

2015

Understanding the lived experiences of students in a comprehensive four-year undergraduate leadership development program

Jessica Walker Hench
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<https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.25774/w4-qc95-1764>

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**UNDERSTANDING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN
A COMPREHENSIVE FOUR-YEAR UNDERGRADUATE LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Jessica Walker Hench

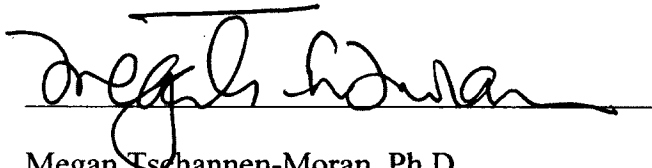
July 2015

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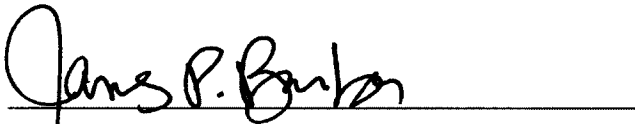
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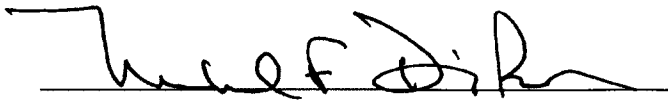
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My experience in the William and Mary School of Education has been remarkable, and I am eternally grateful to all the people who were part of it. I appreciate all members of the faculty and staff who taught, mentored, guided, and supported me throughout this journey.

In particular, I thank my dissertation committee members: Dr. Mike DiPaola, your Leadership course was one of my very favorites, and I am excited to have the chance to teach a similar course. I hope that I may share the joy and fascination of leadership with other students as you did with me. Dr. Jim Barber, thank you for being a great advisor from the first day I started the program. Your enthusiasm for the course material you taught was infectious, and I truly enjoyed learning with you and engaging in discussions inside and outside of the classroom. And of course, thank you for the unforgettable learning experience in China! Dr. Megan Tschannen-Moran, you were an incredible chair and guiding light through this process. Thank you for all your time, patience, guidance, and optimism. You believed in me and encouraged my ideas, and I am so grateful for everything. *"We extinguish this flame, but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again."* Thank you.

I cannot thank enough the "CLP" staff and students and the "ACU" administrators for participating in this study and opening your doors to me, and for all your willingness to share. Your cooperation and enthusiasm were a tremendous help in accomplishing this goal.

I thank my dear W&M friends for sharing this adventure! When I first applied to a PhD program, I expected to work hard and earn an advanced degree, but I never expected to meet so many incredible colleagues that turned into lasting friendships. The camaraderie and support were amazing, and I truly enjoyed all of our writing sessions, conversations over coffee, celebrations of success, and support through challenges. You made this academic experience truly memorable and surprisingly fun!

To Patrick, my very own “Grad School Groupie!” Thank you for understanding when I had to spend nights and weekends at my desk or in the library. Thank you for all the hours of conversation about my work and progress, for catching the tears when I was overwhelmed, and for celebrating every little accomplishment along the way. You believed in me even when I doubted myself, and you loved me unconditionally. We did it!

And finally, I thank my family for all the encouragement and support through this rigorous process. Thank you for understanding when I could not visit because I had to write, or the times when I wrote during visits! Thank you for the phone calls and notes to check in and ask how I’m doing, and the little motivators to keep going. I could not have done this without all of your love and support! Thank you to my parents – Wendy & Marshall, Stewart & Gail – for pushing me in school, sparking my love of learning, and guiding me through all the years that led to this moment. Grandma- Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. *For everything.* I love you *all* so much.

(...and I think this ‘report card’ deserves an ice cream cone!)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to understand the lived experiences of students who participate in a comprehensive four-year undergraduate leadership development program, the College Leadership Program (CLP). Using the Social Change Model as a conceptual framework, I explored 12 students' growth and development as leaders through the dimensions of Individual, Group, and Society. I also explored the congruence between the intended outcomes of the program and the students' lived experiences. Data were collected through interviews, document analysis, and observation. Participants included current students in the program, recent graduates, and university administrators.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Leadership education is a growing trend in higher education. Each year, more and more undergraduate college students participate in leadership development activities of various lengths and types. Astin and Astin (2000) pointed out the significant role higher education plays in the future leadership of American society. Colleges and universities are critical for preparing future leaders in all fields and professions, so many higher education institutions are incorporating leadership development into their programs through courses and co-curricular experiences (Posner, 2004). Such institutions are dedicating considerable time and resources to these programs (Shertzer, Wall, Frandsen, Guo, Whalen, & Shelley, 2005), and leadership development is even being incorporated into many university mission statements (Love, 2013). As undergraduate leadership development programs continue to spread throughout the country, it is vital to understand how such programs are experienced by the student participants.

An online search for undergraduate leadership programs quickly reveals a wide variety of programs. These include one-day workshops, week-long retreats, and semester-long programs that include teambuilding activities, community service, guest speakers, personal assessments, leadership studies majors and minors, and more. In a few institutions, there are even four-year leadership development programs that

incorporate all of those components into one. This study examined the College Leadership Program as an exemplary case that does just that.

The College Leadership Program

The College Leadership Program (CLP) is a unique and comprehensive student leadership program at Atlantic Coast University (ACU), a public, four-year liberal arts institution with about 5,000 undergraduate students. Through its mission, CLP seeks to "empower students to recognize their leadership potential and develop personal and social responsibility for the betterment of self and society" (CLP Handbook, 2014).

The program includes a residential scholarship, a pre-college orientation, a living-learning community in the first year, community service, involvement in campus activities, an internship, a speaker series, opportunity for study abroad, various meetings and group activities, and a leadership studies minor. All of the components of the program are arranged into three areas that comprise the program's framework. These areas are Experience, Develop, and Succeed (see Table 1.1). These program elements will be described in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Table 1.1

College Leadership Program Components

Experience	Develop	Succeed	Additional Components
Community Service	CLP Speaker Series	Check-In Meetings	Leadership Studies Minor
Campus Engagement	Passport Program	Leadership Portfolio	Living-Learning Community

Internship	Senior Meetings	Annual Reports and Reviews	Summer Leadership Adventure Program
Study Abroad	Coffeehouse Series		Residential Scholarship

Students apply to the CLP program prior to the start of their freshmen year, participate in academic and co-curricular activities throughout their college experience, and complete the program in their senior year at ACU. Because of its comprehensive nature, CLP is a unique and exemplary case for studying students' experiences in an undergraduate leadership development program.

Conceptual Framework

CLP is grounded in a developmental framework that combines ACU's ideals with the Social Change Model (SCM) and the Leadership Identity Model (LID) (CLP Handbook, 2014). These provide structure and a theoretical base for the program. For the purpose of this study, I will focus specifically on the Social Change Model, as it is one of the most commonly applied theoretical frameworks among leadership development programs in colleges and universities (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006).

The Social Change Model of Leadership Development

The Social Change Model of Leadership Development (SCM) was developed by Alexander and Helen Astin from the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA and first was disseminated through the higher education community in 1996 (Komives & Wagner, 2009). The Astins and their colleagues, known as "the ensemble," created this model for college students in particular to focus on helping them work with others toward social change (HERI, 1996). The SCM approaches leadership as "a dynamic,

collaborative, and values-based process grounded in relationships and intending positive social change" (Komives & Wagner, 2009, p. 72).

Astin and Astin (2000) purported that one of the basic purposes of developing leaders in higher education is to empower students to become change agents who will promote social change when they leave college and enter American society. The world in which we live needs effective leadership in order to enhance society, and thus it is crucial for leadership development to be a component of the college curriculum. This reflects the assumptions that society needs better leadership, young people are ripe for filling such roles, and the college experience can offer opportunities for developing the skills needed to lead (Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999).

A key feature of the SCM is the way it presents leadership. Leaders are traditionally believed to be those in positions of power who have some control over others due to the formal authority vested in their role. To the ensemble and HERI, a leader is not solely one in a formal position, but rather "one who is able to effect positive change for the betterment of others, the community, and society. All people, in other words, are potential leaders" (HERI, 1996, p. 16). This assumption of the model makes it particularly fitting for higher education, as all college students should feel that they are capable of influencing the community and society around them, regardless of formal titles.

As illustrated in Figure 1.1, the Social Change Model presents leadership through three dimensions: Individual, Group, and Society. These three dimensions interact with and influence one another.

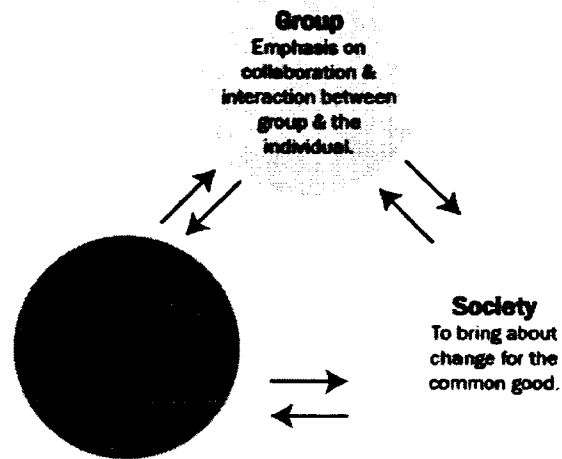


Figure 1.1. The Social Change Model of Leadership Development. Student Leadership at Humber: Our Leadership Model

<http://www.humber.ca/studentleadership/our-leadership-model>

Individual. The Individual perspective focuses on personal qualities of the student that can be fostered and developed to support group functioning and social change. The SCM highlights the idea that inner work, reflection, mindfulness, and personal development are essential for leaders in order to affect groups and impact social change (Komives & Wagner, 2009). As students interact with groups and work toward change in society, it is believed that the individual self will be changed as a result; therefore, self reflection and meaning-making are an important component of the Social Change Model (Komives & Wagner).

Group. The Group perspective is concerned with ways in which the student collaborates with others in order to effect social change. Although all students have the potential to be leaders without formal positional titles, no individual can lead in a vacuum. Students engage with others in many contexts, including clubs, sports, and other campus organizations (Komives & Wagner, 2009). These group encounters

provide opportunities for students to collaborate with others, practice taking responsibility and being accountable, work together toward common goals, and engage in civil discourse when differences arise (Komives & Wagner).

Society. The Society/Community perspective focuses on the social ends to leadership development and the student's impact on the community or society in which he or she lives (HERI, 1996). Students have opportunities to practice leadership and promote change in a variety of settings, including smaller campus organizations, the local community, nationwide, or even on a global scale (Komives & Wagner, 2009). The Society component of the SCM includes any activities in which students have a chance to interact with diverse others, learn local and global issues, and actively participate in projects that go beyond their own self interests (Komives & Wagner).

Statement of Purpose

Many previous studies focus on the effects of leadership development programs, but they do not shed light on the actual experience of the students while they are immersed in the programs. Soesbe (2012) noticed a gap in the literature regarding students' lived experiences in such programs. He addressed this by studying the lived experiences of alumni who completed an undergraduate leadership program in a particular college and how these experiences shaped their lives (Soesbe, 2012). I, too, sought to address the dearth of qualitative studies focusing on students' experiences; but while Soesbe studied alumni, I focused on students who were currently immersed in the leadership program. It is imperative to not only understand the outcomes of leadership programs and the influences they have on students' futures, but to understand how the

programs are experienced at the time that students are immersed in these programs as part of their everyday lives.

Other studies of leadership development programs usually focus on singular activities and their outcomes. A program like CLP is quite rare in that it incorporates many leadership activities into a comprehensive program. It is important to not only understand how leadership activities affect college students in isolation, but to understand the collective impact of multiple activities in one program.

The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to understand the lived experiences of students who participate in a comprehensive four-year undergraduate leadership development program through the lens of the Social Change Model.

Research Questions

This study was guided by two overarching research questions and three sub-questions based on the dimensions of the Social Change Model: Individual, Group, and Society.

1. How have students' experiences in the College Leadership Program contributed to their development as leaders?
 - A. *Individual*: In what ways have students developed as leaders through their intrapersonal experiences in CLP?
 - B. *Group*: How does group involvement encouraged by CLP impact students' leadership development and college experience?
 - C. *Society*: In what ways has CLP prepared students to feel empowered to lead social change?

2. To what extent is there congruence between the intended outcomes of CLP and the students' lived experiences?

Significance of the Study

Leadership development programs are spreading as leadership becomes ever more crucial in higher education. There are countless types of leadership programs, including one-day workshops, week-long retreats, programs that span a semester, and even those in-depth programs like CLP that span a four-year college experience. Research has focused primarily on outcomes of various leadership programs and quantitative measures of leadership skills gained; however, "there is still a dearth of information which intentionally focuses on the lived experiences of undergraduates who participated in a leadership program" (Soesbe, 2012, p. 4). To truly understand the effects of leadership development programs, we must not only focus on outcomes, but on the experience itself.

Higher education practitioners, particularly those who are running, improving, or creating new leadership development programs, must understand the lived experiences of students who are participating in these programs. In this way, they will discover the deeper meanings of the various components of the program, the ways in which students change, and the true value of the experience. Qualitative inquiry into leadership experiences has the potential to provide greater insight into these learning experiences (Dugan, Bohle, Gebhardt, Hoftert, Wilk, & Cooney, 2011). This phenomenological case study will enable practitioners to more fully understand the value of the leadership development programs that they provide to students.

Definitions of Key Terms

Terminology pertaining to leadership is the subject of much debate. The concept of leadership has undergone many changes throughout history relative to shifting societal contexts. For this study, I define these terms as they are most appropriate for use with the missions of higher education, the Social Change Model, and for the College Leadership Program.

Leadership Development Programs

It is important to understand that a wide variety of programs exist for developing leadership skills and capacities. There are programs lasting from one day to several years, and they focus on all types of populations. For this study, I focused on leadership development programs that are open to undergraduate college students. These are programs that are run through the college and are part of the curriculum or co-curriculum of the institution.

Leader

To the HERI ensemble, a leader is not solely one in a formal position of authority, but rather "one who is able to effect positive change for the betterment of others, the community, and society. All people, in other words, are potential leaders" (HERI, 1996, p. 16). This study is grounded in the belief that all students have the capacity to lead.

Leadership

Because I approached this study through the lens of the Social Change Model, I use the definition of leadership that best fits within this conceptual framework. The creators of the SCM, Astin and Astin (2000), defined leadership as the "critically important civic work performed by those individual citizens who are actively engaged in

making a positive difference in society" (p.12). The SCM approaches leadership as "a dynamic, collaborative, and values-based process grounded in relationships and intending positive social change" (Komives & Wagner, 2009, p. 72).

Social Change

"Leadership is ultimately about change, and...effective leaders are those who are able to effect positive change on behalf of others and society" (HERI 1996, p. 10). The Social Change Model defines leadership as the ability to effect positive social change. Social change addresses each person's sense of responsibility to others in order to better society as a whole (Komives & Wagner, 2009). This type of change involves not only addressing problems in society, but aiming at the root causes of those problems in order to create lasting effects.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Today more than ever, society is in need of strong leaders who can positively impact the world on a global level, nationwide, or even within small communities. Higher education is an ideal setting to prepare young people for future leadership roles. In light of this need, colleges and universities throughout the United States are incorporating leadership development into their curricula and co-curricula.

Research on undergraduate leadership development programs points to a wide variety of leadership experiences for students, including workshops, guest speakers, living-learning communities, outdoor experiential learning, majors and minors, community service, internships, and more. Many studies focus on outcomes of individual leadership experiences, primarily finding that students *do* develop leadership capacity by taking part in these activities. However, little research is done to explore the lived experiences of students as they are taking part in those activities and as they are experiencing a multitude of leadership activities in one program. The College Leadership Program at Atlantic Coast University is particularly worthy of study, as it combines many leadership activities into one holistic four-year leadership development program. Students participate in the program throughout their entire college experience, completely immersed in a wide array of leadership activities that complement their academic learning.

Society Needs More and Better Leaders

The world we live in today is more complex than ever. Technological advancements are bringing rapid changes to the workplace, and occupations are becoming increasingly diverse and fluid. The world is far more connected than ever as a result of increased mobility and telecommunication. In light of such a complex, ever-changing time, our society relies on effective leadership in business, politics, and local communities. We need more leaders, as well as more effective leaders, to the extent that our current situation has even been referred to as a leadership crisis (Greenwald, 2010). Colleges and universities have been identified as an ideal context for cultivating leadership skills in young people to prepare them for the future (Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999). No longer are students entering colleges solely for education itself, but to gain skills and qualifications to prepare them for a wide variety of jobs (McLaren, McGowan, Gerhardt, Diallo, & Saeed, 2013). Leadership development programs can teach students skills such as "self-reliance, social and cultural capital, ...creativity, conflict-resolution and team-building skills, ethics, ...and more" (Greenwald, 2010, p. 2). These valuable skills will better prepare students for the complex working world they will enter after college.

Higher Education is the Ideal Setting for Cultivating Leaders

The college experience is a transformational time between adolescence and adulthood, a time when young people develop their full potential and make major decisions about their life's course. Leadership studies are a natural fit for a college education, as there exists a "symbiotic relationship between liberal education and leadership studies" (Colvin, 2003, p. 34). Liberal arts education prepares students to

enter and strengthen society, which makes leadership development a necessary component of liberal learning. The study of leadership naturally blends into many disciplines. Despite this connection between leadership and liberal arts, leadership activities have not yet become the norm in college curricula.

A study by Dugan et al. (2011) analyzed the data from the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL), which uses a survey instrument based on the SCM and designed to measure college students' socially responsible leadership capacity. The survey sample included nearly 9,000 seniors in nearly 100 institutions. The study revealed that only 35% of seniors had participated in leadership experiences (Dugan et al., 2011). This is a surprisingly low number, when the need for leadership development is so great. Historically, colleges and universities were designed to prepare young people to be active members and leaders in society (Colvin, 2003). With today's rapidly-changing global society, higher education must return to this original purpose and focus on more than basic degree requirements.

A liberal arts education can provide students the job-related skills they need, and it can also help them develop holistically. This was stated effectively by Baxter Magolda (1999), who wrote, "Higher education has a responsibility to help young adults make the transition from being shaped by society to shaping society in their role as leaders in society's future" (p. 630). For this reason, many colleges and universities are going beyond the general curriculum and creating leadership development programs to enhance students' overall development and preparation for the future.

Leadership Development Programs in Higher Education

The need for developing leaders has been apparent in our society for many years. In 1983, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation funded the first statewide leadership development program to strengthen adult professionals (Black & Earnest, 2009). The Wyoming L.E.A.D., administered through the University of Wyoming, was an effort to support and develop leadership in rural areas (Wyoming L.E.A.D, n.d.). Since that first program, leadership development has spread beyond professional development for adults and has even moved into higher education.

In 1992, the University of Richmond in Virginia created the Jepson School of Leadership, the first major effort to incorporate leadership studies into a liberal arts education (University of Richmond, n.d.). The Jepson School was responsible for the first Leadership Education Conference in 1993, also supported by a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. Today, there are over 1,500 leadership development programs in American colleges and universities (Jenkins, 2012), and they continue to be launched and developed. These programs vary widely in length, type, and participation.

Outcomes of Undergraduate Leadership Development Programs

In recent years, numerous studies have been conducted to determine the effects and outcomes of various leadership development programs. Such programs have been found to enhance students' personal growth, confidence, creative thinking, time management, professional skills, and communication (Black & Earnest, 2009).

Several instruments have been developed to measure the effects of leadership development programs, such as the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS), which is designed to measure the attributes of the Social Change Model of Leadership

Development (Buschlen & Johnson, 2014). The Student Leadership Practices Inventory (Student LPI) is another such instrument specifically designed for college students (Posner, 2004). These instruments and others have provided data to reveal the effectiveness of leadership development programs in enhancing students' skills and capacity for leadership.

One of the most notable studies of leadership development is the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL), which launched in 2006 (Dugan, Kodama, Correia, & Associates, 2013). The MSL used the SRLS instrument and other data collection methods to assess a broad range of leadership and college outcomes. The researchers have collected data from over 250 colleges in the U.S., Canada, Jamaica, and Mexico, gathering information from over 300,000 college students (Dugan et al., 2013). The study reveals a variety of predictors that shape college students' capacities for socially responsible leadership, as defined in the Social Change Model, and four particular experiences emerged as high-impact practices for building leadership capacity (Dugan et al., 2013). *Socio-cultural conversations with peers* are formal and informal conversations with peers about their differences and across differences. These are important because they help students articulate their own perspectives, understand the worldviews of others, and understand how different communities of people can work together toward positive change. *Mentoring relationships* are those connections students have with individuals who intentionally assist their growth and development. *Community service* is valuable for students as it helps them develop group skills, deepen personal commitments to specific issues, and understand social systems and how to create change.

Lastly, *memberships in off-campus organizations* develops students' leadership capacity through engaging in the community on meaningful work that positively supports others.

The MSL also addresses leadership self-efficacy (LSE), which refers to a student's belief that he or she is capable of succeeding in leadership (Dugan et al., 2013). A student with low LSE, one who does not believe he can lead successfully, will be less likely to try activities that develop their leadership capacities. The social context for leadership influences students' LSE, as they receive messages about what leadership looks like and decide whether or not they fit that image. LSE can be developed by providing students with positional leadership roles in which they can practice leadership and develop confidence, and by creating opportunities for students to have socio-cultural conversations with peers (Dugan et al., 2013). The MSL study also found that leadership development programs should employ developmental sequencing, delivering interventions in increasing complexity over time so that students continually make meaning of their experiences and build on that understanding in order to grow (Dugan et al., 2013).

Another prominent study of higher education is the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNS), which was a longitudinal study of first-year, full-time undergraduates in 19 institutions (Pascarella & Blaich, 2013). This study measured leadership as a liberal arts outcome through the SRLS instrument. When analyzing eight aspects of leadership focused on creating positive social change, the researchers found that students' growth in these areas was very small (Blaich & Wise, n.d.). College students generally did not increase their leadership capacities during college, which further suggests that intentional leadership development is needed.

The WNS data also found declines in students' attitudes toward diversity (Blaich & Wise, n.d.). This area needs to be intentionally developed as well. Like the MSL study, the WNS found that *interactional diversity* has a significant impact on students' cognitive outcomes after four years. This includes "engagement with diverse peers, ideas, and socio-political and religious perspectives during college" (p. 6). Effective leadership programs should cultivate this interactional diversity.

Although it is highly valuable to understand the effects of undergraduate leadership development programs, there is more to the picture than the end results. It is not enough to know that these programs do affect students. In order to be truly effective in designing and improving leadership development programs, we must understand how they are experienced by students and how this leadership development actually takes place. This study will address these needs by focusing on undergraduate students who are currently participating in a unique, four-year undergraduate leadership development program.

Theories and Assumptions Underlying Undergraduate Leadership Development Programs

The study of leadership is deep and complex, and history is filled with examples of all different types of leadership and leaders. There is no single, universal definition of leadership, but the overall understanding of leadership has shifted over time based on societal changes. Leadership development programs in higher education are grounded in modern leadership theories, which focus on the relationships of leaders and followers working together toward the good of society.

A Paradigm Shift. A prominent leadership theorist, Joseph C. Rost, described a paradigm shift in his 1991 text *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century*. During the industrial age of the twentieth century, leadership referred to good management. Rost wrote:

“Good management is the apex of industrial organizations, the epitome of an industrial society, the consummate embodiment of an industrial culture.

Industrialism is unthinkable without good management, and understanding leadership as good management makes perfect sense in an industrial economy”

(p. 94).

This description reflects what Rost called the *industrial paradigm* of leadership. As we moved into the twenty-first century, however, this paradigm no longer suffices.

The world has changed greatly since 2000, as Rost predicted, which is why he called for a new school of leadership to reflect the values of modern society. He called this a *postindustrial paradigm*, in which he defines leadership as “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (p. 102). He emphasizes that intent to make real change, which is substantive and transforming. Even if the change does not occur, or will occur in the future, the intent for change is a key aspect of leadership. This connects to the Social Change Model, through which the purpose of leadership is to effect positive social change. Leadership development programs in higher education reflect this postindustrial paradigm of leadership.

Are Leaders Born or Made? There is a long-standing debate over whether leaders are born or made. In the past, it was largely believed that leaders were people

with special qualities or traits that made them stand out from non-leaders (Northouse, 2013). This trait approach assumed that leadership was only for those people who held those ideal qualities, those “great man” types who were prominent social, political, and military leaders (Northouse, 2013). The trait approach includes the theory of charismatic leadership, which suggests that leaders are those with high self-confidence and a strong conviction in their beliefs that they convey to their followers (Yukl, 2012).

In contrast to the trait approach, leadership can be viewed as a process based on the interactions between leaders and followers (Northouse, 2013). According to this perspective, leadership is accessible to anyone and can be learned. The process perspective includes contingency theories of leadership, such as situational leadership. These are the ideas that leadership behaviors may differ based on the situation at hand (Yukl, 2012). According to these theories, traits or skills that may be effective in one situation might not be effective in another, so a leader’s behavior needs to change based on the context and based on the needs of the followers.

There is also a distinction between assigned and emergent leadership. Assigned leadership reflects the trait approach, by which some people are considered leaders based on their formal titles. Emergent leaders, in contrast, might not hold formal titles, but emerge as leaders based on the way they behave and the way other members of the group perceive them (Northouse, 2013). If the group members see a particular person as influential, then they emerge as leader, regardless of their lack of formal title. Today’s leadership development programs are based on this assumption that anyone in a group has the capacity to lead, and that leadership can be learned and developed.

Studies of leadership have determined that leadership can be learned and that leadership competencies can be developed through training and other activities (Yukl, 2012). Studies such as the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership have explored the various educational environments that impact leadership development. Such research stresses that leadership can be learned and that developing leadership capacities naturally follows that learning (Owen, 2015). The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) states the goals of leadership programs in colleges and universities to include: foundations of leadership, personal development, interpersonal development, and the development of groups, organizations, and systems (CAS, 2012). These resonate with the three dimensions of the Social Change Model: Individual, Group, and Society.

The Role of Relationships in Leadership. Leadership cannot be achieved in a vacuum; it takes multiple people to create change. An individual is only considered a leader if he or she influences and mobilizes other people. More recent leadership theories focus on the behaviors of leaders and how they interact with followers. The style approach to leadership focuses on what leaders do and how they act. This approach assumes that leadership consists of two types of behaviors: task and relationship (Northouse, 2013). Task behaviors refer to those that focus on achieving a goal or objective. Relationship behaviors focus on the connections and interactions between the leader and subordinates. When exhibiting these behaviors, leaders focus on how the subordinates, or followers, feel and what they need in order to successful.

The relationship between leaders and followers is mutually beneficial. The leader inspires and motivates the followers, who perform the major work to create change; in

turn, the followers' behaviors make the leader more effective by bringing out the leader's strengths. The leader empowers the followers to become more than they were, and that growth and support further empowers the leader (Yukl, 2012). Additionally, an individual can play the role of follower and leader at different times, and sometimes be both simultaneously (Yukl, 2012). For example, a college student can lead his or her peers in a service organization while being supervised by a university staff member.

James McGregor Burns, one of the most prominent authorities on leadership studies and Pulitzer Prize winning author, distinguished transactional leadership from transformational leadership. Transactional leadership refers to that which motivates followers based on self-interest and the exchange of benefits (Yukl, 2012). The followers might act upon the leader's request, but they will not likely feel committed to the task or movement (Yukl, 2012). In contrast, transformational leadership focuses on ethical issues and causes for reform, which appeal to the followers' values and moral judgments, making them naturally more invested in and committed to the cause (Yukl, 2012). This inspires followers to feel loyal to the leader, and generally feel a sense of trust and admiration as they are encouraged and empowered to work toward the common goals of the group (Yukl, 2012). As the name suggests, followers are transformed by this type of leadership, and they are often moved to perform more than they could have alone (Northouse, 2013).

Burns wrote about the relationship between leaders and followers and how they influence each other, developing what he called the "Burns Paradox" (Burns, 2004). He questioned how leaders and followers can be distinguished from one another when they are so closely connected through these relationships. The difference, he suggested, is that

leaders take initiative to set the change in motion, acting creatively to get the attention and support of followers. The followers jump in and support the movement, and eventually new leaders may emerge from among the followers. Through this interaction, leaders and followers mutually empower one another, and their roles become nearly indistinguishable (Burns, 2004).

A major theory that stems from this focus on relationships is that of servant leadership. Servant Leadership was proposed by Robert Greenleaf in the 1970s, and focuses on the leader's responsibility to serve and develop followers (Yukl, 2012). The leader empowers the followers and focuses on their collective work to accomplish objectives together. The followers, in turn, grow stronger and more capable, and ultimately feel empowered to take on leadership of their own. Servant leaders do not use force or coercion or dominate through their positional power; instead, they focus on what is best for the follower and how they can help them develop (Yukl, 2012). Servant leadership also focuses not on the leader's personal goals, but on the good of society, working toward what is good and right and focuses on issues of social justice and equality. They intend to support the greater good of the group, whether that refers to a small organization, the community, or society (Northouse, 2013). Servant leadership underlies the Social Change Model, which focuses on individual growth, group development, and impact on society in order to effect positive social change. This is the type of leadership that is at the root of college leadership development programs.

Research Site: Atlantic Coast University

Atlantic Coast University (ACU) is a public, four-year liberal arts institution located in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. ACU is a primarily

undergraduate institution that enrolls about 5,000 students. ACU is classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a medium-sized, more-selective Arts & Sciences institution that is highly residential (Carnegie Foundation, n.d.). I selected this particular university because it hosts a unique four-year leadership develop program called the College Leadership Program.

