um, I think students have an inclination to be involved, but the cyclical nature of student leadership on campus means that you need students who can be very responsive and to the needs of an organization and be very on top of whatever's happening.

Outside of the general leadership process on campus, Carl describes what the leadership process could look like internally, within group members, and that this experience creates a leadership process that somewhat distorts a leader's intentionality and consciousness of leading, at times, reaching a point of experiences conflict of interest:

Um, but I've never been in a leadership position that was so tethered to other people, like we're at a point where we sort of like, complete each other's sentences, our group chat

flies by, um, and I find that to be rewarding when someone has your back, that's great, but also can be really frustrating, you know, in times where we disagreed on things, being in that second position has been tough, or knowing that like if someone, you know, if a student group, for example, like, doesn't like the President, they have some history, I have to shoulder that burden even though it's not my vendetta.

Outside of the internal experiences faced by Carl, some participants, like Sarah, explain the leadership process as a way for students to intentionally create their own success. This success, according to Sarah, can be multifaceted:

Um, having student leaders who really can pave the way to success um, however that looks, um, like I said for me leadership comes academically professionally and socially.

Sarah goes on to say that her success as a leader and the ways in which she leads are attributed to her innate feeling to pursue opportunities. She outlines for the researcher her natural inclination to find leadership roles on campus, defining what she believes to be her leadership process:

Um, people often talk about natural born leaders, whether or not um, I believe and what kind of constitutes as natural born, or if you're culturally defined leader, but I find myself often in those positions and so it comes naturally for me to like seek them.

Skill-building. Considering what has been shared so far within the realm of intentional leadership, it is worth noting that much of what was shared about the leadership process had a direct relationship to the explicit skills needed to successfully execute the role(s). Skill building was categorically a piece to the leadership experience that was present in all participant reports, shaping the idea that when a student leader acts with intention and consciousness, that they are able to effectively practice leadership. Participant Erica takes a unique approach on sharing her point of view on leadership skill-building. She (along with many of the participants) mentions

communication as a skill a leader ought to have. As an extension to communication, she identifies specifically, literacy as a primary skill to have as a leader. She shares this idea as a way to shed light on the importance of engaging with stakeholders and how this high level of engagement truly has an impact on the leadership experience. Erica shared,

Um, you need to be the kind of, common sense, but you need to be literate because as a leader, you need to make sure that you can, if you have to put out publications or anything, you put out publications for your organization, so being literate and being able to um, have proper grammar is very important. Um, communication is a major competency because you have to properly communicate with not only the people that are overseeing your organization, but with the people within your organization, the people that are trying to join your organization, and really everyone on campus, you have to be able to communicate with them in some way, shape, or form.

Not only does Erica share her idea on the most important skill a leader should build, but she gives context as to why this is a primary skill and how this ultimately creates an environment where leaders act with intention among their various stakeholders. Similar to Erica, Kevin suggested that sometimes, leadership is about being aware of others and their individual personalities. While not an explicit technical skill, Kevin is clear in continuing the theme of intentional leadership; bringing mindfulness to the practice so that the group can facilitate an inclusive environment for all stakeholders:

I believe you just um, I believe you need to see the strengths and weaknesses in all of your leaders, like, um, some leaders aren't very comfortable with speaking, while others are, so like, if you fall short in speaking, that's no problem, you can still be a leader, but you need to make sure you are um, accommodating with the group...

John shared a parallel idea, emphasizing respect as a key element in facilitating a group and most importantly, acting with consciousness and intention:

Yeah, in, in order to be an effective leader in my opinion, is you have to have respect for the people you're leading. If you, if you, if they don't have your respect and you don't have respect for them, you're not going to get anything done, cause no one is going to listen to you, or uh, take you seriously, and so the biggest thing for me is, you got to, you got to, listen to everybody. Everybody has a voice, everybody has an opinion, so you got to take that into account, whether you take it with a grain of salt or not, you, you got to give people the time to speak and let their voices be heard or else they are going to get upset and you never know if you're going to have a mutiny under you.

Michael brings in his perspective and shares that skill-building comes from the leader themselves, sometimes separate from that for the larger group.

I would say a good sense of maturity, um, is needed with anything. Um, the practice of uh, of sound judgement and being able to critique yourself without putting yourself down, it's uh, it's not, because asking yourself, what am I doing wrong um, can be taken two different ways. You can take it as I'm bad at this, or you can take it as I need to grow in this.

As is evidenced by Michael's report, the practice of intentional leadership lives within his own reflection of himself and how he was the reason for the explicit developed leadership skills.

Much like the participants noted, reflecting on the relationships they have had with peers and stakeholders, as well as the prior leadership experiences which formed their current identity, it is important to expand upon how these reports of self-reflection help build leadership capacity within college students. As such, the researcher will next outline the moments of self-reflection

which were shared by participants during the study's interviews. The next theme outlines how participants came to make sense of their leadership experience through the act of reflection.

Theme Two: Self-reflection. The second theme of the study helps the reader better understand how a student leader's reflective analysis of their experiences help shape their respective leadership identity in the context of higher education.

Relationships. As was communicated by participants, there are many stakeholders involved in the leadership experience in college. These stakeholders may be co-leaders, peers within the group, or other campus personnel involved with the student leaders. Michael explains how he initially noticed student leaders on campus and it was through the relationships built with these older student leaders that Michael became a leader himself. He shared,

I would say um, as a Freshman and Sophomore, um, the upperclassmen um, influenced me a lot, um, in wanting to lead. I saw, I saw what they were doing for the organization and I saw how much self, or I saw how much praise they were getting from others and I saw um, how happy they were with themselves, that they were leading, and I kind of wanted that feeling for myself. I, I wanted to uh, feel accomplished and, and know that what I was doing was beneficial...

Michael was able to take note early on in his college career and build relationships with those who knew about how to be a successful student leader on campus. Michael leveraged his relationships in order to ultimately create his leader identity today. Similar to Michael, Erica also took initiative early on, building relationships within her sorority on campus, resulting in her rise to become part of the group's leadership team. Erica mentioned,

So um, my first semester in my sorority, I automatically went ahead and was like, you know what, I'll apply for positions, and I applied, and I was actually nominated for my

position, because my sisters thought that my personality fit the position, so that was really nice to have, like, nice for me to be nominated to it...

It is obvious that Erica's peers saw the eagerness and motivation in Erica, as well as took note of her personality, demonstrating that the leadership experience could ultimately be formed through early interactions with older leaders (should the student take the initiative to engage in this way). Sean takes a different approach, sharing that the leader ought to be mindful of the within-group relationships and that group members are being given attention. He shared,

And second thing, like, they have to, uh, get enough time with the people. You have to, just make sure you are giving full of entertainment for the members. If you don't have entertainment, people get bored, so we have to make sure we are organizing the event in a proper way...

Sean also mentions that a leader must be mindful of how decisions can impact the relationship-building in the group. Perhaps Sean is suggesting that leaders must be upfront and direct with their group members so that projects can be completed appropriately. Sean's report appears to say that those leaders who are more laid back tend to be taken advantage of. This brings in a unique perspective to relationship-building in leadership, perhaps an extension of the earlier discussion on how leaders can appropriately act with intention. He stated,

If you're being really good, down to earth, people will step on you, so people will say, no you're not doing anything, so, so if you're being bad sometimes then you will not get all of the negative comments in to yourself.

John brings in another perspective to relationships. He shares that he appreciates the fact that his peers can rely on him, noting that his "ego is a big factor" (l. 124). More specifically,

It, it feels good cause uh, my initial thought is like ok, this person is having an issue and they needed someone to help them and they thought of me. You know, I was one of the thoughts going through their head, like, oh this dude knows what's going on, he's been through the same thing I've been through. He can give me advice and help me get through this or whatever it is they may be getting through, whether it be studying for a class I took or having family problems, like personally, I've seen it all, so I got a lot of advice to give.

Gina brings in an important piece to the discussion on relationships. She suggested group dynamics are a key component to a successful leadership experience. She reflected on her role as a leader within the context of group dynamics, sharing,

And I think team work is just critical because people need to feel as though they are being heard. Um, and they need to feel as though their thoughts are being respected and that they can count on someone, that loyalty, that accountability, that trust is critical and I think that's always the biggest downfall of organizations, because you can have all the great ideas in the world, um, and it can go nowhere if you don't have that strong foundation of a team that's willing to kind of just take one for the team and just people...

Carl mentioned a similar idea to Gina's, emphasizing the importance of relationship building with peers (or "followers") within a campus group and how the relationships built with group members enhances each person's experience as an involved student on campus:

I think developing strong interpersonal relationships with anyone you work with um, is also really important, so I would encourage them to like, if you, you know, when I manage a team of interns at Hillel, like I always take them out for a big dinner and I'll get Hillel to pay for it, and then like there's a sense of friendship and fun there, which is

important, because I think a lot of students who are highly involved on campus see those, even though they are positions of responsibility, any of their clubs or extra-curricular activities are some form of a social life for them, so I would definitely tell them to focus on that.

