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# The Leadership Identity Development of Supplemental Instruction Leaders: A Case Study

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

The Leadership Identity Development of Supplemental Instruction Leaders:

A Case Study

by

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A THESIS

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## Abstract

Much of our understanding of leadership theory is based on hierarchical systems and is grounded in research from business settings. Although researchers have presented more collaborative, relational leadership models for post-secondary students, these models have not been widely applied to supplemental instruction (SI) leader training programs. Having a better understanding of how students become SI leaders, the influences that shape their experiences, and how the SI experience shapes their leadership development has the potential to not only help SI program administrators, but also to assist all student affairs practitioners as they develop leadership programs that address institutional leadership learning outcomes.

This descriptive case study describes the background characteristics and experiences of the SI leaders at a mid-size, regional, western Canadian university (WCU). The leadership identity development (LID) model was applied as a conceptual lens for this study—a model that is well-respected in the student affairs field. Six participants volunteered to participate in three interviews as well as reflective writing exercises. A document review of the SI program was also conducted.

Based on the findings of this study, four conclusions were identified. First, when looking at student LID with SI leaders or any student leader, it is important to understand, acknowledge, and know *the whole student*. Secondly, many learning outcomes associated with the SI leader position were found in this study and warrant more emphasis in the SI literature and SI leader training. Thirdly, leadership identity development occurred for the SI leaders because of the structure and the nature of the SI program philosophy itself, as well as from the specific SI program training for the SI leaders. Finally, post-secondary

institutions and the institutions' student leadership programs need to adopt a leadership philosophy and ground their student leadership development in leadership scholarship, language, and theory to inform their programs. In the case of supplemental instruction, although the leadership identity development of the SI leaders is not a prominent or identified outcome, the findings from this study demonstrate that LID is likely occurring.

Key words: Supplemental Instruction, Leadership Development, Leadership Identity Development

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Note: This thesis has been professionally copyedited.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: Introduction**

### **Overview**

For over 30 years, supplemental instruction (SI) has gained popularity, as its positive impact on post-secondary students' learning has been proven time and again (Arendale, 1993; International Center for Supplemental Instruction, n.d.; Malm, Bryngfors, & Mörner, 2012; University of Guelph, 2013). With its popularity, more attention has been paid to the peer leader who leads the SI sessions: the SI leader. The positive impact of co-curricular activities on a student's leadership development is also grounded in research and gaining attention (Kuh, 2009; Schuh, 1991; Webber, Bauer Krylow, & Zhang, 2013). Although there have been a few studies on the benefits the SI leader obtains from the experience, no studies have specifically looked at the SI leader position and the impact that being an SI leader has on the student's development of a leadership identity. Using the leadership identity development model, this study explored and described the experiences of students who were in the role of an SI leader, with a particular focus on leadership identity development. The background to the study, significance of this research, purpose of the study, research questions, and terminology are provided in this chapter.

### **Background**

The call for strong leadership skills and abilities is prevalent throughout the media, as people seek leadership to solve the complex problems our global society faces today. According to the Canadian Council on Learning's (2009) report, *Post-Secondary Education in Canada: Meeting Our Needs?*, employers are indicating that, although the Canadian workforce is well educated in terms of post-secondary education, there is a gap

in the *soft* skills that graduates possess. These skills include, but are not limited to, “decision-making, teamwork, problem solving, self-motivation, and the ability to manage information, use numbers, and communicate well” (p. 64). In this monograph series, the Canadian Council on Learning called for a pan-Canadian framework for understanding quality education and described the complex challenges defining quality in post-secondary education in Canada.

Previously, Keeling (2006) re-emphasized discussion about the importance of attention to the development of intentional institutional learning outcomes and the need for student affairs professionals to assess the learning that takes place in all programs, not just in classroom-based activities. Part of the reason for capitalizing on the learning that is occurring in the various settings at post-secondary education institutions is to understand the academic, social, and institutional campus learning systems (Keeling, 2006). All post-secondary education contexts provide potential opportunities to learn: some on purpose (e.g., the classroom) and some spontaneously (e.g., living in a residence hall). Institutions have answered the call for demonstrating quality outcomes by developing institutional learning outcomes.

In *Learning Reconsidered 2*, Keeling (2006) also discussed how both students and the world have changed and that post-secondary educational institutions also need to change. He recommended preparing students for life, work, and for an increasingly complex world of civic participation and stressed that preparing students for the changing workforce was essential in the development of the whole student. He also considered that teaching and learning processes that embrace the transformation of the student through their own meaning making must become common post-secondary education practice

(pp. 1-7). Dugy (as cited in Keeling, 2006) also explained that “transformational learning always occurs in the active context of students’ lives and that the work of student affairs is integral to all learning and not just developmental in nature” (p. 2). Since people cannot separate learning, development, and context, Dugy wrote that institutions must integrate learning in and out of the classroom. This includes learning leadership skills. Sharp, Komives, & Fincher’s (2011) study on the learning outcomes of accrediting associations showed that collaborative leadership and management skills were the most frequently mentioned required outcomes.

Colleges and universities are including the development of *future leaders* on their mission statements and strategic plans to address the need to integrate learning about leadership in and out of the classroom throughout North America (Astin, 1993). Many post-secondary educational (PSE) institutions are supporting co-curricular and curricula leadership programs that include soft skills or leadership development within their array of learning opportunities to students and community members (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2012; Endress, 2000; Kuh, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). For example, curricular program offerings in leadership exist across all disciplines as well as the spectrum of academic designations from certificates to PhD-level degrees. Co-curricular offerings in leadership may include leadership seminar programs, on-campus employment, service learning, residential living, community work, and student organizations (Astin, 1993).

Given the growth of and prevalence of co-curricular offerings in leadership on college and university campuses, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2012) has outlined best practices for these leadership development

programs. These practice standards also reflect the emerging post-industrial view of leadership as relational and less hierarchical by directing colleges and universities to “not just develop better leaders, but to develop more leaders who can all participate in leadership when they leave post-secondary” (p. 196). This belief that everyone is able to learn to be a leader is contrary to the traditional view of leadership: namely, hierarchical and reserved for a few. This relational and inclusive view of leadership was central to my definition of leadership for the purpose of this research. Specifically, I used the definition of leadership provided by Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (2007), which was “a relational process of people working together to accomplish change or to make a difference that will benefit the common good” (p. 29).

If leadership can be developed and taught, then one must understand how this can be accomplished. This study began to address this need as it examined the supplemental instruction program at one university and what students were learning from experiencing the role of the supplemental instruction leader. If volunteer work, tutoring other students, and working on group projects with other students was found to enhance leadership skills (Astin, 1993), then it is likely the experience of being a supplemental instruction leader would have this effect.

### **Supplemental Instruction Programs**

A supplemental instruction (SI) program is an academic support program that provides out-of-classroom, regularly scheduled, peer-led workshops open to all students enrolled in identified, high-risk courses (Hurley, Jacobs, & Gilbert, 2006). Arendale (1993) defined a high-risk class as having a high failure rate and low retention of students. SI programs can be found at the community college level, at primarily

undergraduate/teaching-focussed universities, and at medical/research institutions. SI has been in existence for over 30 years (Hurley et al., 2006) and was developed to increase the performance and retention of students who are enrolled in high-risk classes. SI was originally used in medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, and law faculties at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and adapted for first year courses (Burmeister, 1996) Hurley et al. (2006) outlined the goals of SI to include:

(a) to reduce attrition rate in high risk courses; (b) to improve academic performance of participating students; (c) to increase enrolment and persistence by participating students; (d) to increase the students' skills in comprehension, analysis, critical thinking, and problem solving; and (e) to provide a cost-effective model of cooperative learning that can be replicated in a variety of learning environments. (p. 11)

Most of the research regarding SI, however, has focused on the evaluation of the instructional program itself; very little research has been conducted on the experience of the SI leaders, who are trained peer leaders. Specifically, research on SI leaders has focused on the self-reported benefits of being an SI leader. Stout and McDaniel (2006) found that SI leaders reported that they gained an “increased understanding of the course material, improved communication skills, and enhanced interactions with faculty, staff, students, and other SI leaders” (p. 55). They also found that by spending several hours every week in lectures and in planning their own cognitive activities for the sessions, these students achieved the aforementioned skills, as well as data organization, planning skills, improved note-taking skills, and study strategies. The SI leaders also reported “increased professional development as a result of the formal and informal mentoring by the faculty and staff who were involved in the SI program” (p. 59). Stout and McDaniel wrote that the SI leader’s “recognition of their growing leadership role promotes personal development, increased self-confidence, and enhanced self-esteem” (p. 58).