Overview of Case: The College Leadership Program

The College Leadership Program (CLP) was established in 1998 by the president of ACU, President Smith, with a charter class of twenty students. There are currently around 1,000 students enrolled in the program, with a cumulative GPA of 3.3. CLP's students represent 35 different majors and 33 minors (CLP Annual Report, 2014). CLP is particularly unique because it is a four-year program that incorporates several different components into one comprehensive leadership development experience. The College Leadership Program is run by a full-time staff in an office dedicated to the program. The staff is led by Director Mr. Adams and Associate Director Ms. Rose, who supervise the Coordinator for Experiential Learning and the Coordinator for Student Success and Engagement. Three University Fellows also support the program, each of whom are CLP alumni under a one-year contract following their graduation. An Administrative Assistant provides support for the CLP office.

Because extensive resources are being applied to the College Leadership Program to develop students for four years, it is essential to understand this experience and how it impacts students during their college years. Unlike the MSL study, this study will focus on students' current lived experiences in the CLP program rather than relying on numerical outcomes to assess the effectiveness of the program.

CLP's Mission and Goals

Through its mission, CLP seeks to "empower students to recognize their leadership potential and develop personal and social responsibility for the betterment of self and society" (CLP Handbook, 2014, p. 1). The goals of CLP are for each student to develop the capacity to be:

1. An actively engaged citizen committed to enhancing his or her communities.
2. Of strong character and integrity developed through personal accountability, cultivation of meaningful relationships and strong work ethic.
3. An effective leader who can synthesize self-exploration, critical reflection and leadership theory within an ever-changing global society.

CLP's mission and goals resonate strongly with the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (SCM), which identifies the powerful influence that leadership and social change have on one another (Komives & Wagner, 2009). The College Leadership Program is grounded in the framework of the SCM, explained in Chapter 1, which serves as the conceptual framework for this study. The SCM is a fitting developmental framework for CLP, as it was specifically designed for college students to prepare them to create social change throughout their lives (HERI, 1996).

College Leadership Program Structure

Students apply to the CLP program prior to the start of their freshmen year and participate in academic and co-curricular activities throughout their college experience, completing the program in their senior year at ACU. A wide variety of activities are provided as either required or optional opportunities. The application for CLP is part of the main ACU application. Interested students must complete the application and essay

questions and present academic eligibility with a minimum 3.5 GPA and SAT score of 1200 (CLP website).

Some researchers strongly oppose application requirements for leadership development programs. It is believed that selecting only highly qualified applicants into the program will contribute to "polishing diamonds" (Dugan et al., 2011, p. 77). Students who self-select into leadership development programs are likely to already possess leadership qualities, and therefore gains from the program may not be as significant for them as they would be for students who did not have prior leadership experience.

In contrast, student self-selection and using an application procedure have been identified as key aspects of high-quality leadership programs. This process helps ensure that program participants are invested in their learning and development, committed to the program, and bring a wealth of diverse perspectives and experiences to the program (Eich, 2012).

In addition to the discussion over the selection process for leadership programs, there is also debate regarding the length of time necessary for a leadership program to be effective. A 2012 study used the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS) to assess the extent to which 612 college students developed leadership capacity after participating in short-term leadership programs (Rosch & Caza, 2012). Students showed increased leadership capacity immediately after completing programs as well as three months later, suggesting that even short programs can have lasting effects. Such programs can be beneficial while still being cost-effective and efficient for colleges. That study was limited, as the researchers only observed students in one particular institution, and all the short-term leadership programs were delivered through the same department. Also, the

researchers only assessed the students after three months, but did not observe more lasting results, such as one year later. There may have been immediate gains while the leadership lessons and terminology were fresh in students' minds, but it is difficult to ascertain whether complex development has actually occurred in the student participants.

Although short-term programs can be effective, it is even more important to understand whether long-term programs are also effective or have longer-lasting outcomes. In a study of 14,252 college seniors from 50 institutions, Dugan and Komives (2010) used a survey instrument similar to the SRLS, with questions based on the Social Change Model, to measure students' leadership capacities gained from various college experiences. Short- or moderate-length programs enhanced the students' capacities related to the Group area of the SCM. Longer-duration leadership programs, however, such as certifications and minors, were found to have negative effects on group-related values (Dugan & Komives, 2010). This is attributed to the nature of longer leadership programs, as they often consist of many different smaller learning experiences that take place throughout the duration of the program. Long-duration programs may be more effective if they build in complexity over time so that students are continually challenged throughout the program (Dugan et al., 2011). As CLP is a long-duration program made up of many different smaller components, it should be designed to build in complexity over time.

CLP's Developmental Framework

In addition to their academic coursework, CLP students are required to engage in additional components of the CLP program. These are categorized into a developmental framework consisting of three areas of focus: experiential learning (Experience),

leadership development (Develop), and student success (Succeed). This framework is designed to help students develop personal and social responsibility (CLP Handbook, 2014), which is also reflective of the Social Change Model.

Experience

The CLP program incorporates experiential learning into the students' college careers, allowing them to learn outside the classroom by engaging in the campus community and the local area. Experience activities give students opportunities to practice and develop their own leadership and to observe first-hand examples of different types of leadership they may learn about in the classroom (CLP Handbook, 2014). The components of the Experience area include community service, campus engagement, a required internship, and the opportunity to study abroad.

Develop

The area labeled Develop is the part of CLP that focuses on students' developing their own personal leadership skills and knowledge, as well as developing greater knowledge of society and how positive social change can be created. Development occurs through applying knowledge learned in the Leadership Studies Minor, intentional reflection, and the use of meaningful feedback (CLP Handbook, 2014). The Develop area includes the CLP Speaker Series, Passport Program, Senior Meetings, and the Coffeehouse Series.

Succeed

Success is incorporated into the CLP framework to ensure that students are meeting program requirements and expectations, as well as challenging themselves to exceed expectations (CLP Handbook, 2014). The CLP staff provides resources for

students to guide them through the process and help them reflect on their learning and development as they go. Reflection is a valuable tool for leadership development, as it helps students make meaning of their experiences through introspection and by doing projects that allow students to use their own voices (Eich, 2012). The Success component includes group meetings, a Leadership Portfolio, and Annual Reports and Reviews.

Challenges of CLP's Developmental Framework

CLP's developmental framework of Experience, Develop, Succeed was developed through careful consideration and planning, and the model carries meaning for the staff involved in delivering the program. From an outside perspective, however, this model presents challenges. First, the CLP Handbook presents the three areas as if they are clearly distinct from one another, when in fact these three components seem to overlap significantly. The components of the program are divided into each of the three areas, yet an argument could be made for moving each component into any other area. For example, the internship requirement falls under the area of Experience, as it is an active, hands-on activity. Because students gain quite a bit from an internship experience, however, this requirement could easily be considered part of Development, as it helps students grow holistically, or part of Succeed, as it sets students up for future success. These blurred lines are also true for most of the other CLP components, which all seem to contribute to students' overall experiences, development, and success.

Experience is defined in the handbook as "the process of personally observing, encountering, or undergoing something" (CLP Handbook, 2014, p. 6). This definition suggests that every single action is considered part of Experience, so every component of

the CLP program could be considered an experience. Development is considered "growth that you experience on an individual level, the expansion of your perspective and understanding of the world around you, and your ability to see yourself as part of a larger community" (CLP Handbook, 2014, p. 9). Again, this definition encompasses the development that takes place from all experiences within CLP and throughout the ACU education, so using it as only one category of activities creates ambiguity. Lastly, Succeed includes "a level of engagement that supports the program goals and developmental framework" as well as "basic academic and programmatic requirements," and "challenging yourself to go beyond what is expected" (CLP Handbook, 2014, p. 12). The description itself is vague and convoluted, so it seems that it would be difficult to assess students' achievement in this particular area.

The CLP Handbook (2014) describes the areas of focus as interdependent and the model as an integrated approach, so there is not intended to be a sharp contrast between the three areas. However, by defining the areas separately and categorizing the CLP components into the three areas, it seems they are intended to be distinct, making it difficult to conceptualize how the parts of the overall program fit together. Moreover, the Leadership Studies Minor, living-learning community, pre-college Summer Leadership Adventure Program (SLAP) orientation, and residential scholarship are not defined within the three areas of the developmental framework. This makes them seem almost like extra components of the program that do not have specific purposes or definition, yet they are major pieces of the program. Their mismatch with the developmental framework trivializes their overall significance to the program and the intended learning experience.

Exploring CLP through the Social Change Model

In order to understand the essence of students' experiences with the College Leadership Program, I will explore the various components of the program through a more straightforward conceptual framework, the Social Change Model (SCM). As described in Chapter 1, the SCM is particularly fitting for this study because it was developed specifically for college students and is a widely used theoretical framework among college leadership development programs. Instead of considering the components of CLP through the complicated developmental framework of Experience, Develop, Succeed, I will focus this exploration through the more concrete dimensions of Individual, Group, and Society. The components of CLP fit more neatly into these three categories. While certain leadership activities may overlap the boundaries, these three dimensions are more distinct and easier to conceptualize.

Individual

The Individual perspective of the SCM is a useful aspect of the model for categorizing the components of CLP. As a category for the CLP program, it encompasses all activities that involve self-reflection, mindfulness, and development of one's personal identity. This perspective involves actively considering one's beliefs, values, and perspectives, and learning to act in accordance with those values (Komives & Wagner, 2009). In order to be effective as leaders, it is essential for students to have a strong understanding of who they are as individuals and how others perceive them as people and as leaders (Komives & Wagner, 2009).

The description of the Individual perspective reflects the concept of emotional intelligence. Two key components of emotional intelligence, or EI/EQ, are self-

awareness and self-management (Goleman, 2011). It is essential to understand one's self first, as these qualities enable a person to have greater social awareness and more effective relationship management (Goleman, 2011). Developing EI is important for students at the college age, and particularly for students in a leadership program, because they are ultimately being prepared to take on leadership roles in their future professions and social roles. In the business world, the top leaders are not only those with high intelligence, but those with strong emotional intelligence, as they are able to understand their own actions and build strong relationships with others (Fullan, 2001).

CLP and the SCM are grounded in the theory of servant leadership, developed by Greenleaf, which puts the leader not in a position of power, but in servitude to others. As part of being an effective servant leader, a leader must serve with "authenticity, integrity, and trustworthiness" (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 358). These qualities are key parts of individual development.

Individual development is a major aspect of college student development theory. One of the most widely known theories applied across college campuses is Chickering's seven vectors of development, a series of steps that an individual makes toward the formation of identity (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). These steps include developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). While the elements of this theory generally increase naturally at the college age, higher education practitioners often aim to create programming that will help bolster such development.

Programs like CLP can contribute to this growth by providing activities specifically aimed toward individual development.

Several components of the College Leadership Program involve self-awareness, self-reflection, focusing on one's purpose and identity, and personal growth. For the purposes of this study, I will describe the aspects of CLP that I believe best resonate with the Individual perspective of the Social Change Model. These are the Leadership Studies Minor, Internship, CLP Speaker Series, and the Leadership Portfolio.

Leadership Studies minor. CLP students are required to complete the Leadership Studies minor, a set of seven academic courses taught by ACU faculty. The minor is designed to:

prepare ethical leaders who can identify important issues, heighten public awareness and understanding, develop imaginative solutions and strategies, and inspire and empower others to give of themselves to achieve the vision of a better tomorrow" (CLP Handbook, 2014, p. 25).

This purpose reflects the Social Change Model, as the minor is designed to prepare CLP students to make positive changes in society. The required courses are:

- LDSP 210- Self, Group, and Leadership
- LDSP 230- Leadership Through the Ages
- LDSP 310- Leadership Theory and Practice
- LDSP 386- Values Leadership
- LDSP 491- Internship Seminar

Students are also required to take two elective leadership courses. These courses are designed to be taken in the order listed above and moving in sequence from freshmen to senior year.

It is believed that leadership studies are an ideal fit for liberal arts education, as the coursework complements almost any academic discipline (Colvin, 2003). While the CLP students have a variety of academic majors and career goals, the Leadership Studies Minor may be a valuable supplement to their major fields of study and their co-curricular experiences in CLP.

Analysis of the MSL data from 9,000 college students revealed that single leadership courses are one of the most common leadership experiences for students, while engaging in a leadership studies minor is one of the least common experiences (Dugan et al., 2011). Leadership majors and minors are a newer trend in higher education. In their qualitative study of undergraduate leadership degree programs, Brungardt, Greenleaf, Brungardt, and Arensdorf (2006) found 15 degree programs with "leadership" in their title, all of which were created between 1993 and 2003. Such programs have yet to spread broadly throughout higher education. These researchers collected data from a variety of sources to analyze the curricula of those 15 programs. They found that leadership degree programs are not limited to a particular type of institution, but are found in colleges and universities of various types and sizes. This indicates that leadership studies courses are considered valuable for all types of learners and to supplement all types of educational missions and purposes.

The study of leadership majors also showed that most leadership studies programs include both theory and application (Brungardt et al., 2006), which holds true for ACU's

Leadership Studies Minor. Through the Leadership Studies Minor and co-curricular activities, CLP provides such opportunities for students to learn in the classroom and apply their learning in context. The opportunity for students to learn about leadership and engage in effective leadership practice is a trademark of high quality leadership programs (Eich, 2005).

Although leadership studies minors are not common, they nonetheless have been found to be highly effective. One study used a pre-test/post-test method to investigate the effects of a 16-week leadership course based on the Social Change Model (Buschlen & Johnson, 2014). The 108 participants in the course were asked to complete the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS), a self-assessment of individual leadership capacity using a Likert-type scale. The data analysis in this study focused primarily on students' age and gender, but it revealed that regardless of these factors, students' leadership capacities did increase as a result of the course. This study is limited because it only studied one course at one particular institution, so results may certainly vary from one leadership program to another. The SRLS measures students' understanding of their own development based on their understanding of the Social Change Model. It is likely that students may develop in accordance with the model without being directly aware of the model itself; therefore, the assessment may only scratch the surface of students' understanding of the SCM model without revealing the true nature of how students' leadership development occurred.

Internship. All students are required to complete an internship for the Leadership Studies Minor. The CLP staff encourages students to choose an internship within the field of their academic major in order to make connections between their

leadership studies coursework and work experience in their desired field (CLP Handbook, 2014). In the 2013-2014 school year, 281 CLP students participated in a wide variety of internships (CLP Annual Report, 2014). An analysis of the data from the Wabash National Study of nearly 3,000 students found that working yields positive effects on college students' leadership development (Salisbury, Pascarella, Padgett, & Blaich, 2012). Internships are a valuable way for students to develop their professional resumes and gain experience in their major field of study. It also gives them an opportunity to practice their own leadership skills as well as observe the leadership of others, which can help tie real-world experience to the leadership theories the CLP students learn in the Leadership Studies minor coursework.

CLP Speaker Series. This component of CLP consists of formal presentations by renowned local, state, national, and global community leaders. For example, in the 2013-2014 academic year, CLP students had the opportunity to see a presentation by Susan Komives, a major player in student leadership development and one of the members of the ensemble that created the SCM (CLP Annual Report, 2014). Presentations of this type are among the highest reported individual leadership activities among students (Dugan et al., 2011), but frequent use does not necessarily guarantee their effectiveness. Simply bringing in a variety of guest speakers is not enough to ensure students' development, growth, and receptivity. Guest speakers can help students understand how their skills and education may be employed in their future professions, but this is most effective when speakers are highly qualified, prepared for the specific setting, and engaging to students (Riebe, Sibson, Roepen, & Meakins, 2013). CLP students are required to attend every speaker presentation, which is generally about four

per year. They are encouraged to engage with the speakers, think critically about what they are hearing and how it relates to their own experiences and to what they have learned in the Leadership Studies minor (CLP Annual Report, 2014).

Leadership Portfolio. The portfolio is an individual four-year project in which students document their growth and progress in CLP in the form of an online personal website. The overall leadership development experience would have little meaning without personal reflection on the experience, so the portfolio serves as a means for reflection and meaning-making as students progress through the program (CLP Handbook, 2014). The portfolio requirement began in the 2013-2014 academic year, during which time 376 portfolios were created (CLP Annual Report, 2014). Current freshmen and sophomores in the program have created portfolios, and all new CLP students will create them from this point forward. An online portfolio may be more valuable for current students than a formal written paper, as it allows them to creatively employ technology to express their feelings and understanding.

Group

The Group perspective of SCM can be used to categorize components of CLP that involve students collaborating with others. Group work and engagement with others create opportunities for students to explore perspectives different from their own, work through conflict in order to grow, and develop and enact shared values of a group assembled for a collective purpose (Komives & Wagner, 2009). The CLP components that can be categorized as enhancing students' development in the Group perspective are the living-learning community, Summer Leadership Adventure Program orientation, campus engagement, Coffeehouse Series, and group meetings.

Engaging in groups is an essential aspect of students' development in many ways. First, participating in groups helps develop what Schlossberg (1989) called a sense of *mattering*, an individual's sense of belonging in a specific place, making a difference, and being important to others. In contrast, students may experience *marginality* when they do not feel they are part of a group, which is particularly prevalent during times of transition, such as the move from high school to college (Schlossberg, 1989). This negative feeling can lead to students feeling self-conscious, irritable, and even depressed. A feeling of mattering can contribute greatly to a student's confidence, development, retention in college, and overall performance.

Engaging in groups is not only important for students' confidence and self-worth, but it is also essential to their leadership development. In addition to having a strong understanding of self and personal values, the servant leadership approach also accentuates the need for leaders to work effectively with groups. Specifically, servant leaders must be able to facilitate group processes and inspire members to work toward a shared vision and goals (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2007). Essentially, it is the role of the servant leader to mobilize the group to act.

The group process is crucial in Kouzes and Posner's (2007) seminal theory of the practices of exemplary leadership. The authors purport that exemplary leaders model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Based on this principle, it is impossible to separate the role of a leader from the actions and needs of the group as a whole. Leaders cannot work in a vacuum; their followers play an equally important role in creating social change. Group activities prepare CLP students for leadership qualities such as

recognizing the needs and efforts of others, inspiring others to act, creating a sense of common purpose, and establishing trust (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

The College Leadership Program provides many opportunities for students to form relationships with peers, faculty, and staff. According to student development theory, these encounters are beneficial to students, forming what Baxter Magolda (2009) refers to as *good company*. Good company means having the support of an individual who one knows and trusts to help them through their life journey.

In the college setting, good company occurs in the form of learning partnerships, relationships that students have with significant adults who help them through the transition from the authority-dependence of youth toward a more adult state of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2009). These good partners provide challenge and support for students, which helps them "grow and reframe [their] beliefs, identities, and relationships in more complex ways" (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 215). Good company has a positive impact on student development and the journey toward self-authorship.

Living-Learning community. When CLP students first arrive at ACU as freshmen, they move into residence halls designated as living-learning communities. These communities, also called freshmen learning communities (FLCs), in which students with common characteristics or interests live together in residence halls, provide a means for enhancing the first-year experience, a growing concern on college campuses (Jaffee, 2007). Learning communities were first experimented with in the 1920s at the University of Wisconsin, and they began to spread through higher education in the 1980s and 1990s (Pike, 2008). Today, they have become a common feature of college campuses.

All ACU freshmen are placed in living-learning communities based on their academic interests, and CLP students are grouped together within those communities. There is considerable evidence that these learning communities yield positive effects. A 2006 study of FLCs at a large public university found that living in FLCs contributed to students increasing their GPAs as well as increased retention (Hotchkiss, Moore, & Pitts, 2006). The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (2007) studied nearly 3,000 students from about 40 colleges. Experience in learning communities was correlated with deep student learning and numerous gains that contributed to overall student success.

Despite ample research demonstrating the effectiveness of FLCs, there is also concern that living-learning communities perpetuate high school like settings because students are so frequently in contact with a particular group of students, rather than a traditional college setting in which students encounter peers of diverse backgrounds and ages. Spending so much time with a homogenous peer group in residence halls and coursework can lead to problems much like those of the high school setting, such as cliques, excessive non-productive socializing, and even misconduct (Jaffee, 2007). This issue could be particularly problematic for CLP students, as they are organized into a specialized subgroup with which they spend a great deal of their time in classes, activities, and their living environment. It will be highly valuable to discern how student participants feel about this aspect of the CLP program and how it may have helped or hindered their growth in college.

Summer Leadership Adventure Program (SLAP) orientation. When students are accepted into the CLP program, they are required to attend a special CLP orientation

in addition to their regular freshmen orientation before the academic year begins. The Summer Leadership Adventure Program, referred to as SLAP, is a four-day program in which students meet their CLP peers, learn more about the program, and participate in academic, team-building, and outdoor adventure activities (CLP website).

In addition to mattering, another important element for college students is a sense of *validation*, the idea that they are supported and confirmed by those around them (Rendón, 1994). Feeling validated helps students gain confidence, have a sense of self-worth, and feel they can contribute to the college community (Rendón, 1994). It is important for validation to take place at the start of the college experience, particularly in the first few weeks (Evans et al., 2010). By providing SLAP before the academic semester begins, CLP allows students to form significant connections and develop a sense of mattering and validation.

SLAP orientation and the living-learning community both give students opportunities to develop interpersonal relationships. Chickering uses *developing mature interpersonal relationships* as one of the seven vectors, or goals, of higher education (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). This helps students accept others and learn to respect and appreciate differences while finding connections with others. CLP provides many opportunities for students to develop interpersonal relationships and to feel that they are part of a community of learners.

Campus engagement. The Campus Engagement requirement is designed to help students explore their interests and passions by being involved in the ACU campus community (CLP Handbook, 2014-15). This includes involvement in clubs, student organizations, sports teams, or Greek organizations in order to be active members of the

campus community. Figure 3.1 shows the involvement of CLP students in the 2013-2014 school year (CLP Annual Report, 2014).

On Campus Participation

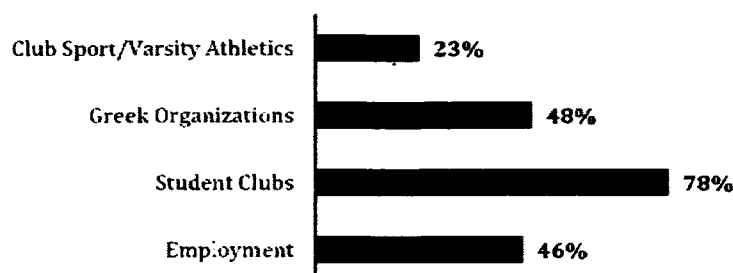


Figure 2.1. CLP student participation in campus engagement activities 2013-2014.

Involvement is a key aspect of many college student development theories. Astin (1984) highlighted the role of involvement in student development. The activities that students take part in impact their development in college, and what students get out of their experience is directly related to the energy they put into it. Involvement on campus contributes to students' satisfaction with the college experience, meaningful interactions with others, and even cognitive development (Astin, 1984). For students who have difficulty getting involved on their own, the leadership program may provide ways for them to make connections and increase their involvement.

In 1936, Lewin developed the famous equation: $B = f(P X E)$, where behavior (B) is a function (f) of the interaction (X) between person (P) and the environment (E) (Evans et al., 2010). This was later adapted by Bronfenbrenner, who theorized that development is a function of the interaction between person and the environment (Evans et al., 2010). In this case, CLP creates a significant interaction between persons (the students) and the environment (the college setting) to produce meaningful development.

Being involved in the college community also helps students' psychosocial development, produces higher levels of autonomy, and markedly increases confidence, a sense of purpose, and the development of mature interpersonal relationships (Evans et al., 2010). CLP provides a context for this development to occur through meaningful involvement on campus and in the surrounding community.

Coffeehouse Series. The Coffeehouse Series provide an annual opportunity for students to speak in front of their peers and share meaningful experiences in which they practiced leadership in various contexts (CLP Handbook, 2014-15). In the 2013-14 school year, ten students were selected from a pool of applicants to present to an audience of over 200 faculty, staff, and students. These presentations had such titles as "Tea for Two: Studying Abroad in England" and "Mission and Fellowship in the Dominican Republic" (CLP Annual Report, 2014). In congruence with student development theory, these talks create an opportunity for students to feel they are part of a community and to learn from each other, which is equally as important as learning from teachers (Evans et al., 2010).

Group meetings. Various check-in meetings take place throughout the CLP program (CLP Handbook, 2014-15). In the first year, students participate in a Foundations Meeting in which they meet with their peers and CLP staff to understand the programmatic and academic requirements of CLP. They also meet that year and again as sophomores to reflect on personal and academic goals and to develop engagement plans for their experience at ACU. As juniors, students meet in small groups to discuss how they are integrating their learning with their experiences on campus and in the community. They also explore how they will employ this learning in future leadership

roles. Senior students participate in casual meetings to connect, share resources, and navigate the transition from college to their next steps after college. This allows students to further develop community and learn from peers while also receiving resources and support from CLP staff who serve as mentors to guide the senior students. Near the end of the program, senior students take part in a celebration of their accomplishments and developments as well as successful completion of the CLP program.

These meetings provide opportunities for CLP students to engage with members of the CLP staff, enabling those good company relationships to form. Students are engaged in the transition from authority-dependence to self-authorship, and these relationships with significant adults help them to start sharing the responsibility for their own life journeys and to become more autonomous in their lives (Baxter Magolda, 2009).

Society

The Society perspective of SCM focuses on the bigger picture, the ways in which students feel equipped to create positive change in their community or greater society. It enables them to feel they are part of something larger than themselves and to see that their efforts can make a difference in the world (Komives & Wagner, 2009).

In this perspective, I categorize any components of CLP that involve students' efforts toward the community, learning about global issues and perspectives, and exploring opportunities for involvement in society beyond college. This includes community service, study abroad, and the Exploration Program.

Community service. This component of CLP is based on the philosophy of Robert Greenleaf's servant leadership model. Participants are required to complete service hours throughout each academic year for a total of 100 logged hours. The CLP

handbook (2014) distinguishes community service from philanthropy as active involvement in the community, working directly with others to serve social needs. In 2013-2014, CLP students performed over 46,160 hours of service to over 300 organizations in the local community (CLP Annual Report, 2014).

The Social Change Model advocates for awareness and responsibility toward the well-being of others as a key aspect of socially responsible leadership (Komives & Wagner, 2009). Community service is an effective way for college students to experience leading in a socially responsible way. Community service also lends itself to the servant leadership approach underlying the SCM. Servant leaders behave ethically and lead not for personal gain, but to inspire change that will benefit society (Northouse, 2013).

Community service is one of the top leadership development practices in college programs, and it is one of the four strongest predictors of leadership growth based on the MSL study (Dugan, et al., 2013). The impact of this practice was described by Wagner and Mathison (2015) as follows:

Community-based learning has the potential to give students experiences that will challenge their ability to simultaneously consider the influence of social systems, local history, and cross-cultural dynamics. At the same time, it can also challenge them to address their own assumptions about working with others, where knowledge lies, and how to engage in a leadership process (p. 86).

By requiring 100 hours of community service, CLP provides an opportunity for students to experience such gains.

Study abroad. Study abroad stipends are available for eligible students. In the 2013-2014 school year, nearly 100 CLP students studied abroad in 20 different countries. CLP awarded over \$300,000 in study abroad stipends (CLP Annual Report, 2014). This investment reflects the push in higher education to increase students' international experiences and thus deepen their intercultural competency. Study abroad is found to be a transformational experience for students, helping to "expand their perspective on world affairs, better comprehend diverse cultures and languages, and grow in self-understanding" (NSSE, 2007, p.17). The NSSE survey of 2007 provided data from about 1,500 college seniors from 58 colleges, and found that students who studied abroad experienced reflective learning and personal gains and were more apt to engage in meaningful activities on campus after their return. It was also found that even short trips abroad resulted in deep learning and personal gains.

These findings are not universal, however. Another study suggested that study abroad may not be as transformational as is commonly believed. The researchers found that while study abroad does increase students' contact with diverse peoples, it does not necessarily impact their development in terms of comfort with and appreciation for cultural differences (Salisbury, An, & Pascarella, 2013). As the effects of study abroad on students' intercultural competency is debatable, it will be interesting to determine the effects that study abroad experience has on the overall leadership development experience of CLP students.

Passport Program. This program includes campus and community events that expose students to social and community issues and provide opportunities for critical thought, creative reflection, and greater awareness. The 2013-2014 school year included

over 100 Passport Program opportunities (CLP Annual Report, 2014). These included programs, workshops and presentations in areas such as career preparation, cultural awareness, and social justice issues. CLP students are required to attend a minimum of four Passport events in each of their first three years, for a total of at least 12 events in all.

Summary

In one four-year program, CLP students are exposed to a wide range of leadership development activities. Each of these activities has been subjected to empirical research or theoretical scrutiny to explore outcomes for students' leadership capacity. Most of these activities have proven effective, demonstrating increased capacity for socially responsible leadership. Two key elements are missing, however. First, there is a lack of information regarding the students' actual lived experiences during these leadership development activities. Understanding these experiences will lend depth and breadth to previous research, as we will be able to understand not only whether or not students develop as leaders through these activities, but also *how* that development takes place during the experience.

Second, the extant research focuses on leadership development activities taken as separate pieces of students' experiences. CLP is unique in that it incorporates all of these elements into one comprehensive four-year program. It is crucial to understand what happens for students when so many leadership activities are blended together into one holistic experience. In this study, I explored these student experiences in order to tell the stories of those CLP participants and their lived experiences in such a unique undergraduate leadership development program.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The literature on undergraduate leadership development programs focuses on outcomes and effectiveness of the programs, relying heavily on numerical data, but that is not enough to truly understand these programs. We must understand the human experience in order to truly grasp the reality of student leadership development. The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to understand the lived experiences of students who participated in a comprehensive four-year undergraduate leadership development program through the lens of the Social Change Model.