On the contrary to Carl's example, Kevin shares that his relationships within campus groups extend far beyond his role as a leader and into his day-to-day as a student:

And then, my best friends, like, um, my best friend [name], and also my roommate, he's in Student Government Association with me as well as our other roommate and you know, it's nice that we all have this to share together and do together. Um, it's like a great support system, it makes me comfortable, it makes me feel very motivated that like, there's not too much pressure to be involved on campus, I can do both.

Continuing the discussion on self-reflection and relationships is *prior life experiences* as a way to make sense of the leadership experience. The researcher designated *relationships* and *prior experiences* as separate subthemes in order to place emphasis on two different ideas: engagement with people versus engagement with a lived experience. That way, the reader can conceptualize the general theme of self-reflection into two separate categories, ultimately making for a clearer definition of self-reflection in this context.

Prior experiences. Sarah shares a specific example, reflecting on her time in elementary school and how the perceptions of those around her allowed her to ultimately envision herself as a leader. She stated,

I think of like, when I was young, in like elementary school and teachers would be like, ok, you're the class leader when they would walk out of the room and some students would like really take that on, and like stand up or whatever in my experience and like

and what I've seen and like, elementary school classrooms or some students kind of are more timid and sit back and so you can even see it like, in young kids, like, the innate drive for leadership, and so I think that there are skills and there are qualities, like um, those sorts of things, like engagement and, um, the other things I've mentioned that really kind of, that's what makes an effective leader.

Sarah also conceptualized her prior experiences in the context of her involvement on campus. She reflected on how her engagement in campus groups allowed her more clearly take note of her leadership development. Sarah shared,

So things like, I mention being involved in, in [school] yoga club, and like, while that was something I was so interested in and having so much fun with, as I've developed professionally and academically I have realized that like, I have experiences that can be used elsewhere that other people might have more experience with like yoga or health that could benefit that club more than I can.

For Michael, it was his high school experience that shaped his desire to continue leading, sharing,

I think I, from when I was younger I was told I would, that I have a lot of potential um, to be a leader and I took it to heart, um, when I was in high school and when I had my first forms of executive roles and when I got to college I assumed that desire to lead would continue.

Kevin continues the conversation of prior experiences shaping leadership identity, noting in particular how his high school involvement transitioned to a form of activism on behalf of the student body. Kevin found his niche in high school and was able to therefore leverage his position and promote good on campus. He shared,

I believe my initial motivation is, I've always been um, I just always liked positions like that, even in high school, I was in student government association, um, and me and my friend actually started a club together in high school for um, suicide awareness, because we had a, a population problem, with like, high schools in our area, it's really sad, so we started a club to make sure people were happy in our high school. And when I got to college, I um, I didn't want time just to be wasted...

Similar to the policy and activism sought out by Kevin, Carl also engaged in representing the student body when it came to serious matters being shared on campus. Carl shared a story of one of his first campus leadership experiences which was created as a result of intense political uproar in the United States:

Um, but like the big first thing I got involved in, in student government, was this initiative around free speech to get our President to do a public event on free speech because he had, basically said that Richard Spencer, a pretty prominent uh, member of the alt-right, who months later would go on to lead a very violent protest in Charlottesville, was allowed to come to campus, and I guess they were like, as a Jewish student, I felt, that was probably my influence to get involved there.

The self-reflection theme which emerged in this study sought to explain the students' first-hand experiences with their stakeholders and how these individual experiences helped to shape their leadership identity. By reflecting in such a way, the students were able to make sense of their present-day roles and how they can further develop and promote student leadership on campus. Perhaps by reading these reflections, universities can shed light on what it is student leaders are looking for in an ideal leadership role, ultimately matching student needs and desires with specific leadership opportunities. In addition to the theme of self-reflection and the various

campus-specific lived experiences, this study also sought to expand upon the idea of how the institution plays a role in the student leadership phenomenon.

Theme Three: Institution-specific experience. Of the eight participants interviewed, there were four different institutions represented. While the aims of this study did not consider type of institution with which the student identifies, it was however worth noting that not all participants came from the same institution. For added context, of the four institutions represented in this study, three were small, private institutions (yet different from one another considering the participants' reports of campus culture), and one was a large public institution. Four geographic regions of the United States were represented as well. Considering the diversity of institutions and geography, a more dynamic perspective of the student-institution relationship was portrayed in the data.

Advisor support. For the purposes of this study, "advisor" will be used as a way to refer to the staff of the institution, and more specifically, the student affairs professionals. Much of what stemmed from advisor support included the long-standing relationship the student had with their advisor. If not a long relationship, then the student had built a strong connection with their advisor, perhaps giving the student reason to share more about their organization's professional staff. By including this subtheme, perhaps universities can take note of the support offered to their student leaders and the importance an advisor may hold within campus groups. In turn, institutions may more intentionally develop leadership programming which allows advisors to individually meet the needs of their student leaders. Of the 8 participants, Sean spoke extensively about his advisor. Sean came from a mid-size private institution, where the groups are relatively smaller than a large, public institution, so it could be the case that Sean felt closer to his advisor on campus. Sean reported,

...and the supervisor he interviewed me and then he came to know my, um, leadership qualities then he said like you are good to go and you can do whatever you want to do. My supervisor he's very genuine, and he's a very cool guy and he gave me the full freedom so whatever I suggest to him like he said no worries go ahead and do it because he wants uh, everybody to get, know each other and everyone wants to socialize among everyone. So altogether like his motto, his goal is like people want to get network.

Sean highlighted even further how his advisor (to whom he refers as his "supervisor") is a central motivator for Sean to continue leading on campus. Sean stated,

Like my supervisor is the only person who influenced me in a good way. He influenced me, he motivates me and he will say like, um, simply I would say he's a, he's a, another form of uh, Abraham Lincoln, so he don't uh, he don't say no for whatever I say. Not only me, whoever approach him, he will say, ok no worries, we do, we do this, ok, we go with your opinion.

Sean's advisor also encouraged him to continue leading despite any challenges that could arise, promoting what appears to be a transparent relationship between Sean and his advisor:

My supervisor, he suggests me, um, he told me that, no, go ahead and do, give your best, but don't bother about the people who are talking about behind, and don't give up, first thing, you will get like mixture of feelings, you will get a lot of negative commands and feedbacks, if you do good also, so don't give up, be brave, man don't give up.

As already mentioned, the strong support Sean receives from his advisor could be due to the campus environment, allowing for consistent crossover with an advisor. Unlike Sean, Michael attends a large public institution, where engagement with organization advisors is minimal. Additionally, much of the advisor population is made up of faculty, who sponsor each campus

group. Michael suggested that the organization advisors on campus allow for a student-centered, hands-off approach to supporting their student leaders:

And what's nice about the faculty is they, they let the students run it, it's definitely, it's a student organization. It's not, they're not all faculty-led. Um, we, we generally call our on-campus superior, we call them the advisors because they don't run the organization, they simply offer advice and they help us authorize payments, but other than that, they really let the student do what they want to do.

An important note to make is the dichotomy present in the above two examples. In comparing the two, each participant shares their respective experience, and while both examples are different, both highlight the important role of an advisor within on-campus groups.

Campus community. In addition to Michael and Sean's explanations of advisor support, the study's participants also talked about how their campus community plays a role in helping students develop their leadership identity and capacity. Carl describes how his institution (small, private institution) impacts his perceptions of student leadership on campus, sharing,

Um, I would describe the culture as generally very bookish, and there's a small percentage of students, it's like fifteen to twenty percent who are more social, um, and really distinguish between those two cultures of students...

Kevin describes how his campus (large, public institution) often makes time for external parties to come to campus to engage with the community. These moments, as reported by Kevin, are what help build his eagerness to continue leading because he is gaining insight from those who are in the public eye. Kevin mentioned,

I believe it's been, um, when the university brings people to speak to us, whether it's someone who's wrote a book, or has held a nice position, like um, the last speaker I can

remember very well was from um, he was I believe the Chief Corresponder for CNN, and um, he was telling us about his job and how it works, and things like that, and I felt inspired because I was um, I was listening to him speak and I was like, wow that is so nice, you know, his job is so cool, he really put himself out there.

Gina brings in another point to the discussion on campus community (mid-size, private institution), highlighting her sense of awareness that her campus is intentional with giving their students chances to engage, outside of the rigor of academics. She shared,

Um, [school] is all about service, human dignity and really honoring the people around you and seeing what you can do to step up to the plate, um, and I think that's something that really sets it apart from all other college cultures that I haven't really seen this manifested in other places. I've always felt like other universities are so focused on academia and how you'll get into the next big program, uh, but [school] is so different in the sense that it's focused on how are you developing as a person and how is your development as a person serving the community around you.

As a student attending a large, public, institution, Erica takes pride in her school and makes it clear to the researcher that engaging with the campus is a way to take advantage of opportunities, and that student ought to get involved since there are endless organizations with which to participate. She suggested,

...with having over a hundred and forty clubs, there's a lot of, there's many things you can get involved with, so with that being said, we have many different groups, but within those groups, we all find pride in calling ourselves screaming eagles, so our culture is very diverse then at the same time, it's very open and it's welcoming to many different people and I like to think that we have one of the best college campus cultures out there.