Lockie and van Lanen (2008) and Wallace (1992) indicated the SI leader position has the capacity to develop leadership potential. They suggested that SI leaders demonstrate leadership (e.g., guide the group, provide a positive and accepting space) and are taught leadership skills (e.g., group facilitation, communication skills), and thus, they differ from tutors. Astin (1993) found that enhanced leadership skills were associated with participating in volunteer work, tutoring other students, and working on group projects with other students. However, unlike other student leadership roles, the training of SI leaders has historically focused on facilitation/teaching skills and very little on the SI leader's personal leadership development and the informal personal learning that is occurring.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework consists of concepts, together with their definitions, and existing theory that were used for this study- Social Constructivism. Social constructivism was the theoretical framework used for this study, which is described more fully in Chapter Three. Briefly, the premise I held was that everyone would benefit from the knowledge of each individual in the group and that the knowledge and learning would have more meaning and depth when it was produced and not simply introduced (Creswell, 2007).

### **Conceptual Lenses**

The conceptual lenses used in this study are also introduced in Chapter Two, and include the relational leadership model (see Chapter Two, Student Leadership Models, Relational leadership theory), the definition of relational leadership (Komives et al., 2007, p. 75), and Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, and Osteen's (2005) leadership identity

development model (see Chapter Two, Leadership Identity Development). Underlying these lenses is the belief that leadership is an ability that can be developed and learned.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This case study occurred at one mid-size university in western Canada (hereafter referred to as WCU), which shall remain anonymous. WCU was selected because it recently created institutional learning outcomes that address outcomes similar to those cited in the Canadian Council on Learning's (2009) report. Also, the SI program was first piloted in 2007 and, therefore, fairly new to the WCU campus. Some of these outcomes include problem solving, communicating effectively, thinking critically, and working collaboratively/teamwork (p. 64).

This qualitative, descriptive case study explored the impact of assuming the SI leader role on the students who hold SI leader positions at WCU. Gaining a deeper understanding as to the characteristics and previous leadership experiences of students who become SI leaders was important in order to plan for possible future recruitment and training of these student leaders. Researching students' experiences as an SI leader also has the potential to contribute to the body of SI research and to be used to recognize the impact the SI leader role has on the students who hold the position.

This study also sought a deepened understanding of the LID model. Specifically, this research explored the transition undertaken as students moved from seeing themselves as leaders to the *demonstrating* or *doing* leadership stage. In addition, this research sought to determine the impact and influence of others (e.g., family, older peers, teammates, group members), as models and mentors, to the developing leader. This study also applied the LID model to students who demonstrated other leadership philosophies

and who did not yet “hold extensive organizational involvements as did the students in this study” (Komives, Owen, Longersbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005, p. 610).

### **Research Questions**

To more fully understand the impact that the SI leader role has on the student who holds the position, this research was informed by the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics, background experiences, academic programs, and previous leadership experiences of students who hold an SI leader position at WCU?
2. How does a student who holds an SI leader position at WCU describe the experience of working with their SI groups while in their SI role?
  - a. What are the factors that shape these experiences?
  - b. How does the description of these experiences align with the LID described in the Komives et al. (2005) model?

These research questions, combined with my belief that learning is socially constructed, led me to use descriptive case study methodology. Merriam (1988) described case studies used in education in terms of their end product and as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 21). The participants in the study were the SI leaders involved in the facilitation of the SI groups for the WCU SI program at the time of the research.

### **Researcher Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is a core characteristic of qualitative research. My role as the researcher and the instrument of data collection is unique to qualitative research. In this study, I formed relationships that allowed the participants to share a description of their

leadership journey with me. It was important that I clarify the bias I brought to this study. For the past 15 years, I have held a variety of student affairs roles. For the last 13 years, I have focused on student housing and student life. Prior to entering the workforce, I was a peer leader as an undergraduate student and can attest to the impact that this opportunity had on my own leadership development and identity. I never thought of myself as a leader and thought that only great people were leaders. When my peers would come to me for advice and assistance, I felt my understanding of what was leadership began to change. I began to see that despite my quiet nature, I was viewed as a leader among my peers. The peer leadership programs gave me skills, and my confidence grew. I attribute my own personal development to the mentors I had while I was an undergraduate student. As my confidence grew, I tried new opportunities.

Since I entered the workforce, I have been training student leaders and teaching leadership skills (e.g., communication, team work, peer-counselling, etc.) to post-secondary students at the undergraduate level. As a university counsellor, I learned to listen carefully and assisted students to become more self-aware and understanding of their learning experiences while at university. Currently, as a director for student life, leadership, and housing, I am responsible for developing programs that assist students' transition to post-secondary studies, develop their leadership skills, and form learning communities with students who are developing their own identity and leadership skills. I also teach a university success course that touches on leadership development and includes a service-learning component. Participants may already see me as a researcher, student, administrator, and instructor. However, in this study, I have focused on the students' own developmental experiences and their understanding of their personal

leadership development. I anticipated that my knowledge and understanding of students, my research experience, my counselling background, the context, and my understanding of student development theory, as well as my role and reputation on campus would support me in developing a positive rapport with the students who chose to participate in this research project. I discuss the issue of addressing bias and power in Chapter Three.

I also believe that leadership potential exists in every student and that universities can assist in the development of this potential (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, & Burkhardt, 2001). I believed that SI leaders would benefit from exploring their own leadership identity development and having time to critically reflect on their own leadership journeys and identities. I also believed it was important for those involved in training the SI leaders to gain an understanding of any leadership development that could emerge as SI leaders experienced their SI positions. These values and perspectives, while embedded in the focus of the research, informed both the research itself and the focus of the questions I asked.

My personal view of learning is derived from my background in counselling and the successes of the interactions in group therapy and support groups I have led or been a part of. I have also witnessed and experienced the transformational learning that occurs in a social setting while leading student groups in residence halls in activities such as resident assistant training sessions and peer-discipline boards. Whether this subjective view of the leader's own leadership identity is formed or enhanced by their involvement as an SI leader was the focus of this study.

I chose to study the experiences of WCU's SI leaders due to the recent implementation of the SI program on WCU's campus, as well as my own view of the SI

leaders' potential for leadership development and the unique involvement that this student position has with faculty members and student affairs staff. A description of the case, including how the SI program at WCU was organized and operated, how SI leaders were recruited, and a description of who participated in this case study, is described next. This will allow readers to decide how this study may or may not apply to his/her personal context.

### **Significance of the Study**

There was both theoretical and practical significance to this study. First, the ability to understand more about the students who are SI leaders enhanced the understanding of this specific sector of the current student population at WCU. SI leaders and their responsibilities represented a unique and less-recognized type of student leadership development opportunity that crossed academic support programs and co-curricular programs. The data collected provided information for practitioners as they sought ways to provide SI leaders with a leadership development opportunity, but who may not otherwise be attracted to programs that are described as leadership programs.

Second, this study explored the SI leader's experience in using the LID model (Komives et al., 2005). The use of a model that addressed and described the development of a leadership identity had the potential to inform a more targeted delivery of leadership skills training and recruitment as related to SI leaders. Acknowledging and studying the leadership identity development of the SI leaders gave credence to the title of leader granted to SI leaders.

Thirdly, participation in this study provided the SI leaders with the opportunity to reflect on their experiences, their own aspirations for leadership development, and the

skill sets they have acquired to progress towards action and learning about their own development potential.