Research Questions

The overarching question guiding this study was:

1. How have students' experiences in the College Leadership Program contributed to their development as leaders?

Sub-questions were based on the three dimensions of the Social Change Model:

Individual, Group, and Society.

- A. *Individual*: In what ways have students developed as leaders through their intrapersonal experiences in CLP?
- B. *Group*: How does group involvement encouraged by CLP impact students' leadership development and college experience?
- C. *Society*: In what ways has CLP prepared students to feel empowered to lead social change?

2. To what extent is there congruence between the intended outcomes of CLP and the students' lived experiences?

Method: Phenomenological Case Study

To answer the research questions and serve the purpose of this study, I used a phenomenological case study approach. Soesbe (2012) pointed out a gap in the literature regarding the lived experiences of students in undergraduate leadership programs. Most studies focus on outcomes and effects rather than the actual experience. I sought to address this gap by focusing on students who are currently immersed in a comprehensive, four-year undergraduate leadership development program, the CLP.

There is debate about the most appropriate time to invite participants to reflect on their experiences. Colaizzi (1978) posited that a phenomenology should be reflective rather than focusing on participants currently immersed in the phenomenon. Although I can see the value of this approach, as in Soesbe's (2012) study of leadership program alumni five years after the program, I believe that in order to truly understand how a leadership program is experienced by students, they must be studied during or directly after their time in the program.

The CLP staff collects a variety of data each year, such as numbers of students enrolled in CLP, GPAs, retention rates, and attrition. Although the CLP staff has a significant amount of data to describe limited aspects of the program quantitatively, it is crucial to gain an understanding of the driving forces behind those numerical facts.

This phenomenological case study used in-depth interviews to garner rich descriptions of students' experiences in CLP to provide a thorough understanding of the essence of the experience. I used phenomenology for this study, as it examines the world

as it appears to the individuals who have experienced the phenomena, with a focus on how individuals construct their reality (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Although ample research exists to support the benefits of leadership development programs, there is no objective reality in which all participants will have the same results from their experiences in a college leadership program. The CLP staff and other constituencies must garner an understanding of the reality experienced by the individuals who participate in the four-year program in order to truly grasp its meaning. Thus, phenomenological research was ideal for this study, as its focus is on "what the person experiences and its expression in language that is as loyal to the lived experience as possible" (Rudestam & Newton, 2015, p. 43). This phenomenological study will help practitioners understand the essence of the experience as the participants perceive it (McMillan, 2008).

Along with the phenomenological approach, my study was also a case study. A case study focuses on an individual, organization, event, or program (Rudestam & Newtown, 2015). I studied the unique experience of a specific program, the College Leadership Program at Atlantic Coast University. The goal of a case study is to obtain a comprehensive understanding of that particular case (Rudestam & Newtown, 2015), and I was able to do so by focusing solely on students in this specific leadership program.

Epistemology

This study reflects the social constructivist paradigm, by which multiple realities exist based upon the lived experiences of individuals and the meanings and realities they construct (Creswell, 2013). The social constructivist paradigm is subjective in that reality is based on the perspectives of the individuals who experience the phenomenon. The

goal of the study was to understand the participants' views of the phenomenon or experience (Creswell, 2013). As the researcher, I was aware of my biases when approaching the study and was aware that my interpretations stem from my own experiences (Creswell, 2013). I focused on co-constructing reality with the participants, as my interpretations influence the reality of the phenomenon as well. The researcher and participants are linked, and I am aware that, as the researcher, I exert significant weight on the interpretation of findings (Evans, et al., 2010). I did not wish to change the phenomenon, but to understand it as it is in order to inform best practice for practitioners.

Participants

I conducted a series of interviews with key players involved with the College Leadership Program. Qualitative inquiry is biased by nature, and therefore random sampling is not always the best approach. Instead, the researcher should be deliberate about selecting participants who will contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). I employed purposeful sampling, which intentionally selects participants who can provide the researcher with the best information about the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013). A phenomenology also calls for participants who have or are currently experiencing the phenomenon (Rudestam & Newton); therefore, I worked with participants who are directly connected to the College Leadership Program. In addition to purposeful sampling, I also utilized snowball sampling, because one of my participants recommended two other people who could provide valuable information for this study.

For a phenomenological study, Creswell (2013) suggests selecting a heterogeneous group of anywhere from 4-15 participants, depending on the needs of the

study. I wanted to gain a holistic view of students' CLP experiences through face-to-face interviews with 15 participants consisting of senior students, sophomore students, CLP Fellows, the CLP Directors, and the President of Atlantic Coast University. The President recommended two additional administrative staff members, so I also interviewed the Dean of the College of Social Sciences and the Director of Community Engagement. In total, I interviewed 17 participants.

Senior students. I interviewed six seniors in the CLP program during the spring semester of their senior year, when they were close to graduating. These students had been in CLP for the entire program, during all four years of their college experience. I worked with the CLP staff to select the six senior student participants for this study. I wished to diversify the group as well as possible regarding gender, race/ethnicity, and types of campus involvement so that the sample would accurately represent the population of CLP students. As the CLP staff members know the students well, they were able to identify students who fit the criteria and made a list of 10-12 CLP students from which I drew a sample of six seniors who were willing to meet with me and participate in interviews. I retained a copy of the list in case I needed further information or a substitute participant, but I did not need to refer back to the list, as the first six seniors I contacted were willing and able to meet for interviews and provided thorough data. The six seniors were able to share their experiences of four years in the CLP program while still currently enrolled.

Sophomore students. A key element that has been introduced to CLP is the Leadership Portfolio, an online personal website through which students can reflect on their experiences and make meaning from them as they progress through the program.

Because this component is new to CLP, only freshmen and sophomores have portfolios at this time. I met with three sophomore students, also identified by the CLP staff, to learn about their experiences with this reflective practice. The three sophomores were near the end of their second year at ACU, so they were able to speak about the program about halfway into it. They each gave me a virtual tour of their portfolios and shared the web addresses so that I could use their portfolios for document analysis.

CLP Fellows. The three program graduates I interviewed are currently working as CLP Fellows. They graduated from ACU and completed the CLP program in 2014, and they are now full-time members of the CLP staff for one year. These participants provided valuable insight because they had completed the entire CLP program and have now been out of college for about a year. They were able to look back at their experiences in the leadership program and share their reflections of it from a distance, though a distance close enough for the feelings and memories of the experience to be fresh in their minds. They shared their experiences as students in the program as well as their perspectives as part of the staff who can look at the program from a professional perspective.

Student demographics and engagement. Demographic information for the 12 CLP students is displayed in Table 3.1. The three Fellows, who currently serve as members of the CLP staff, are included here with the student demographics because they were enrolled as students for four years prior to becoming Fellows. Of the 12 total students, eight were female and four were male. Ten students identified as Caucasian, and two identified as African American. The majority (ten) of the students were living in

Virginia prior to starting college, with only two from out-of-state. They ranged from 19-23 years of age and represented eight different academic majors.

The student participants reflected the demographics of ACU. The Freshman Class Profile for Fall 2013 shows a total of 1276 students enrolled at ACU. Of this number, 93% of the students come from in-state, and 7% from out-of-state. There are slightly more females (57%) than males (43%) enrolled. Caucasian students make up 75% of the student population, with 7% African American, 5% Hispanic, and 3% Asian. (ACU Freshman profile, 2013).

Table 3.1

CLP Student Participants' Demographic Information

Name	Year	Sex	Age	Race	Home	Major	Minor
Sarah	Alumn/ Fellow	F	23	Caucasian	VA	Communications	LDSP Political Science
Nancy	Alumn/ Fellow	F	22	Caucasian	VA	Psychology	LDSP
Mike	Alumn/ Fellow	M	23	Caucasian	VA	Biology	LDSP
Megan	Senior	F	22	Caucasian	NC	Communications	LDSP Spanish
Dan	Senior	M	21	Caucasian	VA	Philosophy	LDSP Philosophy of Law
Kyle	Senior	M	21	Caucasian	VA	Communications	LDSP
Kelly	Senior	F	22	Caucasian	TX	Chemistry	LDSP
Maria	Senior	F	22	African American	VA	Sociology	LDSP Spanish
April	Senior	F	22	African American	VA	Psychology	LDSP

Nick	Soph.	M	20	Caucasian	VA	Biology, Biochemistry	LDSP Applied Physics
Jamie	Soph.	F	20	Caucasian	VA	American Studies Economics	LDSP Philosophy of Law
Emma	Soph.	F	19	Caucasian	VA	Political Science	LDSP

The 12 student participants were involved in a variety of activities throughout their time at ACU. Table 3.2 shows their engagement in community service, the internship requirement, campus activities, and study abroad.

Table 3.2

CLP Student Participants' Engagement

Name	Service	Internship	Campus	Study Abroad
Sarah	REACH (Alternative Spring Break), work with low-income, trail cleanup	ACU Orientation	Greek Life, Panhellenic, Campus Activities Board (CAB), RA, orientation leader	No
Nancy	REACH trip leader, Museum	SLAP student director	Honors program, REACH, campus ministry, CLP Passport Agent,	England (Oxford)
Mike	Breath (children/mental health)	SLAP student director	Orientation crew leader, tour guide, Greek Life, Student Honor Council, Intramural sports	No
Megan	Tutoring, teaching Spanish, teaching ESL, Relay for Life, girls after-school program	Cystic Fibrosis foundation in DC	Coffeehouse speaker, CLP Ambassador, tour guide, Greek life, Honors, RA, Communications Club	Spain
Dan	Work with kids, teen center, mentoring, sexual assault awareness, human trafficking awareness, service within CLP	SLAP facilitator	Radio show, suicide awareness group, Greek Life, IFC, CLP Recruiter & Ambassador, sexual assault awareness, human trafficking awareness, campus job	England (Oxford)

Kyle	Museums	Museum	Greek life, IFC, CLP Recruiter & Ambassador, RA	No
Kelly	After-school program, SPCA, serving at fundraiser events	SLAP leader	SLAP orientation, CAB, Harry Potter Club, CLP Recruiter & Ambassador, Chemistry Club, honor fraternity, study abroad ambassador, honors program, admissions tour guide	England (Oxford) Scotland
Maria	Tutoring, working in schools	SLAP facilitator	SLAP, Greek Life, CAB, APO service fraternity, work at arts center, honor societies.	Spain
April	AmeriCorps, YWCA, health and family, Boys & Girls club, coaching YMCA teams	Student director of ACU orientation.	ILA, orientation facilitator/leader/student director, transfer orientation leader, undergraduate research in Psych and LDSP, honor societies, RA, campus jobs.	No
Nick	Fear to Freedom	Not yet	CLP Recruiter & Ambassador, marching band announcer, Greek Life, Crusades for Christ	Not yet
Jamie	Animal rescue, Legal Aid society	Not yet	ILA, Economics & Finance Club, History Club, pre-law fraternity, Honors, honor society, campus job	England (Oxford)
Emma	REACH, elementary school, feeding the homeless	Not yet	Crusades for Christ, Difference Makers (support homeless), Bible study	Not yet

Administrators. In addition to the 12 students, I interviewed five administrators from ACU. Their names and positions are displayed in Table 3.3, and details for each participant follow.

Table 3.3

Administrator Names and Titles

Name	Position
Mr. Adams	Director of the College Leadership Program
Ms. Rose	Associate Director of the College Leadership Program
President Smith	President of Atlantic Coast University
Mr. Jackson	Director of Community Engagement
Dr. Brown	Dean of the College of Social Sciences

Mr. Adams & Ms. Rose: College Leadership Program Directors. I completed a small focus group interview with Mr. Adams, the Director of CLP, and Ms. Rose, the Associate Director of CLP. Our initial interview ran over our allotted time, so I followed this up at a later date with an additional interview with Ms. Rose and a brief conversation with Mr. Adams. The Directors spoke about the CLP program's structure, impact on students, purpose, changes over time, and areas for improvement.

Mr. Adams has been with CLP since 2003, when he served as the Associate Director for the program. Three years later, he became the Director of the program. He defines his role as being the representative of the program out to the university and to the public. He serves on several committees and works within Student Affairs on behalf of CLP. His role keeps him less engaged with the day-to-day functions of the CLP office and more active with external issues.

Ms. Rose joined the CLP staff three years ago as one of the three Coordinators. While she was in that role, the Associate Director left ACU, and she moved into that

position in 2014. Ms. Rose used a circle metaphor to describe how the Director's and Associate Director's roles function together: she explained that if CLP were visualized as a circle, Mr. Adams stands on the edge of the circle looking out, and she stands beside him on the circle looking inward. She facilitates connections between the different areas of the program, supervising the Coordinators and Fellows, and making sure the various components of the program are working effectively.

President Smith: Atlantic Coast University President. My final intended interview was with President Smith, the current president of ACU and founder of the CLP program. He spoke to me about his vision and goals when starting the program, how ACU has changed over time, and his desires for the program as it continues. President Smith recommended two additional people for me to interview, Mr. Jackson and Dr. Brown.

President Smith began his ACU tenure in 1996 and created the College Leadership Program soon after his arrival. During our interview and my observation of the speaking event, President Smith spoke with eloquence and passion for the institution and the CLP program. He has such great pride in ACU and CLP that he asked me to remove the pseudonyms from my study and share with the world who they are and what they do. Although it was a noble gesture, I have employed pseudonyms and anonymity in this study to hold with the conventions of dissertation research and IRB guidelines.

Mr. Jackson: Director of Community Engagement. Mr. Jackson is currently the Director of Community Engagement at ACU, and he is also an ACU alumni who was a member of the very first class of the College Leadership Program. He spoke about how

the program took shape in those first four years while he was a student and his role and beliefs about students' participation in community service.

Mr. Jackson studied at ACU from 1998-2002, which he felt was a time to be involved in an up-and-coming university and to have a hand in "building something special." After college, he pursued a career in music, and then found himself back in the local area. President Smith was planning to start an office on campus specifically focused on connecting students with the local community. Mr. Jackson helped create what became the Center for Community Engagement and his role evolved into that of Director.

In this role, Mr. Jackson works with the development of community partners, organizations in the local area with whom ACU's students can engage. He also leads the Bonner program, a scholarship program for first-generation students, and manages the 'service distinction' program for students who wish to conduct extra service hours in a particular area. He manages student coordinators to oversee each of the ten service tracks, the designated areas in which they encourage students to focus their community service hours in deliberate ways. As the CLP students are required to conduct 100 hours of community service and focus on a specific track, Mr. Jackson and his staff work directly with those students, helping them find their niche in service and connecting them to organizations in the community.

Dr. Brown: Dean of the College of Social Sciences. Finally, I met with Dr. Brown per President Smith's recommendation. Dr. Brown is the Dean of the College of Social Sciences at ACU. He oversees seven departments, including the Department of Leadership Studies (LDSP). Dr. Brown played an integral role in developing the

academic component of the leadership program. He spoke about his role in shaping the program, developing the Leadership Studies minor, and the connection between the minor and the CLP program.

Dr. Brown has been working at ACU since 1998, when the CLP program was just getting started. He worked to develop a leadership curriculum, shape the Leadership Studies minor, and build the Leadership Studies department, of which he became chair. Later, he moved into the role of Dean of the College of Social Sciences, where he oversees seven departments, including Leadership Studies. Dr. Brown explained passionately, “My role is to inspire 91 professors to give these students the best education and the best educational experience that we can put together.”

Data Sources and Data Collection

This section provides a detailed description of how the data were collected in order to understand the lived experiences of students in a four-year undergraduate leadership development program.

Interviews. In order to understand the essence of the CLP experience, I collected data through interviews with CLP students and administrators. As suggested by Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), I conducted one interview with each participant in order to obtain a comprehensive description of the phenomenon as the individual experienced it. The interviews were informal and interactive and relied on open-ended questions to prompt the participants (Moustakas, 1994). I met with the participants face-to-face to conduct these personal, in-depth interviews (McMillan, 2008) that varied in length depending on the data desired from each participant (see interview schedule in Table 3.4). I met with

each participant separately, except for a combined interview with Mr. Adams and Ms. Rose. In total, I gathered over 20 hours of interview data.

Table 3.4

Interview Schedule

Participants	Focus	Individual Interview Time	Total Interview Time
6 Senior CLP Students	Personal experiences in CLP	57-112 min	8 hrs 41 min
3 Sophomore CLP Students	Leadership Portfolio	14-32 min	1 hr 2 min
3 CLP Fellows (Graduates)	Personal experiences in CLP, one year out	47-78 min	3 hrs
Director & Associate Director of CLP	Knowledge of CLP components, purpose, results	11-54 min	1 hr 55 min
ACU President	Creation of CLP, goals, purpose, impact on ACU	46 min	46 min
Dean of College of Social Sciences	Creation of CLP, connection between CLP & LDSP	40 min	40 min
Director of Community Engagement	Experience in first class of CLP; connections between CLP and engagement	50 min	50 min
Total Interview Time			20 hrs 12 min

In the social constructivist paradigm, the questions should be broad and general: "The more open-ended the questioning, the better, as the researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life setting" (Creswell, 2013, p. 25). The questions in this study were broad and general so that participants could share their experiences with the phenomenon as deeply as they wish. I asked open-ended questions relating to students' experience, leadership, motivation, challenges, and overall impact of the program on their

college experience. The findings of this study enabled me to ascertain what is most and least effective about the program, as student accounts are shared in their own words and in relatable terms.

I used the Interview Questions listed in Appendices B-H as a guide for the face-to-face interviews. The protocols for both Senior students (Appendix B) and CLP Fellows (Appendix C) contain general questions to elicit responses regarding the overall experience of participating in CLP, with some more specific questions seeking information about how they developed in the areas of Individual, Group, and Society. Appendix D lists the interview questions for Sophomore students. I began by asking students to lead me on a virtual tour of their portfolios, then proceeded with the other questions listed and any follow-up questions that arose during the portfolio analysis.

The interview questions in Appendix E and F guided me through the interviews with the two Directors of CLP and the President of ACU, enabling me to gain a more broad understanding of the CLP program, its purpose, and its impact on students. Appendix G shows the interview questions that I asked Dr. Brown, the Dean of the College of Social Sciences. Lastly, the questions for Mr. Jackson, Director of Community Engagement, are listed in Appendix H.

Document Analysis

In order to develop a deeper understanding of ACU and the College Leadership Program, I analyzed various documents that provided valuable information and made this study more robust. First, I read through the current CLP Handbook for the 2014-2015 school year to understand the components of the program. This is the handbook that all students enrolled in the program received to guide them through their CLP experience.

Additionally, I viewed the College Leadership Program's 2014 Annual Report. The first of its kind, the Annual Report provides descriptions based on quantitative data collected throughout the 2013-2014 school year. It includes information about the components of the program and details about students' specific experiences throughout the year.

After reading through these two documents, I was able to obtain copies of the CLP Handbooks from the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years, which I compared to the current handbook to find differences in the program over the year. I discussed these differences with Ms. Rose to understand the reasons for the changes.

Additionally, I viewed and analyzed three Leadership Portfolios. I first asked the three sophomore students to sit down with me in person and give me a virtual tour of their portfolios, explaining the significance of each feature. I then asked them the interview questions listed in Appendix D, as well as any additional questions that came to my mind as they reviewed their portfolios with me. After our interviews and the virtual tour, they shared the web addresses with me so I could continue to analyze the documents later. I printed copies of the portfolios and analyzed them along with my other data.

Observation

My initial proposal for this study included only interviews and document analysis; however, I also had the opportunity to conduct a formal observation, which added a valuable additional element to my data collection process. Mr. Adams, the CLP Director, first approached President Smith on my behalf to ask him if he would take the time to meet with me. When they spoke, President Smith suggested that I attend the Speaker Series event that would take place the following week. Generally, the CLP Speaker Series events consist of presentations by a variety of leaders from outside of campus, but

the scheduled speaker was unable to get there as planned. Instead, President Smith spoke to the students. I was able to attend this event and conduct a 90-minute formal observation of this key component of the CLP program. Notes from this observation are included in Appendix I. Additionally, I conducted short, informal observations of the CLP setting and ACU environment each time I visited campus. This helped me understand the daily lives of those experiencing the case being studied.

Data Analysis

The phenomenological data analysis procedure developed by Colaizzi (1973) was fitting for the nature of this study. I employed the version of this model developed by Soesbe (2012), who described the model into clear, user-friendly steps (pp. 70-71):

1. The researcher thoroughly reads and rereads the transcribed interviews to identify with the data and to acquire a sense of each individual and his or her background and experiences.
2. From the transcripts the researcher identifies significant statements that pertain directly to the proposed phenomenon.
3. The researcher develops interpretive meanings of each of the significant statements. The researcher rereads the research protocols to ensure the original description is evident in the interpretive meanings.
4. The interpretive meanings are arranged into clusters, which allow themes to emerge. The researcher seeks validation, avoids repetitive themes, and notes any discrepancies during this process.
5. The themes are then integrated into an exhaustive description. The researcher also refers the theme clusters back to the protocols to substantiate them.

6. The researcher produces a concise statement of the exhaustive description and provides a fundamental statement of identification also referred to as the overall essence of the experience.
7. The reduced statement of the exhaustive description is presented to the study's participants in order to verify the conclusions and the development of the essence statement. If discrepancies are noted, the researcher should go back through the significant statements, interpretive meanings, and themes in order to address the stated concerns.

Ethical Considerations

In order to ensure that students' privacy was respected and participants were kept free from potential harm, I followed the necessary ethical considerations. I ensured confidentiality by using pseudonyms for all people, places, and program details. Atlantic Coast University and the College Leadership Program are both false names that protect the identity of the institution being studied. Each participant was given a pseudonym in this report.

I also asked participants to complete informed consent forms (Appendix A) prior to the start of each interview. I followed the appropriate procedures to secure permissions to conduct this study through the W&M Education Institutional Review Board (IRB) as well as the IRB of ACU.

Assumptions

In a qualitative study, it is essential for the researcher to explain past experiences that have shaped her interpretations (Creswell, 2013). As the researcher in this study, I have been interested in leadership for some time. I deeply value personal growth and

reflection and personal development. In 2012, I participated in a five-month women's leadership development program, which was a truly meaningful experience in many ways. I learned the value of connecting with other women and supporting each other in our collective journey toward success and equity.

I approached this study with the belief that the College Leadership Program may provide a similar transformative experience for college students. It is a different context and age group, but a program like this can help bring people together who might not have otherwise connected. It can also help people discover their potential and gain confidence. I understand that not all people share this appreciation for self-discovery and that not all experiences with leadership programs will resonate with my own. It is with this background that I approached the current study, but I questioned my own interpretations and checked with participants to allow for accuracy in representing their points of view.

Limitations

Limitations are those factors that are beyond the control of the researcher. The most likely limitation of this study is the fact that I cannot control for which aspects of the students' lived experiences in CLP are purely a result of participation in that program, as opposed to being part of the overall experience of being in college. I also cannot control whether the participants chose to withhold information from me in order to portray the program in either a more positive or negative light based on their biases.

Another clear limitation to this study is the sampling method. The students in this study were selected by members of the CLP staff because they were well-known, actively engaged participants. I did not have access to students who were less engaged, struggling, or even dropped out of the program. The experiences of the 12 students in

this study are by no means generalizable to all students in CLP, but represent highly positive experiences.

Delimitations

As a phenomenological case study, this study is exploratory in nature and its scope is limited to the participants and their experiences within a specific leadership program at a single institution. This study only focused on one institution, ACU. I make no attempt to compare this university to other schools, so the results are not intended to be generalized to other schools. Instead, the purpose of this study was to illustrate the experiences of students in this particular program.

This study also focused only on the College Leadership Program and did not address other programs in this or other institutions. This was to keep the study focused on a particular example of an in-depth, four-year leadership program with a wide variety of components.

I studied only CLP students at ACU, rather than comparing the experiences of students who are enrolled in CLP with those who are not in the program. The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of students in CLP; therefore, it was not necessary in this particular study to address the experiences of non-CLP students.

Validity and Trustworthiness

I employed a variety of strategies for validation, the establishment of trustworthiness in a piece of research (Angen, 2000). I discuss those measures here in terms of Creswell and Miller's (2000; in Creswell, 2013) validation strategies that they compiled from a variety of qualitative researchers.

Triangulation

This strategy involves utilizing multiple data sources and methods to provide corroborating evidence (Creswell, 2013). I used three primary data sources in this study: face-to-face interviews, observation, and document analysis. This enabled me to gather robust data about ACU and CLP through various sources that presented different types of information, which allowed me to understand the institution and leadership program more holistically. I conducted interviews with diverse constituents related to CLP, including current students, past students, staff, and other administrators. This also provided a multitude of perspectives on the program. Finally, my document analysis included handbooks, the annual report, and student portfolios, offering a wealth of information as well. Collecting data from all of these sources helped me move beyond my own biases and initial interpretations to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

Clarifying Researcher Bias

In my earlier section on Assumptions, I explained my connections and beliefs regarding leadership development programs. I made an effort to keep my own position and biases in mind throughout the data collection and interpretation process and consciously sought to keep my own assumptions from impacting the findings.

Member Checking

Member checking allowed me to keep those assumptions in check. This strategy involves asking the participants to review the findings and interpretations from the study (Creswell, 2013). After coding the data and developing themes, I created a theme list for each participant containing anecdotes and quotes from their transcripts as they aligned with the themes. I emailed this document to each participant and asked him or her to

review it, challenge any of my interpretations, make changes or clarifications as necessary, and give their approval for me to proceed with writing up my findings. Every participant replied and gave their approval, and changes were made as needed according to their feedback.

Rich, Thick Description

This is a strategy in which the researcher describes the participants and context of the study in great detail so that the reader may make connections to other settings based on similarities they detect (Creswell, 2013). The findings and interpretations in this study are not meant to be generalized to all leadership programs. Thus, I aimed to provide ample detail regarding ACU, CLP, and the participants so that readers may transfer the findings to their own programs as they deem appropriate.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to understand the lived experiences of students who participated in a comprehensive four-year undergraduate leadership development program through the lens of the Social Change Model. To address my research questions, I collected data through interviews, an observation, and document analysis. The participants included six seniors currently enrolled in the CLP program who were nearing the end of their final year at ACU, three sophomores currently enrolled in the program who could share their Leadership Portfolios, and three CLP Fellows who are graduates of the program and work under a one-year contract with the staff. For more robust data, I interviewed the two directors of the CLP program who oversee its daily functions, as well as the President of ACU, who created the program. Additionally, I interviewed the Dean of the College of Social Sciences, who oversees the department of Leadership Studies, which houses the academic minor, as well as the Director of Community Engagement, who connects students to community service. I also gathered data through document analysis of the CLP Handbooks, Annual Report, and websites as well as three students' online Leadership Portfolios. Finally, I conducted an observation of the ACU President speaking to the CLP students at a formal CLP Speaker Series event.

Patterns emerged from the data collected from the participants. The students had many similar experiences with CLP, as well as some variations in their unique paths. Overall, their experiences provide an understanding of the essence of CLP and the

general student experience. The findings, presented in Table 4.1, are described in this chapter in direct connection to the research questions that guided this study.

Table 4.1

Summary of Themes

Research Question Addressed	Themes that Emerged
RQ1. How students' experiences in the CLP contributed to their development as leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their understanding of leadership shifted • They developed understanding of their own leadership
RQ1a. Individual: How students developed as leaders through intrapersonal experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the Leadership Portfolio contributed to personal growth • Gaining confidence • Involvement • Intentionality • Making real-life connections • Responsibility and professionalism • Being challenged and empowered • Meaningful adult relationships • Goals for the future
RQ1b. Group: The impact of group involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging with like-minded others • Engaging with diverse others
RQ1c. Society: Preparation to lead social change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serving the community • The desire to make a difference
RQ2. Congruence between the intended outcomes of CLP and the students' lived experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The intended outcomes of CLP • Students' development as leaders through CLP • Room for improvement

RQ1: How Students' Experiences in the College Leadership Program Contributed to their Development as Leaders

The 12 student participants -- seniors, sophomores, and alumni Fellows -- all expressed ways in which they had developed as leaders through their participation in the College Leadership Program. Underlying the overall experience, students' very understanding of leadership changed through their participation in the program. They moved from prior definitions of leadership as positional and trait-based toward a concept of leadership as accessible, relational, and transformational. They realized they can lead by having a small impact in the communities around them, and they began to understand the importance of followers in creating social change. This shifting perspective on leadership and their experiences in the program allowed them to develop an understanding of their own leadership styles and qualities.

A Shift in Students' Understanding of Leadership

Every student expressed that his or her understanding of leadership was changed in some way as a result of participation in CLP. Some combination of the curricular and co-curricular activities of CLP helped shape how they defined leadership and how they viewed themselves as leaders. For the Fellows and seniors, this type of change could be expected, as they were immersed in the program for four years. Surprisingly, however, even the sophomores expressed changes in their views of leadership, suggesting that the program was influential even in the first two years.

Prior definitions of leadership. Prior to coming to ACU and starting the CLP program, the students in this study believed that leadership was something reserved for a particular type of person and for those in specific leadership roles. Most students made

comments about this prior belief of positional leadership. Dan, a senior philosophy major from Virginia, explained his prior thinking this way:

Coming into college, I thought leadership was whoever was in charge of something. Be a manager; have an army. More grandiose terms, like presidents. I probably thought it was more trait based -- if you were courageous and smart and good-looking, then you could be a leader [Dan, Senior Student].