John includes a perspective on the campus community which highlights a potential lack of genuineness from the student body, and that engagement only lasts so long during college. Based on John's previous statements, perhaps his conceptualization of leadership on campus is more positive with internal experiences in his organizations and less positive externally, among the larger campus community. He shared,

I feel like there's a lot of BS to come with the culture, uh, just cause, I feel like a lot of people kind of think too much about it when in reality we are only here for four years, you know, a lot of people like to think that they can make a difference, and a lot of people definitely can, but there are a lot of people who think they can but, can't, I don't know.

As a more positive reflection on the campus community, Michael shares how his institution has always been a place of encouraging students to engage, cultivating what he believes to be a dynamic and well-rounded campus:

I think it's amazing how this fifty-three-year-old university is able to give students so many opportunities while keeping the low-cost that we have. It's a, it's a draw for a lot of people, um, being the lowest costing four-year institution in the state, um, which makes some people think that this university is cheap and twenty years ago it was, but we don't use the word 'cheap' anymore. It's, because I mean, this is a prime university.

Given the participants' perceptions of their roles in the context of the campus community, another component of this theme to add to the examples is the role of the administration.

Including this subtheme will give reference to how some of the student leaders defined their role as it related to their level of engagement with high-level campus stakeholders.

Relationship with administration. Much of what Carl explained in relationship to this subtheme was centered in his level of consciousness of his role as a high-level student leader. While this piece of the discussion bleeds into the first theme shared, it is worth noting Carl's report here, as he outlines how he engages with the administration and how that impacts his leadership role(s). Carl mentioned that he must be aware of how he comes across to the community and in particular the college administration, stating,

I am the student face, frequently, to the administration, so I'm like a representative of the student body, which means it's like my responsibility to be a mature, prepared, reasonable, thoughtful actor in those spaces. So like our college President meets with students twice a year and there'll be four undergraduates there. As one of them, you know, I have to think about how to be responsible within that role.

Carl also emphasizes the point of being in a position which allows him to leverage the knowledge of his role and use it to his advantage when engaging with the upper-level administrators, stating,

We want people, both students and administrators, to view student government as a great, um, partner to hold events, like maybe a townhall, or if they need three students to sit on an advisory board for a new initiative, we want them to come to us, so that we can also encourage people to join the organization because we have that special access.

Sarah provides a different perspective, seemingly opposite of Carl's, explaining that she leveraged campus administration in order to obtain leadership roles on campus. She was able to be proactive and receive insight from the campus Dean so that ultimately, she could find her niche on campus. Sarah shared,

I was encouraged to speak with who was then the, I assume his position was something like um, Dean of Diversity, more or less, because that was my passion and so I was encouraged to speak with him to see how I could get involved so I remember running into him actually um, between classes on the first day of school and I was like, how can I get involved um, and from that moment, as a first semester, first year, undergraduate student, he pulled me into a brand new um, council that they had created called the Action Council of Diversity and Inclusion which worked, um, with students, faculty and staff to kind of manage and oversee and develop programming, um for issues related to diversity and inclusion, and so that was kind of the first step I took but of course, um, through involvement fairs, I found myself involved in many things...

Interestingly, Sarah explores an opposing opinion as the interview continued, sharing that once student leaders are engaged on campus, sometimes, the administration can wrongfully take advantage of the students, giving them chances to lead, while simultaneously adding additional responsibility with the stipulation that students are not compensated. Specifically, Sarah adds,

I have become increasingly more frustrated in the way that institutions take advantage of student leaders, um, in terms of what they're asked to do, especially at smaller, um, in my case, a small non-profit university, student leaders really run the school. Um, I've realized that institutions and like universities would not function without volunteer student leaders because often we're not paid um, we're not getting anything other than valuable life experience, which I am so grateful for, don't get me wrong, but also um, a little validation and a little affirmation goes a long way, um, in terms of like, um, in terms of like effective leadership.

Based on Sarah's insight, her experience is multifaceted with many moving parts, specifically in relationship to how she has an eagerness to engage while there is simultaneous lack of affirmation from the administration. The administrative support given to the student leaders ought to be explored further as to make more sense of how the high-level professionals can support students at the ground level. Despite the, at times, disconnect between student leaders and their administrators, student leaders are constantly seeking out ways to give back to their communities, promoting an experience centered in service. Much of what was communicated in the interviews centered around giving time and effort to the campus as a result of the campus providing its students leadership opportunities. As such, the fourth and final theme of *being of service* emerged as a central finding of this study.

Theme Four: Being of Service. A central theme in this study explored student leadership in the context of giving back to the campus and surrounding community. Many of the participants communicated a desire to support campus initiatives and new leaders, thus creating a dialogue around being of service to both the institution and to the surrounding community. Because this theme could be defined in many ways, the researcher decided to focus particularly on student leader supporting up-and-coming leaders, as well as the time student leaders spend volunteering on campus in support of campus-wide initiatives. Including a theme around service and volunteering will perhaps better outline the time and effort student leaders give to their respective institutions and how this effort gives meaning to the lived experience of an on-campus student leader.

Supporting new leaders. As a way to make sense of the leadership experience, participants discussed how their roles allowed them to take the appropriate steps to support future leaders, whether in general on campus or within the participant's own organization. By

putting in the effort in supporting new leaders, the participants shared that they were able to be more conscious of their own leadership style as well as take note as to how they wanted to see their organization develop. For example, Erica gives an example from her experience in a sorority, sharing,

Yeah, so especially communicating with um, future members, you have to get your point across why your, like, especially for our sorority, we have to be able to communicate why we think our sorority's the best, why we think that they should join our sorority, so communicating with um, potential new members is very important because you need to maintain your integrity but then at the same time, you need to make sure that they see that, oh, this is really great, this is really fun, and they could, and they could be the next future leaders, so, communicating with them can make, and it can continue building your organization in the long run.

Erica explains the importance of how a leader ought to be conscious of their actions and decisions when supporting future leaders, as ultimately, these up-and-coming leaders will be the new faces of the organization. Erica demonstrates how her eagerness to support these new leaders is part of the overall pride she has for her own organization and leadership identity.

Similarly, John shares that much of his support to new leaders comes from the consciousness he has of others and their contributions to the group. He shared,

...but for you as a leader um, yeah I just, I'm a big believer in everybody, everybody deserves a chance to be heard because you never know what someone's going to come up with. It could be a lot of things that you never thought of that could benefit everybody as a whole.

As opposed to Erica, John communicates an approach that is more internal to his group, whereas Erica talks about the external process, specifically bringing new members into the organization. Perhaps John is eager to develop new leaders within his already-formed group, giving those in the organization a chance to shine in a leadership position. Adding on to John and Erica's experience is Gina, who describes supporting new leaders in the context of her responsibilities as a Senator in Student Government. Gina explains the meaningful experience and that she enjoys seeing other student leaders become the face of their organizations:

Because as a leader I'm really I think leaders are really responsible for facilitating a lot of things um, and through that facilitation, it's so rewarding to see people like hit a milestone or accomplish a project or get to a point where they feel that they're ready to take the next step in their leadership journey and knowing that you were part of laying that foundation is just such an honor, such a privilege, such a cool thing to be part of.

Similar to Gina, Kevin takes advantage of his role in Student Government and serves his fellow students so that they can have access to resources on-campus to maximize their engagement with the university. Because Kevin's role with Student Government is specific to the College of Liberal Arts, he makes sure to intentionally focus on those students so that their academics and social experiences on campus appropriately mesh, perhaps encouraging more students to become leaders. He suggested,

Within the student government I, uh, pretty self-explanatory, I'm the liberal arts representative so I really try to make sure that the people in my College, like Liberal Arts, like, I study political science, but liberal arts ranges for people who are also studying languages, or, things like that. I try to make sure that they feel like they are being, like,

heard and understood, and if there's things I can change within our, um, within our college or within the whole campus we can.

Carl takes a different approach to what it means to support student leaders. He explains an interesting balance he feels like he needs to keep; supporting new leaders and also making sure that his initiatives are carried out and completed successfully. He shares that there is interest among students on campus to engage as leaders however once they do, the execution is lacking. Perhaps his lived experience is campus-specific, as much of what he shared surrounded the campus events and what him and his colleagues chose to facilitate on campus for students. He explained,

So a great example is like we have to out on this Sexual Assault Awareness Prevention month, I have a committee with people who all put in applications, wanted to be on it, I can get them to do anything, reach out to student activism groups around sexual assault and policy on campus. They are disorganized, or don't want to do something, um, and I've actually been really surprised by this, like I feel as if, if you're the campus group, you know, we put on a big event for mental health and getting them the many clubs that wanted to address the issues of mental health on campus to work with us, was really frustrating and um, so I think dealing, actually, I would that's been my really my main frustration with the job, is that I've been disappointed with other student leaders at their lack of initiative or accountability.