### **Definitions**

Terms and definitions used throughout this study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

*Common Terms and Definitions*

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Relational leadership	A term used to describe “a relational and ethical process of people together attempting to accomplish change” (Komives et al., 2007, p. 29).
Leadership identity development	The process by which an individual goes through in recognizing self as a leader (Komives et al., 2005).
Leadership identity development (LID) model	The LID model was developed by using grounded theory and is based on theories of student development and relational leadership (Komives et al., 2005). It identifies six stages of leadership identity.
Post-secondary education (PSE)	PSE “refers to those whose highest level of educational attainment is an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma . . . college, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma; university certificate or diploma below bachelor level; or a university degree” (Statistics Canada, 2010, para. 1).
Supplemental instruction leaders (SI leaders)	SI leaders facilitate further discussion and deeper learning of classroom material presented in a particular course. The SI leader at the subject institution is an undergraduate student who has earned an A or B in the course he or she is serving as SI leader (Arendale, 1993).
Supplemental instruction	Supplemental instruction is an academic intervention strategy that assists students in understanding historically difficult course material, while at the same time providing additional resources for the students on topics that include learning theory and study strategies (Arendale, 1993).
Supplemental instruction	Supplemental instruction groups are scheduled by the

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
groups (SIG)	SI leaders to deliver the supplemental instruction to students who take the course that is supported by the SI leader. These groups consist of the students enrolled in the supported class and the SI leader.

**Summary**

In Chapter One I identified how this study addressed the importance of understanding SI leaders' experiences and the need to address the concept of leadership for SI leaders within SI programs. The ability to identify and develop the skills necessary to meet employers' demands is important for Canadian post-secondary institutions, as they must continuously qualify what learning is occurring. The LID model is one way to qualify a student's leadership identity development and can be helpful when working with student leaders, such as the SI leaders. I explained the reason for using a qualitative, descriptive case study to answer the research questions and identified my own personal biases that influenced my interpretations.

In Chapter Two I provided a critical review of the literature on SI programs in post-secondary institutions and the role of the SI leader. I will also summarize what student leadership models were being used to guide post-secondary institutions that want to develop student leadership, describe the research on the LID model, and outline its connections to what was known about the development of SI leaders.

In Chapter Three I presented the ontology and epistemology that informed my research, as well as the methodology and methods used to collect the data. Ethics and research bias are also discussed.

In Chapter Four I described how the results were analysed by category, presents the results of the qualitative analysis, and includes quotations from the participants'

interviews and written reflections. A comparison and contrast of descriptions within the LID model stages are also presented.

In Chapter Five I provided a summary of findings, discusses the possible significance of the findings, identifies the study limitations, and presents implications for future research and practice.

## **CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review**

My research explored the experiences of students who hold a supplemental instruction (SI) leader position at WCU, whether they identify themselves as a leader, and, if so, how.

According to the Canadian Council on Learning (2009), there is a need for post-secondary institutions to develop, evaluate, and assess their leadership development programs, yet there is limited guidance from current research on how institutions can or should go about this. Keeling (2006) stressed the need for post-secondary institutions to assess all learning that is occurring in all programs, both in and out of the classroom. Thus far, the student leadership research has focused on the best practices of student leaders (Posner & Brodsky, 1992), and some studies have also collected information regarding the student leadership experience itself (Cress et al., 2001; Dugan, 2006; Pugh, 2000; Schuh, 1991).

The literature streams that informed this study include (a) supplemental instruction, (b) history of leadership theory, (c) leadership development programs in higher education, (d) student leadership models, (e) leadership identity development theory and model, and (f) identity development. A review of previous research related to supplemental instruction and research into the LID model is also presented.

### **Supplemental Instruction**

SI has existed for over 30 years (Hurley et al., 2006) and was developed by Dr. Deanna Martin to increase the performance and retention of students who were enrolled in classes that were considered high risk (i.e., those courses that have high fail rates and

high withdrawal rate). Courses were targeted if they had a higher than 30% failure rate and classes had 60 to 100 students (Burmeister, 1996).

Originally, the University of Missouri-Kansas City was concerned with the costs of high failure and withdrawal rates in their medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, and law schools. Thus, SI was developed to reduce these costs based on the assumption that this intervention would decrease failure and dropout rates (Burmeister, 1996). SI has since proven to be successful for many more courses and subjects and at many post-secondary institutions around the world (Hurley et al., 2006) when also measured against reduced dropout rates and levels of failure. SI has been described as an academic support program that provides out-of-classroom, regularly scheduled, and peer-led workshops open to all the students enrolled in the high-risk course. SI differs from traditional academic support programs in that it does not target high-risk students, but rather it targets high-risk courses. SI also differs in its approach, as it provides an opportunity for small group discussion in a collaborative, non-remedial, peer-led, and interactive environment (Hurley et al., 2006).

The primary role of the SI leader is to “guide students away from teacher-directed, dependent learning toward self-directed, independent learning” (Lipsky, 2006, p. 35). Based on social constructivist principles, SI leaders are trained to use collaborative and active learning techniques to assist students as they learn the course content (Lipsky, 2006). While SI leaders have already mastered the *content* of the course they lead, similar to peer tutors and teachers, SI leaders also require specific training, and social skills enable them to facilitate effective SI sessions. The SI leader provides structure, direction, and reinforcement for the student learning in this course content (Lipsky, 2006).

Specifically, SI leaders must have the ability to monitor and to control the students' progress through a task, and also have the skills necessary to manage conflict and competition amongst student course participants. Further, Stout and McDaniel (2006) stressed that SI leaders are trained in the art of group facilitation, study skills, and problem solving. Despite the long list of what skills SI leaders should possess in order to be effective in their roles, little is known about what the students who are SI leaders gain from the SI leader experience.

In previous research specific to the benefits and impact of the SI leader position, SI leaders reported a better understanding of course material; enhanced relationships with the SI faculty member assigned to them; clarification of career goals; greater appreciation for diverse learning styles; increased self-awareness; improved leadership and communication skills; improved organizational and planning skills; enhanced integrations with faculty, staff, students, and other SI leaders; and increased self-confidence (Lockie & van Lanen, 2008; Stout & McDaniel, 2006; Zaritsky & Toce, 2006).

A key component of the SI program is the use of a peer-to-peer delivery to support the mastery of academic skills, and it relies on the collaboration between campus leaders, student affairs professionals, and faculty to facilitate students' learning (Burmeister, 1996; Hurley et al., 2006). The collaboration and relationships among these people are important for the SI leader and SI sessions to function effectively, and there was much emphasis placed on this in the activities of the groups, the SI leader training, and in the role laid out for the SI coordinator and faculty member (Lockie & van Lanen, 2008).

Related to the development of the skills of leadership, Komives et al. (2005) described essential developmental influences that foster the development of leadership identity, which include adult influences, peer influences, meaningful involvement, and reflective learning. Based on this description of developmental influences and the roles, training, and responsibilities of the SI leaders, I proposed that SI leaders might *also* be developing their identities as leaders while in the position. The SI leader's relationships (i.e., fellow SI leaders, the students in the SI sessions, the SI coordinator, and the faculty) could possibly influence the personal development of the SI leader. To help to fully understand the research questions related to the concept of leadership, it is important to understand the history of and development of leadership theory.

### **History of Leadership Theory**

There has been considerable attention given to the topic of leadership in the 20th century, and much of this work has focused on trying to define what leadership is (Pugh, 2000; Rost, 1993). To add to the complexity of this challenge, the concept of leadership has taken many forms and has been informed by many theories over the years in response to both the changing needs of society and the perspective from which leadership has been viewed.

One example is Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson's (2007) situational leadership theory developed in the late 1970s, which is probably the most-used, frequently cited model of leadership used today, in part due to its ability to be applied to any group and any task at hand. The basic premise of situational leadership is that effective leadership requires leadership flexibility since different situations and groups require different leadership approaches and tactics (p. 55).

Another example of a somewhat different view is Robert K. Greenleaf's (1977) work on servant leadership that looked at the success of leadership being based on the ability of the servant to assist the leader's journey. Greenleaf identified seven key practices of servant leaders: (a) self-awareness, (b) listening, (c) changing the pyramid, (d) developing your colleagues, (e) coaching not controlling, (f) unleashing the energy and intelligence of others, and (g) foresight (pp. 7-49). Unlike leadership approaches with a top-down hierarchical style, servant leadership instead emphasizes collaboration, trust, empathy, and the ethical use of power. At the heart of this theory is the view that the individual is a servant first, making the conscious decision to lead in order to better serve others and not to increase his or her own power. The objective and focus is instead to enhance the growth of individuals in the organization and to increase teamwork and personal involvement. Greenleaf also addressed the potential that PSE students have to develop leadership skills when they are on campus and that some students "may make a quantum leap in their growth as responsible person while they are in college if someone on the faculty will take an interest in finding and coaching them" (pp. 196-197). At the time, Greenleaf questioned why PSE institutions did not include leadership development in their mandates (p. 199).