Dan's belief that leadership was 'grandiose' and trait-based was shared by most of the students. Sarah is one of the CLP Fellows who graduated from ACU and completed the CLP program. She studied communications and political science. Sarah explained that she originally thought leadership was about people who are "above me in leadership roles." Like Dan and Sarah, the other students gave examples of seeing leaders as football coaches, presidents, military officers, and other figureheads who give directions that others must follow. These beliefs that leaders are the people in charge likely reflect a typical perspective that people hold if they do not have direct experience or training in leadership.

A shift in perspectives. For the CLP students in this study, their prior beliefs about leaders as formal figureheads shifted once they entered the program and learned more about leadership through their coursework, community service, guest speakers, and active engagement on campus. Maria, a senior sociology major and Spanish minor from Virginia, learned that she could make a difference without being the formal leader in her organizations. When she played the role of "big sister" to younger women in her sorority, she realized "You don't need a title. You can be actively engaged to lead" [Maria, Senior Student]. This

emphasis on engagement suggests that Maria now focuses not on the traits of a leader, but the relationships the leader builds with others within the organization.

Three of the students came from military families and had deeply ingrained beliefs that leaders were people in charge who gave commands. Like Maria, they took part in clubs and organizations on campus where they realized “the leader is a member of the team, not the front of the team” [Nick, Sophomore Student]. They explained that they could take part in these groups and make a difference without a positional title. April, a senior psychology major, explained:

In most of my activities, I haven't held a formal leadership position. But in no way do I feel like I have not made an impact on campus or with my service. That's what leadership is about -- having the courage to influence change. When you feel passionate about something and want to see it done, then you are a leader [April, Senior Student].

April's words reflect many of the students' beliefs that they could make change if they were passionate about making a difference or seeing a project through.

The students who came into the CLP program thinking leadership was limited to a select few people with special traits now believe that it is accessible to all people as a result of the opportunities they had to engage on campus and in their communities. Nancy, a CLP Fellow, described her internship experience and community service, where she realized that her supervisors were “just normal people, like me. They didn't have formal leadership training; they were just passionate and motivated.” Like Nancy, the CLP students in this study learned that leadership was not reserved for elite people with special traits who hold

formal titles. They realized that anyone can be a leader through active engagement and passion for making a difference, even in small ways.

Small impact. The students' original ideas about leadership suggested that leaders were those who left legacies by making major changes in the world. They realized through their involvement in CLP that not only is leadership accessible to everyone, but that people lead every day in small ways, impacting one small organization or even just one person.

Megan is a senior student from North Carolina who studied communications and Spanish. Megan talked about her community service experience in which she volunteered to teach students to speak Spanish. "Maybe one of those kids has a taste for Spanish now," she said. Although Megan did not make groundbreaking changes, she realized that she was leading just by impacting that group of children. Many of the students in this study shared similar stories of having an impact on small groups or even individuals. They spoke about mentoring "little" brothers or sisters in their fraternities and sororities, helping to move boxes at a food bank, or reaching out to freshmen students who were struggling during SLAP week. "Leading isn't changing the world -- it's changing *someone's* world" [Maria, Senior Student]. The students recognized the desire to make a difference in the world, but realized they can only start with small steps. April described this as a "ripple effect," believing that the influence she has on even just a few other people can have a lasting impact that will spread to more people.

The College Leadership Program provided opportunities through community service and involvement on campus that enabled the students in this study to feel they could contribute to the world around them. They recognized that they do not need to hold titles or formal roles, but could reach out to others, set an example, and make an impact in their own

small ways. They began to recognize leadership not as a position of power that benefits the leader, but as a relationship between people that is mutually beneficial.

The role of followers in leadership. Participation in CLP led students to shift their definitions of leadership from a position of power to a more accessible definition, including impacting in small ways. They realized through this program that leadership is not only the function of a single person, but takes people working together to make change. One student expressed, “I think you need at least one follower to really be a leader” [Dan, Senior Student]. Almost every one of the students specifically mentioned the role of followers when they spoke about leadership.

The students recognized that there is a relationship between leaders and followers. They spoke about the importance of following and how they could make a difference without being the leader. Mike is a CLP graduate who studied biology and was involved in a fraternity, intramural sports, and CLP orientation. He now works as one of the three CLP Fellows. Mike explained how his on perspective on leadership changed through his experiences in CLP, particularly with community service:

I came from a sports world, was the captain of many teams. I think of an authoritarian style -- it's my decision, and everyone is going to follow me.

(Community service) showed me the effectiveness of followership. The organization would be useless without the volunteers. It's headed up by a director, but she gave us so much autonomy. A leader really empowers their followers [Mike, CLP Graduate & Fellow].

Mike's experience with community service helped him see that part of a leader's role is to empower followers, to build them up in order to create more leadership.

Maria said that CLP helps students understand followership. For example, as a SLAP facilitator, she felt that she was always following somebody. She followed Mr. Adams and upper-class students, and newer students followed her. She believes that following makes people better leaders, as they can learn from other people. Jamie, a sophomore who studied American studies, economics, and philosophy of law, articulated her views on followership in her online portfolio as part of her reflections on her sophomore year:

Leaders must trust their followers in order to gain their trust and commitment in return. Respect involves the authentic acknowledgment of the value of another human being, and it forces leaders to look at followers as equals, and followers to look at leaders as deserving of their obedience [Jamie, Sophomore Student].

Jamie recognized that leaders and followers mutually respect and value one another. Interestingly, although she said leaders and followers are equals, she still used the word “obedience” to describe this relationship.

For some students, their personal leadership style resonates with the concept of followership and the theory of servant leadership. Emma wrote in her freshmen year reflection in her online portfolio about feeling too shy to take on leadership roles as a freshman. Instead, she started as a follower and learned from the leaders around her. Emma had an awareness of how her own leadership could grow through followership. Not only did the students acknowledge the role of followers in relation to leaders, but they also felt they could lead by following. Nancy spoke about being a follower in service organizations by being involved and helping other people. She thought of this as servant leadership, as she was leading by serving other people. Although all of the students mentioned the importance of followers when they spoke about leadership, they varied in their understanding and

explanations of the relationship between leaders and followers and in how they interpret the concept of servant leadership.

Understanding One's Self as a Leader

As the students' perspectives on leadership changed from being position-based and transactional to being more accessible and transformational, they were able to develop an understanding of themselves as leaders. They were able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses as well as their preferences when it comes to leadership styles.

Even as a sophomore, political science major Emma was able to articulate how leadership works for her particular personality. Although she was very shy and quiet, she realized she could lead in her own way without having to be "big and boisterous." Emma learned that leadership can fit her personality and is not reserved for outspoken positional leaders. In almost direct contrast to Emma, senior Kelly is a very different personality type. Being bubbly, animated, and outgoing, Kelly also learned to adapt her leadership style to fit her personal qualities, recognizing when to tone down her personality and listen to the opinions and needs of others. "I've become someone more relational, not just so task-oriented like I was before" [Kelly, Senior Student]. Kelly and Emma both realized that leadership is not solely about their own personalities, but in how they work with others.

The students learned through the program that self-understanding is important for effective leadership. April articulated this relationship and her own self-understanding, "You can't lead without knowing yourself first." She and others spoke about being self-reflective, knowing who they are and how they impact other people. The students became more aware of their own actions and personalities and realized that understanding their own qualities can make them more effective leaders.

Document analysis of the 2014-2015 CLP Handbook provided insight as to how students, even as early as their sophomore year, were able to articulate their own personal qualities and what type of leadership style works best for them. The Handbook includes a description of the courses in the Leadership Studies (LDSP) minor. The first course that CLP students take as freshmen is LDSP 210: Self, Group, and Leadership. In this course, students are guided through self-assessments and a variety of activities to help them understand their personal development and leadership capabilities, and the relationship between self-identity and leadership. In their sophomore year, students take LDSP 310: Leadership Theory and Research, which provides them with an overview of salient leadership theories. This combination of courses enabled students to understand their unique qualities and traits and relate them to leadership theories, developing their own personal understanding of self as leader. In our interviews, the students used phrases that likely stem directly from these courses, such as:

I try to pull a lot on that charismatic and relational leadership. I also like the transformative leadership model -- my favorite theory from classes. But I'm grounded on charismatic leadership. There's an energy you bring to different situations. My top strength (from StrengthsFinder) is *Includer*. I try to do that through charismatic energy, to find out how we can bring all peoples' skills together instead of just my skills [Mike, CLP Graduate & Fellow].

Mike's words jump right off the pages of leadership textbooks, showing that he is able to articulate what he learned in class and how he has integrated these lessons with his understanding of his own identity. The students in this study demonstrated a strong sense of self-awareness that they attributed to their learning in the LDSP coursework and CLP

activities. Their understanding of their own leadership definitions and styles was a major part of their development as individuals throughout the program.

RQ1a. Individual: Developing as Leaders through Intrapersonal Experiences

As students learned about leadership and began to shape their own identities as leaders, the CLP program helped them to develop on an individual level. Intrapersonal activities and self-reflection enabled them to develop a better understanding of who they are as individuals, which in turn shapes how they interact with groups and how they can ultimately impact society. The students' developed personally by reflecting in the Leadership Portfolio, gaining self-confidence, being actively involved on and around campus, and being intentional in their college experiences. They were also able to make real-life connections with the leadership theory they learned in their courses. The students also developed through taking on responsibility, being challenged and empowered, and establishing meaningful adult relationships with ACU faculty and staff. Their personal understanding allowed them to develop goals and direction for their futures.

Self-Development

For all of the students I interviewed, self-development was a significant aspect of the College Leadership Program. They gained greater awareness of their own personalities and understanding of who they are as individuals. Kelly felt the program helped her to reinforce her beliefs about herself and further develop her existing qualities. "CLP made me more mature, more comfortable with who I always knew I was" [Kelly, Senior Student]. Kelly felt that the program highlighted and developed the best parts of herself.

Dan, in contrast, felt that he had changed completely since the program began. He said, "It colored my entire college experience." The various opportunities helped him learn and grow, and he felt the program made him more introspective. He asserted that he would not be the same today without the CLP program. "They really facilitate personal growth. I had never been in a position where that was the focus" [Dan, Senior Student]. One such experience that helped Dan grow was being a SLAP orientation facilitator as his internship requirement. During that time, Dan made a mistake that threw off the "well-oiled machine" that SLAP was. He felt he had let down his friends, supervisors, and team. This experience hurt his confidence, but he owned up to his mistake, talked through it, and came out stronger. After that experience, Dan is more aware of mistakes and consequences and how to effectively make decisions in his life. Mistakes were valuable learning moments for other students too. "It's made me realize, I *am* a leader. I'm not perfect. I make mistakes" [Maria, Senior Student]. As Maria expressed, making mistakes did not make her less of a leader; in fact, the self-awareness she and Dan developed made them feel like stronger leaders.

Even after just two years of the program, sophomore student Emma was able to express how she had grown personally:

I have a better understanding of myself, how I can use learning about leadership to lead others, but also to understand what leadership is in a job I have. I learned how to work effectively in an organization [Emma, Sophomore Student].

Emma's words reflect that she not only learned about herself, but how that will factor into her future roles within organizations. Kyle also explained that CLP gave him the tools he needed to be successful in various activities, which guided him toward graduate school and

his future career path, where he plans to work in higher education. He learned where his safe zones are and how to challenge himself to grow. Through self-reflection, Kyle realized that he makes a “good vice president.” He does not like to be in charge, but prefers to play a supporting role. This self-awareness will help guide his future roles and his interactions in groups and in the greater society.

For two students, attending the International Leadership Association (ILA) conference was a significant event in shaping their individual understanding. Senior student April explained,

I really wanted to study abroad but couldn't afford it. CLP provided me opportunities to travel to Denver, California, Canada. I got to see the world in a different way and meet people like the authors of my textbooks [April, Senior Student].

Going to the ILA conference helped April realize that she was very passionate about leadership and wanted to learn more. This opportunity would not have been possible without the financial support of CLP. This conference experience was also valuable for sophomore student Jamie. She wrote in the sophomore year reflection of her Leadership Portfolio,

I got out of my comfort zone and tried to challenge myself in a new situation as authentically as possible, and found some great experiences and friendships along the way! [Jamie, Sophomore Student].

By learning more about herself, Jamie was able to feel like a more authentic leader, which strengthened her belief in her ability to lead others. By encouraging and financing students' travel to an international leadership conference, CLP provided an opportunity for students to connect what they were learning in a broader setting, and to feel confident in what they know about leadership.

Megan, senior student, spoke about the CLP Coffeehouse Series, in which students share their study abroad experiences with faculty and students. She shared her story about studying in Spain, adapting to a new culture, and going through challenges like losing her luggage in an unfamiliar place. Megan enjoyed sharing the experience with other students so they could get interested in study abroad, and she also learned that she enjoys speaking to others, believing that someday she might even be a keynote speaker. Megan was the only student to mention the Coffeehouse Series, but for her it was quite meaningful and helped shape her self-awareness.

The students in this study spoke about the individual learning that took place through the first course of the Leadership Studies minor. LDSP 210 “Self, Group, and Leadership,” includes self-assessments and other activities to help students understand how their own personal development affects their leadership and group interactions. The students shared that this course made them realize their strengths and weaknesses and how they interact with other people, and they did a great deal of self-reflection to heighten their personal awareness. For April, not only was the content valuable, but her relationship with the professor was important. She felt challenged to think about her own identity was inspired to continue this self-exploration, knowing it would make her a better leader. This self-identity course is the first that students take as freshmen in CLP, and it laid the foundation for their development throughout the program.

Volunteer-work also helped students learn about their individual strengths and weaknesses. For Nancy, CLP graduate and Fellow, volunteering in a community organization helped her realize certain skills she had and develop them to effectively communicate with others. She believed that recognizing and cultivating her personal skills

through volunteering will serve her well in future jobs. April was also able to understand herself better through volunteer work. She tried working with AmeriCorps and loved it, far exceeding her required number of community service hours. This helped her find her passion for working with children and mentoring underrepresented youth. She and others expressed that they would not have found such opportunities if they were not required by CLP to do service hours. Through a variety of activities within the LDSP course and co-curricular activities, CLP enabled the students in this study to find their passions, learn their strengths and weaknesses, and better understand who they are as individuals. This self-awareness makes them feel equipped to be better leaders and to better understand others in order to serve society.

The Leadership Portfolio

For the sophomore students, the online Leadership Portfolio served as a valuable tool for them to reflect on their development throughout CLP. It also serves as a space where the CLP staff can view their progress and development, and students will be able to look back at their growth at the end of their four-year experience. In the portfolio, the students listed three goals for each school year. For each goal, they listed steps for an action plan, as well as three or more campus resources that would help them meet their goal.

The goals varied for each student depending on their particular personalities and interests, but all three students had more detailed, thoughtful goals in their sophomore year than they did in the first. For example, Nick's freshmen year goals were quite simple:

Goal #1: My first goal for freshmen year is to get involved at ACU.

Goal #2: My second goal for freshmen year is to have at least 50 community service hours.

Goal #3: My third and final goal for my freshmen year is to maintain at least a 3.5 GPA.

Nick's sophomore year goals showed deeper consideration, which likely resulted from his growth in his first year in CLP and being encouraged to reflect more deeply. He even categorized his goals into thoughtful themes:

Self: To improve myself, I will continue going to the gym as well as do more outside activities such as hiking, running, and sports with friends. This will help me to relieve stress and build much better relationships with those that I am close to.

Community: I will become more involved in the community by serving as a volunteer for [organization]. In this role I will help in preparing supplies for their events, loading and unloading trucks for their events, and helping to organize the events in all ways possible.

Leadership: I will take on leadership roles in my Fraternity, specifically as Philanthropy Chair. In this role, I will organize and run fundraising events as well as educational events to promote our various philanthropy efforts. I will also head and lead a committee of 3-5 Brothers to assist in these efforts [Nick, Sophomore Student].

This change in just one year shows that Nick became more deliberate about his college experience and what he wished to invest in and get out of his participation in CLP.

Emma's and Jamie's portfolios showed the same pattern of more meaningful goal-setting in the second year.

In addition to goal setting, the CLP students are required to post a reflection at the end of each school year in which they reflect back on their year and the extent to which they met their goals. This was done in narrative form. These pieces of the portfolio demonstrated students' individual development during their first two years of CLP. After her sophomore year, Jamie wrote the following thoughts in her portfolio reflection relating to her original goals:

The realization that I will likely not maintain a perfect GPA after this year was disappointing, but I've come to accept it. I did my absolute best in all my classes and I deserved the grades I received, and they accurately reflect my abilities as a student. I still put myself through rigorous academic challenges and am satisfied with my efforts. I actually feel more authentic as a student now that I am not striving for what might be considered an unrealistic goal, and now that I can focus on the quality of my academic work beyond just the numerical reflection of grades [Jamie, Sophomore Student].

This excerpt shows that the Leadership Portfolio helped Jamie to process her experiences in her first years at ACU and understand her own growth and development as she moves forward. She felt that understanding herself through this reflection made her more authentic as an individual, which she believes to be an important quality for leadership.

Jamie, Nick, and Emma all wrote goals and reflections in their Leadership Portfolios that show thought and growth. Although the portfolio is a new requirement in CLP, it seems to be a useful tool for students. The sophomores were forced to take the time to think about their experiences and their intrapersonal development and to put that

growth into words. This reflection may help deepen the meaning of their experiences in CLP as they proceed through the four-year program.

Gaining Confidence

Several students expressed that being in CLP and the activities related to it enabled them to gain self-confidence. Notably, almost all of the female students expressed gaining confidence through CLP, and none of the males did. The males definitely grew as individuals and expressed their beliefs in their abilities to lead and make a difference, but only the females specifically spoke about gaining confidence in those terms. This growth happened through opportunities to lead others, having a sense of responsibility, and being in situations that put them in front of people.

Kelly explained that she gained confidence in herself and learned to process what she thinks before speaking. She says she used to “get excited and talk really fast,” and she has gotten much better about slowing down, thinking, and better explaining herself. Senior sociology major Maria also expressed her personal growth in this area, saying that she now feels confident to interview without being nervous: “Now I know what to say, how to dress. I’m more confident in myself and my ability to feel like a leader” [Maria, Senior Student]. Maria’s reflection suggests that her growth occurred through opportunities to act professionally. For example, she told me that students are required to dress up for the CLP Speaker Series. She and other students also went through interviews for campus positions and held professional internships.

The internship was a major factor in developing confidence for senior student Megan. Megan interned with a nonprofit organization in Washington, DC one summer during her college experience. She lived with roommates in an apartment and experienced navigating a

large city and living independently. She was treated as a peer by professionals, and “thrown into the real-world” at a young age. This was a time of great personal growth for Megan, and she believes she grew significantly as an individual through this experience.

I’m more confident in myself than I used to be. The CLP program helped with that. It helped me realize it’s okay to be who I am. I think that’s why they start with the personal leadership course [Megan, Senior Student].

The internship is a requirement in CLP, specifically as part of the Leadership Studies minor. Megan and others explained that they would likely not have had experiences like this if the internship were not required. It opened new doors and helped them grow personally and professionally.

Nancy, CLP alumni and Fellow, said she was “100% changed by the program.” A major part of her growth came through participating in REACH, an alternative spring break program in which students travel to under-developed areas and perform service. Nancy participated in this as a freshman student in order to get her required service hours, but she loved it and wanted to continue. She joined the executive board for the organization and then became a trip leader for the program, which she did for several years, going on a total of five trips. Nancy said she never would have done something like that when she started the program, but her confidence grew through all of her experiences, and she believed in her ability to lead and to push the boundaries of her comfort zone.

Nancy became a trip leader because she was pushed by the staff who saw something in her that she did not yet see. Other students shared similar experiences about taking on opportunities they would not have had without the CLP program, and that they became more

confident as a result of being encouraged to take on new leadership roles and being actively involved on campus.

Involvement

For all of the CLP students I interviewed, a major source of their individual growth was their involvement on campus. CLP requires students to be actively engaged during their years at ACU. These 12 students participated in activities such as Greek Life, clubs, organizations, campus jobs, undergraduate research, and sports. Their varied experiences helped shape their own development as individuals.

All of the students in this study are heavily involved and engaged, and most of them expressed that they might not have been so involved on campus if it were not initially required by CLP. The program requirement forced them to explore opportunities and find organizations and activities that would interest them, when they likely would not have explored so many options. Nancy explained how CLP helped her involvement in more specific ways:

Without the CLP program itself, I wouldn't have studied abroad. There weren't options for my field of study. It was a unique opportunity. I was pushed to go to leadership conferences and stuff. I would have been involved, but not in such a unique way. I would have been more broadly involved, or only in my future career /major area, but wouldn't have tried such different things and had such unique opportunities [Nancy, CLP Graduate & Fellow].

As Nancy expressed, she and the other students would likely have been involved in some way regardless of their participation in the program, but CLP helped shape that involvement in a more meaningful way and lend structure to their overall college experience. Being

required to get involved helped them connect in the beginning and explore the many options that ACU provided, and then the students in this study continued their involvement because they found areas they were passionate about.

April explained that she was able to know about relevant events on campus because the CLP staff sends out weekly emails and Facebook posts describing upcoming events and how they connect to the CLP requirements, such as the Speaker Series and Passport events. Nancy shared her feeling that CLP provided students in the program more opportunities than were available to the other ACU students, which gave them a chance to feel special and to stand out from their peers in their later job searches. Kyle also expressed how his activities on campus would benefit him in the future: “When you’re involved on campus you understand yourself more, and you realize your passions. Those work toward future job opportunities” [Kyle, Senior Student]. The students learned to see the deeper value of their involvement on campus and how it would help them develop. “It became part of college life rather than an obligation” [Maria, Senior Student]. After being pushed to be involved, the students found the intrinsic value of their engagement on campus and how it helped them grow as individuals.

Several participants expressed that the meaning they received from their activities was in proportion to the effort they put into them. Dan explained:

You get out what you put into it. I put a lot into being a Recruiter, Ambassador, other things. It wasn’t always easy, I understood why people dropped out. But for me, I knew I was being benefitted because of what I was putting into it [Dan, Senior Student].

Dan and several others expressed that they were able to grow and succeed in the program because they exerted effort. “Not everyone reaps all the benefits” [Maria, Senior Student]. All 12 of the students I interviewed represent the group of CLP students who *do* reap the benefits, because they are actively engaged on campus and take advantage of the opportunities provided to them by the College Leadership Program.

Although there were numerous activities and opportunities at ACU for students to be involved, Emma realized she did not have to stay committed to every activity she tried. She wrote in her sophomore year reflection:

I was not passionate about all the activities I got involved in. Honestly, I got involved in them just to say I was involved on campus -- I was not being authentic. I have learned that passion is the most important thing to have in an organization. Without passion, I am wasting my time, and the organization's time [Emma, Sophomore Student].

It was valuable for Emma to learn early that being selectively involved in activities she feels passionate about is more important than being involved in numerous activities. The development of selectivity was not the case for every student. Some were so involved in so many activities that they experienced burnout.

Over-Involvement. Some college students struggle to find engagement on campus. For several CLP students, however, the struggle came from being over-engaged. They tried out many activities, clubs, and organizations in addition to their coursework and volunteer hours, and it became very difficult to manage. This caused the students stress and frustration. Eventually, they learned to prioritize their efforts. Dan said,

I started to withdraw from things, learned to say no. I put more effort into the things I cared about most. I can't do everything, and I realize I don't have to do everything.

It's not about just looking good on my resume [Dan, Senior Student].

Dan's personal growth came from learning to invest quality into his engagement rather than focusing on quantity of activities. Sarah expressed similar struggles and explained that being over-involved compromised her leadership skill. "You can be a strong leader, but that doesn't mean you always will be. If you don't give it your energy, you won't be a good leader" [Sarah, CLP Graduate & Fellow]. Sarah's reflections speak to the connections she and others were able to make between their experiences on campus and their leadership development.

Kyle also struggled with over-involvement and wished there had been more staff support to guide him at that time:

There's a push for involvement -- but there's not administrative support with telling students they are doing too much. I was over-committed, way too much. There's so much to do on this campus, over 200 organizations. If you're not involved, you're looked down on. But if you're too involved, there's the threat of burnout. So I missed out on administrative support to help me realize I was too involved and needed to focus my energies [Kyle, Senior Student].

Kyle makes a point that students, particularly when they first come to college, may not yet have the judgment to know when they are doing too much, especially since they are so strongly encouraged to get involved. Learning to prioritize was a significant part of students' personal development in college.

Intentionality

As they experienced a wide variety of activities and learned to prioritize their engagement, many of the students spoke about CLP making them more intentional in their college experience. This happened through reflection, goal-setting, and the connections that CLP helped them make between what they were experiencing and why it was important. Kelly experienced this intentionality when she studied abroad. She kept a blog while she was away and was asked to reflect on the experience when she returned. “It had a bigger impact because I was forced to think about it” [Kelly, Senior Student]. The study abroad experience would likely have been meaningful for Kelly no matter what, but being required to reflect on the trip helped drive home the meaning and provide deeper individual growth.

Dan explained how he started to see the connection between mandatory experiences and the meaning behind them. He said it felt like a checklist at first, being required to do certain activities on campus. Over time, he started to see past the requirements to the meaning behind them and the value that he received from taking part in those activities. Although students are required to engage in certain activities through CLP and literally follow a checklist in their handbook, Dan was able to understand why he was doing these things and how they helped his development.

Jamie spoke about making these connections through the Leadership Portfolio. She said the CLP staff checks the portfolio to see students’ goals, action plans, and resources, and later their reflections on the year’s progress. Jamie said this helped her make more meaning from her experiences by setting goals and reflecting on them. Even if she did not meet her

goals, she knew that was okay, as long as she was able to reflect on the process and learn from it.

Nick also reflected on his goals in his portfolio and was able to make meaning from what he experienced in his first year at ACU:

I feel that this year's goals were more "me" focused. At the beginning of freshmen year, I was very interested in being super involved and doing as many things as I could to develop a good network as well as make new friends. This year I was more focused on what my passions were. Through that I was more able to develop myself and grow from my experiences. I would say that I was more intentional with my actions than I have been in the past [Nick, Sophomore Student].

Even if Nick were involved in his college experience without the leadership program requirements, CLP helped him make more meaning from his experiences through the Leadership Portfolio, and it helped him be more deliberate in his decision-making and engagement.

Mike, who can now look back at his CLP experience as a Fellow, said he understands some of the connections better now that he is part of the staff: "I realized they aren't just check-off requirements; there's a reason. There's a constant struggle to get students to get that" [Mike, CLP Graduate & Fellow]. Nancy was also able to look back at her CLP experience as a Fellow and speak about her intentionality:

Being an alumni means I made a commitment to spend my four years very intentionally. Not just go through college, but to get what I could out of those experiences. That's the bond we all share as graduates of the program. It means I have intentions to not just leave here and go sit around. I want to be active, help

people. Formally or not, I'm going to do something [Nancy, CLP Graduate & Fellow].

The students realized over time that everything in CLP had a purpose and a connection. The coursework, community service, speakers, Passport events, and campus involvement were all designed intentionally by the CLP staff in order to facilitate students' personal development.

Making Real-Life Connections

Part of the students' individual growth and development occurred when they were able to make connections between what they were learning in the classroom and through their CLP experiences, and when they could connect those activities to broader real-life meanings.

Kyle explained how he was able to make connections between learning about leadership in the academic classroom and performing community service outside the classroom. He was able to analyze leadership situations that he witnessed first-hand and connect them to the theories he was learning in class. Kyle described this as a good "circular effect in building leaders." Jamie said it was almost impossible to keep the two things separate, as she was making those connections so frequently.

Students felt that the CLP program gave them a different outlook on the world, as they noticed things they learned in class in real-life situations all around them. As a Fellow, Mike now enjoys helping other students make those connections that he was able to make in the program:

For me, it came full circle in the internship course. I got to make real-life applications of what we were learning. Now as a Fellow I can tell those students who are struggling with theory -- it will be worth it. The leadership courses have given me

a good subconscious knowledge. I can't encounter a work setting and spout out a theory. But I have knowledge of how to work with people, what the books say are the best ways to handle certain situations. I'm excited to leave ACU and be in a work setting and start to see what I learned in those courses, to really understand what's happening [Mike, CLP Graduate & Fellow].

Mike believed that the connections he made in the program were not limited to the time he spent as a student at ACU. He continued to make connections as a Fellow and believes that will continue in his future professional situations.

Some students shared that they made connections to servant leadership while performing community service, and others observed theory-to-practice connections while observing the group dynamics of organizations during their internships. This made leadership more real to them, rather than believing it was only a subject taught in class. Senior student April first made this connection when she traveled to the ILA conference and competed in a case study competition:

I had to apply leadership theories that we had learned in class. I noticed other scholars and grad students were really surprised that we were using those theories as undergrads. I was scared going into it. But what I was learning in school really does connect to something greater. You can use what you learned and apply it every day.

You can apply the different theories to anything [April, Senior Student].

April explained that first-hand experiences are what made her leadership coursework meaningful. She grew when she could work with people in the community and learn more about herself and her views on life. The connections they made between the academic

curriculum and the co-curricular activities strongly increased the students' learning and development.