In one way, Carl is conscious of his own position and the reputation it holds, but in another way, he wants to continue supporting those who want to engage. Like Carl, Sarah also gives a campus-specific example, noting the structure of the institution's curriculum model. Sarah explains the service-learning component of her institution, providing all students the chance to

engage as leaders. These moments of engagement, as Sarah notes, can be a subconscious experience for some. She shared,

I think that, like I mentioned already, service learning is number one so even if students don't really want to like if service or leadership isn't something that students are actively searching, they're passively doing it through class that encourage, that require service learning which are least um, a couple that students are required to take and so for me that covers the definition of leadership so being involved in the community, and being um, and serving and representing [school] and being a leader in the community in terms of that sort of thing.

Sarah's experience is embedded within the institution's mission, which is to give every student the chance to engage in service-learning. Whether intentional engagement or subconscious engagement, Sarah makes it clear that service-learning is part of the culture on campus and is what helps build the pipeline for a student to transition from just a student to a student leader.

Volunteering. While a majority of the participants took note of how they supported future student leaders, some participants communicated being of service in the context of volunteering, or giving back to their own communities. While specific to each participant, all shared that they felt an urge and need to be of service as a result of the leadership opportunities that were given to them in the first place. In some instances, the participants were drawn to the organizations and leadership roles because they were aware that the organizations engaged in volunteering. For example, Michael shares more about the culture on his campus when it comes to volunteering:

Um, we do a lot of community service in the area and we do a lot of fundraising um, which I think is very beneficial but I think other organizations do more community

service and they do more fundraising, so I think a lot of that is building ourselves as young business professionals. Um, so seeing, seeing that the organizations were doing something good, and beneficial, drew me to join the organizations.

Much of what Michael shares is two-fold; allowing himself to participate as a volunteer for the benefit of his organization, but also engaging as a volunteer so that he can enhance his own professional identity. Similarly, Sean speaks of his volunteering on campus. Of the 8 participants, Sean spoke extensively about his experience as a volunteer and how the various stakeholders involved supported his leadership development. He shared,

On campus involvement, um, as I said earlier like I like to do uh, volunteer so um, my involvement is towards only the volunteering. That's how I got a chance to be a president of this organization, um, so my involvement, so most of the staff members of the faculties and stuff they came to know how much I get involved with the university, um, in the space of the volunteering.

According to Sean, his engagement on campus is centered in the work he does for his institution and the subsequent volunteering that occurs as a result. He continued to share how he maximized the relationships he built on campus (both with students and staff) so that he could obtain additional roles:

First thing I would say is volunteering, just volunteering because um, if you go behind the volunteering it will give you a lot of opportunities. Say for example, I do a lot of volunteering with the OSI department, so they know, like, uh, for instance they have a lot of openings, like, they have a lot of positions, openings for, for the department, front desk receptionist, like the peer advisor, am program coordinator and as I am doing the volunteer service for them they know me well, so before they can interview me for this

position, they know me so, okay, so if I send my application into the pool, so they don't even want me to be interviewed, so they will say okay this person is already with me, he knows, he has the good qualities of the, um those positions...

Sean continues the discussion on volunteering by explaining how he has built stronger relationships with peers:

Uh, uh, I would say because I'm doing a volunteer service, I'm doing good with the people, like, be good and do good. That's uh, initial uh, initial motivation, not initial motivation, that's my motivation always, so be good and do good.

Perhaps Sean's heightened sense of awareness around his peers is what drives him to continue to engage as a volunteer. The service he gives to his institution seems to be centered in how he perceives his peer and staff relationships. Due to the relationships he builds, he is therefore more motivated to give his time and effort in volunteering.

Themes Summary

The four themes that emerged from the interview data allow us to make sense of the college student leader experience. The first theme, *intentional leadership*, described how leaders shape their own experience by remaining mindful that leadership is a process and not an experience which is formed right away. Furthermore, this theme explained the explicit skills that leaders ought to have in order to do the job effectively. Through thinking through the leadership process and the subsequent skills needed, the second theme emerged, *self-reflection*. The second theme gave the participants a chance to reflect upon their prior and current experiences, so that ultimately, they can continue leading well-beyond their college career. As the participants reflected on their own leadership journey, the third theme emerged, *institution-specific experience*. Much of what was shared centered around how the institution operated with their

student leaders. Because there were several different types of institutions represented in this study, this theme served as a way to make sense of leadership from varying perspectives and contexts. These different contexts included the student-staff relationship, how the campus engaged with the leaders, and finally, how the student leaders interacted with campus administration. The fourth and final theme, *being of service*, explained the leadership lived experience as one that requires specific time and energy in order to be executed effectively. In other words, participants engaged in leadership experiences that supported future development of both the institution's reputation and new and emerging student leaders. These four themes, along with the corresponding subthemes, allowed the researcher to make connections to the central research questions of this study. The connections supported the main goals of this study, which were to more deeply examine college students' perceptions of their roles as leaders on campus and more clearly define what motivates a college student to engage as a leader on campus.

Observations

In addition to interviewing participants, the researcher conducted observations in hopes of making sense of the leadership experience within a group context and to gather additional information on the meaning behind a student's motivation to lead (Appendix E). It is worth noting that the observational data complemented the interview data and merely acted as an extension of what was gathered from the interviews. In other words, the observational data helped to confirm or further the meaning of the findings gathered in the interviews.

Three observations were completed and each observation included between eleven and thirty-two participants, including the staff advisor. At the onset of the observation process, the researcher put aside any preconceptions of the observation space and type of meeting, considering the researcher's prior experience in similar spaces (Kutsche, 1998). Furthermore, the

researcher mapped the setting of each observation avoiding terminology which places judgement on a particular detail and rather gives meaning to the setting being observed (Kawulich, 2005).

The observations took place on a college campus, each event occurring in different spaces on campus. The setting of each observation was noted by the researcher however the type of the setting was not used as a primary factor to determine meaning of observational data.

At the start of each observation, the researcher read aloud a statement, containing the guidelines for the observation, making clear that the researcher is non-participatory in the group meeting. The researcher followed what Haregu (2012) outlined are the strategies for analyzing observational data. Primarily, the researcher described, chronologically, what was observed, splitting up each observation into sections of fifteen minutes. This gave the researcher a chance to strategically focus on small pieces of the observation, which Haregu (2012) mentioned is the best way to capture the story of the event from beginning to end. Each observation also gave the researcher a chance to note key events, which the author describes as “critical incidents” (Haregu, 2012). Furthermore, the people being observed as well as how the people engaged in the process of the event is another item which was noted in the observations. *Table 6* below briefly outlines the data gathered from each observation.

	Observation #1: Activities Board; Advisory Board	Observation #2: Activities Board; Executive Team	Observation #3: Greek Council Meeting
Expectations/reason for observing	Observe how student leaders engage with each other in planning campus events	Observe the leadership team of the group from the meeting prior, noting similarities/differences from larger team-wide meeting	Observe a meeting of students where a majority of them have a specific positional title; Observe a specific section of campus Student Life
Setting	Large room in Student Union, seating set up in square shape, facing front toward projector	Small conference room, seating in a circle, all facing President and projector	Large lecture hall; students seated in first few rows with a few students seated toward back of room; large projector at front of room

Interactions	Several moments of engagement between student President and team; President asking questions to gauge team's perceptions of event ideas; Staff Advisor confirming details; Small group activities followed by reporting back to large group	Several instances of students seeking validation from peers regarding proposed event ideas; Students offering President feedback on what does and does not work well during events; High level of interaction from Staff Advisor regarding more specifics of events including budgets and calendars	President calling upon each Greek chapter representative for updated report; Staff Advisor providing input to confirm and validate student input regarding logistics of budgeting and calendar
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Table 6. Observational data

Connection to Interviews. The observations added to the rigor of the study by providing a unique context by which to make sense of student leadership on campus. Considering the themes gathered from the interviews, the observations portrayed pieces of each theme, paralleling the findings of the interviews. As Haregu (2012) stated, observations help the researcher understand more clearly if people do what they say they do, adding a more practical approach to the theoretical pieces of the phenomenon. For example, the theme of *intentional leadership* was present in each observation because each team remained mindful of their roles and responsibilities, given what was reported on event updates, event logistics, and Advisor buy-in. Intentional leadership, in this context, was demonstrated by what and how the student leaders communicated their updates, especially in the first and second observations, where the President followed up with each person on their respective updates. The second theme of *self-reflection* was present in the observations as is evidenced by how the leaders communicated feedback on prior events and logistics of campus activities. This gave the leaders a chance to reflect back how they perceived each activity and how these activities could be replicated or improved upon in the future. The third theme of *institution-specific experience* was embedded in each observation as the students and Staff Advisors appropriately followed institutional policy and how, for example, budgets are made and followed throughout each planned activity. This theme in particular gave

the researcher deep and rich insight into how a particular institution operates and how much buy-in student leaders have to make financial decisions on behalf of their group. Finally, *being of service* was present in each observation as was evidenced by student reports of seeking volunteer opportunities to enhance the morale of the group. Specifically, students reported that they gave their time in between jobs and class to attend to various events so that the event itself had coverage of those who planned the event in the first place. As is evident in the findings, the interviews and observations paralleled one another and provided a more in-depth perspective on the lived experience of the student leader. As such, the researcher was able to bridge the gap between the theoretical and practical components of student leadership, ultimately giving meaning to how student experience their world in the context of campus leadership.