In the 1980s and 1990s, the leadership literature identified a shift in the type of leadership desired. Transformational leadership was characterized as a process where leaders and followers work together in ways that change or transform the organization, the employees, followers, and the leader (Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978). Transformational leadership theory is based on the premise that leadership involves transformation and learning on the part of follower(s) and the leader. As such, it is more of a partnership,

even though there is a power imbalance. The power imbalance refers to the fact that the leader is giving something to the follower, and it is not reciprocated. Bass and Steidlmeier (1998) referred to two types of transformational leadership: authentic and pseudo-transformational leaders. It is only the authentic transformational leaders who provide a vision, are genuinely concerned for the common good, and are interested in developing their followers into leaders. Transformational leadership was based on inspiring followers, enticing followers to buy-in voluntarily, and creating a common vision as a group (Bass, 1990).

Joseph Rost (1993) has been credited for labeling the leadership paradigm shift from “Industrial” to a more collaborative leadership approach as being “Post-Industrial” (p. 102). There was a need for people to believe in their own leadership abilities in order for society to progress and meet current challenges. Rost theorized that to foster leadership, people needed to adopt a new view of leadership and realize that everyone must engage in leadership (p. 102). Roberts (1997) added to this discussion and posited that the hierarchical, charismatic, and individual-centric leadership of the past is not the leadership approach demanded in contemporary society. Today’s complex global issues (i.e., increased connectivity between cultures, human diversity, and global economics) require leaders who can develop leadership within their followers (Higher Education Research Institute [HERI], 1996). Dugan (2006) wrote, “This post-industrial perspective is process oriented, transformative, value-centred, non-coercive, and collaborative” (p. 217). The characteristics of the post-industrial style of leadership were also evident in the literature regarding student leadership development programs and models (Allen, Stelzner, & Wielkiewicz, 1998; Bass, 1990; Covey, 1992). Some would argue that there

was never a shift in the way leadership was viewed, but a reaffirmation of approaches to leadership many women and indigenous people have always used (Dugan & Komives, 2011; Komives & Dugan, 2010).

Taking a more global perspective, Allen et al. (1998) argued that only looking at leadership based on position is inadequate for the global challenges facing us today. They insisted that people must increase their capacity to understand, define, and solve complex problems. They also suggested five changes that leadership must address, which included: (a) living and working in a global perspective, (b) living within environmental limits, (c) transforming information into knowledge and wisdom, (d) developing the wisdom and ethics to take on scientific endeavours, and (e) adapting to changes in our social ecology (pp. 63-65). The history of leadership literature demonstrated the ever-evolving nature of the field, the need to match what is required as a global society, and the shift from leadership being reserved for a few to something that is shared by all. To answer the call to develop leadership, higher education has developed leadership models that pertain specifically to the students.

### **Leadership Development Programs in Higher Education**

Students, staff, and faculty in higher education institutions have begun to view the practice of developing leadership skills in post-secondary students as being necessary to meet the needs of a changing workforce and global society. PSE institutions have encouraged the creation of these opportunities within a variety of venues across campus. Not only have campuses had to respond to the demand for better leaders from employers and the need for graduates who can function in a diverse, global world, but the students themselves are also seeking to hone their leadership skills. Once considered a by-product

of post-secondary education, now campuses are becoming more organized in their delivery of leadership education and their intentional development of student leaders.

While student affairs practitioners have been the driving force behind many of the leadership programs offered on campuses, there are many settings where a student can learn to develop their leadership skills, including in-class experiences, co-curricular programs, and on-campus employment (Astin, 1993; Endress, 2000; Roberts, 1997). Similarly, the responsibility for creating these experiential opportunities is often shared among academic units and student affairs offices as well as through focused student leadership centres. Keeling (2006) addressed this need for collaborative practice to create opportunities to “put the academic learning and student development processes together in a format that requires all the resources of the academe to function together in an integrated manner on behalf of the students” (p. 1). Some examples of these experiential opportunities include students’ roles as resident assistants, orientation leaders, fraternity leadership, student government, athletic event assistants, work-study students, and research assistants.

Student affairs practitioners have commonly used the vehicles of leadership education, co-curricular, and on-campus programs and activities to deliver leadership development training and experiences (Astin, 1993; Cress et al., 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Schuh, 1991). The SI leader position incorporates two of these venues; specifically, it is *co-curricular* (i.e., not for credit), and it is often a *paid on-campus position*. What makes an SI leader unique from other similar on-campus leadership positions is that it is directly related to an academic program. Therefore, these student

leaders have both faculty and student affairs professionals providing training, mentoring, and ongoing support.

In discussing experiential learning, Kolb and Fry (1975) wrote that leaders are distinguished by their ability to adapt to change and learn, and “as learning growth occurs, thoughts become more reflective and internalized” (p. 22). To assist with understanding and supporting leadership development in the post-secondary environment, there have been some models developed specifically related to the post-secondary student.

### **Student Leadership Models**

To help institutions develop student leadership programs and to assess student leadership skills, a few models have been developed by researchers. The models presented in this discussion include (a) leadership challenge model (Kouzes & Posner, 2002), (b) social change model (HERI, 1996), and (c) relational leadership theory (Komives et al., 2006). Kouzes and Posner’s (2002) research looked at leadership behaviour, and HERI (1996) developed the social change model of leadership for higher education institutions to follow when developing programs. Komives et al. (2005) developed the relational leadership model concurrently with the social change model, which eventually led to their work on the LID model (Komives et al., 2006).

#### **Leadership Challenge Model**

Kouzes and Posner (2002) theorized that effective organizational leaders consistently engage in five leadership practices, which they identified as (a) challenging the process, (b) inspiring a shared vision, (c) enabling others to act, (d) modeling the way, and (e) encouraging the heart (p. 98). Kouzes and Posner’s leadership challenge model

originated in research on organizational managers, which asked them to reflect on when they performed at their personal best and to reflect on the qualities and practices they engaged in at the time.

Recognizing that there was no existing valid instrument designed specifically for PSE students to measure their leadership development, Kouzes and Posner (2002) created a student-focused model to fill the gap. Their study of PSE student leaders found that the most effective leaders engaged in each of their identified five leadership practices more frequently than did those identified as being less effective leaders by their followers.

To elaborate, Kouzes and Posner (2002) collected data on student leaders in U.S. universities and colleges and developed the Leadership Potential Inventory-Students (LPI-S). The student leaders studied included effective fraternity and sorority presidents (Posner & Brodsky, 1992, 1994), effective resident assistants (Posner & Brodsky, 1993), and orientation leaders (Posner & Rosenberger, 1997). Data from studying these student leaders formed the basis for the LPI-S as an assessment tool. Students, who are not necessarily in a leadership position, taking the LPI-S, gauge their leadership skills against those who have held student leadership positions. This assessment tool is very popular, as it is one of the only resources available by which students can measure their leadership skills.

There are limitations to the leadership challenge. The measurement is based on data collected from students in leadership positions, thus focussing on positional leadership. Although the leadership challenge does pay attention to the followers, it still has the tendency to view leadership as a power imbalance. The students who were selected for these positions may or may not have been selected by their followers and the

positions imply a power imbalance. There may be aspects of leadership that are missing that students who are not in leadership positions can strive for. In response, other models were developed to take a more philosophical and inclusive approach to leadership development, one of which is the social change model.

### **Social Change Model**

In 1996, a group of United States leadership educators brought together through a federal grant developed the social change model (SCM) of leadership specifically for post-secondary students (HERI, 1996). The basic premise of the SCM model is that it is inclusive and is designed to identify the leadership qualities in all students: those who hold formal leadership positions and those who do not. The SCM model has two goals: (a) to enhance student learning and development of self-knowledge and leadership competence, and (b) to facilitate positive institutional or community change. This “7 Cs” model is organized by three levels: (a) the individual, (b) the group, and (c) the community/society (HERI, 1996). The model also describes seven critical values that it assesses: (a) consciousness of self, (b) congruence, (c) commitment, (d) collaboration, (e) common purpose, (f) controversy with civility, and (g) citizenship (Komives & Wagner, 2009, p. xiii). These seven values help “individuals understand themselves and come together in collaborative ways to accomplish social change” (p. 394). The SCM embodies commitment to action, and Astin and Astin (2000) asserted that leaders are change agents and thus “foster change” (p. 8).