Responsibility and Professionalism

A major theme that transpired from the students' stories is the opportunity to take on responsibility and to act and be treated as a professional. Through campus jobs, internships, campus events, and volunteer work, the students expressed that being in professional settings and taking on responsibility enhanced their personal development.

Recruiters and Ambassadors. Several of the students had opportunities to serve as Recruiters or Ambassadors for CLP. They helped represent the program to prospective students and to welcome in new students. When I observed the Speaker Series event, I saw several of my interview participants working at the check-in table there. I realized they were selected for my interviews because of their high visibility in the program, largely due to their serving in these roles. In the interviews, they spoke about planning and hosting overnight visits, interacting with students and parents, and serving as representatives of the university and the CLP program.

Kelly explained that as a CLP Recruiter and Ambassador, she was able to take on responsibilities that her academic experiences would not have provided: "It was an opportunity to develop my skills, interpersonal relationships, communication -- things I wouldn't get in my science major" [Kelly, Senior Student]. Students like Kelly gained skills and a strong sense of responsibility from serving in these CLP positions. Several of them were surprised by just how much responsibility they were given:

Not many schools would put that in the hands of students. They put so much responsibility on the students here. Our job was to represent the program. We

represented the university. Without CLP, I would be a lot less professional [Dan, Senior Student].

Dan spoke about feeling professional in the role of Ambassador, and also described that all of the students in CLP were required to dress professionally for the Speaker Series and other events. This allowed them to develop new skills and feel more prepared to enter the working world after college. Nick said, “They give us a safety net, but they don’t hold our hands” [Nick, Sophomore Student]. Nick’s words represent what many of the students expressed. They were supported throughout their college experience, but they were pushed out of their comfort zones, held accountable for their actions, treated as professionals in their leadership roles, and given responsibility for their actions.

Orientation. In much the same way that students grew from serving as Recruiters and Ambassadors, several students developed a sense of responsibility through their roles with Orientation. Students had the opportunity to be involved through internships or service hours with the Summer Leadership Adventure Program (SLAP) orientation as well as ACU’s main orientation for new students. They held the roles of facilitators, leaders, and even student directors, which allowed them to grow professionally and deepen their individual development. Before he graduated from CLP, Mike completed his internship requirement as Student Director for ACU’s main orientation, which was a major developmental experience for him:

Orientation is run mostly by students, supervised by staff, rather than being completely led by staff. I was on a team of five students. We were responsible for planning, implementing, hiring staff, logistics, and training for orientation. I got experience leading and managing peers. I hired people my age or younger. The

supervisor gave me a lot of responsibility. We could take orientation where we wanted to [Mike, CLP Graduate & Fellow].

Mike explained how this role allowed him to train and develop others, engage in planning and organization, and to interact in meaningful ways with other students. He believes the skills he learned as an orientation Director are transferrable to other jobs in the future. He already found that they helped him to work professionally in his role as a CLP Fellow this year.

For students like Mike, this professional growth came not only from holding prominent positions on campus, but from the way they were treated by their supervisors. The students spoke about hiring (and even firing) their peers, training other students, making important decisions, interacting with parents, and managing their time effectively to keep the program running. They were given a great deal of autonomy and responsibility, which pushed them to grow.

Volunteer work. For many students, a sense of responsibility came from their work outside of ACU as they met their CLP community service requirements in the local area. Maria had a significant learning experience when she organized an event for the students of a local elementary school. She spoke with the principal and the PTA president about her idea and was given the freedom and responsibility to lead the event. She was proud to be trusted to do so, and left with a feeling of professionalism, responsibility, and overall personal growth. Several other students spoke about similar experiences in which they were not only serving their community through volunteer work, but were in positions where they were held responsible for their actions and felt accountable to the organizations in which they worked. Experiences like these enabled the CLP participants to push beyond their prior personal

experiences and to take on roles they had not held before. They were treated as responsible adults and grew as a result.

Being Challenged and Empowered

In addition to being trusted to take on responsibility and act professionally, students also spoke about personal growth that took place from being pushed beyond their comfort zones. They were challenged to try new things and take on new roles, and they felt empowered to lead and impact others. In our interviews, the students spoke about how the CLP staff was always there for them, supporting them when they needed it, making them aware of new opportunities, and encouraging them to take chances and try new things. They felt that the staff members valued every student and gave them as much individual attention as they could. Having someone else notice their strengths and skills pushed the students to see themselves in a different way, recognize their potential, and have the confidence to take on new roles and challenges.

Sarah spoke about being challenged and empowered through her internship experience as a SLAP Student Director:

[Mr. Adams] was my supervisor. I wrote my best practices paper on transformational versus transactional leadership. He molded and empowered me to be a better student leader. [Mr. Adams] empowered me, then I was a peer leader to other supervisors and to the freshmen students. I learned how to encourage people and empower them to do their best [Sarah, CLP Graduate & Fellow].

Sarah's point here is noteworthy; not only did she feel challenged to better herself and take on new roles, but she also felt that she could, in turn, encourage and empower others. She

experienced personal growth, and now she feels inspired and equipped to do the same for others, which illustrates her individual development.

Other students shared similar stories of being challenged by the CLP staff through internships, orientation, CLP leadership roles, and general interactions and check-in meetings. They also felt challenged, empowered, and supported by the LDSP faculty, who encouraged self-reflection, going to leadership conferences, and taking on academic and personal challenges.

The coursework and the CLP program activities contributed greatly to students feeling challenged and empowered, which helped them grow in ways they may not have experienced on their own. Naturally, being in college for four years leads to growth like this, but Nancy explained the difference CLP made for her: “I’m older, had four years of life, so maybe 25% was just going through college. But the people who challenged me -- that came from the CLP program” [Nancy, CLP Graduate & Fellow]. It is likely that Nancy felt pushed and encouraged specifically by the CLP program because it is designed to expand students’ leadership potential. For college students not in a leadership program, this challenge and empowerment might not have been so intentional, if present at all.

Meaningful Adult Relationships

The challenge and empowerment that the students experienced in CLP stemmed from the fact that the program includes a staff dedicated to their success and development. The students were able to form meaningful relationships with significant adults on campus, specifically with the members of the CLP staff and the LDSP faculty. Several students said that they visited the CLP office frequently, were on friendly terms with the staff, called them by first names, and joked with them. They felt they could go

and talk to the staff when they were struggling in school or personally, and they were supported. “They were a family when I was so far away from my family” [Kelly, Senior Student]. Kelly thought of the CLP staff not just as people who administer a program, but as people who could advise and support her like family.

Feeling supported by the staff helped students feel more deeply connected and engaged on campus. Dan explained that the CLP program was challenging and there were times when the requirements felt overwhelming and frustrating. Having strong connections with the staff helped him to stay connected and to continue the program to the end. The staff made the students feel recognized and special, even when there were 1,000 students and only eight staff members. Kyle explained his role as a student in cultivating those relationships with the staff: “They know they can’t cover everyone, but those who take time to get to know them, they will get to know them well. They met me halfway because I wanted to get to know them” [Kyle, Senior Student]. Of course the staff cannot reach out to get to know every student, but they make themselves available and provide support when students are interested in forming those relationships.

Mike spoke to this investment as well in sharing a story about his best friend dropping the CLP program as a freshman. Even though his friend left the program, he still came to Mr. Adams as a valuable resource throughout his college experience. Mike explained that some students do not have such meaningful relationships with the staff because they do not take advantage of that resource that is there for them. As a Fellow, he encourages students to use that resource and make an effort to get to know the staff. The meaningful relationships that students formed with adults in CLP and LDSP provided

challenge and support as they made their way through college, their first significant time away from their family homes and their first major step toward independent adult life.

Goals for the Future

As students went through the CLP program, stretched their limits, and grew on a personal level, many students began to shape goals for their futures after college. They spoke of career goals and how they stemmed from the experiences they had as part of CLP. Kelly enjoyed the program so much that she deferred admission to graduate school to stay on as a CLP Fellow. She feels attached to the program and wants to impact incoming students in the same way that she was impacted through the program. Kyle had a positive experience serving in Greek Life and making changes on the Inter-Fraternity Council, which gave him a desire to work in higher education. He has been admitted to a graduate program in higher education administration, and he will work as a graduate assistant with Greek Life. He looks forward to interacting with young men and helping them grow as he did in college. Maria was deeply moved by her community service experiences in the local elementary schools. She decided to enroll in a master's program in teaching with a focus on ESL. Her volunteer work through CLP even helped her to determine the particular area in which she would like to work, as she developed a passion for serving a low-income community

Jamie has a desire to be a college professor, believing the program is preparing her well for that role: "As a teacher, you are a leader" [Jamie, Sophomore Student]. Nick shared that his experience in CLP makes him feel prepared for job interviews after college, as the program gave him a unique experience as a leader before he even begins his career. Nick is involved in community service and campus engagement activities that focus around sexual

assault and human trafficking awareness. The passion he developed in these areas has inspired him to shift his interest in law to a career goal of being an international human rights lawyer. This was directly shaped by his CLP experiences.

The many diverse experiences the students had through CLP helped shape their future goals and gave them a better understanding of who they are as individuals. They developed self-awareness through their involvement on campus and in the community, their coursework on personal identity, being held responsible in leadership roles, and being pushed and empowered by meaningful adults. Of the three dimensions of the Social Change Model, the students' Individual development stood out to be the most prominent. The students grew personally and became more aware of their identities, and this intrapersonal understanding helped them work better in groups and feel more prepared to effect change in society.

RQ1b. Group: The Impact of Group Involvement

The individual growth and development that the students experienced through CLP directly impacted their ability and understanding of working with others. A major piece of leadership is being able to engage with other people and collaborate in ways that will impact society. The 12 students in this study experienced opportunities to work in group settings that helped them develop in that dimension. Mainly, students shared examples of engaging with like-minded others through the program as well as encountering diverse others, people who were different from themselves and the people they are used to interacting with.

Because CLP students are required to be actively engaged on campus, students were involved in a variety of organizations, clubs, and other activities in which they worked with other people. This work made them more aware of their actions: "The

thing I learned is that everything you do affects people around you” [Dan, Senior Student]. Students began to see through their experiences in this program that leaders do not function in isolation, but have an influence on people around them. Mike, a CLP Fellow, stated simply that he gained “a better understanding of how to treat people” through his experiences in the program.

The various requirements of the program allowed students to interact with people in different ways than they may have in the past. This helped them learn about other people, group dynamics, and how their own skills interact with others. For example, Kyle explained his beliefs about group interactions:

I like to impact social change through communicating and understanding where people are coming from, and I want them to understand where I’m coming from too. I want there to be an open dialogue- it’s not always easy- but I want people to disagree, to understand why we disagree. So then we can figure out a solution together [Kyle, Senior Student].

Kyle spoke specifically about communicating with other people, realizing that it is important to let voices be heard from different perspectives so that people can better work together. Megan learned about group dynamics through her experiences with being a CLP Ambassador, a campus tour guide, working as an RA, and being in a sorority, all of which she participated in because of the CLP engagement requirement. Megan had some difficulties with group situations, but they improved over time, and she was able to learn about her own style when working in groups:

Group situations have improved for me. I used to struggle. I don’t like confrontation, bad conflict. It makes me uncomfortable. I don’t like to confront, so I just passively

move away from a situation. I learned to be a person who can initiate conversation, but keep it comfortable and just talk with people” [Megan, Senior Student].

Megan now feels more comfortable in group situations because she had more experiences working with people. Though Megan and Kyle spoke about dealing with people who have different opinions and perspectives, they did not speak directly about learning conflict resolution skills through the program. Their group processing skills may have been a latent function of spending more time in groups because the program encouraged involvement, but further investigation is needed to determine whether or not conflict resolution was part of the leadership program curriculum.

Through their involvement in a variety of organizations, the students were able to learn more about how they function within groups. They spoke about the roles they generally play in groups, how they interact with others, and how their actions influence others:

It made me realize that people are always watching you. You’re sacrificing yourself.

With the job comes responsibility and expectations -- people know who you are. You have to be aware of what you’re doing. You can impact people, even if you don’t directly see that you’re influencing them [April, Senior Student].

April was able to see that she had a responsibility to others when taking part in any group or leadership role. This gave her a sense of integrity, knowing that she had to meet certain expectations and be a role model. In a portfolio reflection of his freshmen year experiences, sophomore student Nick connected this type of learning back to leadership development:

“This helped me become a more authentic leader because it allowed me to develop deeper relationships as we work towards a much larger goal” [Nick, Sophomore Student]. Working

in groups and understanding his role in the big picture helped him feel more authentic as a leader.

Working in academic groups and in campus organizations was an important source of learning for the students in this study. In addition to their broad descriptions of group involvement, the students mentioned that the program provided opportunities for them to work effectively with other people with whom they share certain characteristics.

Like-Minded Others

The students in this study felt they benefitted from being around people with whom they shared similar characteristics, qualities, and interests. They felt instantly connected to other CLP students because they shared an interest in leadership, personal development, being involved on campus, and being intentional about their college experience. They found it helpful to come to ACU and be connected right away to a large group of students who were like themselves. April expressed the connection she felt with other students in CLP during her four-year experience:

It's a liberal arts institution- but no matter what your major is, you have that commonality with leadership. Working with other people who are so passionate about making change, making a difference. People come from all different areas. It doesn't matter my major or career goals. We share leadership studies [April, Senior Student].

Despite their diverse backgrounds and varied academic interests, the students felt connected by their mutual experience in the College Leadership Program, and particularly with their peers in the LDSP courses. They enjoyed engaging in group projects in their LDSP courses

because they found their peers to naturally work well together since they shared similar mindsets.

Many students said their closest friends at ACU were students from CLP, since they were so closely bonded from the beginning. The CLP students were motivated and engaged like they were, so they enjoyed working together as orientation leaders, Ambassadors, and other roles. CLP provided an opportunity for students to connect with people with whom they could relate, which helped them feel free to express themselves and be actively involved throughout their college experience.

Diverse Others

In addition to being around other students like themselves, CLP also provided many opportunities for the students to be exposed to and engage with people who were different from them. This broadened their understanding of others and made them feel better equipped to work with different types of people in the global society in which they will work. Opportunities to engage with diverse others came primarily from internships, study abroad, and community service.

Internships. Two students mentioned their internship experiences, which allowed them to interact with other students who were different from them in subtle ways. Senior student Maria had a particularly meaningful experience through her internship as a SLAP Facilitator. In that work, Maria had to collaborate with peers who had different strengths. She felt more people-oriented and focused on the students, while her partner leader was more task-oriented and focused on managing the time and logistics. This was frustrating for Maria, but she learned that their different strengths could work together to make them an effective team.

April also learned about working with diverse others through her internship experience, a requirement of CLP as part of the Leadership Studies minor. April did her internship with ACU's orientation office, serving as a Student Director. In that role, she had to work with other students to develop and implement orientation for new students, and this allowed April to be more aware of her own work style and how that allowed her to engage with others:

It's okay that I'm different from other people. I was worried about my work style being different, not knowing why they would have hired me. It made me realize I was given the opportunity for a reason; that I don't need to second-guess myself. I can have the confidence that I can do it. If there's something I'm not strong at, there are people around me with strengths I can learn from. Same with my strengths -- I can make up for the weaknesses of others [April, Senior Student].

The internship was an effective way for students to learn these lessons about their own strengths and styles in groups because the CLP program required self-reflection along with the experience. April's and Maria's examples illustrate how these experiences were made more meaningful through reflection, as they could move beyond frustration of being different from other people to understanding others and learning how to effectively work with them.

Study abroad. Six of the 12 students participated in study abroad at some point during their experience at ACU. The CLP program provided a stipend to help make this possible, and most of the students said they would not have been able to study abroad without that financial support. Study abroad allowed students to interact with different people directly and experience cultures that varied from their own.

Students found they could make friends with people in other countries, embrace other languages and cultural traditions, and overcome the challenges that arose from being in places very different from where they lived. They enjoyed seeing how classes were delivered at other universities, how families interacted, and how people lived in international cities and towns. For example, Nancy studied at Oxford during her time at ACU and enjoyed developing a research project in a different country:

It broadened my learning so much. It's different to think of a problem in America versus a world problem. Being physically removed from America forced an open mind. It made me realize how global everything is, how many people are in the world. I got to meet Oxford PhD students and learn about their research. I saw connections between what we study here and what they study there. It shifted my perspective [Nancy, CLP Graduate & Fellow].

For the students who use their CLP stipend to study abroad, this provides an opportunity for them to see the world differently and to interact with people who are culturally, ethnically, and linguistically different from themselves. This broadens their horizons and generates an interest in learning more about people who are different from them. Whether or not they will continue to travel and explore the world, these experiences will help students appreciate differences when they interact with other people.

Community service. Finally, students enhanced their group understanding and development by engaging with diverse others in the local community through their community service experiences. CLP requires students to do service in the local region surrounding ACU, and this stood out to every student as a meaningful experience. A few students spoke directly about how these interactions impacted their understanding of other

people and their ability to work with others in group settings. For example, Mike volunteered with an organization focused on children with Down syndrome. He said that he never had exposure to something like that before and that it opened his mind to a new world. Other students spoke about similar mind-expanding experiences, particularly when dealing with diverse others from various socioeconomic backgrounds. Maria, the senior student who volunteered at a local elementary school, developed a greater understanding of the families that lived in the local area: “Their parents are great people. People judge them, give them flak for being poor, but they are working hard” [Maria, Senior Student]. This experience was so powerful for Maria that she shifted her career focus. She had known she wanted to be a teacher after college, but her volunteer work made Maria realize that she would like to teach in a low-income area like where she had done her community service. This was a direct result of this exposure she gained to people who came from backgrounds different from her own.

Dan learned similar lessons through his community service working with children and teens in the community and through organizations that focused on human trafficking awareness:

Seeing how other people live is really important as a person. We spend so much time in our own bubble. Seeing how different people live their lives was important. It gives you more perspective on your own life [Dan, Senior Student].

For Dan, this exposure to diverse others raised his awareness of people’s daily lives and the various issues they face, which sparked his interest in becoming a human rights lawyer. Interestingly, five of the 12 students referred to getting out of their “bubble” when speaking

about community service. I interpret this to mean going beyond a setting in which the majority of the people around them have similar backgrounds and current lived experiences.

Sarah spoke about the importance of understanding other people through her experiences volunteering in a low SES neighborhood, which she connected back to leadership:

We talk about servant leadership a lot. You can't lead a group if you don't understand their needs, who they are. You can't relate to them. It's not just about volunteering - you understand people, know where they are coming from, so you can effectively give them what they need [Sarah, CLP Graduate & Fellow].

Sarah believed that, in order to serve people, one must first understand them. Volunteer work and being in contact with diverse others helped her develop a stronger understanding of their lives. Many students believed that being around "real people in real situations" [Kyle, Senior Student] was a highly valuable part of their learning through CLP. They spoke about being exposed to diverse others, but did not go into detail about the types of conversations they had with those people and whether they were able to connect on a level deeper than exposure and brief conversations.

As the students developed greater self-awareness and understanding of their individual identities, they were better able to work in groups. The group experiences they had through CLP helped them learn about working with other people who may either be like them or quite different. All of this growth and development enables the students to better engage with society and to effect positive social change, which is the ultimate goal of leadership development according to the Social Change Model.

RQ1c. Society: Preparation for Leading Social Change

The College Leadership Program prepared students to feel empowered to lead social change through their meaningful community service experiences and involvement in activities related to social justice. The students I interviewed spoke about these meaningful community service experiences, including the importance of consistent service throughout their college careers. They also shared their desire to make a difference in the world and their ability and confidence to do so. CLP prepared students to look beyond ACU and the students' hometowns and recognize their place in society.

Serving the Community

CLP provided many opportunities for students to engage in the community. The mandatory community service requirement encouraged them to explore the city and greater area around ACU. Although this was a requirement, it proved to be a meaningful experience for the students in this study, as it contributed to their personal growth and understanding of the world. They believed they had a chance to impact ACU and the neighboring communities, and to feel they were part of something greater. Dan explained:

I became passionate about not being “a bystander.” That’s something President Smith tells us. I can affect others’ lives. It wasn’t just something I *had* to do; I realized it would actually help people. It influenced me wanting to help others. CLP urges you to be more involved in your life and on campus [Dan, Senior Student].

Dan had a particularly meaningful experience when he served on the Inter-Fraternity Council as a representative of his fraternity. The council created a new policy in response to some recent events on campus, and he felt that it was a step toward a culture change in the Greek

community. “People won’t necessarily be aware that we did that, but I feel good to be part of a culture change” [Dan, Senior Student]. Even without direct recognition, it was important for Dan to feel that he was part of something meaningful that would continue to affect ACU and the Greek community after he graduated.

The sophomores wrote their community service goals in their Leadership Portfolios, which helped them go through the year with a plan and to reflect on their learning. At the end of her freshmen year, Emma reflected on an experience that was particularly significant to her:

The most meaningful service experience I have had this year was my first experience feeding the homeless in [the city]. I remember how great it was talking to the men and women in line and being able to help them. It opened my eyes to see how many needy people there are and how we all can help. Before coming to [ACU], I never did much service. I now have such a passion for it and I really enjoy helping others. I plan to continue with this club and really make connections with people over the next three years [Emma, Sophomore Student].

This new experience helped broaden Emma’s understanding of the greater community and her place within society.

Students like Emma explained that community service helped them understand other people, realize how much they care about the community in which they live, and to understand their own values in terms of caring for others. Community service required students to see beyond their college and their previous experiences, and they realized they were part of a bigger picture. For Mike, this learning experience shaped how he is now approaching his job search: “Now it’s in my values. In job interviews, I ask companies what

service means to them” [Mike, CLP Graduate & Fellow]. Mike said that at first, he only did community service because it was required. Over time, he found that service to the community became part of his own value system, and he wants to continue to build on that in the future. The students explained that being part of a community means not just living in a particular place, but in actively seeking out ways to help other people. The volunteer service requirement of CLP helped shape their identities and their perspectives on society, and they believe they will continue to serve others after they leave college.

Performing consistent service. In order to maximize their experiences in the community, CLP encourages students to perform consistent service. They are guided to find community organizations with which they feel a connection and asked to develop a relationship with that organization. For a couple of students, finding a consistent service site was not easy. They dabbled in many areas and did not find connections to particular community organizations. For others, trying out different types of service helped them discover their passions, whether it was working with children, focusing on social justice, or serving the needy. When they did find consistent service sites, they were able to become more deeply involved, to feel they played a significant role in their organizations, and to shape their own interests. Nancy reflected on the benefits of performing consistent service work:

I volunteered with [local] museum, and stuck with that the whole the time. I enjoyed everything else in CLP, but that had the biggest impact. I became invested in something. It was my own. They took me in and formed a relationship, and they offered me opportunities that wouldn't have happened otherwise [Nancy, CLP Graduate & Fellow].

The more consistent these 12 students were in their service, the more deeply they felt connected to the community.

The Desire to Make a Difference

Nearly all of the students I interviewed expressed that their involvement in the community empowered them to feel that they could make a difference in the world at some level, and they truly had the desire to do so. For Dan, this desire to do more came from his engagement in social justice activities focused on sexual assault and human trafficking. As a result, he will be going to law school after graduating from ACU and pursuing a career as an international human rights lawyer.

There's this drive I now have to want to do something in the world. President Smith said once "For God's sake, just go do something!" I could take my degree and go do whatever I want to do, but what's the point if I don't affect the lives of others? It's not about them remembering me. I want peoples' lives to be better because I was able to help them [Dan, Senior Student].

This was a powerful statement coming from a college senior, and it reflects the confidence that came from completing the CLP program and a genuine belief that he can affect the lives of others.

Students spoke about how they can serve as role models by sharing their personal experiences. For Kyle, his experiences based on his own identity shaped his belief in what he has to offer to society:

My parents always taught me to be understanding. Being a social minority, I think about why it's so difficult for people to understand. I'm forced to. Being gay is not always the easiest, especially at a small conservative university, and being from a

conservative background. But my parents have always been very supportive. They gave me a lot of the tools to be more supportive to other people, and that's how I want to make social change -- to be that person that I didn't have [Kyle, Senior Student].

Kyle believed that his own experiences enable him to relate to other people who are facing similar situations. Since he overcame a challenge, he can use that growth to support others and make a difference in the LGBTQ community.

Kyle also shared a story about his experience with Greek Life and serving on IFC. He was concerned that the historically Black fraternities and the predominantly White fraternities were very separate in terms of programming on campus. When he joined the council, he saw it as his chance to make a change. He worked with the organizations to create teams of fraternity brothers who would plan events for their organizations to participate in together. Kyle expressed that the fraternities began working together for the first time, and that his work will have a lasting effect for the Greek community at ACU. His experiences in CLP empowered him to feel that he could step up and make that change.

These students were able to connect their individual learning with their group experiences and realize they can play an active, meaningful role in society. The CLP program enabled them to experience working in the community through the community service requirement and other activities that exposed them to new people, new places, and social issues. They will leave ACU with a desire to make a difference in the world and feeling empowered to do so.

RQ2. Congruence between the Intended Outcomes of CLP and Students' Lived Experiences

The 12 students who participated or are currently participating in the College Leadership Program shared their experiences in the program and the ways in which they have developed as leaders. I also interviewed ACU administrators who are affiliated with the program to understand how their intentions for the program resonate with the students' actual experiences. The Director and the Associate Director of CLP were able to speak specifically about the program, how it functions and why, and how it has changed over time. The Director of Community Engagement spoke about being in the first class of CLP when it began and his current role in making community service and engagement possible and meaningful for students. The President of ACU and the Dean of the College of Social Sciences told about the program origins and how ACU has changed since CLP began.

This section describes the administrators' perspectives in relation to the students' lived experiences along the themes of the intended outcomes of CLP and the students' development as leaders. I also describe some areas where the program could be better aligned between the goals of the program and the actual implementation of it.

The Intended Outcomes of CLP

The mission of the College Leadership Program is to “empower students to recognize their leadership potential and develop personal and social responsibility for the betterment of self and society” (CLP Handbook, 2014). Based on the 12 students in this study, the program seems to be living up to its mission. The students experienced personal growth, a sense of responsibility to the community, and a desire to make a

difference in society. The program consists of many components that all work in combination to achieve these goals. Naturally, some components are more effective than others, and they have varied effects on different students.

CLP program origins. Interviews with the administrators and document analysis of the CLP handbooks provided insight as to how the CLP program was initially created and its desired impact on students. President Smith first developed the College Leadership Program in 1998, just after he arrived at ACU. He said of its origins: “CLP sprang from my commitment to forming good citizens and leaders. The emphasis on leadership, honor, and service come directly from my deeply held values” [President Smith, ACU]. From this vision, President Smith designed the program to include both curricular and co-curricular components. Dr. Brown, who was tasked with developing the academic side of the program, created the Leadership Studies minor and ultimately the Leadership Studies Department. He had the advice of James McGregor Burns, renowned expert in the study of leadership, which helped lend credibility to the academic program and gain support of the ACU faculty.

As a member of the first class, Mr. Jackson remembers what the program was like during his participation. He recalls being treated specially by faculty and administrators, as he was part of the first class of a program that began with a lofty vision. The students were invited to help shape the program into what they believed it should be. As the students were only 17 to 19 years old, they felt intimidated and greatly challenged, but Mr. Jackson also remembers that time as a great honor and unique experience. Mr. Jackson’s class consisted of 20 students. Now, over 1,000 ACU students are part of the program.

Changes over time. As the program grew, it was necessary to make changes and adjustments in order to adapt. A major piece of that change is the number of people at ACU who have a hand in making the program work, as Dr. Brown explained:

There's a confluence of people who come together. We have 12 full-time professors in LDSP, nine full-time people in the CLP program. That's 21 people on this campus who are devoted to leadership education and development [Dr. Brown, Dean of the College of Social Sciences].

This is a significant number of faculty and staff involved in the program, especially for a school of only 5,000 students. As the program evolved, ACU has been able to draw a different group of students to its campus. Dr. Brown explained that the average SAT score is higher now, and ACU is more competitive with other comparable schools in the state.

Mr. Adams and Ms. Rose described the ways in which the CLP staff evolved as the program grew. Each year, around 100 students were added to CLP, and the original staff was strained by the growth. They were granted permission and resources to hire additional staff members, so they had to determine the best way to utilize those new people. That was when the three Coordinator positions were developed, as well as the corresponding focus areas of Experience, Develop, and Succeed. The Directors explained that the three areas are not perfect and that any component could arguably fit into a different area, but they help provide structure and framework for the program. The staff were able to develop the student handbook and organize the components of the program into a logical system that they could more easily convey to students.

Few of the senior students I met with spoke directly about Experience, Develop, and Succeed, as this was a new development since they started. Kyle spoke about this framework being introduced after he started the program, and how it helped to some degree, but was somewhat confusing for him and his classmates. The sophomores used the terms more comfortably, specifically referring to the three areas when they described their CLP experience and their Leadership Portfolios. It seems that the framework will be most effective once it has been in place long enough for a single cohort to use it for all four years, and then it will be the norm for all CLP students.

As the CLP staff makes changes to the program, they try to do so in a way that does not impose too heavily on the current students. Ms. Rose and Mr. Adams said they try to make changes gradually and inform students as they go so they will not overwhelm them or make them feel like guinea pigs. “The lack of continuity really bothered students. We’re trying not to do that now” [Mr. Adams, Director of CLP]. Nancy, who completed four years in the CLP program and now works as a Fellow, reflected back on how these changes affected her as a student. She said sometimes when they were introduced to new initiatives, “it felt very thrown together.” Now that she works alongside the staff, however, she is able to understand the intentionality behind each change. She realizes they were actually needed, but believes now that changes should be introduced gradually and communicated very clearly.