Connections to the Research Questions

The aim of this study was to give voice to the micro-level experiences of student leaders on college campuses. Because a central aim of higher education is to develop leaders at the collegiate level (see Baccei, 2015), this study sought to examine the phenomenology behind student leadership in college. By conducting the study in such a way, the researcher was able to gather first-hand accounts from student leaders, explaining how their leadership experience is shaped during college.

How do college students perceive their role(s) as leaders on campus? Much of the scholarship on student leadership has yet to explore the psychological and behavioral factors that influence a student to engage as a leader on campus (Cho, Harrist, Steele, Murn, 2015). Furthermore, the field knows little about how students make sense of their leadership experiences in the context of their role(s). As such, this study's focus was to conduct a micro-level analysis of how student leaders define their experiences on campus. This research question

allowed participants to examine their roles in the context of their relationships, both with campus stakeholders and peers. Additionally, participants communicated the various challenges they faced in their roles and how these challenges ultimately paved the way for future successes. It is through gathering perceptions of leadership roles that the researcher was able to better define how students make sense of their experience. Once a clearer description of student leadership was formed, the researcher was then able to create a dialogue around what motivates students to lead on campus, closing the loop on the study's goal; using motivation to lead as a framework to understand student leadership in college.

What informs a college student's motivation to lead? The second research question aimed to identify the key motivating factors that influence a student's decision to lead. As was shared by Murphy and Johnson (2011), while motivation is identified as an antecedent to leadership, we have yet to understand motivation as it relates to the lived experience of a leader, in real time. As such, participants explained how their eagerness to engage existed in several parts of the leadership process; peer relationships, advisor support, prior leadership roles, and personal attitude. Together with their perceptions of their role(s), participants' motivation to lead is what also helped the researcher identify how student leadership is executed on college campuses. The study's conceptual framework of Motivation to Lead (MTL) (see Chan & Drasgow, 2001) will be used in the following chapter to explain the students' motivation as it related to their reported perceptions.

Conclusion

Chapter Four presented the findings from this phenomenological study on college student leadership. First, the researcher outlined the participants and their relevance to the study. Included in this outline were descriptions of each participant, based on the demographic

information reported. Next, student perceptions were shared in hopes of adding new knowledge to the discussion on student leadership in higher education. The researcher summarized the varying experiences of each participant in order to give attention to the multifaceted leadership experience. Following, the researcher shared the emergent themes which validated the reported experiences of the participants. Finally, the researcher paired the study's findings with the central research questions so that connections could be made in hopes of filling the relevant gaps in the scholarship. The themes which grew out of the participant stories are shared below in *Table 7*.

Theme 1: Intentional Leadership
Subtheme: Leadership as a process
Subtheme: Skill-building
Theme 2: Self-reflection
Subtheme: Relationships
Subtheme: Prior experiences
Theme 3: Institution-specific experience
Subtheme: Advisor support
Subtheme: Campus community
Subtheme: Relationship with administration
Theme 4: Being of service
Subtheme: Supporting new leaders
Subtheme: Volunteering

Table 7. Emergent Themes and Subthemes

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The central aim of this phenomenological study was to more deeply examine student leadership from the student perspective and therefore, help make sense of student leadership in the context of motivation. Interest in this topic emerged as a result of reviewing relevant literature on the topic and making note of the subsequent gaps in the literature. Together with the researcher's prior experiences and knowledge on the topic, this study continued the conversation on student leadership in higher education. The study was executed in such a way that allowed for the lived experiences of eight student leaders to be shared in thoughtful, personal, and transparent ways. Through eight in-person interviews and three in-person observations, the researcher discovered four central themes (*intentional leadership, self-reflection, institution-specific experience, being of service*), paving the way for a more detailed and rich description of what it means to be a student leader in college and how motivation is therefore created to continue leading.

Connection to Literature

While scholars have completed a considerable amount of work outlining key aspects to the leadership phenomenon, little has been researched about the lived experience of student leaders (Burchard, 2009). If Student Affairs professionals want to gain a better sense of how to meet the needs of their student leaders, more ought to be explained as to the specific experiences of leaders. Despite the lack of scholarship on the phenomenology of student leadership, many authors contribute meaningful, thought-provoking concepts in order to build awareness of student leadership. These concepts are incorporated below as the researcher outlines the connections made from the qualitative study to the literature on the topic.

Connection to Theme One. Similar to the leadership work of Kouzes and Posner (2012), this study paralleled much of what scholars have mentioned are the key elements to leadership. The authors shared that leadership is often a multifaceted art which brings like-minded people together toward shared aspirations. It is important to note that while each lived experience of the participants was reported differently, each was multidimensional, shedding light on how the phenomenology behind the leadership experience is specific to each person. To this point, the first emergent theme of *intentional leadership* opened up dialogue referencing how a leadership experience is constructed based on one's own experience. The intentionality a leader has to carry out their role is a conversation based in how we respond to others and how we make sense of our own identities as leaders (Dethmer, Chapman, & Klemp, 2014; Kets de Vries, 2014). Yukl (2013) discussed this idea by mentioning that leadership is a phenomenon of traits, challenging how much power a leader ought to have. The participants in this study spoke to this point, outlining explicitly that leadership does not give one power right away, and that power develops over time, outlining what some would consider a parallel to Alexander Astin's student development theory, which states that students, over time, develop the capacity to invest psychological energy toward an object, the object being the leadership experience (Astin, 1985). In other words, Astin stated that the more a student is involved, the more likely it is that they become connected to the organization, confirming the energy being exerted on the proposed object. On the other hand, some participants in this study felt an immediate sense of power given their role and title, contrasting what Astin originally suggested. Ciarrochi and Godsell (2006) agreed with Astin, noting that leadership is a process and whomever decides to engage as a leader must make a commitment to growth. This growth is part of the awareness one has of their own emotional reactions to other people, and once the awareness exists, emotionally intelligent

leadership comes to the forefront, shedding light on a leadership process that is largely internal and personal to each person (Ciarrochi & Godsell, 2006; Welén 2010).

As the leadership process unfolded throughout this study, the participants shared the explicit skills needed to carry out their roles effectively. Dugan (2011) explained that leaders ought to promote positive change on campus so that not only others are encouraged to engage, but so the leaders themselves develop new (or stronger) attributes in support of their leadership development. In order to promote positive change, leaders need to be conscious of their skills and how they develop so that they can become authentic and genuine to those whom they lead (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). The participants not only shared specific skills needed to carry out the role effectively, but they also touched on remaining mindful of the skills throughout the leadership process. Examples of this included taking note of peers' strengths and weaknesses, communicating needs clearly to stakeholders, and respecting those involved so that in the end, projects can get done efficiently and with quality. To this point, and much like Astin (1997) explained, a leader's behavior can occur on a continuum, meaning, skills of leaders should be adapted to people of all kinds as not everyone in the group will feel comfortable adhering to the same type of leadership. As the leader adapts their leadership style and subsequent skills to the needs of the group, they are also enhancing their perceived self-awareness, taking note of how they react to those around them (Luthans et al. 2006).

Connection to Theme Two. Fundamentally, many of the lived experiences shared by the participants were rooted in involvements occurring either earlier in college or before college. To that end, the authors suggested that effective leaders are shaped, and that prior leadership experiences are the catalysts to becoming successful in the role (Gentry, Deal, Stawiski, & Ruderman, 2012). As such, a large portion of this study included moments of *self-reflection* by

the participants, sharing more deeply how relationships and previous experiences shaped their leadership identity. Aside from the dense discussion on leadership as a phenomenon of traits and behavior, there is some scholarship outlining leadership as an experience based on knowledge of the experience (Komives et al. 2005). As Warren Bennis (1997) shared, social conditions built around people are what create leaders. In this study, some students referenced early years in college, how they were able to construct meaning of leadership because they saw others engaging as leaders, or because they themselves were considered the followers. Similarly, Dugan and Komives (2007) explain in their findings that not only do pre-college experiences matter, but the within-college experience, pre-leadership, is what will inform a student's capacity and motivation to transition from follower to leader. The authors refer to the product of this process explicitly as "purposeful interventions" (p. 14). On the other hand, other participants in this study leveraged prior experiences in leadership roles to be better leaders moving forward. These ideas mirror the literature, which explained that leaders are not born, but rather made as they encounter specific instances which they deem as shaping their leadership identity (Kirby, 2014). Paired with prior experiences is the idea that leaders help to cultivate relationships as they experience the leadership process. This process is therefore reflected upon as students build their own definition of what it means to be a leader in the college environment. For example, Hernandez (1999) mentioned that students are able to construct their own worldview on leadership while simultaneously encouraging growth among other students. By acting in such a way, the leaders are giving meaning to their relationships with peers, fostering what Kuh (1995) designated as a key goal to leadership on campus. In this study, the researcher found that the relationships leaders built differed between what happened internally within the organization and externally among the campus community. Student leaders, according to the findings of this study, build

relationships intentionally and are mindful of the people with which they build those relationships. In turn, the student leaders hope for a stronger sense of community on campus in addition to more collaborative environments with administrators and staff. The intentionality placed in relationship-building is perhaps what Howell and Avolio (1992) reference as acting in socially productive ways.