SCM maximizes the use of peer groups to enhance leadership development in students. The strength of this model is that it is to be applied to all students and groups. This model has been used in guiding PSE communities, such as residence halls. Unlike

Kouzes and Posner's (2002) model, the SCM focuses on values rather than skills. Despite the fact that this model was developed for PSE institutions, there was unfortunately very little research regarding its use (Dugan, 2006) until the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership that began in 2006. In an effort to apply the SCM of leadership, Komives et al. (2007) began their work on a model that would address leadership identity.

### **Relational Leadership Theory**

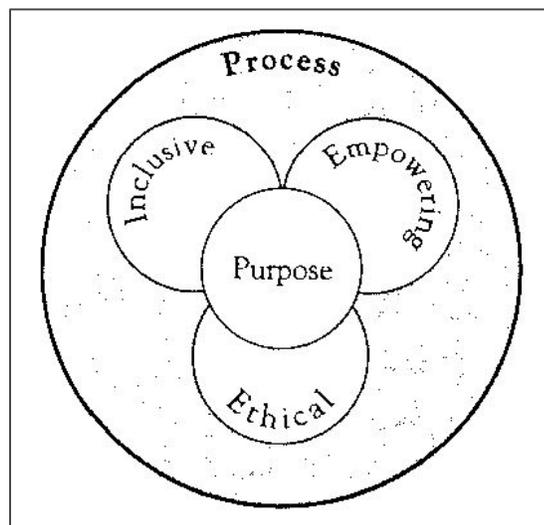
A relational view of leadership has also been emerging. In an effort to apply the SCM of leadership, Komives et al. (2007) began their work on a model that would address leadership identity. They used the term relational leadership to refer to a perspective on leadership that focuses on the premise that leadership effectiveness has to do with the ability of the leader to create positive relationships within the organization.

From this perspective, relational leadership is only possible where there is a movement of *engaged citizenry*, and leadership is a mutual, collaborative process (Endress, 2000; Komives et al., 2007; Matusak, 1997). This perspective asserts that anyone involved in the leadership process has to know him or herself first *before* he or she can effectively work with others to influence change. The leadership development process follows the knowing-being-doing model (Komives et al., 2007, pp. 5-6).

The relational leadership theory (Komives et al., 2007) includes five components and is illustrated in Figure 1. These five components include:

- Empowering—encouraging members to actively engage and get involved; . . .
- Purposeful—committing to a common goal or activity; . . .
- Process-oriented—being aware of the way a group interacts and the impact it has on the group's work; . . .
- Inclusive—understanding, valuing, and engaging all aspects of diversity; [and]
- Ethical—being guided by a system of moral principles. (p. 75)

There are numerous theories of leadership that have attempted to describe who leaders are, what leadership is, and what kind of leadership is used in particular contexts. What was missing from student leadership development theory was the ability to understand more about the process of becoming a leader. In response, Komives et al. (2009) further developed relational leadership theory to address questions on how a leader develops.



*Figure 1.* The relational leadership model is purposeful and builds on the diverse points of view, empowering to those who are involved, is ethical, and recognize that all of these elements are achieved by being processed-oriented. From *Exploring Leadership for College Students Who Want to Make a Difference* (2nd ed., p. 75), by S. R. Komives, N. Lucas, & T. R. McMahon, 2007, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Copyright 2007 by Jossey-Bass. Reproduced with permission

### **Leadership Identity Development Theory and Model**

The relational leadership model (Komives et al., 2007) formed the foundation for the LID model (Komives et al., 2005), which was the guiding framework for this study. Komives et al. (2005) studied the process a person experiences in creating a leadership

identity using grounded theory, and they also drew upon relational leadership theory. Using a grounded theory approach, the LID model was developed from a study of 13 undergraduate student leaders.

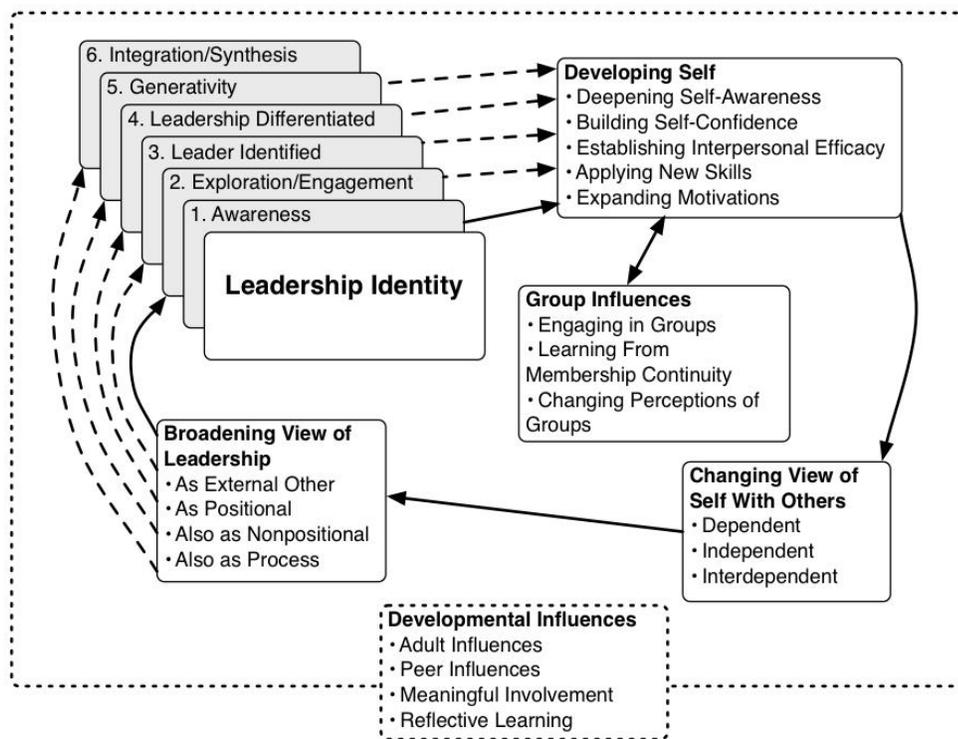
Over the last several decades, some of the research on post-secondary students has focused on the process of leadership development and the factors that influence their developmental growth (Kegan, 1982). Other researchers have asserted that involvement in organizations provides students with a place to develop their leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). However, little research has addressed the *process* of developing leadership skills (Komives et al., 2006). Understanding the process of creating a leadership identity is paramount in teaching and developing leadership. To best influence leaders, Day, Harrison, and Haplin (2009) insisted that the development of leadership identity must be incorporated into leadership development. They argued that having a well-defined leadership identity enables a leader to demonstrate more consistent behaviours, reliable priorities, and defined goals. LID was the only theory that addressed leadership development over time in post-secondary students.

Komives et al. (2005) proposed that the students' views of leadership change over time based on a number of influences and experiences. Komives et al. identified these factors and experiences as developmental influences, developing self, group influences, changing view of self with others, and broadening a student's view of leadership. It has been recognized that there are limitations of the LID model.

### **Developmental Influences**

The developmental influences Komives et al. (2005) identified included adult influences, peer influences, meaningful involvement, and reflective learning (p. 596).

These influences had different impacts depending on the stage at which the leadership identity development was occurring (see Figure 2). This category includes essential developmental influences that contribute to fostering LID. As mentioned previously, each of these four influences have dimensions that change according to which LID stage the student is experiencing. For instance, newer leaders will be influenced by adults differently than are more experienced leaders.



*Figure 2.* Developing a leadership identity: Illustrating the leadership identity development (LID) cycle. From “Developing a Leadership Identity: A Grounded Theory,” by S. R. Komives, J. E. Owen, S. D. Longerbeam, F. C. Mainella, & L. Osteen, 2005, *Journal of College Student Development*, 47, p. 599. Copyright 2005 by the American College Personnel Association. Reprinted with permission.