One major effort to articulate the changes to CLP over time was the creation of the CLP Handbook, which the students now receive when they begin the program. This handbook provides details of each component of the program and the specific requirements that the students need to fulfill. I analyzed the handbooks from the 2012-2013 school year,

the 2013-2014 year, and this current 2014-2015 year. The handbook went through a few changes over those years, but Ms. Rose believes they have reached a point where the kinks have been worked out and the handbook can remain stable.

The Leadership Portfolio. One of the most noticeable changes in the program over the past three years is the addition of the Leadership Portfolio in 2013. Ms. Rose explained that the portfolio requirement has been added gradually, starting with the freshmen who came in that year. They did not ask the current students to create portfolios, as it would have been too difficult to change in the midst of their program. The current sophomores, including the three that I interviewed, began this new requirement and have been using it for two years now. Ms. Rose said the portfolio was developed as a way for the students to engage with their experiences in CLP and to reflect on them in order to make meaning from those experiences. The CLP staff members view the students' portfolios and use them as a tool for communicating with each student during their one-on-one meetings.

The three students I interviewed expressed the value of the Leadership Portfolios to help them set goals for each year of the program and reflect on their experiences in relation to those goals. They were able to look back at their own growth since they started the program. The three students did say the portfolio sometimes feels like just another requirement they have to think about, but they saw the value of it when they wrote their reflections. Nick said he looks forward to being able to look back at his progress at the end of four years and having a way to speak about the program when he goes to job interviews. The portfolio will package the experience for him in a meaningful way.

The Leadership Studies Minor. When Mr. Jackson was a CLP student in 1998, he and his classmates had just a few elective courses from different departments that counted under the term “Leadership Studies.” Now, there is a full department of leadership professors and a clearly defined curriculum. President Smith described the origins of the academic program:

We offer an array of leadership courses that lead over four years to a minor in LDSP. A student might major in political science or physics, but at the end of the day, they have a minor in Leadership Studies. These are serious academic offerings taught by highly credentialed faculty. They are rigorous and demanding, but they are also empowering [President Smith, ACU].

The Leadership Studies minor is a major element of the CLP program. It is designed so that students will learn leadership theories and examples in the classroom and then make connections to real life through the other CLP elements like community service. Although this intention is made clear through the program, the students expressed feelings of disconnect between the curricular and co-curricular sides of CLP.

One major challenge is the academic rigor of the LDSP courses. Several students expressed surprise that the courses were as hard as they were, since it was a minor, and they did not expect Leadership to be a difficult subject. They felt unprepared for the demands of the courses, and had trouble making sense of the courses and how they connected to the overall program. This improved over time as the students matured academically, but it was a source of frustration for many. The students also felt a disconnect between the LDSP faculty and the CLP staff. They felt the professors did not know enough about the CLP program, and that there was a disconnect between the

developmental framework (Experience, Develop, Succeed) of CLP and what was taught in the classroom.

While the LDSP academic coursework was frustrating for many students, it was a highlight for others. Jamie quite enjoyed the coursework. She described the strong overlap between the classes she was taking, the faculty, and the leadership program as a whole. She felt it all came together when she attended the ILA conference, where the lessons in her coursework came to life. Jamie wrote in her first-year portfolio reflection: “My Leadership classes have, of course, been extremely effective in furthering my knowledge of leadership, and I have really enjoyed my professors’ excitement and involvement with my learning” [Jamie, Sophomore Student]. The difference Jamie experienced may suggest that the first-year courses have changed since the seniors started the program, or could simply be a result of her different approach to academic work and her particular interests. Overall, the courses and the program do not seem to connect as well as they were originally intended.

The CLP Directors expressed an understanding of this disconnect. Ms. Rose said they could probably do a better job in that area, and that the two sides are not as integrated as they once were. She said the CLP staff originally taught the first LDSP course, so there was a direct connection between the two sides of the program. But over time, as the program and the LDSP department have grown, they are not so intertwined. Ms. Rose says she and her staff make an effort to understand the LDSP curriculum and try to program activities accordingly, but that it can be difficult when both departments have so much to do on their own ends.

Dr. Brown, who oversees the Leadership Studies department, agreed that the two areas are not as connected as they should be, but he did not find this to be a problem. He believes the two areas have very different tasks. He said at one point there was a proposal to combine them under one department and have LDSP fall under CLP, but that he adamantly refused this connection. Dr. Brown believes the two areas have their own strengths as they stand on their own:

We have the service center, under Mr. Jackson, and the CLP staff, under Mr. Adams - managing all the different components. Professors are digging into the theoretical part. There has been discussion about it being more closely integrated. I don't like forcing things. We need to keep some connections, nurture and build them; but I don't think we need to force a woven network [Dr. Brown, Dean of the College of Social Sciences].

Again, the students have been able to look back on their experiences in CLP and appreciate what they learned in their courses and make connections to their co-curricular engagement, but there remains a sense of disconnect between the two areas, particularly in the beginning of the program.

CLP and Community Engagement. One way in which the CLP program has changed over time is the development of the Center for Community Engagement. Mr. Jackson explained that community service was always part of the CLP program, but it was not always so intentional. He said it was up to the students to find volunteer work to do, which was not always easy nor meaningful. Having the Center for Community Engagement provides guidance for students and helps connect them to service that will be more significant to their personal interests and career goals.

Mr. Jackson expressed a healthy relationship between his office and CLP. He says the CLP staff understands the Center's philosophy and model of community engagement, and that they have been wonderful about communicating that vision with students. In turn, Mr. Jackson and his team are able to provide data to the CLP staff describing the number of hours the CLP students serve, where they serve, and what service track each student has chosen. This relationship is mutually beneficial for the goals of the Center for Community Engagement and for the CLP program.

The CLP participants. When considering the congruence between the students' lived experiences in CLP and the intended outcomes of the program, it is interesting to look at who the current students are and why they joined the program, and to compare that to the intended audience for the program. The administrators' beliefs about who chooses the program and who they would like to have in the program aligns well with the actual students' experiences. Dr. Brown explained that many students who choose ACU are drawn to the leadership program. The students and their parents see value in learning leadership and feel it is important for their future careers.

More students are drawn to ACU because of the CLP program, and it also allows ACU to be intentional about the students they recruit. President Smith explained:

We reach out to students who are strong academically, but who have demonstrated some passion for engagement. We get different kinds of leaders: we have the presidents of the class and the captains of the team; we also have the first chairs in the orchestra; we have the quiet leaders that are the glue that hold organizations together. And we invite them to come, and we provide a small stipend. We wanted it to be far more than just going out and doing public service.

We wanted there to be a serious academic side to it. It reflects the vision and values of ACU and what we want to accomplish in the hearts and minds of these young people [President Smith, ACU].

President Smith further explained that the program has worked as a powerful recruiting vehicle, noting that the first class had under 20 students and now there are around 400 new students each year.

The administrators' beliefs that the program attracts students who might not otherwise attend ACU is reflected in the experiences of the 12 students in this study. When I asked them about coming to ACU in the first place, the majority of the students said the school was not their first choice, and several said they did not know about the school at all. They heard about ACU through friends or by receiving information in the mail, which led them to visit the campus. Almost every student said that when they visited ACU for the first time, they fell in love with the campus right away, and that it "felt right" for them. Students liked the look and feel of the campus, found it to be clean and attractive, and felt welcomed by the people they met. When they learned about the College Leadership Program, they were highly interested. Some were intent on attending ACU already and found CLP to be an added benefit, while for others, CLP was the ultimate reason they chose the school. It provided something different that they had not seen at the other schools on their lists.

CLP helps ACU attract a particular type of student that the administrators wish to have on campus, those who have some prior leadership experience and "passion for engagement." Most of the students I interviewed spoke about being involved in high school, as part of sports teams, academic organizations, community service, music, and

more. For those students, CLP seemed like a great way for them to continue being actively involved throughout their college experience.

For a few students, CLP was not simply a means to continue prior involvement, but rather provided something new that they wanted to experience. Dan said, "I never really did service before. I liked that it required you to do it so I could get into it" [Dan, Senior Student]. Dan thought CLP would be a way to start something new that could help him grow.

Based on what the students shared about their experiences in CLP, the program proved to meet their goals of getting involved in college, which was exactly what the administrators wished they would do. Dr. Brown noted this connection:

While they are on campus, they are hugely involved in leading and creating organizations on campus. They are using what they learn. They're making a difference. They stand up. They speak out [Dr. Brown, Dean of the College of Social Sciences].

The students in this study did just that - they joined clubs and organizations, played on teams, represented ACU at conferences, studied abroad, committed to social justice, and served in the community.

CLP program components. In this comprehensive four-year leadership development program, there are many components that come together to form the overall program. Ms. Rose noted:

The program is designed so different elements of the program stand out differently for different students. That's the nice thing about CLP. There are so many options,

and students get meaning out of different things [Ms. Rose, Associate Director of CLP].

Ms. Rose and Mr. Adams agreed that the students have widely different experiences. As a whole, they noted, students talk about certain aspects of the program more than others, and some students really like certain aspects that other students dislike. This disparity was reflected in my findings from the students.

Even among only 12 students, their experiences differed greatly, although some patterns emerged. As a whole, the students highly valued community service, campus engagement, and the internship. These were meaningful experiences for the students, as described earlier in this chapter. Those experiences were congruent with what the administrators intended for the students to gain from the program.

Additionally, the study abroad experience was highly meaningful for those who took part in it. President Smith spoke about the value of study abroad and his wish that every student could do it: “I want them to experience other countries and other people, and come back home with a greater appreciation for the genius of their own country” [President Smith, ACU]. As the President hoped, study abroad was a major highlight of the college experience for the students in my study. They learned more about themselves and diverse others, gained confidence, broadened their understanding of the world, and came back with a better understanding of their own culture and how it connects to others.

Another effective component of the CLP program was the Summer Leadership Adventure Program, SLAP. President Smith also believes this is a valuable experience for the college students:

To take these young people out of their comfort zones, introduce them to challenges and obstacles, help them see their ability to overcome challenges, encourage them to better grasp the importance of teamwork. Before their first class, they have survived the experience and have a host of new friends [President Smith, ACU].

President Smith's understanding of SLAP and his hopes for it connect directly to what the students actually experienced. Many of the students spoke about their valuable experiences in SLAP as participants as well as serving in the roles of facilitators and directors. Senior student Maria spoke about what sets SLAP apart from the regular ACU orientation:

You learn more about yourself, how you work with teams, learn about others.

Orientation is good, but SLAP is more intimate, more personal. My roommate and I still live together from that week. I believe in the magic of SLAP week friendships [Maria, Senior Student].

The students said SLAP helped them make friends, break out of their comfort zones, get excited about coming to college, and feel more connected to the ACU community. This is a powerful and effective component of CLP.

Although many components of the program were effective and experienced positively by most students, there were also components that were met with mixed experiences and feelings from the students. One was the living-learning community. Although this is a part of the CLP program, it was given little mention during the student interviews. Senior student April enjoyed the experience, saying that it was motivating to live on a hall with other students who were doing the same types of activities that she was doing. Other than this, the living-learning community was not mentioned during the

interviews. I asked one of the students about it because it had not come up. Maria explained that she is “not the biggest fan of it,” because they end up living with students who they see quite a bit, even if they do not like being around them. Mostly, though, she does not think much about it, because it is “more of an ACU thing than a CLP thing.” This is likely why the students in this study did not mention the living-learning community, as they might not directly associate it with CLP.

One aspect of the program that had mixed opinions and experiences was the CLP Speaker Series. Students are required to attend events in which a guest speaker addresses the students regarding their leadership experiences. President Smith explained that the purpose of this program is to complement classroom learning with real-world examples from a variety of different fields. The students in this study generally did not like this component of the program. Some said that it felt like a checklist-type requirement, and they did not always want to attend the events when they had other activities going on. Some noted that they found the speakers to lack diversity, not feeling like they could relate to the individuals who came. For some students, however, one or two speakers really stood out for them. Dan explained the value of the Speaker Series as he sees it:

Not because every one is amazing. Some were terrible. But there have been great ones. It's the *idea* of the speakers. The program and President Smith and ACU want to bring in people, and want us to come and learn about different aspects of life. All different kinds of leaders come; it's a learning experience in itself. We can see leadership in all these different methods or areas. What they've done, how they've become successful. It allowed us to see real people doing important things. You can watch the news, read books, but it's different to see them in person. It humanizes

leadership in an otherwise inaccessible way. Until you see someone who has applied the things you are learning, it's abstract and kind of useless [Dan, Senior Student].

Dan believed that even though every speaker did not resonate with him, it was highly beneficial to see how leadership theory looks in practice through these real examples. These varied viewpoints about the value of each element of the CLP program reiterates Ms. Rose's point that the program is designed to have a breadth of content so that each student will find something that resonates with them.

Students' Development as Leaders through CLP

The students in CLP developed as leaders through the mix of curricular and co-curricular experiences that the program required. These activities helped them shape their understanding of leadership and develop in the Social Change Model dimensions of Individual, Group, and Society.

Understanding of leadership. The interviews and portfolio analysis revealed that the students started ACU with an assumption that leadership was a position of power designated by formal title and limited to individuals with certain traits or characteristics. As they made their way through the program, learned about various leadership theories, and experienced leadership in real-life contexts, the students' views of leadership changed. They began to see that anyone can be a leader and that there are many ways to lead. They do not need to hold a formal title, but can make a difference through active involvement. The students realized they can lead in small ways by having an impact on the people and community directly around them. They also grew to understand the role of followers and the notion that they can sometimes lead and sometimes follow, and that it is essential to cultivate that relationship in order to be an effective leader. The

students' shift in understanding resonates well with the administrators' perspectives on leadership and the CLP program intentions.

In order to appreciate the students' shift in their understanding of leadership, we must know how the administrators define the concept. President Smith, who had the original vision for the CLP program nearly two decades ago, spoke about leadership in this way:

Leadership boils down to having a great vision for your life. A leader must wear that vision and those values like the clothes on her back, and communicate them in everything she says and everything she does. Leadership is the flowing back and forth of energy and ideas. Other people really matter. We must listen, really listen to other people and recognize that most everyone has something to offer [President Smith, ACU].

President Smith's definition resonates with the students' beliefs that leaders must listen to other people and collaborate in the process of making change.

Dr. Brown, the Dean of the College of Social Sciences, also played a role in the creation of CLP, developing the academic side of the program through the Leadership Studies minor. He spoke about leadership in similar ways, emphasizing that leaders and followers must work together toward a common goal:

Common is important. The followers may not have seen that goal, it might be latent. The leader makes it visible. They raise an issue and then lead others to find a common goal. There is a moral component regarding your own intentions and what you and your followers will have to pay [Dr. Brown, Dean of the College of Social Sciences].

Both President Smith and Dr. Brown highlighted the importance of relationships in leadership and the idea that it is not about a single person creating change alone. Mr. Adams and Ms. Rose, the directors of CLP, explained that the program is not designed to turn people into leaders, but to expose them to the concept and provide them with a variety of tools that they can use as they see fit “to make a difference and impose a sense of responsibility on the world” [Ms. Rose, Associate Director of CLP]. Ms. Rose also explained that the concept of leadership might look different for students in different academic disciplines, so they administer the program with a broad, overarching approach to leadership that will fit within a variety of contexts.

Mr. Jackson, who also completed the CLP program as a student, expressed his beliefs about the program: “The program is about transformational leadership; it’s not transactional. You don’t have to be the president of something in order to lead” [Mr. Jackson, Director of Community Engagement]. This message was clearly communicated with the current students, as they all emphasized the ability to lead without a formal title. The administrators all expressed similar ideas, indicating that the major players at ACU who are involved with creating and implementing the CLP program share consistent underlying beliefs about leadership.

The administrators also spoke about the importance of followership and servant leadership, which connects to the students’ changed perspectives as a result of participating in CLP. Dr. Brown insisted that leadership is meaningless without followers:

Leadership resides in the minds of the followers and nowhere else. You get those leaders who were captain of the team, first chair, president ... that means nothing

to me. I want to know what their followers said [Dr. Brown, Dean of the College of Social Sciences].

In order to understand this, Dr. Brown believes the academic courses in Leadership Studies must expose students to a variety of leaders and leadership theories and to know about the followers, why they followed those leaders, and the movements that took place because people followed. He explained that students must be “critical consumers of leadership,” that they should never blindly follow someone who is considered a leader. Similarly, students need to understand the role they play as leaders in influencing others, and that they have a moral obligation to lead in socially conscious ways. Ms. Rose explained that the program was rooted in servant leadership, that students were encouraged from the very beginning to serve the local community and make a positive impact in society.

The students I interviewed believed they could impact society, and they could do so in small ways. This resonates with President Smith’s speech during my observation of the CLP Speaker Series in which he addressed the students. President Smith told the students they can lead in small ways, affecting even just one person at a time. All of the administrators’ ideas resonate with the students’ newly developed beliefs that leadership is accessible, followership is essential, and that one does not need a formal title in order to be a leader.

Individual. Many components of the College Leadership Program allowed students to reflect on their personal identities, develop intrapersonal understanding, and to shape their perspectives of leadership through this self-awareness. The students grew individually through experiences like study abroad, taking on certain roles on campus, writing in the Leadership Portfolio, being actively involved on campus, being challenged

and empowered, and having relationships with significant adults on campus. They also directly learned to self-reflect and understand their own identities through their LDSP coursework. Students spoke about stepping out of their comfort zones, gaining confidence, believing in their abilities as leaders and as members of the community, and being intentional about their college experiences. They were able to make real-life connections between what they were learning and what they experienced around them, to take on responsibility and grow professionally, and to develop and shape their goals for their futures beyond ACU. This growth in the Individual dimension of the Social Change Model is congruent with what the administrators said and believed about CLP.

Involvement. The students spoke at length about the involvement at ACU that is encouraged by CLP. They are active in many clubs, organizations, and teams on campus, which contributes to their overall growth. According to President Smith, this active involvement is a highly intentional aspect of the program, springing directly from his desire for students to have meaningful experiences at ACU:

This is not a place for spectators. This is a place for those who will engage. We want them to get involved beyond the classroom. To find something that brings them alive.

[President Smith, ACU].

President Smith's vision is for every student to be actively involved on campus, and CLP serves as a source to encourage and push them to do so. Of course, every student will not commit to the same level of involvement and engagement. The program invites them to engage, but it is up to the students to take action. Mr. Jackson explained

Nobody can force feed the values and the vision to them. So it's really about how much they want to get out of this. The ones that really do want to get more out of it, they have that opportunity [Mr. Jackson, Director of Community Engagement].

The students in my study are those who have taken the opportunity to get involved and be deliberate about their college experiences. For students like Dan, Sarah, and Kyle, it was difficult to balance being involved without becoming over-involved to the point of burnout and meaningless activities. Mr. Adams explained that students' involvement comes from required events, sessions, and other forms of engagement that CLP encourages. While the CLP staff wants the students to be involved with the program, they mean for it to be complementary to their academic experiences. Mr. Adams explained that the program should feel like something that is running in the background of their college experience, not taking up the forefront of their daily lives. They do not wish for students to be overly involved to the extent that it negatively impacts their academic lives. Ms. Rose explained that the CLP staff makes an effort to discourage over-involvement, focusing sessions during SLAP orientation on how to be involved on campus and have meaningful engagement without spreading oneself too thin. Although Ms. Rose and Mr. Adams expressed that they do not wish for students to be over-involved and overwhelmed, those three students still had stories about it happening. This is an area of disconnect that may need greater attention.

The students spoke about growing as individuals because CLP helped them be more intentional and deliberate in their activities and in their overall college experiences, making meaning from what they do rather than just going through the motions. Ms. Rose expressed her view that CLP is a complement to the ACU experience, providing structure to all that students do. The program builds a framework around the college experience and helps

students have more intentional experiences. President Smith explained that the components of the program are not meant to stand alone, but are valuable in combination. The curricular and co-curricular activities were put together purposefully and combine to “produce a wonderful result.” Each component contributes to the students’ growth and development.

Challenge, empowerment, and relationships. Students spoke about feeling challenged beyond their original abilities and empowered to try things they may not have otherwise attempted. Specifically, the students said the academic side of the program was particularly challenging. Dr. Brown explained that this is intentional. The Leadership Studies courses are designed to be challenging in order to push the students. He shared stories about taking students to ILA conferences to compete in case study competitions. Dr. Brown said that other faculty members would tell him they were impressed by his graduate students, and he would proudly say, “No, these are undergraduates!” They are intentionally challenged to excel in this program.

The students spoke about being held responsible and acting professionally. When I conducted my observation of the CLP Speaker Series, I saw the students arrive in business attire, looking polished and professional. I also saw many of the participants from this study working at the check-in table. One of the Coordinators explained that the CLP Recruiters and Ambassadors are given quite a bit of responsibility. This helps the staff manage the challenge of accounting for 1,000 students, but it also gives the CLP students a sense of accountability to one another.

The CLP staff understands the value of their relationships with the students, which the students in this study expressed to be highly meaningful in their development. Mr. Jackson explained that even now, years later, he thinks back on those relationships he had

with adults at ACU who helped him grow. He believes the regular one-on-one meetings between the students and CLP staff are a great advantage of the program.

Ms. Rose also spoke about these relationships, saying they range from simple recognition of students to very close relationships. The students who were selected for my study happen to be those that are well-known to the staff. Ms. Rose explained that the program started out small and was highly focused on relationships, and the staff did not want to lose that feeling even as the program grew. They still make a point to have one-on-one meetings with the students so they will at least know every student a little bit. Of course, with eight staff members and 1,000 students, it is nearly impossible to have a close relationship with every student. Ms. Rose explained the students' role in this:

It's about them -- their eagerness and desire to have relationships with us. We encourage them -- we need them to come talk to us, because we can't always reach out. Many have sought leadership opportunities within CLP, or they just come hang out with us, make themselves known to us. It's a two-way effort [Ms. Rose, Associate Director of CLP].

Ms. Rose's words resonate directly with what senior student Kyle said, that he made a point to get to know the staff and developed a valuable relationship because of that. The staff members are there for everyone, but not every student takes advantage of that opportunity.

President Smith expressed his deeply held belief that the students are the most important people at ACU. In his speech to the students, he shared a story about taking down the president's and dean's reserved parking signs and replacing them with student parking signs in order to prove that the students are the priority. At the end of his speech, he invited questions from the audience, and a young lady said the straws in the dining hall are terrible.

President Smith announced humorously, “I promise you, there will be better straws!” and he invited the student to follow-up with an email. He explained that his door is always open, and students should come to him with any concerns they have. At the end of event, President Smith stood by the door and greeted each student with a handshake, and his wife greeted them with hugs. A few students stayed to have conversations with the couple beyond the end of the event. It is evident that the emphasis on relationships is directly intended to be part of the CLP program.

Focus on the future. The students in this study expressed that being in CLP helped them decide what they wish to do in the future, making decisions about graduate school and career goals. Some said they look forward to seeing how their learning will play out when they are in their future jobs, when they will be able to understand leadership in real-life contexts. Mr. Jackson still reflects back on the program with fondness, believing that he grew as an individual by participating in CLP during his college years. Dr. Brown noted that students often write letters or visit after five years or more and say, “I didn’t realize it then, but now, so many years out, the things we talked about in class are coming back and ringing true.” The students were able to more deeply understand what they learned about leadership when they could see it in the context of their careers. Ms. Rose explained, “We’re laying the foundation for life-long learning and developing after they leave here” [Ms. Rose, Associate Director of CLP]. Ms. Rose and Mr. Adams hoped that all of the students who complete CLP will be able to look back, as Mr. Jackson does now, and realize how much they have learned and grown as individuals by taking part in this unique leadership development program.

Group. The 12 student participants in this study expressed development in the Group dimension of the Social Change Model through community service, campus activities, group projects in courses, internships, and even study abroad. These activities enabled students to interact with like-minded others as well as diverse others from whom they could learn about how to engage with groups toward common goals, and how their understanding of others contributes to their own leadership and ability to impact society.

Mr. Adams expressed that the CLP program is designed to help students think about the impact they have on others when they make decisions. Ms. Rose also spoke about the goals of the program to help students understand their community, collaborate with others, and work in teams. They should leave the program with the experience of working with people with different backgrounds, perspectives, and life experiences. Ms. Rose expressed that “the challenge of leadership is having the ability to hold multiple truths at the same time,” so they intentionally expose students to different identities.

Mr. Jackson, whose professional role focuses on connecting students to the community in meaningful ways, explained his belief in the purpose and responsibility of higher education:

To whatever degree we can have our students engage and be prepared to engage with local citizens, have healthy relationships, learn from each other, appreciate the depth of worth and being of others, that should be a primary focus for college students -- learning how to be active citizens [Mr. Jackson, Director of Community Engagement].

These beliefs and intentions seem to be highly congruent with the students’ lived experiences in the program, as these interactions with others stood out for the students as

significant aspects and developmental opportunities from participating in CLP. Many of the students expressed seeing people and communities in a different light as a result of their interactions, and they also began to recognize their own roles and responsibilities in their community, and how this knowledge contributes to their own leadership.

Society. The students in this study developed along the Society dimension of the Social Change Model through the community service requirement of CLP. By actively serving in various ways through consistent community service, the students felt prepared to contribute to society and have the desire to make a difference in the world, whether on a large scale or within their own community. The interviews with the administrators revealed the intention behind this development and the belief that CLP students should leave ACU prepared to contribute to society.

Mr. Jackson spoke about colleges and universities as places for developing democracy and citizenship. He passionately expressed his beliefs about preparing students to contribute to society:

We are not just churning out cogs that are going to go make money somewhere; but people who see others, can relate to them well, who are civil, and who have the skills to work together to bring positive change - from the very local level, to the national level, to the global level. They're going to live in our society. If all they're doing while they're in school is reading books and having philosophical conversations, without actually relating to people who are different from themselves, then I'm not sure we're producing students who are much better for society [Mr. Jackson, Director of Community Engagement].

Mr. Jackson's beliefs resonate with the experiences the students had, as they have developed strong interests in helping people around them and using their own strengths and talents to make a difference. Ms. Rose also explained that community service is a key piece of the program because it helps teach students about being a good person and a contributing member of the community. The students did seem to have this experience of being involved on campus, leading others, acting through their values, and contributing to their community. They were changed and shaped by this experience, which resonates with President Smith's belief in the importance of "rolling up one's sleeves and touching humanity." He said:

It's very empowering. I believe that when our students go out and do service, they're never the same again. They probably will continue those things in different ways throughout their lives [President Smith, ACU].

The students in this study did express such a change and the desire to continue serving their communities in the future.

In order to truly have a meaningful experience with community service and realize their abilities to impact society, CLP students are encouraged to perform consistent service. The Office of Community Engagement has developed ten service tracks that they hope will align with students' personal interests and career goals. The students spoke about these tracks and how they benefited from consistent service and were able to see their impact over time. A few students did not stick with one track and find a consistent service site, so more guidance could be given to such students who need help focusing their interests. Ms. Rose believes that encouraging consistent service makes the requirement more meaningful, as the students have the opportunity to be part of the change that occurs in their organizations.

As a result of their community service and required hours spent contributing to the community, the students in this study felt empowered to make a difference in society when they graduate from ACU. They believe they have the skills and passion to create positive change in roles such as teacher, human rights lawyer, or higher education administrator. This development connects directly to the administrators' views about students' capacity to impact society. Dr. Brown explained, "Democracy won't run on auto-pilot. We need people with a moral compass, a sense of ethical grounding, a sense of responsibility to lead government, churches, schools, local groups, etc." [Dr. Brown, Dean of the College of Social Sciences]. Dr. Brown explained that society needs people who can engage with others to make a difference. He says this is the reason that the Leadership Studies program is a minor rather than a major: "I want them to major in chemistry, theater, government, and to take what they learn in LDSP to go make a difference" [Dr. Brown, Dean of the College of Social Sciences]. The program is intended to complement the liberal arts education.

While there are many ways in which individuals can make a difference in the world, Dr. Brown stressed the importance of creating leaders with a strong moral compass who will lead others in ethical ways. In order to be effective leaders, people also need to be critical consumers of leadership. He believes the CLP students leave ACU equipped with that understanding to think critically about leading and following and to be able to make a difference. Ms. Rose believes that CLP does not impose a single ideal of what is right for students, but provides them with a wealth of theories and examples so they are equipped to make moral decisions that will positively impact society. Her beliefs resonate with President Smith's original intentions in creating the

CLP program. He believed the primary role of ACU should be forming good citizens and leaders.

There are too many leaders leading the world off a cliff, because they have no moral compass. So we want to form good citizens. We want our young people to choose meaningful, consequential lives -- lives of significance. So, we have created this program to help our students discover their gifts and develop those gifts, and the hope is that they will go out and transform the world [President Smith, ACU].

President Smith further explained that young people will not automatically develop these ideals, but that they need to be passed from one generation to the next. It is the role of parents to pass on these values, he says, and certainly the role of higher education. Based on my interviews with 12 current CLP students, the program is having such an impact on students who invest themselves wholeheartedly in the program.

Room for Improvement

Although the 12 students in this study had positive experiences in the College Leadership Program, there is room for improvement. There are a variety of reasons why students leave the CLP program, and there are also challenges and frustrations with the program. Finally, I asked the administrators to share their wishes for improving the program.