Connection to Theme Three. Because this study sought to expand more deeply on the lived experience of student leaders, it was worth including how the institution plays a role, noting in particular, the *institution-specific experience*. The researcher found that much of what the participants shared about their experience aligned with how the institution inserts itself into the discussion. As Astin (2000) shared, institutional gain is a large part of why colleges and universities invest resources in their student leaders. As such, it was important to pair the student leader's perceptions with that of the institution so that ultimately, new ideas in the scholarship could emerge as to how institutional factors impact the student leaders. Student Affairs author, David Day (2001) reported that the institution, and more specifically the Student Affairs professional, can facilitate an experience for its student leaders that promote learning and support. This idea was found in the study, specifically noting how advisor support of the students is what fosters collaboration within the organization as well as legitimacy as an on-campus entity. Perhaps new findings in this regard emerged in the study, with particular attention to advisor involvement. The National Association for Student Affairs Professionals (NASPA), encouraged advisors of student organization to promote holistic and humanitarian approaches to leadership, so that ultimately, the student leaders can more easily construct meaning in their work (NASPA, 2004). For some of the participants, this was the case, as they mentioned their advisor as someone who facilitated the development of the students, rather than micro-managed

the students. This, in turn, allowed for the students to make the most sense and meaning of their work.

Similar to advisor support, the campus community played a role in how student participants in the study conceptualized their leadership experience. Keeling (2004) highlighted the important point that students should no longer be expected to focus exclusively on a teacher and textbook when it comes to learning, but that the institution as whole offers much more than what is simply taught in a classroom (see Kuh, 2005). Many of the participants shared how their campus offers numerous opportunities to engage as a leader, much of which happens outside the classroom. Furthermore, the student participants shared that it is the institution's mission and values that drive them to engage as a leader, not necessarily the rigor of the academics or the reputation of the institution. Lavery (2003) reported a similar idea, noting that students want to promote good on campus, empowering other students to engage as leaders as well. Palmer and Burgess (2001) underscore this idea by encouraging the interaction among students and professionals on campus so that relationships are maximized in support of the leadership experience. While at times, these relationships can be tricky to navigate (as is evidenced by this study's finding regarding collaborating with administration), it is important to note how the campus community enhances a student leader's experience in support of continued development as a professional in the field.

Connection to Theme Four. Student leaders are constantly encouraged to be the agents of change on campus (Bass, 1998; Correia-Harker, 2016). As they are put into this role and are expected to carry out specific responsibilities, there is a subsequent pride that develops as a result of being designated the agent of change. An example of this idea comes from the study's fourth and final theme, *being of service*. Because this theme is multi-dimensional, depending on the

student and their institution, the researcher defined this idea in multiple ways. The authors noted that a successful leader is one that exemplifies service to others and avoids putting themselves first (Lavery & Hine, 2012). As was evidenced in this study, the student leaders communicated service in this way – making sure that they were honoring their peers and those around them in order to make sure that they acted consciously and with intention for the sake of group they were leading. Similar to previous examples, some participants paired the act of service with the institution’s mission. Lavery (2012) continued this discussion to say that leadership is exercised in the spirit of service, much like some of the participants in this study explained the importance of service; sometimes, students may not even know they are being a service to others. Contrastingly, leaders may be well aware of their desire to serve others and may intentionally pursue leadership knowing that they will be able to make a meaningful contribution (Luthans et al. 2006). This sense of self-awareness is what the authors deem as most important in a leader, as most of the time, the leader will need to communicate their values and beliefs externally to incorporate buy-in from the various stakeholders included in the initiative.

Considering the central themes of this study and their relevance to the scholarship on student leadership, it is also worth noting how the study’s conceptual framework of Motivation to Lead (MTL) connects both to this study and to what prior scholarship has shared (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). Not only did this study explore student perceptions of their roles, but the study also explored a student’s motivation to lead based on their reported perceptions. The literature is noticeably lacking a deeper understanding of motivation as it relates to the phenomenology behind college student leadership (Murphy & Johnson, 2011). Even though authors such as Correia-Harker (2016) suggested motivation to lead is experience-specific, there was nothing further mentioned as to what experiences these are and how they are constructed. Furthermore,

we ought to know more about the practical and first-hand implications that surround motivation in leadership (Cho et al., 2015). Since lived experience is individual to each student, motivation may actually occur on a spectrum, from high Social-Normative MTL to high Non-calculative MTL, depending on how students report their experience in their respective campus departments (Chan, Uy, Chernyshenko, Ho, & Sam, 2015). For the purposes of this study, the researcher matched a MTL construct with a participant story in hopes of more explicitly defining motivation to lead in a phenomenological context.

Three different MTL constructs were implemented in this study; Affective MTL (receiving joy out of leading), Social-Normative MTL (feeling a sense of duty or obligation to lead), and Non-Calculative MTL (not accounting to the subsequent benefit of leading) (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). It is worth noting that since the MTL framework has historically been used quantitatively, to the researcher's knowledge this study was a first of its kind to conceptualize MTL from a qualitative perspective. To do so, the researcher carefully matched a MTL construct with each participant's story. This was done based on what the participant reported, how they reported it, and what specific words were used to describe the experience. For example, some participants used words such as "enjoy," "fun," "happy," and "exciting," when describing their leadership experience. This, in turn, warranted an Affective MTL identifier. Sometimes, participants referenced their peers and family members as those who influenced them to lead or continue leading. In this case, a Social-Normative MTL lens was used to identify their motivation. In the few instances where Non-Calculative MTL was used, participants communicated their leadership experience as one that was strictly personality-based, rather than simply an experience to enhance a resumé or to be accepted to graduate school. By executing the study in such a way, the researcher was able to continue Correia-Harker's (2016) discussion on

MTL, giving specific examples of student leader experiences as they relate to a specific MTL construct.

Implications for Practice

By researching the context of a student's experience, the researcher had an opportunity to engage in new dialogue with Student Affairs practitioners, perhaps helping to foster new initiatives on campus that match a student's needs, personality, and behavior. This dialogue happened primarily at the onset of the study, and more specifically, when seeking observations with which to take part. The conversation was primarily centered around the practitioner's thoughts and feelings toward student leadership and how this study could perhaps inform their work directly with students. The dialogue considered, this qualitative study presented a perspective of leadership which allowed for a specific and intentional understanding of what it means to be a student leader on a college campus. The implications for practice are perhaps shared across different populations, specifically, students, Student Affairs Practitioners, Advisors, and Administrators. (for the purposes of this study, the Advisor is synonymous to Faculty and Staff).

Students. The perceptions shared by the participants continued the discussion on student leadership in college, giving particular attention to a student's lived experience. Much of the student experience in college, as was evidenced in this study, is shaped by the work students do with their peers and leader counterparts. This work, at times, may create moments of excitement or even frustration among student leaders. To successfully continue the excitement or to help problem-solve moments of frustration, students ought to bring an authenticity to their role, meaning, students should be communicating to their counterparts their thoughts and feelings about a particular initiative or project so that all student

stakeholders are not only informed, but can contribute to the discussion. By being transparent to each other, the student leaders are engaging in a leadership process, enhancing their problem-solving skills and developing the capacity to manage groups of people. Much like some of the participants shared, leadership is a process of learning, and in order to commit oneself to growth, the leader must be willing to engage in and with moments that may feel more challenging than others. Furthermore, the observations conducted in this study portrayed the idea that student groups are successful when all parties are engaged, so a central implication for practice, is that students should encourage each other to engage, despite the, at times, frustrating moments. It is from the deep descriptions and rich detail shared by the student participants that researchers in the fields of Leadership and Student Affairs are able to make better sense of student leadership and how it impacts a college student's overall collegiate experience. As such, implications for practice, as they relate to Student Affairs professionals, ought to be considered as well.

Student Affairs Professionals. Fundamentally, this study will have particular bearing on how Student Affairs professionals execute their work on campus, hopefully in support of their student leaders and their subsequent development. Whitt (2005) explains that it is the collaborative efforts between the students and the professionals that fuel the spirit and energy of the campus environment. Whitt goes on to say that Student Affairs professionals implement co-curricular programming for their leaders, giving a chance for student leaders (and future leaders) to engage in activities that are both academic and social (non-academic). An example of this is Orientation Week on campus; while students are engaging with and among those in their field of study, they are also involved in campus activities, which promote not only student engagement during college, but also exposes new students to the various leadership opportunities on campus

(Whitt, 2005). Similar to the observations conducted in this study, at times, the meetings were both a mix of games and agenda-related items, as to keep the engagement ongoing, while simultaneously accomplishing the tasks at hand. This is an example Student Affairs professionals can take with them as a result of this study; incorporating diverse and dynamic activities within their engagement with student leaders as to keep the culture of the group alive during moments of task completion. The energetic and creative approach taken by these professionals can perhaps enhance the notoriety of the organization, but also strengthen how the student leaders engage with one another. In order for the energy and creativity to have a positive impact on the student leaders, the professional must have the willingness to collaborate with their superiors to explore new and innovative ways to work with students at the ground level. Much of what was observed during the in-person observations included professionals applauding the work of their students and reinforcing the importance of on-campus engagement and leadership. As such, professionals should be continuously reporting these successes to their supervisors so that these initiatives and cross-curricular programs may continue for future cohorts. In addition to the impact this study has had on Student Affairs professionals, Advisors are also a major contributing factor to a student leader's experience. As such, this study will help inform the future of how we make more sense of the Advisor-Student relationship in the context of student leadership development.