## **Developing Self**

This category of development contains properties of personal growth that also change with the development of a leadership identity. These properties include deepening self-awareness, building self-confidence, establishing interpersonal efficacy, applying new skills, and expanding motivations (Komives et al., 2005, p. 599). From the perspective of this theory, students begin with a vague sense of self that is influenced mostly by adult and peers. A student's self-awareness also brings about the development of personal values and a sense of personal integrity. A student's self-confidence grows with active involvement in things that mean something to them. His/her confidence builds with opportunities for identifying weaknesses and strengths, taking risks, and getting more involved with more active group roles. In the LID model (Komives et al., 2005), a student's self-efficacy refers to their confidence in their ability to work with other people. As students develop their leadership identity, they work to develop new skills, and they also change their motivations for doing so (p. 600).

## **Group Influences**

As depicted in Figure 2, the previous category, Developing Self, interacts with the category of group influences. The category of group influences includes activities such as engaging in groups, learning from membership continuity, and changing perceptions of groups (Komives et al., 2005, p. 602). Students search for a group to belong to and eventually narrow down the memberships they continue with. Students who continue with membership in a group will be able to practice their leadership on a deeper level and also to take more risks. As their experience in groups grows, students begin to see how they can impact the group to create change.

### **Changing View of Self with Others**

The LID model recognizes that as the students interact with groups, their view of themselves in relation to others will also change (Komives et al., 2005, p. 604).

According to Komives et al. (2005), students who are early in their experiences of engaging with groups were more dependent on others. As students become more experienced in groups, they engage in groups from either an independent path or a dependent path. On the independent path, the student has strong motivation to change the group and aspires to be a positional leader. Other students choose the dependent path and are more comfortable with being members or followers in the group (p. 605). This leader-centric view of leadership is the belief that only positional leaders do leadership. Students in the final stages of development of their leadership identity will believe that leadership comes from anywhere in the group, and they work to develop everyone's capacity for leadership (p. 605).

### **Broadening a Student's View of Leadership**

Throughout a student's identity development as a leader, their view of leadership will broaden. The LID model accounts for this and describes the changes in students' views of leadership (Komives et al., 2005, p. 605). Students first begin viewing leadership as being something that someone external to them does, then as something someone does who is in a leadership position, then, next, that leadership can be demonstrated by someone not in a leadership position, and finally, that leadership is a process that can be demonstrated by everyone in a group.

These categories and stages are important characteristics of the LID model, and all contribute to an understanding of a student's development through the six stages. The six stages of Komives et al.'s (2005) LID model, as shown in Figure 2, are:

1. Awareness: Student views leadership as external to the self, and they do not personally identify as a leader.
2. Exploration/engagement: Student takes time to experience groups, take on responsibilities, and take on a leadership position.
3. Leader identified: Student recognizes that every group has leaders and followers and that those leaders were responsible for outcomes.
4. Leader differentiated: Student recognizes that any person can do leadership and that leadership is a process among people.
5. Generativity: Student articulates personal passion and explores interdependence, becomes role model and peer mentor, and seeks to enhance newer members' leadership so they can, in turn, participate.
6. Integration/synthesis: Student exhibits continuous, active engagement in leadership as a daily practice. Student is confident that she/he is a person who can demonstrate leadership; he/she can practice systems thinking and is comfortable with contextual uncertainty. (pp. 606-607)

The LID model is stage-based, and students must progress through and accomplish the tasks associated with each stage before beginning the next stage. The model also provides researchers and practitioners with the information they need to understand the factors that work together to facilitate the development of a students'

leadership identity, and it provides practical implications from that understanding for practitioners (Komives et al., 2005).

Komives et al. (2006) later expanded their model and developed categories and stages of the LID model. These researchers drew further connections to relational leadership and the final three stages of the LID model, when the student's view of self in relation to others is interdependent. Komives et al. (2007) wrote about the substantial shift between Stage 3, Leader Identified, and Stage 4, Leader Differentiated, when a student begins to see him or herself not as a leader, but as "doing leadership" (pp. 76-77). This *doing/having* identity is key stage and represents an important cognitive development step (Renn & Bilodeau, 2005).

There has been tremendous growth in the research into the resources available for practitioners who work with the students, and there has been much research that has influenced the design and implementation of student leadership programs, as well as to ensure that student leadership is viewed as an area worth both time and resources (i.e., Keeling, 2006; Kuh, 2009; Roberts, 1997). Thus, the ability to examine the experiences of SI leaders using the LID model also has the potential to give further credence to the title of leader, to assist WCU in achieving its institutional learning outcomes, and could also add value to the experience that this position can offer students. The LID model offers a stage-based map of how a student's leadership identity is forming, and as with most complex concepts, it can also create limits to how it can be used.

### **Limitations of the LID Model**

The widely-used and accepted LID model of student leadership in post-secondary institutions does have limitations. For instance, Gonda (2007) looked at the processes that

women experience as their awareness of leadership abilities develop. Gonda used narrative research techniques with five subjects who were early to mid-career women who demonstrated a relational leadership approach. While she found some support for the LID model's Stages 2 through 4, she did not find evidence for the LID Stages 5 and 6. She thought this could be because the participants had no formal leadership education or training, and thus, they may have been operating from these stages, but lacked the language to describe their experiences. The transition between *leader identified* and *leadership differentiated* stages for Gonda's participants was found to occur much later than for the participants in the Komives et al. (2006) study. Also, Gonda found that her subjects reported holding beliefs from these two stages simultaneously. In some cases, the subjects' beliefs depended on the context they were speaking about. This could have been due to the stage-based and linear quality of the LID. Different experiences may impact a student's leadership development differently. As I will discuss later in Chapter Four, students indicated a more fluid understanding of leadership, depending on what context they were referring to.

Also, further research is needed on how intersecting social identities, such as gender and race, may impact the LID model. Using the LID model, Onorato (2010) recently explored and described the complex leadership identity development of a select group of Hispanic women. The study sought to explore the roles that gender and ethnicity play in leadership identity development. Although the female Hispanic leaders she studied demonstrated the development of skills that paralleled the LID model, Onorato also found many differences and, thus, has suggested a multi-dimensional perspective that is not stage based.

Wagner (2011) recently tested the model using J. Rutledge's Q methodology to classify subjects with similar views of leadership into groups. Q methodology looks at the correlations between subjects across variables and results in forming categories. This methodology aims to collect the "participant's subjective impression of the research topic" (p. 70). Participants in Wagner's study were asked to describe their view about leadership and themselves as leaders through a 64-card item sort. The cards included statements taken from the participants in the original LID study and from each of the six stages of the LID model. Participants placed cards into piles along a continuum from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Participants were classified into four factors based on similarities. Common themes were used to distinguish each factor group, which included (a) hierarchy, (b) definition of leadership as positional, (c) leadership identity, and (d) self-aware and reflective about leadership and what leaders do. The descriptions from each of these factors were then compared to the stages of the LID model. Wagner found evidence that leadership identity develops over time. She also found some similarities between her themes and the stages in the LID that are most frequently experienced during the college years, particularly in Stages 2 through 4. Wagner also suggested an adjustment in the LID model, as she found differences in how students frame the concept of positional or non-positional leadership over time as well as a lack of consideration for amount of and motivation for involvement in leadership. Also based on her study, Wagner did not find the breadth of the stages described in the LID model. For instance, she found no data that were similar to LID Stages 1 or 5 to 6.

Despite its limitations, the LID model (Komives et al., 2006), which takes a developmental approach to leadership identity, is an appropriate tool to use to explore the

development of leadership identity in students who are SI leaders and who do not necessarily see themselves as leaders. The model was created to understand the processes a person experiences in creating a leadership identity. By using this model to look at the experiences of the SI leader, I believe that my study has provided more information regarding leadership identity development.

### **Identity Development**

Often, the time when students are involved in post-secondary studies coincides with a time/stage in their lives when some young adults have the opportunity to explore identities that they may not have otherwise been able to or that they have even been aware of. This includes the development of their leadership identity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

In referring to the development of identity in an educational setting, McEwen (2003) described identity in two ways: (a) Erikson's (1980) theory of identity development throughout the life cycle, and (b) Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven vectors of identity development model. McEwen referred to identity as relates to it being the core essence of self (i.e., particular dimensions of one's identity). Developing identity from this perspective is the journey of exploring one's identity in more detail and increasing the complexity of formulating one's identity: "Identity development represents a qualitative enhancement of the self in terms of complexity" (p. 205).