Why students leave CLP. According to the CLP Annual Report of 2014, the program had an overall retention rate of 85%, with 154 of the 1,000 students leaving the program in the 2013-14 school year for various reasons. Mr. Adams said that about half of each freshmen cohort does not end up graduating from the CLP program. I asked the administrators and students why some students leave the program.

For many students, the Leadership Studies minor was the main reason for leaving the program. They were not expecting it to be so academically challenging, or they did not like the classes or professors, or they did not feel it connected to their major field of study. For some whose majors required certain specific minors (like the sciences), it was too much to have the LDSP minor as well. It was hard for those students to meet all the credit requirements. Dr. Brown, who is aware that many students have trouble with the LDSP minor, explained that if students drop the minor, they have to drop CLP as well, because it is a required component. Several students explained that those who dropped the program because of the minor missed out, because it might have gotten better as they went on: "First year is just testing the waters, and 2nd year is when they'd really start to get it" [April, Senior Student]. The students who drop out do not have that chance to experience the benefits of the program.

Mike, a CLP graduate and Fellow, said that he struggled with the courses in the first two years, but that they really started to click for him as a junior. He was very glad he stayed. Mike and others said that even when students quit the program because of the minor, they still liked the program itself and felt supported by the staff. When one of Mike's close friends quit, he still turned to Mr. Adams as a resource throughout his ACU experience. Ms. Rose spoke about this connection, saying they acknowledge that the program is not for everyone and want them to know that leaving the program does not mean they do not have leadership potential.

The students in this study explained that, in some cases, their peers left the program because they were in it for the wrong reasons. They said many students joined the program because of the scholarship. In fact, for many of the students in this study, the scholarship

was an enticing element that got them interested in the program. In time, however, they became invested in the program itself and no longer thought about the scholarship.

Other students explained that those who dropped were not putting enough effort into the program to truly reap the benefits. The students who participated in this study are those who are heavily invested in the program, so they had significant gains from it. Not every student will be so directly involved, so the program will not work for them. Sarah referred to this as “buy-in”:

The biggest chunk of those who leave is the people who don't buy in to begin with.

They try it for a year and realize it's not for them. I could point out those students every year at orientation who won't stay in the program. That's the time to buy in. If you don't buy in then, you won't later [Sarah, CLP Graduate & Fellow].

Those students who “buy in” and put effort into the program are able to have great experiences from which they can learn and develop, like the students in this study. For those who leave the program, they either did not feel connected to it, or they enjoyed it but found the many requirements to be too demanding.

Challenges and frustrations. Though only a portion of the students actually leave the program, even those who stay in and have positive experiences have some challenges and frustrations with the CLP program. Although they spoke highly of the program, the students in this study still recognized room for improvement. Several spoke about not seeing the value of every component of the program, such as the Passport destinations. This is the program that requires students to attend at least 12 campus and community events that provide opportunities for thought, reflection, and awareness of social and community issues. Several of the students in this study did not see how

Passport contributed to the overall experience of the program. Megan explained that “everyone has hit that wall” at some point in the program when they feel ready to quit because they do not see the value of every piece of the program. They spoke about the challenge of meeting all the requirements, saying it was sometimes hard to find the motivation to go to speakers and other events when they had so much going on. For some students, keeping track of all the requirements was difficult in itself: “It’s hard to make sure I’m staying on track in terms of all the required events-- the administrative tasks. The events, I have no problem with, it’s just tracking it all” [April, Senior Student]. These minor details can add up and make the students feel frustrated with the overall program, even when they recognize many of its benefits.

Nancy, one of the Fellows, said she was frustrated by the many changes in the CLP program during her four years. She said many new initiatives were introduced, and it was hard to keep track of all the changes. As discussed with Ms. Rose and Mr. Adams, many changes did take place in the past few years as they tried to improve the program, and it has become relatively stable at this point. Nancy said she was less frustrated once she was a Fellow and understood why the changes were happening. She also believed the handbook was a valuable addition to the program after she left, and she thinks it will make the program easier for the next classes of students.

Wishes for the program. No matter how well a program is working, there is always room to improve. I asked the administrators to share with me their wishes for the College Leadership Program, and I received a variety of answers.

Mr. Adams and Ms. Rose are most closely connected to the program on a day-to-day basis, so their responses focused primarily on the operational side of it. They both

expressed that they wish the program had a larger and more defined programming budget. They felt they had a sufficient budget for scholarships and study abroad stipends, but would like to be able to do more programming through their office. As it stands now, they often collaborate with other departments and co-sponsor events, but an increased budget would allow them to be more intentional with their programming. Mr. Adams said this would allow them to do things like bring in a wider array of speakers and enable students to attend more leadership conferences.

President Smith also felt that more money was needed specifically for the CLP program, and he felt the money could go toward scholarships, supporting the faculty, encouraging foreign study, and to facilitate the students' engagement in public service. Dr. Brown also felt that more scholarship money would enable ACU to be more competitive in attracting students from a wider variety of backgrounds.

In contrast to these wishes for more money that could go toward scholarships, Mr. Adams wished that the program could offer fewer tangible incentives. He believes many of the students are generally committed to the program, and that the benefits like the scholarship, early registration, and housing lottery are a draw for students who may not care as much about the program. Mr. Adams and his staff invest a lot of time and resources into supporting those students who are not fully committed, so it might be more effective to reduce the benefits in order to attract students who will join for the right reasons. He feels this would bring greater authenticity to the program. Mr. Adams also believed the program could be more effective if it were not used as an admissions function. He understood that the program is a powerful recruiting tool, but he thought

that perhaps students would be more deeply committed if they came to ACU first, learned more about the program and what it entails, and then made the decision to join it.

Additionally, Ms. Rose wished there were a stronger relationship between CLP and LDSP, as discussed earlier. The CLP staff and the LDSP faculty respect each other and have a professional relationship, but there is still disconnect between the curricular and co-curricular sides of the program. Ms. Rose believes they could work more intentionally on connecting what the students learn in class with the experiences they have outside the classroom, to draw the theory-to-practice connection more clearly.

Both Mr. Adams and President Smith spoke about the size of the CLP program, but with differing viewpoints. President Smith said he would like to have every ACU student participate in the program because it is “so valuable and life-changing.” In contrast, Mr. Adams wished the program could be smaller: “You lose a certain touch with the students when it’s so large. It’s difficult to capture that feeling” [Mr. Adams, Director of CLP]. Both wishes make sense based on what the students experienced in the program. For all 12 students in this study, the program was highly valuable and they grew tremendously in terms of the Social Change Model. It makes sense that President Smith would wish this for every one of the students at Atlantic Coast University. It is also understandable that Mr. Adams would like the program to be smaller, as the students in this study spoke quite a bit about the impact of the relationships they had with faculty and staff. That intimacy and personal attention might be stronger if the program were not so large. Both views to change the size of its program are based on different aspects of the program’s strengths.

Finally, Dr. Brown wished “that we keep doing what we’re doing.” He believes the CLP program is highly effective and can continue to be so. His concern is that the current president of ACU will not be there forever, and he worries about what will happen when a new leader comes to the university. He hopes that whenever this change occurs, that the new president will be in full support of the CLP program and continue to support the faculty and staff who are currently making the program possible.

Summary

The 12 seniors, sophomores, and graduates of the College Leadership Program developed as leaders through their experiences in the program. Overall, their understanding of leadership changed as they learned about leadership in their LDSP coursework and their co-curricular activities. The students entered ACU with a belief that leadership was based on formal position or title, and they now believe that leadership is accessible to anyone who is passionate about making change. They believe they can act as leaders even by having a small impact in their communities, and they understand and appreciate the role of followers in leadership and social change. The students have an understanding of themselves as leaders and how their own strengths, weaknesses, and personalities can best serve others.

Students in the program developed in ways that reflect the Individual dimension of the Social Change Model. They took part in activities that allowed for self-reflection and introspection, developing greater understanding of their own identities and how they affect other people. They grew and developed through study abroad, campus engagement, coursework, and community service. The new Leadership Portfolio served as an effective tool for the sophomores to set goals and reflect on their experiences each

year. Students gained confidence through their activities related to CLP, and they learned and grew through involvement in a wide variety of activities, organizations, clubs, and more. CLP helped the students to be more intentional in their college experiences and to make real-life connections between what they were learning in the classroom and what they experienced through engagement and service. The students were able to take on responsibility and act professionally, and they felt challenged and empowered.

Throughout the program, they felt supported by adults who served as mentors, role models, and guides. The students developed goals and direction for their own futures based on their experiences in the program.

In the Social Change Model, the three dimensions are not mutually exclusive, but influence one another. As students developed within the Individual dimension, this allowed them to better understand their roles and impacts within group settings. They had opportunities to interact with like-minded others as well as diverse others through group projects, campus organizations, internships, off-campus community service, and study abroad. These opportunities allowed them to work with people they had previously not encountered in their lives, and to have a broader understanding of the needs and abilities of others. This understanding of others and working in groups also served to shape the students' intrapersonal understanding, circling back to the Individual dimension.

The students' further Individual growth and their development in the Group dimension enabled them to feel prepared and empowered to make a difference in their communities, which falls under the Society dimension of the SCM. By serving in the community, specifically through consistent service, and active involvement on campus,

the students developed a desire to make a difference in the world. They have the passion and confidence to make a difference, and understand that they can do this on a large-scale or through small changes.

The second main research question focused on the congruence between the intended outcomes of CLP and the students' lived experiences. The students' experiences were compared to the data gathered from the ACU administrators. There was a great deal of congruence in the areas of students' understanding of leadership and the ways they developed in the dimensions of Individual, Group, and Society. Through community service, study abroad, campus engagement, internships, and SLAP orientation, the program achieved the desired effects.

As the program evolved since 1998, changes were made to enhance the program, which improved it in many ways and helped make the students' experiences more congruent with the intended outcomes. For some students, the changes themselves were a source of confusion and frustration. A major source of discord in the program was the relationship between CLP and LDSP, the Leadership Studies minor. Students and administrators alike felt the two areas were not as cohesive as they should be in order to achieve the goals of the program. Although they are designed to complement one another, they felt too disconnected as separate entities.

As there are many components that make up CLP, some had greater impact on students than others. The living-learning community was a component that was barely mentioned at all, suggesting that it may not be a significant experience for the students. The CLP Speaker Series also received mixed reviews.

Overall, there was room for improvement in the program, despite its successes. Students leave the program for various reasons, the current students have some challenges and frustrations with the program, and the administrators have wishes to improve the program overall. In sum, there is discord in some areas of the program, as they do not impact students the way they were originally intended to, but there is a high level of congruence in many other areas.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to understand the lived experiences of students who participated in a comprehensive four-year undergraduate leadership development program through the lens of the Social Change Model. Studies like the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) explore outcomes such as changes in students' leadership capacities as a result of college interventions. In this study, my focus was to move beyond the outcomes of a leadership program and to focus instead on what takes place *during* the four-year leadership program that contributes to students' development as leaders. It is helpful for practitioners to understand how that development takes place so that they may best structure their leadership programs to promote such development. This study focused on the College Leadership Program at Atlantic Coast University, a unique four-year program with a variety of components. This study was guided by two overarching research questions and three sub-questions based on the dimensions of the Social Change Model: Individual, Group, and Society.

Although the CLP is organized by a developmental framework consisting of the three areas, Experience, Develop, and Succeed, I found that exploring the program through the lens of the Social Change Model was an effective way to conceptualize students' development in terms of their growth in the dimensions of Individual, Group, and Society. The SCM approaches leadership as a "dynamic, collaborative, and values-based process grounded in relationships and intending positive social change" (Komives & Wagner, 2009, p. 72). The SCM grew from Astin and Astin's (2000) belief that higher

education has a role in empowering leaders to become change agents who will promote social change when they leave college. The experiences of the students in this study reflect these assumptions. Through the various components of the CLP program, the students developed as individuals, learned about relationships, and were empowered to lead change in society and feel that they have the ability to make a difference.

How Students Developed as Leaders through the College Leadership Program

Through their participation in a wide variety of curricular and co-curricular activities connected to CLP, the students in this study experienced a shift in their understanding of leadership. When they first came to ACU, most held beliefs that leadership referred to people in positions of power with formal titles. This reflects the industrial paradigm of the 20th century, in which leadership was equated to good management (Rost, 1991). The students also felt leadership was trait based, that only people with certain characteristics were able to lead (Northouse, 2013). These ideas reflect the transactional view of leadership, in which subordinates follow leaders to achieve tasks in exchange for benefits, with little or no commitment to the cause (Yukl, 2012).

As they took part in the College Leadership Program, the students began to understand leadership differently. They learned more about leadership theories, research, examples, values, and their own identities through their LDSP coursework, which broadened their conceptual understanding of leadership. In addition, the students engaged in leadership activities and were able to make real-life connections through involvement on campus, internships, study abroad, and community service. These activities combined to shift their definition and understanding of leadership, which

resonates with the postindustrial paradigm's concept of leadership: a relationship between leaders and followers who intend real change (Rost, 1991).

The students understand that leadership is not for an elite few with key traits, but for anyone who is passionate about effecting positive change. They understand the importance of relationships and the role of followers in leadership (Yukl, 2012; Northouse, 2013; Burns, 2004). Through their community service activities in particular, the students gained an understanding of leadership that reflects Greenleaf's servant leadership model, which focuses on the leader's responsibility to serve followers and positively influence society. Through the CLP requirements, the students learned about leadership and developed along the SCM dimensions of Individual, Group, and Society.

The Individual Dimension

As they made their way through college guided by the framework provided by CLP, the students had a wide variety of experiences that contributed to their individual development. The Individual dimension of the Social Change Model focuses on students' personal qualities that can be fostered and developed through reflection, inner work, mindfulness, and developmental activities (Komives & Wagner, 2009). The students experienced such development through their LDSP course on self-identity, community service, active involvement in campus organizations, study abroad, attending leadership conferences, internships, and reflecting in an online portfolio.

Emotional intelligence. Through their intrapersonal experiences at ACU, the students in this study were able to feel more comfortable with who they are as individuals, become more self-aware, and feel that they have grown personally. In the first course of the academic minor, LDSP 210 "Self, Group, and Leadership," the

students learned about their own identities and what that means in terms of their interactions with others and their capacity for leadership. Self-awareness was taught in the LDSP 210 course, and students further deepened this knowledge through their experiences being involved on campus and working with others. All of the students in my study were able to articulate their own identities, leadership qualities, values, and perspectives, and to explain how they have grown over time. This learning contributed to their emotional intelligence, as they developed self-awareness and self-management as well as awareness of others and how to effectively manage relationships (Goleman, 2011). The students were able to articulate their understanding of other people and diverse perspectives, and to better understand how different people work together. This reflects the relationship-management side of emotional intelligence. Fullan (2001) asserted that the top leaders in the business world are those with strong emotional intelligence. The CLP students in this study are prepared to enter the workforce with a strong awareness of self and others.

The students' intrapersonal learning reflects Chickering's vectors of development in the individuals' formation of identity. They were able to establish their own identity, purpose, and integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Research shows that academic coursework is valuable in leadership development when students are able to connect what they learn in the classroom and apply it in context, engaging in leadership practices in a real-life setting (Brungardt et al., 2006; Eich, 2005). The CLP students were able to do so by learning about leadership and their identities in class, and then practicing leadership in co-curricular activities.

Service and membership. The real-life contexts where students practiced their leadership learning included volunteer work in the community and participation on campus through organizations, clubs, sports, Greek life, and other activities. The Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (Dugan et al., 2013) found four high-impact practices for building leadership capacity, which included both *community service* and *memberships in off-campus organizations*. Community service allows students to develop group skills and deepen personal commitments to specific issues and to understand social systems. In the Social Change Model, the three dimensions are inextricably linked, so the students' experiences in the community and working with others further deepened their own personal development and self-understanding. Involvement in off-campus organizations also helped the students engage in the community to support others (Dugan et al., 2013). The students in this study found volunteer work gave them meaning and helped them more deeply understand their own identities, skills and abilities, and areas of strength or weakness.

Leadership self-efficacy. Many of the students said that participating in CLP helped them gain confidence. They realized they are capable of leading others, making a difference, and taking on challenges that they might not otherwise have faced. This growth demonstrates enhanced leadership self-efficacy (LSE), a student's belief that he or she is capable of succeeding in leadership (Dugan et al., 2013). Interestingly, only the female students specifically addressed gaining confidence through the program. The males demonstrated and described gains in their beliefs as leaders, but they did not actually use the term 'confidence.' This might suggest that the males were generally more confident before they began the program, and only felt they developed leadership

skills through the experience, while the females interpreted that growth as an increase in confidence. This also may reflect a general difference in vocabulary used by males and females. Further study could explore differences in leadership self-efficacy of males and females as a result of a four-year program like CLP.

Additionally, the students in this study might have had high LSE to begin with, as they chose to take part in a leadership program. Students with lower LSE would likely not have joined in the first place, or may have been among those who dropped the program after starting. The MSL suggested that LSE can be developed by providing students with positional leadership roles so they can practice leadership and develop confidence (Dugan et al., 2013). The CLP students I interviewed had been given such opportunities to take on leadership roles and to hold a great deal of responsibility, as they were trusted to act professionally, manage peers, and make decisions at ACU. This happened through internships, work on campus, and roles like CLP Recruiters and Ambassadors or SLAP orientation leaders. The Wabash National Study found that working yields positive effects on college students' development (Salisbury, Pascarella, Padgett, & Blaich, 2012). This study supports that finding, as the students who held leadership and job-related roles on campus experienced strong personal gains.

The Social Change Model is grounded in servant leadership, which suggests that effective leaders serve with "authenticity, integrity, and trustworthiness" (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 358). The students in this study were able to develop a sense of trustworthiness through these leadership opportunities. They were trusted to be professional and honest, which helped them realize the value of integrity. They also likely developed these qualities, or at least understanding of them, through their LDSP

course “Values Leadership.” The students spoke about being authentic and being aware of the impact their decisions and actions have on others.

Mentoring relationships. In their various roles on and off campus, the students felt challenged and empowered. Much of this stemmed from the relationships they formed with adults on campus, particularly with the CLP staff and the LDSP faculty. One of the four high-impact practices found by the MSL was *mentoring relationships*, which are connections between students and individuals who assist their growth and development (Dugan et al., 2013). The students were able to connect with adults on campus who provided support, direction, and encouragement. For some students, these adults played a parent-like role, and for others they felt more like friendships. For all of the students, the adults challenged them to reach their full potential and empowered them to grow. These relationships mirror what Baxter Magolda (2009) calls *good company*, significant adults who help individuals through the transition from authority-dependence toward self-authorship. They provide challenge and support to help students understand their beliefs and identities and to grow as individuals. In this study, the students found good company in the CLP staff and the LDSP faculty, who helped them develop in the individual dimension of the SCM.

It is important to note that the students who participated in this study were all directly involved with the CLP program in some way during their college experience. Five of the students worked with SLAP orientation, five identified as CLP Recruiters and/or Ambassadors, and others were involved with Passport or various internships or service work. Overall, every student in this study had some direct connection with the CLP office and staff, which likely makes their experiences unique from what the majority

of CLP students experienced. Learning from these closely connected, heavily involved students provides valuable insight as to how the program provides exceptional results, but it would also be important to understand the experiences of a random sample of students who were not so closely tied to the program staff or did not hold leadership roles within the program itself.

The Group Dimension

The Group dimension of the Social Change Model describes the ways in which students work with others to effect positive social change (Komives & Wagner, 2009). It includes activities that provide opportunities for students to collaborate with others, be held responsible and accountable, work together toward common goals, and work through conflict and discord. These activities allow students to explore perspectives that are different from their own.

Through participation in the College Leadership Program, the students in this study became more self-aware, which allowed them to also be more aware of how their own actions impacted others. They developed greater understanding of people and how to work effectively with different personality types. The students explained that learning more about themselves helped them learn how they work in groups, which will in turn help them more effectively impact society.

Program length. A study using the SRLS instrument, counterintuitively found that longer-duration leadership programs had negative effects on group-related values (Dugan & Komives, 2010). This was attributed to the fact that longer programs often consist of many smaller learning experiences that do not always connect or build in complexity over time. The CLP is such a program that consists of multiple components

making up a four-year program. In this study I did not find the program to have negative effects on group-related values. However, the students' experiences in CLP revealed less development in the Group dimension than in the Individual dimension, suggesting room for more intentional programming and focus in this area.

Although limited, the students in this study described experiences that helped them develop in the Group dimension by working with others and learning about their own roles in groups through various curricular and co-curricular activities. Their development reflects Chickering's vectors of *developing mature interpersonal relationships* and *moving through autonomy toward interdependence* (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Engaging with peers. In their CLP experience, the students had opportunities to interact with like-minded others as well as diverse others. Interaction with like-minded others came primarily from internships and student organizations, as well as the CLP program itself, in which students were able to work with peers who were similar to themselves. They found common interests and intellectual levels, and they shared a passion toward their leadership activities.

Living-learning communities are discussed in the literature as one area for students to develop through exposure to peers with common characteristics. The 2007 NSSE study found that learning communities contributed to students' increased GPA and increased retention (Hotchkiss, Moore, & Pitts, 2006). Other studies found these communities to have negative effects due to their lack of diversity and a similarity to high school like settings (Jaffee, 2007). Interestingly, among the students at ACU, the living-learning community was scarcely mentioned. One senior expressed that having other

people around her who were passionate about the same things, like applying to be orientation leaders, helped increase her enthusiasm and desire to be involved. Another senior, when I asked her about the living-learning communities, said that she does not really like them, and that it was more of an ACU feature than a CLP feature. All the rest of the students, and even the administrators, did not mention the learning communities at all.

It may be that the participants simply did not think of the living-learning community when they reflected on CLP experiences because it is a requirement of ACU, not solely CLP. The communities are not listed in the CLP handbooks either. They may seem tangential to the overall leadership program experience. It may also be that the seniors did not mention the living-learning community because they experienced it during their freshman year, four years ago, so it was not fresh in their minds. Either way, this was clearly not a component that stood out for them in terms of their CLP experience and their development as leaders. This is one area where practitioners should take caution to make sure that any element associated with a comprehensive leadership program is directly connected and made clear to students. There should be activities that connect the living experience to the leadership program so that meaning can be made and the effect is not lost.

Students did find great value in the campus engagement requirement of CLP, which pushed them to be involved in clubs, organizations, Greek life, and other activities on campus. These experiences allowed them to be part of a group, feel connected to a larger whole, and to test their own leadership as well as followership in context. This

contributed to their sense of *mattering*, feeling they are part of a group and important to other people (Schlossberg, 1989).

Kouzes and Posner (2007) posited that key leadership qualities include recognizing the needs and efforts of others, inspiring others to act, creating a sense of common purpose, and establishing trust. The students in this study described experiences in their group activities that reflected these qualities. Their involvement with groups also reflected Astin's (1984) theory that involvement contributes to students' satisfaction with college and meaningful interactions with others. Astin also posited that what students gain from involvement is directly related to what they put into it. The students in this study were strongly invested in their college experience and committed to making the most of CLP. They explained that students who dropped the program did not put in as much effort, so they did not experience the rewards in the same way.

Exploring diverse perspectives. In addition to experiences with like-minded others and active involvement in groups, CLP also provided students with opportunities to interact with diverse others. They did this primarily through internships, study abroad, and community service. The MSL revealed one high-impact practice of leadership development to be *socio-cultural conversations with peers*, in which they have the chance to discuss their differences and learn from one another by articulating their own perspectives, understanding the views of others, and understanding how different communities of people can work together (Dugan et al., 2013). The Wabash National Study also revealed that *interactional diversity* had significant impact on students' development, providing a chance for them to explore diverse ideas and perspectives (Blaich & Wise, n.d.). Although the CLP students in this study described exposure to

diverse others, they did not specifically recount incidences of directly talking to others about their differences. They expressed that they became more aware of the ways other people live, how they act, and what they need in society, but they did not necessarily engage with them directly in exploring these differences.

Similarly, the students in this study spoke about the impact of studying abroad and how they were able to learn about different cultures and different types of people. Some studies, like the NSSE survey of 2007, found study abroad to be a transformational experience for students that allows them to expand their perspective on the world and understand diverse cultures. Conversely, other research has found that study abroad increases students' contact with diverse people but does not specifically enhance their intercultural competency (Salisbury, An, & Pascarella, 2013). These contrary findings are exemplified by the students in this study, as they spoke about growing individually based on their study abroad experience, but not necessarily strengthening their deep understanding of diverse cultures and peoples.

Socio-cultural conversations and interactional diversity should be developed into a more intentional part of the CLP program. This could be done through portfolio reflections and group meetings with CLP staff and peers. The staff could also develop activities that facilitate socio-cultural conversations among students from different racial and cultural groups. Directly addressing diversity instead of only exposing students to it would have a stronger impact on students' group development and better prepare them to lead change in their communities.

Conflict resolution. The SCM describes the Group dimension as those opportunities that allow students to explore diverse perspectives unlike their own,

develop shared values in a group with a collective purpose, and work through conflict toward growth (Komives & Wagner, 2009). The students in this study were able to interact with people who represented different perspectives, which allowed them an understanding and appreciations for diverse others. They also had the chance to develop shared values and work with groups toward common goals. The part that was not addressed directly, however, was working through conflict. A few students spoke about getting better at working with others and working through differences, and some mentioned being better at navigating conflict as a result of their group experiences. This development, however, came from experiences working in academic groups, organizations, or even fraternities or sororities. They did not describe specifically learning conflict resolution skills through CLP. This skill might have been addressed in the LDSP coursework, but the students did not describe such direct learning. This is an area that could use further investigation to see if and how conflict resolution is developed through the leadership program. Leadership programs should incorporate conflict resolution skills into academic courses or required workshops. The staff should also prompt students to reflect on experiences with conflict in their portfolios and discuss these during one-on-one or group meetings with staff in order to enhance students' growth in the Group dimension.

The Society Dimension

The third dimension of the Social Change Model, Society, focuses on the social ends to leadership development and the students' impact on the community or society in which they live (HERI, 1996). This dimension includes opportunities in which students practice leadership and promote change in settings like campus organizations, community

groups, and even on a larger scale in global initiatives (Komives & Wagner, 2009).

While the students experienced a wide variety of activities and engagement through CLP, the Society dimension focuses specifically on those efforts that go beyond students' own self-interest. The Social Change Model as a whole, and the Society dimension in particular, reflects the shift to a postindustrial leadership paradigm, in which leadership is a relationship among leaders and followers who intend social change (Rost, 1991). The focus of this paradigm is on creating change that is substantive and transforming.

Servant leadership. The SCM is also grounded in the theory of servant leadership, in which a leader empowers followers to collaborate toward common objectives (Yukl, 2012). These objectives are intended to benefit society and focus on what is right, just, and equal for all (Northouse, 2013). A major component of servant leadership is the relationship between leaders and followers. As Burns (2004) described in the "Burns Paradox," leaders take initiative toward change and followers support the movement. This interaction of leaders and followers is mutually beneficial, as they empower one another through their actions. The students in this study described a shift in their understanding of leadership from that of trait-based leader-focused models to a more interactive, relationship-based model. However, their understanding of the role of followers appears to be somewhat naïve. The students spoke about the importance of followers and knowing that they can lead by following, but they described this in terms of performing community service or doing other 'good deeds' that help others. However, serving others is not synonymous with servant leadership. As Burns described, leaders and followers support one another, and leaders develop followers into new leaders. The students in this study were able to form a foundation for this understanding, but they have

room for growth. This distinction and understanding should be addressed in leadership programs so that students are not misled to believe that following is, in itself, leadership.

Serving communities. The students in this study participated in activities with this social-minded focus, primarily through community service. They were required by CLP to perform 100 hours of community service, and they were encouraged to focus on a specific service track in order to connect with an organization in a meaningful way and to focus on their passions. Service enabled the students to experience the greater community beyond ACU. Students also had a chance to impact society through some of their involvement on campus in organizations that focused on positive change.

Community service was one of the high-impact practices for developing leadership capacity determined by the MSL study (Dugan et al., 2013). Community service is shown to expose students to diverse people and cross-cultural dynamics, knowledge of the local area, understanding of social systems, and practicing their own leadership (Wagner & Mathison, 2015). The students' stories reflected this exposure and growth, as they spoke prolifically about their experiences with community service, what they learned about working with other people, and feeling that they were helping to create positive social change in their communities.

The students also expressed that they felt empowered and passionate about making a difference in society. They care about issues in their community and in the world, and they want to do their part to make change. The students believed they will be able to make change in such ways as serving as a role model to children through teaching, engaging with college students in Greek life, or even working as an international human rights lawyer. The opportunities they had through CLP enabled the

students to feel they were part of something larger than themselves and to realize the impact they could make on the world, which is a major focus of the Social Change Model (Komives & Wagner, 2009).

Recommendations

This study supports leadership theory and the research literature on leadership development that suggests leadership can be learned and developed over time. The students in this study gained a deeper understanding of socially-responsible leadership and developed as individuals, in their group dynamics, and in their focus on society. This study supports the idea that leadership development can take place in colleges, particularly in liberal arts institutions, as a valuable complement to academic learning.

Colleges and universities that do not have any type of leadership development program should consider implementing one. The College Leadership Program provides an excellent starting point for anyone who wishes to develop a comprehensive leadership program, as the information gathered in this study can help practitioners understand students' experiences with different types of leadership development interventions.

The students' experiences in CLP show that different components of the program are experienced in different ways by different students. Thus, it is important to have a variety of components built into a leadership program in order for each individual student to find some meaningful connections. I recommend that program administrators communicate this concept to students when they begin the program, so they come in with the understanding that they might not love every single component, but that each student should be able to find something they do love, and they can focus their energy in those areas.