Advisors. Faculty and staff advisors of student groups will find this study to be relevant to their practice. Perhaps the advisors can make note of new ways to engage with their student groups based on what the participants of this study shared. As was evidenced by the study's findings, students take their relationships with their advisors seriously, mentioning that the advisors foster an environment that promotes growth. For this momentum to continue between students and their advisors, institutions of higher education should have measures in place to

support those professionals who, more often than not, volunteer their time to facilitate student groups and individuals within them. To that end, perhaps the advisors' supervisors can explore a financial incentive for their colleagues who lead student groups. In addition, maybe some discussion in re-working the job description is needed, accounting for the individual's main job on campus mixed with their responsibility to facilitate a student group. It is through this plan the advisor could commit longer to their role, building and enhancing their drive and passion for the experience. Similarly, Vanguri (2010) explains, that faculty and staff acquire the Advisor role because they have passion for the organization with which they choose to represent.

Interestingly, some scholars suggest that advisors are pushed to engage as advisors for student groups because they seek the social component of the role, what the authors reference as the social function of meeting people (Meyer & Kroth, 2010). Even more specific to social engagement is the Advisor's motivation to be part of an organization that practices similar values and missions to that of the advisor. It is through examining these components of the Advisor's experience that future advisors can be motivated to engage. At a more micro level, Advisors on campus can take note of the firsthand student reports and hopefully make sense of what the students are seeking, when it comes to Advisor support. As said earlier, the observations were just one way to see at the ground level how Advisors engage with students. The interviews supported these observational findings, showing more in-depth perceptions of student leaders and the relationship (or lack thereof) they have with their Advisors. Together with the findings of this study, Advisor engagement on campus will prove to be a priority in the future of Student Affairs as campuses continue examining the best ways to incorporate Advisor buy-in with student leadership initiatives.

Administrators. As a fourth and final implication for practice, this study will inform the future of how college campus administrators meet the needs of their students. This study made very clear that at times, student leaders give many hours to their roles on campus and do so with little affirmation or support. Contrarily, student leaders are given special access to campus administrators, which has been shown to strengthen the leadership experience of the student. Campus administrators, as a result of this study, will be able to take note of what student leaders are reporting about their roles, and as a result, perhaps shift the plan of action on campus to focus more on student needs rather than institutional reputation. As a one participant shared, there have been sentiments of “feeling exploited” by the administration due to the little praise or recognition for an unpaid job well done. Perhaps a solution to this concern could involve administrators recognizing the amount of service students are giving to the institution. While paying students may not be possible, given the role, proposed budgets, and circumstance, praising students for volunteered time on behalf of the campus community can help bridge the gap between students and administrators. For those administrators who support their leaders, in any capacity, this study will give them more insight into how students respond to the high level of support, potentially contributing to and enhancing an administrator’s approach to student leadership. With the high level of support from the administration, the students are more likely to be motivated to continue leading – a sentiment shared among several participants. Nonetheless, by enhancing the voice of the student leader, it is possible that professionals in the field can more clearly outline and execute their student development programming.

Limitations of the Research

While there were certainly limitations to the study’s methodology, it is also worth mentioning the limitations of the study’s findings. First, the participant sample included four

different types of institutions (see *Table 1*), which caused for several general ideas to emerge, rather than a few, more detailed concepts. Secondly, many of the participants of this study identified as Caucasian which does not contribute to a more ethnically diverse study. Had this study included more underrepresented students, the findings would have communicated a more holistic and detailed approach to student leadership. Finally, the study's inclusion criteria are to be identified as a limitation, primarily because the researcher did not account for the non-traditional college student. Had the researcher included participants of older age (e.g. older than twenty-seven, the oldest participant of this study) but who were also engaged on campus in any leadership capacity, the study's findings would have portrayed a more dynamic and unique lived experience, separate from that of the traditional college student. Considering the limitations of the research, there are, nonetheless, recommendations to make for the future of this topic, keeping in mind the inclusion criteria of this particular study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future qualitative research could build on this research to investigate more specific ways of making sense of the leadership experience among college students. Through additional qualitative approaches (e.g. case study or narrative inquiry), the field of Student Affairs will continue to gain a clearer sense of the phenomenology behind the student experience in college. The anecdotal way by which to make sense of the student experience is what will add practical value to the field. As such, the researcher presents three approaches for future research on the topic, hopefully allowing for continued discussion on what it means to be a student leader in college.

Throughout this study, the researcher made note of the several instances in which the student leader spoke about their respective institution, its mission for its students, how the

institution acts in favor (or not) of the student, and how the institution's culture shapes a student leader's experience. It is because of this that a central recommendation for further research lies within the meaning behind institution-specific experiences of leaders. Now that a study such as this one has been completed, (exploring the overall experience of a college student leader), future studies ought to be more focused in the nuances of the leadership experience, specifically how the institution with which the student belongs, shapes their personal leadership development. There is still a lot to be said about institutional practices and the ethics behind these practices. As a participant in this study mentioned, much of the time she feels taken advantage of, often feeling exploited by the administration. Others in this study mention how the institution itself generally doesn't support its leaders, leaving the leaders to fend for themselves. These are only a few examples which underscore the importance of future research focusing exclusively on institution-specific experiences in the context of student leadership.

A second recommendation for future research involves the structure of how one ought to execute the study, meaning, future researchers may design a case study, focusing on one student through the timespan of an academic year. That way, the research on the topic becomes specific to one person, allowing for a more focused study, while attending to intersectionality with regard to identity, race, religion, etc. Future studies, should they be completed as case studies, should dive deeper into the personalities of the students. This study spoke briefly about the individual identities of the student, however more should be explored as to how a student leader's personality appropriately matches their stated leadership roles, and moreover, how their personality is constructed in their role. To this point, while the researcher in this study collected demographic data of each participant, future researchers could specifically analyze the various

identities the student participant(s) hold, as this could be used as a way to make sense of a particular lived experience.

A final recommendation for future work on this topic includes exploring how administrators feel about their institution's approach to student leadership. While not a study focused on the student, it could perhaps shed light on the administration's beliefs and goals for their students, which may give way to new approaches on how administrators can work more closely with their student leaders. By conducting a study in such a way, this is encouraging a more collaborative approach to student leadership, rather than what some participants of this study voiced as feeling disconnected from their administration. Incorporating an administrator's voice into this discussion could hopefully bridge the gap between student leaders and their campus administration. Through acting more collaboratively, administrators and students could reach a point of developing stronger programming on-campus, contributing to the institution's goals of remaining a competitive entity in the field. These recommendations are just a few of what could potentially evolve as a result of this study. As research continues to be completed on the subject, we will continue to see where to fill gaps as we meet the needs to college student leaders.

Conclusion

The investigation made into the lived experience of college student leaders helped identify the connection between leadership and motivation to lead. The study sought to give more attention to the student voice as it relates explicitly to a student's experience as a leader in college. As the findings explained, student leaders are intentional practitioners who execute the leadership role with purpose. This purpose, as was evidenced by the findings, is created and fostered through the several instances of leadership prior to college in addition to the

relationships built through family and peers. It was also evident that students' institutions play a large role in the student leadership development process, which some would argue is categorically what shapes a student's leadership identity and practice. These institution-specific examples from the findings are what help shape each individual experience, underscoring the importance that leadership is unique to each person. Additionally, the time and energy spent in being a campus leader is what ultimately was highlighted in this study. Whether through service or through a paid job, this study demonstrated that leadership in college is multi-faceted and a process which is ongoing.

Through giving new meaning to a particular experience that has been studied for several years, the field of Student Affairs may be able to develop new and better programming for student leaders which supports student development in higher education. This study enhanced the discourse surrounding what it means to be engaged as a student in college, potentially supporting future initiatives which support student development. More will always be necessary to extrapolate the phenomenon of student leadership, therefore, this study supported the continued development of the leadership discussion and its impact on a student's experience in college. Considering what was found in this study, future projects completed on the topic will perhaps continue the important conversation surrounding the student leadership phenomenon in higher education.

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Appendix A
Recruitment Letter

Adapted from University of Oregon, Research Compliance Services

[*date*]

Hello [*participant name*]:

My name is Jacob and I am a student from the Doctor of Education department at DePaul University [*state "in Chicago, IL" if interviewing students remotely*]. I am connecting with you to invite you to participate in my research study, which explores your experience as a student leader on campus. You are eligible to participate in this study if you identify as a student who participates on campus outside of the classroom. [I obtained your contact information from (*description of source*).]