Komives et al. (2005) found that in addition to moving through the six stages of the LID model and also moving from the hierarchical, leader-centric view to a view that embraced leadership as a collaborative, relational process, students also mentioned having multiple social identities and that these identities were important influences on the

development of their leadership identity. The transformational view of leadership, including the shift between Stages 3 and 4 of their leadership identity, is developmentally important. This is when a person shifts his or her view from “I am a leader . . . [to] I do leadership” (p. 607).

Day et al. (2009) asserted that a leader’s identity is an integral component of self-identity, especially in relation to continuous leadership development. A well-defined leader will be a positive role model and will be able to build relationships through consistent actions. The more a person knows himself or herself, the more they can be effective. Lord and Hall (2005) proposed that a person’s self-view as a leader not only influences proactive attempts to gain leadership experiences, but may also lend itself to gaining more leadership knowledge, thus leading to an integration of leadership skills and one’s identity. Understanding identity development is complex; however, a few studies have used the LID model and are important to review.

### **Related Research**

Although the role of the SI leader within the SI program is an integral part of the program, there has been little research devoted to the student who fills this position and the impact the SI leader position has on the student. Also, there have been only a few studies looking at how the LID can be applied in a variety of settings and with post-secondary students. In this section, the research that has been done on SI leaders and also with the actual LID model will be explored. (Komives et al., 2005).

One of the first papers written about the SI leader experience was by Ashwin (1994), who wrote about his own experience and observations of other SI leaders. He observed that SI leaders set appropriate boundaries, employed language familiar to

students, and learned to assess the student's understanding of the material by reading body language.

Congos and Stout (2003) surveyed former SI leaders after graduation on the benefits of the SI leadership experience. The benefits were sorted into categories. The SI leaders cited communication skills, interpersonal relations skills, learning skills, leadership skills, and improved course content.

Zaritsky and Toce (2006) wrote about the SI program at an urban public college in New York. In their article, they mentioned how they collected survey data from 40 former SI leaders. They found that 95% of former SI leaders reported a better understanding of the course material, 73% reported the SI leaders experience helped them choose a career, and 98% reported gaining self-confidence and strengthening their leadership and communication skills. The researchers did not mention what questions were asked in their survey, but they did mention that it was part of a survey to measure the effects of their program.

Based on their observations and experiences in student services, Stout and McDaniel (2006) summarized the benefits that the SI leaders derive from their experiences. When SI leaders are carefully selected and trained, they experience many benefits, such as academic benefits, improved communication and relationship-building skills (i.e., setting boundaries, employing the language of the students, using body language to evaluate the student's understanding, and mentoring relationships with faculty), enhanced personal development, and enhanced professional development. Stout and McDaniel suggested that if SI coordinators select individuals as SI leaders who already believe in supporting educational access for all students, the SI leader's learning

would be expedited, “since collaborative learning and the SI model are based on this philosophy” (p. 55).

Lockie and van Lanen’s (2008) phenomenological study used reflections from 29 SI leaders in science at one small liberal arts university to assess the impact of the SI experience on leaders. SI leaders were invited to participate after the completion of each semester. Using Colaizzi’s procedural analysis of the data, significant phrases were extracted from participants’ two reflective writing questions on their lived experience as SI leaders. The phrases, which reflected what the SI leaders had learned, were grouped into the following themes:

. . . greater appreciation of diversity of student learning styles, increased understanding of the subject matter, greater self-confidence as a learner, development of closer relationships with faculty, application of the strategies and skills learned as an SI leader in other courses, and realization of the important and value of collaborative learning. (p. 2)

Thus, their study validated the richness of the SI experience for the SI leader. The researchers were also able to use the findings to help recruit new SI leaders as well as to communicate to administration the long-range benefits of SI experiences to the academic and personal pursuits of SI leaders. Couchman (2009) looked at the self-reflections of 11 SI leaders and found that they developed empathy with the students, practiced collaborative techniques, had increased confidence, and were able to actively involve the students with the course material.

To build on the previous research, Malm et al. (2012) conducted a case study on two groups of SI leaders in an engineering program at a Swedish University. Group one (35 respondents) consisted of SI leaders who had just completed their terms, and group two (20 respondents) was comprised of former SI leaders who had graduated and were

working in the workforce. The researchers used both open-ended questions and questionnaires with statements to which the SI leaders expressed agreement using a 5-level Likert-type scale. They found that students who had worked as SI leaders benefited from their SI experiences. Some of the benefits included improved communication, improved interpersonal skills, improved leadership skills, improved self-confidence, and a deeper understanding of the course material. Many of the SI leader alumni reported high use of their skills acquired and developed during their SI leader experience. The authors suggested that universities should communicate the skills learned to students' employers.

There were also a few studies that indicated students who had the SI leader lived experience benefited both academically and personally (Ashwin, 1994; Congos & Stout, 2003). Some mentioned leadership skills, but there was not much information or definition on what was meant by leadership or by leadership identity development (Stout & McDaniel, 2006; Van Der Karr, 2000; Zaritsky & Toce, 2006).

Since the development of the LID model in 2005 (Komives et al., 2005), there have been a few studies that have used this model to gain insight into students' leadership identity and their potential for demonstrating leadership. Some studies looked at specific students and their leadership identity development (Cory, 2011; Onorato, 2010; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005), while other studies looked at how different programs impacted the students who participated (Belton, 2010; Muir, 2011).

Using the LID model as their framework, Renn and Bilodeau (2005), for example, identified campus experiences that contributed to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) leadership development. They found that the students' involvement in activism

and leadership activities related to GLBT identity also promoted the development of their leadership identity. The authors called for more research on how other organized student-led programs promote or inhibit student identity development processes.

Belton (2010) examined how undergraduate experiential learning programs, such as leadership courses, volunteer service, study abroad, and internships, facilitate leadership identity development among female college students as measured by the LID model. The data analysis revealed that these experiential learning programs had a positive impact on leadership outcomes for the participants. This study also revealed that the experiential style of learning did facilitate leadership identity in female students who might not otherwise have reached their full leadership identity due to their initial perceptions of leaders as being central, positional, and authoritative, rather than approaching leadership as shared, collaborative, and relational.

Recently, using the LID model, Cory (2011) studied how fraternity and sorority membership influences the leadership identity development of PSE students. The findings suggested that organizational factors and meaningful relationships contribute to the development of a student's identity as a leader for fraternity and sorority members. The study provided support for advancing practical applications of the LID theoretical construct.

Another recent study done by Muir (2011) examined volunteers at a non-profit organization and the influence that mentoring had on participants in a non-degree leadership program. Findings suggested that mentoring influenced the volunteers' leadership identity development positively. Muir also stressed the importance of critical reflection as a factor in a volunteer's development as a leader.

Based on the results from this study, there may also be an opportunity for an increased understanding of whether an SI leader's training; the experiential, collaborative learning, and study strategies used in the SI groups; and peer-to-peer mentoring may also impact different levels of the leadership identity development. This study compared themes identified from interviews with SI leaders regarding their experiences with the LID model. This model is ideal for students who may or may not already identify themselves as being a student leader. As discussed previously, in order to develop leadership skills, it is important to first identify oneself as being a leader. This study has the potential to positively impact both *the student holding the SI leader position* in SI programs and *the study of student leadership development* as a whole, by reframing the personal outcomes of the SI leader's experience.

### **Summary**

Through a review of the literature on supplemental instruction, the history of leadership theory, leadership development programs, student leadership models, leadership identity development theory and model, identity development, and related research, I have provided a background of the existing SI literature, the role of the SI leader, and an overview of the history of leadership development programs, with a particular focus on leadership development at PSE institutions through various program involvements. Research has demonstrated that the time spent during a person's post-secondary years is a critical period for their personal, social, and professional growth (e.g., Astin, 1993; Cress et al., 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Schuh, 1991). This is also a critical time for PSE institutions to develop intentional and effective leadership

development programs to address the need for complex problem solving and leadership in our increasingly global society.

I have summarized what student leadership models are currently available and are being used to explore and to develop the leadership of students, and I also explained the model used for this study. A review of the available research on the student SI leader position and how it may lend itself to leadership development was also provided. To deliver effective leadership programs, educational institutions must increase their understanding of how students develop as leaders and the factors that contribute to their leadership identity development. An understanding of these students' developmental experience has the potential to provide rich data to inform practitioners as they create curricular and co-curricular leadership programs, including SI programs. Details on the research methodology and design used to answer the research questions will be presented in Chapter Three.