Match Program Components to Program Mission and Goals

Through its mission, CLP seeks to "empower students to recognize their leadership potential and develop personal and social responsibility for the betterment of self and society" (CLP Handbook, 2014, p. 1). Based on the experiences of the 12 students in my study, the CLP program is living up to its mission. The students have developed self-awareness and were able to articulate their own leadership styles and how their strengths, weaknesses, and personal traits can serve them in leadership roles. They believe they play significant parts in the various communities in which they live and work, and they feel they have a responsibility to help when they can and do what is best for society, beyond their own self-interests. The students' lived experiences strongly align with CLP's overall mission.

It is essential for a leadership program of any length or type to have a clear, realistic mission statement to help guide the program. As the program staff develops initiatives and components for the program, they should consider whether or not those activities align with the mission. Doing so will help keep the components focused on the intended purpose of the program and help deter the staff from adding extraneous components that may dilute the program's effectiveness. To support the overarching mission, the CLP program has three goals that delineate specific ways in which students will develop their leadership capacities. Having specific goals can also help the staff develop the various elements of the program in meaningful ways. Each of these goals needs to be carefully crafted to be inspiring yet realistic.

Actively engaged citizens. The first goal of CLP is for each student to develop

the capacity to be, “an actively engaged citizen committed to enhancing his or her communities” (CLP Handbook, 2014, p. 1). The program is meeting this goal, as students spoke at length about their active involvement on campus and in the greater community. They were heavily involved in the CLP program itself through a variety of roles, and they took on leadership roles in student organizations. The students spoke about being part of the community in which they live, not just residing there. Their experiences in campus organizations and volunteer work helped them engage in the community and develop a desire to continue serving and enhancing the environments in which they live and work.

The CLP program’s requirements for students to do community service and be involved on campus are effective, as the students in this study incorporated the importance of being actively engaged citizens into their daily lives and personal values. It is important to note, however, that many of the students went beyond the program’s required 100 hours of service and were often over-involved in campus activities, to the extent that they felt overwhelmed. Program administrators need to be aware of the pressure that students feel to be active on campus as well as their lack of experience in prioritizing their activities. They need support and guidance to help them be involved without stretching themselves too thin.

Character, accountability, and relationships. In its second goal, the CLP is intended to develop students “of strong character and integrity developed through personal accountability, cultivation of meaningful relationships and strong work ethic” (CLP Handbook, 2014, p. 1). This goal was well-written, reasonable, and attainable, and it was certainly met by the students in this study.

The students in this study felt that the choices they make influence others, and they recognized the need to think beyond their own needs when they make decisions. They practiced accountability and responsibility through meeting program requirements, leading organizations, and holding leadership roles within CLP. They were given autonomy and decision-making power in these roles, and they were treated as professionals. This helped the students develop a strong work ethic, as they felt their roles were important and that people were relying on them.

The students in this study were particularly well-connected to the CLP staff, and they were able to take on these leadership roles as recruiters, ambassadors, orientation leaders, and even program fellows. Leadership program administrators should take care to ensure that all students have equal access to leadership opportunities around campus. Whether they are working directly with the leadership program, in other organizations on campus, or in community organizations through internships and volunteer-work, the students should be asked to reflect on their leadership experiences in their portfolios. This will help them connect what they are doing in their various roles with what they are learning about leadership in their coursework.

The student participants in this study also developed meaningful relationships. They were able to connect with their peers through the CLP orientation and coursework, and they connected with the CLP staff and LDSP faculty to form mentoring relationships that provided them with challenge and support. It is important for program administrators to understand the value of these relationships in students' development and to make efforts to cultivate these relationships. For those students who do not initiate such relationships on their own, the administrators should reach out to support them and

make them feel connected.

Effective leaders for a global society. The final goal of CLP is for each student to have the capacity to be “an effective leader who can synthesize self-exploration, critical reflection and leadership theory within an ever-changing global society” (CLP Handbook, 2014, p. 1). This program goal is more abstract than the first two, which makes it difficult to assess whether or not the students are meeting the goal.

First, when a program strives to develop “leaders,” it is essential that the program administrators have a clearly defined concept of what leaders are and what leadership development entails. In many cases, leadership programs may be contributing to character development for students, but not necessarily leadership. In CLP, the students do develop in many ways and emerge with heightened awareness of self and others and a desire to make a difference; however, it is not accurate to say that every student in the program will actually emerge as “an effective leader.” Program goals should be more specific, measurable, and attainable.

It is also difficult to assess whether the graduates of the program will be able to “synthesize self-exploration, critical reflection, and leadership theory” in society. The CLP students are exposed to these concepts, and certain steps can be taken to increase students’ understanding in these areas. Program administrators should be deliberate about helping students make connections between all components of the leadership program so that each activity is meaningful and contributes to the overall effectiveness of the program. Additionally, leadership portfolios should continue to be implemented and developed to help students reflect on their experiences and development.

Making Connections

A source of frustration or challenge for the CLP students in this study was the disconnect they felt among certain components of the program. Particularly, the students and administrators felt the CLP program and the LDSP minor did not connect in the most effective way. While both parts were valued by the students, the overall impact was not as strong as intended because the connection between them was not made explicit. The students also expressed disconnect with components like the living-learning community and the Passport program. Even the most positive aspects of the program were often described in isolation rather than holistically. Regardless of the duration or amount of components a leadership program has, it is essential for the components to connect in meaningful ways. Program administrators must ensure that students are aware of each component, what it entails, and how it connects to the other aspects of the program.

One suggestion for building connections between the components of a leadership program is for all program administrators to be in contact with each other. At ACU, Dr. Brown said there are 21 full-time professionals dedicated to students' leadership development. The problem, however, is that these people are not necessarily working together. The CLP office, LDSP department, and community engagement office all have their own functions and purposes. They are all devoted to leadership development, but in different ways and without direct collaboration with each other. I propose that institutions like ACU develop a sort of "leadership coalition" to bridge this gap. This would consist of at least one professional from each area who would meet together each semester to discuss the program, their goals, and any information the others should be aware of. This would help keep everyone on the same page and help the students feel

that the different areas are directly connected.

Portfolio Reflections

Another way to build connections within the program is to have students track and reflect on their experiences. Because the sophomores in this study had a positive experience with the Leadership Portfolios, I highly recommend that some type of portfolios or journals are incorporated into any leadership program. In CLP, the students create their portfolios online through websites of their choice. Although they have the freedom to create portfolios as they desire, the three sophomores in this study all used Weebly (www.Weebly.com). This is a website that is user-friendly, customizable, and provides many options at no cost. The sophomores liked using this site because it was easy and they could adjust it to represent their own personalities. I believe that freedom of choice is important for students, but I would certainly recommend Weebly as an excellent choice for online portfolios to serve the purpose of guiding students through a leadership program. If all students are asked to use the same website, but can customize as they choose, it will be easier for program administrators to provide direction and support for students, and it will also give them a consistent way to view students' work and progress without the confusion of a variety of websites.

At the beginning of the year, the CLP students set personal goals to focus on as they participate in the program, and this helps guide their involvement for the school year and makes their college experience more intentional. At the end of the year, the students go back and reflect on those goals and write about the extent to which they met those goals. The students who studied abroad mentioned that they kept blogs or journals during their time away and used those for reflecting on the experience when they

returned. This is an excellent way to ensure that students do not simply have a variety of experiences, but make sense of each one and learn from it, and especially to connect it back to their leadership development. An online portfolio or journal is a powerful tool because it provides an outlet for students to be introspective and reflective. Every leadership program, no matter how long, should utilize this type of tool for internalizing the experience.

Omit or Improve Components Less-Aligned to Program Goals

In order to provide a high-quality long-duration leadership development program, an institution must invest significant resources such as money, staff, physical space, and time. It is impossible for every institution to include all possible leadership development interventions that are described in the literature. Priority must be placed on those components that are shown to be most effective. In the same way, program administrators must also limit, improve, or even omit components that are not achieving the desired effects.

For the CLP students in this study, program components that were least effective or least mentioned were the living-learning community, CLP Speaker Series, Passport program, and Coffeehouse series. This is not to say that these components are not valuable at all and should not be part of CLP or any program. Rather, it is worth the attention of program administrators to ensure that all components are delivered in meaningful ways and are fully developed to achieve the desired results. If any particular components do not seem to be working well, they should be changed or omitted in order to focus resources on those components that are most effective. A long-duration leadership program should not simply stitch together a series of activities and hope to

have a positive effect on students. The pieces must be thoughtfully selected, carefully developed, and frequently evaluated in order to be most effective and valuable for students' leadership development.

Scholarships

One component of CLP that was both effective and ineffective was the residential scholarship. CLP students received money each year that they stayed enrolled in CLP and lived on campus at ACU. This was a powerful incentive for students to attend ACU in the first place, which helped draw students to the school and to the leadership program. Some students continued to appreciate the scholarship each year and found it to be helpful for their families, while others hardly noticed it or found it "not worth" the effort of all the CLP requirements. President Smith and Dr. Brown expressed that the scholarship helped draw ideal students to ACU. On the other hand, Mr. Adams believed that the scholarship brings in some students for the wrong reasons and takes away from authentic commitment to what the program stands for. As there are pros and cons to each perspective, leadership program administrators should carefully consider whether or not to incorporate a scholarship into their programs based on the needs and resources of their institution.

Sequence the Program in a Meaningful Way

When an undergraduate leadership program takes place over a long duration and consists of multiple components, it is important for those individual elements to not only connect, but also to build upon one another over time. The literature shows that longer-duration programs are most effective when they build in complexity over time so that students are increasingly stimulated and challenged as they develop throughout the

program. It is also important for different aspects of the program to be delivered at appropriate cognitive levels for the students so they will understand what they are learning and be engaged in the process.

Not only do they provide connections between program components, the leadership portfolios or journals can also help with sequencing the program for the students. The students can be guided through their goal-setting and reflections each year by the leadership administrators. They should be asked to set increasingly deeper goals and to reflect in more meaningful ways as they go, applying higher-level cognitive skills each year and making connections throughout the program.

The CLP students expressed that the LDSP courses built upon one another and made sense in sequence as they went on, and they were able to connect their learning to what they experienced in other settings. They started with a course about self-identity so they could be aware of their own perspectives, strengths, and weaknesses before moving forward with group and society interactions. This was effective for the students, but they had trouble with the theory courses that were introduced early. They had challenging professors and struggled with the content in those courses, even to the extent that some students left the program. The coursework should be introduced in such a way to engage the younger students in their first two years so they will be interested in the learning and stay committed to the leadership program.

Orientation

The Summer Leadership Adventure Program (SLAP) was a highly valuable experience for the CLP students. This three-day orientation allowed them to visit campus prior to starting school, learn more about the leadership program, get familiar with

campus resources, and make connections with students and staff. The students said they arrived at ACU as freshmen feeling they already had friends and had their own place at ACU, which made the transition easier and made them more committed to CLP. A pre-college orientation is an effective way for leadership programs to begin, and I recommend that any leadership development program that begins freshmen year should start this way.

Directions for Future Research

This study focused specifically on students who are currently or were recently involved in the College Leadership Program in order to understand how their experiences in the program shaped their development as leaders. Administrators of Atlantic Coast University provided insight as to the intentions of the program and how they perceived students' experiences. This study provided rich, detailed description of students' experiences in this particular four-year undergraduate leadership development program through the lens of the Social Change Model. This study contributes to the existing literature about leadership development programs and provides direction for future research. It also raised new questions that might be taken up by future researchers.

Students Who Leave CLP

In this study, I focused specifically on 12 students who are actively engaged with CLP and are having or have had positive experiences. These students were able to enjoy maximum benefits of the program because they invested themselves wholeheartedly into the experience. Each year, however, there are over 100 students who leave the CLP program for various reasons. The students and administrators in this study spoke about those students and why they think the students chose to withdraw from the program.

Largely, they believe students leave because of the difficulty of maintaining the LDSP minor and managing all the requirements of the program in addition to their other college engagement.

A follow-up study to this one could focus on students who have left the CLP program. I suggest interviewing several of those students who left the program to discern why they chose to discontinue their participation in the program or consider instituting an exit survey. This would provide insight as to what triggers students to disengage with the program, and whether there are patterns in the experiences of students who leave. If there are common factors that deter them from continuing in the program, then these factors could be addressed by administrators. Improving those factors and focusing on struggling students may help to encourage students to stay in the program and increase the overall retention and graduation rate of CLP. This research would help ensure that more students have valuable experiences that impact their development as leaders.

Longitudinal Study

In this study, I focused on senior students at the end of the four-year CLP program, sophomores finishing their second year of the program, and alumni who have been out of the program for one year. This allowed me to understand the lived experiences of those students while they are still directly connected to the program. Other studies have focused on alumni of leadership programs. For example, Soesbe (2012) looked at alumni at least five years after graduating from a leadership program to see how their experiences influenced and shaped their professional experiences. These studies provide valuable information about students' development as leaders through

undergraduate leadership development programs, but they only provide a snapshot of that development.

I propose a longitudinal study that would observe a cohort of students from start to finish of their CLP experience. They could be pre-tested before starting ACU using a measure such as the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS) to determine their existing leadership capacities prior to starting the program. Then they would be observed throughout the program and interviewed mid-year and at the end of each school year to gather information about their experiences and how their leadership understanding and capacities are shifting over time. The Leadership Portfolio could also be analyzed throughout the study. After graduating from the program, the students could be post-tested with the SRLS to measure their learning outcomes. Although time-consuming, this study would provide a thorough understanding of how students experience this four-year leadership development program and how they change over time.

Comparing CLP Students with Non-CLP Students at ACU

This study focused on the students who took part in the College Leadership Program at ACU in order to understand how their experiences in the program shaped their leadership development. While the students' and administrators' stories provided valuable insight into the experiences of the program, it is nearly impossible to distinguish how much of this growth came directly from CLP as opposed to growth that would have happened anyway as a result of attending a four-year liberal arts institution. College is a time of major transformation as students move from adolescence to adulthood. A liberal arts institution provides numerous curricular and co-curricular activities that contribute to their individual development, and four years of college is ample time for significant

growth and maturation. The CLP is designed to provide specific opportunities to contribute to students' development as leaders, but some development may occur as a latent result of attending college.

Future research could study a group of seniors at Atlantic Coast University who did not participate in CLP to learn about how they have grown in terms of the Individual, Group, and Society dimensions of the Social Change Model. Their experiences and development could be compared to those of the 12 students in my study who participated in the College Leadership Program. The researcher could then determine the main differences between the experiences of the two groups of students and further discern how CLP contributed to students' development beyond the typical experience of attending ACU.

A Focus on Non-Leaders Entering a Leadership Program

Most of the students in this study explained that they were attracted and applied to the CLP program because they had been actively involved in high school and wanted to continue that involvement in college. Many of them even thought of themselves as leaders prior to attending ACU, and they wished to further develop their leadership skills. These students reflect the desired population of CLP participants described by President Smith and Dr. Brown, who said the program attracts students who are academically strong and come to ACU with a passion for engagement and involvement and bring rich prior experiences. Dugan et al. (2011) used the term "polishing diamonds" to describe this phenomenon of focusing on students who already possess leadership skills. Research shows that students with prior leadership experiences and higher leadership capacities show lesser gains from leadership development programs.

To understand the true effects of the College Leadership Program, it would be interesting to study an experimental cohort of students who enter ACU without prior leadership experiences, who test on the SRLS with lower leadership capacities, and who may even have lower academic achievement. This group could go through the four-year leadership program and be observed at the end, much like in this current study, to determine the effects of the program and how (if at all) they developed from non-leaders into potential leaders.

Conclusion

This phenomenological case study provides rich descriptions of the ways in which students developed as leaders through participation in a comprehensive four-year leadership development program, CLP. The 12 students developed through the three dimensions of the Social Change Model: Individual, Group, and Society. This growth and transformation occurred while students took part in the many components of CLP and made meaning from them in various ways. Students experienced a shift in their understanding of leadership from a transactional, positional approach to one that connects more to socially responsible leadership.

The students' lived experiences in the College Leadership Program were largely congruent with the intended outcomes of the program based on perspectives from ACU administrators affiliated with it and the program descriptions and objectives stated in the handbooks. There are some areas that show weak connections or do not seem to be working as effectively as intended, and these provide insight as to how such a program can be improved.

Higher education practitioners who are planning or developing leadership programs can learn from this study. The College Leadership Program provides a rich case study with many components, and practitioners can understand how each of those components impacts students' development. Overall, this study contributes to the literature on leadership development programs and moves beyond quantitative outcomes of leadership programs to a deeper understanding of how they are experienced by college students.

Appendix A

Research Participation Consent Form:

Understanding Students' Experiences in the College Leadership Program

WHAT DO I HOPE TO LEARN FROM YOU?

This investigation, tentatively entitled “Understanding Students' Experiences in the College Leadership Program” is designed to explore the experiences of students in the four-year College Leadership Program (CLP) and the ways in which it impacts the overall college experience.

WHY IS YOUR PARTICIPATION IMPORTANT TO ME?

Leadership development is a growing trend in higher education, as it is vital to prepare future leaders for the society in which we live. Many institutions implement some type of leadership development program, and these programs vary in length and complexity. The CLP is unique in that it is a comprehensive program that coincides with the four-year education at Atlantic Coast University. Your experiences will help to create an understanding of how such a program impacts college students and their experiences.

WHAT WILL I REQUEST FROM YOU?

As participants in this study, I request that you:

- Participate in an audio-recorded individual interview in which you will describe your experiences with the College Leadership Program.
- Share your portfolio with me (sophomore student participants).
- Be available for a follow-up interview if needed.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Please know that:

- The confidentiality of your personally identifying information will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.
- Your name and other identifying information will be known only to the researchers through the information that you provide. Neither your name nor any other personally identifying information will be used in any research presentation or publication without prior written consent.
- You may refuse to answer any questions during the interview(s) if you so choose. You may also terminate your participation in the study at any time. (To do so, simply inform the researcher of your intention.) Neither of these actions will incur a penalty of any type.
- Your participation in this study is completely voluntary.
- A summary of your interview will be sent to you electronically once it is complete, using the email address that you provide. I will ask for your review and approval.

HOW CAN YOU CONTACT ME?

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Jess Hench (jwhench@email.wm.edu) at The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia. If you have additional questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, Dr. Tom Ward at 757-221-2358 (EDIRC-L@wm.edu) or Dr. Megan Tschannen-Moran at 757-221-2187 (mxtsch@wm.edu).

By checking the "I agree to participate" response below, then signing and dating this form, you will indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in this study, and confirm that you are at least 18 years of age.

I agree to participate.

I don't agree to participate.

Please keep a copy of this consent form for your records.

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Senior Students

1. Tell me about how and why you ended up at ACU in the first place.
2. Why did you choose to join CLP initially?
3. What is your current major? What led you to select that major?
4. Describe the CLP program as you experienced it throughout the four years.
5. How did the CLP program impact your overall college experience?
 - a. What specific aspects of the CLP impacted you the most?
 - b. How/why did _____ have such a strong impact on you?
6. What has motivated you to stay committed to CLP for all four years?
7. Describe any challenges you faced as a student in the CLP program.
8. How would your college experience be different if CLP did not exist?
9. Outside of the classroom, describe the ways you were/are actively engaged on campus.
 - a. What activities did/do you participate in, or what groups were/are you part of?
 - b. What role did/do you play in _____ ?
10. Describe the types of community service you have participated in.
 - a. How do you think the community service requirement contributed to your learning?
 - b. How did community service impact your understanding of leadership?
11. What does Social Change mean to you?
 - a. In what ways can you as an individual impact society?
12. Tell me about your internship experience in CLP.
 - a. What impact did that experience have on you?
13. If you participated in study abroad during your time in CLP, tell me about that experience.
 - a. What were some of the high points of that experience?
 - b. What challenges did you face, and how did you meet those challenges?
 - c. How do you think that experience influenced your understanding of yourself and others?
14. How do you define leadership?
 - a. How has this changed over time?
 - b. How would you describe yourself as a leader?
15. Tell me a story about a time you felt you made an impact on society.
16. Tell me about a time when you had a positive group experience.
 - a. What were the highlights of working with that group?
 - b. What were the challenges? How did you meet those challenges?
 - c. What was your role in the group?
17. How have you changed as a result of participating in CLP?
18. What resources were available to help you succeed during your time in CLP?
19. Now that you're nearly finished at ACU, what does it mean to have been a CLP participant?

20. Do you have friends who started the program with you who are not finishing with you?
 - a. Why did they leave the program?
21. What would you like to do when you graduate from ACU?
22. How do you think you'll apply what you learned in CLP after you leave ACU?

Appendix C

Interview Questions for CLP Fellows

23. Tell me about how and why you ended up at ACU in the first place.
24. Why did you choose to join CLP initially?
25. What was your major at ACU? Why did you select that major?
26. Looking back, how did the CLP program impact your overall college experience?
 - a. What specific aspects of CLP impacted you the most?
 - b. How/why did _____ have such a strong impact on you?
27. Outside of the classroom, describe the ways you were actively engaged on campus.
 - a. What activities did you participate in, or what groups were you part of?
 - b. What role did you play in _____?
28. Describe the types of community service you have participated in.
 - a. How do you think the community service requirement contributed to your learning?
 - b. How did community service impact your understanding of leadership?
29. Tell me about your internship experience.
 - a. How did that experience influence your current role as a CLP Fellow?
30. Did you study abroad during your time in CLP?
 - a. Please tell me about that experience.
 - b. How do you think that experience influenced your learning and development?
31. How do you define leadership?
 - a. How has this changed over time?
 - b. How would you describe yourself as a leader?
32. In what ways do you feel that you changed as a result of participating in CLP?
33. How have you applied what you learned in CLP in this first professional role?
34. What resources were available to help you succeed during your time in CLP?
35. Now that you have graduated from ACU, what does it mean to have been a CLP participant?
36. Did you have any friends who started the program with you and did not finish with you?
 - a. Why did they leave the program?
37. What were your greatest challenges or frustrations with CLP while you were a student?
38. Now that you are seeing CLP as part of the staff instead of as a student, are there any parts of the program that you understand differently now?
39. Now that you have been out of CLP for a year and you can look back on it from the perspective of a Fellow, what would you change about the program? Why?

Appendix D

Interview Questions for Sophomore Students

40. Why did you choose to join CLP?
41. Please give me a virtual tour of your leadership portfolio.
42. What specific aspects of CLP seem to be the most meaningful to you?
43. In what ways do you think you have changed since you began the program?
44. How do you define leadership?
 - a. Has this changed since you started the program?
45. What do you ultimately hope to gain from the experience of the CLP program?

Appendix E

Interview Questions for CLP Directors

46. Please tell me briefly how long you have been with CLP and what your role is here.
47. What does it mean for students to be part of CLP?
48. Why do you think leadership development is important for college students?
49. Please tell me about the developmental framework of your program with the three areas of Experience, Develop, and Succeed.
 - a. How do you define each of the three areas?
 - b. How did you determine which components of the program fit in which areas?
50. Tell me about your involvement in shaping this program.
51. How do the various experiential requirements of CLP impact the students' learning and development?
52. What specific aspects of the program do you think are most valuable for students? Why?
53. I saw in the Handbook that there was an 85% retention rate last year, with 154 students leaving the program. Please tell me about the students who choose to leave the program.
54. In what ways does CLP prepare students to contribute to society?
55. Can you share an exemplary story of a student who was transformed or particularly influenced by the CLP experience?
56. If you had three wishes for the program going forward, what would they be?

Appendix F

Interview Questions for President Smith

57. Please tell me about when you first created the College Leadership Program.
 - a. Why did you initially create the CLP program?
 - b. What was your vision or goal for the program?
 - c. In what ways have you seen the program fulfill your vision or goal?
58. How do you define leadership?
59. Why do you think leadership development is important for college students?
60. In what ways has Atlantic Coast University changed since the CLP program began?
61. What specific aspects of the program do you think are most valuable for students? Why?
62. If you had three wishes for the program going forward, what would they be?

Appendix G

Interview Questions for the Dean of the College of Social Sciences

63. Please tell me your title and describe your role here at ACU.
 - a. Describe your current involvement with the CLP program.
64. Tell me about your role in creating/shaping the College Leadership Program.
65. In what ways have you seen the program fulfill your original vision or goal?
66. How do you define leadership?
67. Why do you think leadership development is important for college students?
68. Please tell me about the relationship between the Dept. of Leadership Studies (LDSP) and the CLP program.
69. In what ways has ACU changed since the CLP program began?
70. What specific aspects of the program do you think are most valuable for students? Why?
71. If you had three wishes for the program going forward, what would they be?

Appendix H

Interview Questions for Director of Community Engagement

72. Please tell me your title and describe your role here at ACU.
73. Tell me about the experience of being in the first class of the College Leadership Program.
74. In what ways did you grow/develop through participation in the program?
75. How did participating in the program influence or shape your experiences after college?
76. How and why did you end up back here at ACU?
77. What do you see differently now that you are experiencing ACU from the faculty side rather than the student side?
78. How has ACU changed since you graduated?
79. Tell me about the relationship between the Center for Community Engagement and the PLP program.
80. Why do you think community service/engagement is important for college students?
81. How do you define leadership?
82. If you had three wishes for the CLP program going forward, what would they be?

Appendix I

Observation of CLP Speaker Series

March 30, 2015, 8:00pm

Center for the Arts, ACU

The building is formal, impressive. Students enter through a grand foyer, where CLP volunteers sit at a long check-in table with lettered signs. Pop music plays from a loudspeaker, and students arrive in high spirits- smiling, laughing, chatting. They come in alone or with friends and excitedly greet other students around them, as well as the CLP staff and a few professors who are milling about. The students are dressed in business attire- skirts, heels, suits, jackets, ties. They look polished and professional, although occasional bulky backpacks and swinging key chains reveal their youth.

At the check-in table, I recognize several of the student volunteers. They are students I interviewed for this project. I see Emma, Kyle, Kelly, and Nick. This reiterates that the students I interviewed are those who are quite visible, involved, connected to the CLP program. A CLP Coordinator explains to me that the students working at the check-in table are CLP Recruiters and Ambassadors, which I recall hearing about in my interviews. The Coordinator says the staff used to conduct check-ins, but they changed it for two main reasons. First, it was a tedious, daunting task to manage all 1,000 CLP students when there are only seven staff members. So they recruited students to help with some of the face-to-face work with current students, such as event check-in, and much of the interaction with prospective students, such as tours, interviews, and overnight visits. The other reason for the shift is so that CLP students are not always being monitored by CLP staff. The student involvement gives them a sense of accountability to their peers. This seems to be effective. I recall from interviews that this sense of responsibility is a major growth opportunity for the recruiters and ambassadors, as they assume a leadership role among their peers.

We move into the theater, where all the students have taken seats, and I sit among the CLP staff and faculty. They sit in chairs along the side aisles of the theater, from

which point they can see all the students in the room, and be seen by them. This seems to be for the sake of visibility and familiarity, yet I imagine it also works as crowd control. As the audience assembles, a slideshow of photographs plays on the large screen above the stage. Students chat softly as they wait for the presentation to begin.

Suddenly the talking stops and the audience applauds as President Smith takes the stage. Nobody introduces him, and he does not introduce himself. Instead, he greets the students warmly and begins his speech.

The speech is inspiring, motivational, empowering. President Smith describes to the students the vision of ACU, the reasons they implement a liberal arts curriculum, the importance of serving the community, and his wish for each of them. He invites them to dream big, have clear visions, and work hard to make them come true. He explains that at ACU, students come first, sharing a story of when he first became president, how he removed the parking signs for the President and the deans, and replaced them with student parking signs. President Smith discusses the importance of values, suggesting that leaders wear their values like the clothes on their backs. He invites them to lead “lives of significance” and explains what that means to him and to the ACU vision.

Throughout his inspirational speech, President Smith tells stories to illustrate his points. The students are engaged, and they laugh and applaud at high points in the stories. In some moments, they smile and nod at each other when a new story begins, as they have heard it before. He speaks casually, openly, referring to himself and his wife by first name.

Through his stories and words, President Smith expresses his views on leadership. He says it is not about one person, but takes group synergy, understanding, and listening to others. He explains that you can lead in small ways, even affecting just one person at a time. He tells them to seize opportunities that come up so that their lives will be extraordinary. At one point, he says, “I hope that one of you will be president of the United States one day.” After a pause, he adds, “I don’t know who she is, but I hope she’s in this room tonight!” This is met with cheers and applause from the students.

When he finishes his speech, he invites the students to ask him questions. I am surprised to see several students, one after the next, stand up and address him articulately in front of all their peers. The questions vary from political to personal. One student asks about Smith's vision of ACU's growth in the near future, to which he replies, "I promise you, while I'm here, we will not get bigger. We will only get better," and the students applaud. Another student requests better straws in the cafeteria, which makes the crowd laugh. Smith laughs along and declares animatedly, "I promise you, there will be better straws!" The students applaud again, and he invites the student to send him an email reminder. He explains that his door is always open, and he wants to hear their requests, no matter how small.

The final student asks President Smith how he met his wife, who appears to be a well-known figure on campus. He tells a heartfelt, comical story about how he met her in college and how he proposed, even pantomiming rowing a boat and getting down on one knee. He shares that he and his wife have been married for over 40 years and that he loves her more now than ever before.

After the event, students file out of the theater. President Smith shakes students' hands as they leave, and his wife gives heartfelt hugs. A few students linger at the end to enjoy personal conversation with the couple.

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