If you decide to participate in this study, you will complete a demographic questionnaire, and I will interview you and ask you to share your experiences as a student who is involved in more than just academics on campus. I will audio record the interview so that I may review our conversation when analyzing the content. I will seek to not reveal your identity both in the interview and in writing my analysis. Furthermore, it is my goal to provide a space for you which is safe, open, transparent, and inviting.

Please remember that this is voluntary. If you'd like to participate or have questions about the study or process, please contact me at [*contact information*].

A link to the consent form with more information about the study can be found here:

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jacob

Appendix B
Thank You Letter

[*date*]

Hello [*participant name*]:

Thank you for participating in this study about student leadership on campus.

I appreciate your frankness in answering what can sometimes be dense and detailed questions. Your contribution to this important research is instrumental for supporting student leaders in the future.

I am hopeful that this research will help provide colleges and universities additional insight into the student leadership phenomenon. It is with your support in which the field continues to thrive.

Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,

Jacob

Appendix C

Adapted from DePaul University

ADULT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**Motivation to Lead: College Students' Perceptions of Their Roles as Leaders on Campus**

Principal Investigator: Jacob Gross, EdD Candidate

Institution: DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois, USA

Department (School, College): DePaul University School of Education

Faculty Advisor: Rebecca Michel, PhD

What is the purpose of this research?

We are asking you to be in a research study because we are trying to learn more about student leadership in higher education. This study is being conducted by Jacob Gross, a graduate student at DePaul University as a requirement to obtain his Doctor of Education (EdD) degree. This research is being supervised by his faculty advisor, Rebecca Michel, PhD.]

We hope to include about 12 people in the research.

Why are you being asked to be in the research?

You are invited to participate in this study because you are identified as an on-campus student leader in a designated role or are participating in an on-campus organization.

What is involved in being in the research study?

If you agree to be in this study, being in the research involves being interviewed by the researcher, Jacob Gross.

- The subject matter of the interview will involve questions around your leadership experience, how you perceive your leadership role, and any examples of leadership experiences had on campus.
- The researcher may request to also conduct an observation of your campus group.

The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed into written notes later in order to get an accurate record of what you said.

How much time will this take?

This study will take about one hour of your time. Should a follow-up interview be needed, the researcher will contact you.

Are there any risks involved in participating in this study?

Being in this study does not involve any risks other than what you would encounter in daily life. You may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about answering certain questions. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to.

Are there any benefits to participating in this study?

We hope that what we learn will support on-campus student leaders with their goals of facilitating rich and meaningful leadership experiences on campus.

Is there any kind of payment, reimbursement or credit for being in this study?

You will not be paid for being in the research.

Are there any costs to me for being in the research?

There is no cost to you for being in the research.

Can you decide not to participate?

Your participation is voluntary, which means you can choose not to participate. There will be no negative consequences, penalties, or loss of benefits if you decide not to participate or change your mind later and withdraw from the research after you begin participating.

Your decision whether or not to be in the research will not affect your grades, your relationship, or your employment.

Who will see my study information and how will the confidentiality of the information collected for the research be protected?

The research records will be kept and stored securely. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study or publish a paper to share the research with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. We will not include your name or any information that will directly identify you. We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. However, some people might review or copy our records that may identify you in order to make sure we are following the required rules, laws, and regulations. For example, the DePaul University Institutional Review Board, and/or the Data and Safety Monitoring Board] may review your information. If they look at our records, they will keep your information confidential.

The audio recordings will be kept until accurate written notes have been made, then they will be destroyed. You should know that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if you report information about a child being abused or neglected or if you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.]

Please be aware that disclosing experiences with sexual or relationship violence during the course of research does not constitute a formal report to the University and will not begin the process of DePaul providing a response. If you are seeking to report an incident of sexual or relationship violence to DePaul, you should contact Public Safety (Lincoln Park: 773-325-7777; Loop: 312-362-8400) or the Dean of Students and Title IX Coordinator (Lincoln Park: 773-325-

7290; Loop: 312-362-8066 or titleixcoordinator@depaul.edu). Individuals seeking to speak confidentially about issues related to sexual and relationship violence should contact a Survivor Support Advocate in the Office of Health Promotion & Wellness for information and resources (773-325-7129 or hpw@depaul.edu). More information is available at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/hpw/shvp.html>. Individuals are encouraged to take advantage of these services and to seek help around sexual and relationship violence for themselves as well as their peers who may be in need of support.

If you do disclose an experience with sexual or relationship violence, we will also provide you with a resource sheet containing this information at the end of the study.

Who should be contacted for more information about the research?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study or you want to get additional information or provide input about this research, you can contact the researcher, Jacob Gross, jacobmg3@gmail.com.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the DePaul Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have questions about your rights as a research subject you may contact Susan Loess-Perez, DePaul University's Director of Research Compliance, in the Office of Research Services at 312-362-7593 or by email at sloesspe@depaul.edu.

You may also contact DePaul's Office of Research Services if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent from the Subject:

I have read the above information. I have had all my questions and concerns answered. By signing below, I indicate my consent to be in the research.

Signature: _____

Printed name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D Interview Protocol		
Section of Interview	Explanation of Questions	Questions
Introductory Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seeking demographic information and following up from initial contact 2. Non-intrusive and non-threatening 3. Neutral approach to question structure 	<p><i>How would you describe yourself as a college student?</i></p> <p><i>How would you describe the culture at your college/university?</i></p> <p><i>Describe your on-campus involvement.</i></p>
Transition Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Linking introduction to key questions forthcoming 	<p><i>What opportunities are available for students to serve as leaders at your college/university?</i></p> <p><i>How, if at all, have you actively sought out leadership roles on campus?</i></p> <p><i>What does student leadership mean to you?</i></p>
Key Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Questions which are best related to the research questions and study 	<p><i>How do you define “college student leader”?</i></p> <p><i>What does competency look like when it comes to being a leader on campus?</i></p> <p><i>What is effective leadership?</i></p> <p><i>Is defining yourself as a leader inherent?</i></p> <p><i>How would you describe your role and responsibilities as an on-campus leader?</i></p> <p><i>What are the benefits of being an on-campus leader?</i></p> <p><i>What are the challenges of being an on-campus leader?</i></p>

		<p><i>How would you describe your motivation to lead in general?</i></p> <p><i>How would you describe your motivation to lead on campus?</i></p> <p><i>What or to whom do you attribute your motivation to lead at your college/university?</i></p> <p><i>What initially motivated you vs. what motivates you now? Are there similarities? Differences?</i></p>
<p>Closing Questions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Easy to answer 2. Providing closer 3. Allowing for summarization of reports 	<p><i>Do you feel heard as a leader on campus?</i></p> <p><i>If you could give advice to future college student leaders, what would you tell them?</i></p>

Appendix E
 Observation Protocol
Adapted from Anita Baker (2012) of Evaluation Services

Observation Protocol

Observation Details

Organization/Group:

Observer's Name:

Date of Observation:

Start Time:

End Time:

Observation Structure

1. Expectations and reasons for observing

2. Description of setting

3. Chronology of events in 15 minute intervals

15min	
30min	
45min	

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4. Description of interactions (how participants interact, who interacts, how decisions are communicated, nonverbal communication)

5. Conclusion of observation (how it ends, signals made, how participants react)

Additional Notes

Appendix F

Demographic Information Form

Instructions: Please provide a response for each question below.

1. What is your age? _____

2. What is your sex?

Female • Male •

3. What is your student status?

Freshman • Sophomore • Junior • Senior • Other
• _____

4. With which racial or ethnic category do you identify?

African American • Asian/Pacific Islander • Caucasian • Latino •

Other: _____

5. Please list the roles you have as an on-campus leader and with which groups/organization with which you have these roles:

Appendix G
Observation Script

To be stated by the researcher, to the group being observed, before the observation begins

Hello, my name is Jacob and I am a student in DePaul University's Doctor of Education program. I am currently working on my research dissertation project, which explores student leadership on college campuses and the motivation students have to lead and continue leading. I am here today to conduct an observation of *[state event]* in order to gain additional insight into the student leadership experience in college, particularly surrounding how student leaders engage in group contexts. This observation is not centered around a certain individual, rather, I am observing the group as a whole, keeping all my observations and notes confidential. I will be taking handwritten notes throughout the observation, and the observation will last approximately *[amount of time of meeting]* minutes.

You have the right to let me know of your disagreement to have me present.

Thank you for having me today. I kindly ask that you disregard my presence in your *[state event]* and continue as planned.

Appendix H
Facebook Post

Hello Students:

For those of you who do not know me, my name is Jacob Gross. I am currently working on my dissertation research, which explores a college student's leadership experience on campus and what motivates students to lead. If you are interested in participating in my study, please click the link below to sign up and I will be in touch with you with more information:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TW8B98D>

Thank you in advance for your support of my dissertation project.

Jacob