### **CHAPTER THREE: Research Methodology and Design**

As noted in Chapter One, the purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of a group of student supplemental instruction (SI) leaders, using the learning identity development (LID) theory and model (Komives et al., 2005) as a conceptual framework. Specifically, the questions that guided this study were:

1. What are the characteristics, background experiences, academic programs, and previous leadership experiences of the students who hold an SI leader position at WCU?
2. How does a student who holds an SI leader position at WCU describe the experience of working with their SI groups while in their SI role?
  - a. What are the factors that shape these experiences?
  - b. How does the description of these experiences align with the LID described in the Komives et al. (2005) model?

In this chapter, I describe the research methodology and design by outlining the following: the ontology and epistemological underpinnings of this study; the theoretical framework; methodology; methods used; data analysis; credibility, consistency, and transferability; and ethics. I also address my bias and assumptions.

#### **Ontology and Epistemological Underpinnings**

This qualitative inquiry focused on participants' views of their experiences as an SI leader. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) described qualitative research as a process that includes three interconnected, generic activities that define qualitative research. A researcher is bound by beliefs that will shape how he or she sees the world and acts in it. "The gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of

ideas, a framework (theory ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she then examines in a specific way (methodology, analysis)” (p. 28). The terms used to describe the researcher’s beliefs are called paradigms or interpretive frameworks and include epistemological, ontological, and methodological. “Each interpretive framework makes a demand on the researcher, including the questions they will ask and the interpretations he or she will bring to them” (p. 31).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Social constructivism, the chosen theoretical framework, informed this study. As well, rather than beginning with theory, social constructivists develop a theory or pattern of meaning during the research. In 2009, Creswell wrote,

The more open-ended the questioning the better as the researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life settings. Often the subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. They are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through social interactions with other (hence social constructivism) and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individual’s lives. (p. 8)

The premise of this position was that everyone would benefit from the knowledge of each individual in the group and that the knowledge and learning gained through this process would have more meaning and depth as opposed to knowledge that is simply introduced (Creswell, 2007). My personal view of learning is derived from my background in counselling and the successes of the interactions of people in group therapy and in support groups that I have either led or have been a part of. I have also witnessed and experienced the learning that occurs in a social setting while leading student groups in residence halls in activities, such as in resident assistant training sessions and on peer-discipline boards.

Social constructivist researchers rely as much as possible on *the participants' views of the situation* and consider the context by asking broad questions. They look at the interactions between people and their context (Creswell, 2009). Since this study was focused on the development of the leadership identity of SI leaders, the data were collected directly from the students themselves and were communicated in their own words. The use of multiple data collection techniques, such as interviews and reflective writing, also provided different perspectives from which to interpret the meaning of various SI experiences.

The first conceptual lens used in this study was the relational leadership model (see Chapter Two). Turning first to relational leadership theory, which is a socially constructed paradigm that is exhibited through the relationships we value (Komives, Dugan, Owen, Slack, & Wagner, 2011; Komives & Wagner, 2009), the LID model outlines the meaningful experiences and relationships that impact college students as they develop a leadership identity. The intent of this study was to understand the experiences, influences, and characteristics that a selected group of SI leaders shared.

The second conceptual lens, also key to this study, was the definition of leadership presented by Komives et al. (2007) as a relational and ethical process of people together attempting to accomplish change (p. 29). Based on this definition, I do not equate the term *leader* with the concept of *leadership*. By differentiating these two terms, I suggest that the potential exists in everyone to take responsibility and to have opportunities to demonstrate their leadership. I see that the term leader bestowed on a person, as a title, which is different from leadership qualities that everyone can possess regardless of position. I also recognize that, sometimes, leaders do not demonstrate

leadership (Harris & Lambert, 2003). I believe that despite having a leadership identity and learning leadership skills, a person might not exhibit leadership or be a leader. Finally, based on my personal experiences, I believe that leadership, as a quality, can be learned and can only be learned by interacting with others.

In summary, my own view of learning in this study is that knowledge is co-constructed and shaped by one's experiences and previous knowledge. This view aligns with a social constructivist epistemological and pedagogical approach to learning. This viewpoint also influenced the methodology used for this study.

### **Methodology**

The research questions, combined with the reality that I was studying (i.e., a single SI program) and my belief that learning is socially constructed, led me to choose descriptive case study as the methodology to guide this study. I chose to follow Merriam's (1998; 1990) work on case study as my guide for this research. Merriam provided clear step-by-step guidance and terminology that help guide my research. According to Merriam (2009), case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (p. 40). The bounded system in this study was the SI program at WCU.

Merriam (2009) described case study as offering "a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon" (p. 50). As a qualitative researcher, I am drawn to inquiry that explores a phenomenon intently and within a given context. Merriam wrote that the single case study "offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers' experiences" (p. 51).

Special features can further define a case study, and this can be useful to further differentiate case studies according to type. Aligning with Merriam (1998, 2009), I describe this research as a descriptive case study. According to Merriam (1998), a descriptive case study “is a rich ‘thick’ description of the phenomenon under study” (p. 11). Using qualitative data, this descriptive case study presents documentations of events, quotes, and samples from the case that resulted in a holistic account of the SI leaders’ experiences.

My preference for conducting single case study is due to my philosophical beliefs and views of the value of transferability and credibility. In qualitative research, the focus is not on the ability to generalize, but whether a study is applicable in other settings. In Merriam’s first book (1988) on case study research in education emphasized the qualitative, the particular, and the singular:

The qualitative case study can be defined as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit. Case studies are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic and rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources. (p. 16)

As a counsellor, I resonate with Merriam’s (1988) statement, as understanding context and environment is paramount to understanding behaviour because it gives a more complete holistic view of an issue that I believe is best accomplished in a qualitative case study. Merriam (2009) asserted there is much to learn from a single case study despite the issues with whether or not it can be generalized to other programs. The goal of this case study was to rely, as much as possible, on the meaning-making and leadership experiences of the SI leaders themselves and to provide a rich description of the experiences.

Merriam (2009) also suggested that a qualitative researcher selects a single-case study approach “because one wishes to understand the particular in depth, not because one wants to know what is generally true of the many” (p. 173). Hans Eysenck (1975), who originally thought case study was just a nice way to get anecdotal information, later aligned himself with Merriam’s position and stated, “Sometimes we simply have to keep our eyes open and look carefully at individual cases—not in the hope of proving anything, but rather in the hope of learning something!” (p. 224). That is what I set out to accomplish in this study.

This descriptive single case study looked at how or if the SI leaders identify him/herself as a leader. It also enabled and supported the inclusion of rich and descriptive information from the participants. The findings from this study have further documented the potential leadership development outcomes of the SI leadership role.

### **Methods**

Consistent with the methodological assumptions of social constructivism and case study methodology, interviews, reflective writing analysis, and document review were the primary methods of data collection in this study. An overview of the methods used to collect data is provided in this section, starting with the participant sampling process.

#### **Participant Sample**

Of the 14 students who were involved in the SI leader position at WCU during the 2012-2013 academic year, six participated in this study. All participants who agreed to participate in the study were between 21 and 25 years of age.

It was difficult to find students who were both currently SI leaders and who had the time to participate in the study. I sent two emails inviting participants (see Appendix

A) and also met with the SI leaders in mid-February to let them know about the study and to invite their involvement. Through snowball sampling, participants identified other students who were currently in an SI leader position. Two males and four females volunteered to participate in this study. The SI participants' anonymity was maintained throughout this study (as was agreed for the ethics approval), and their participation in the research was not known by either the SI coordinators or by the faculty members involved in the SI programs they were leading. Demographic information was collected using the demographic survey found in Appendix B. The demographic profile of the leaders who participated in this study is presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

*Summary of Participant Demographic Information*

Pseudonym*	Age	Faculty	Year of Study
Bernard	23	Science	3
Dawn	25	Science	4
Eric	25	Arts	4
Kayla	21	Arts	3
Margriet	20	Arts	3
Victoria	20	Arts	3

\* The pseudonym for each participant was selected by the participant him/herself.

## **Interviews**

The focus of qualitative interviewing is to understand the world and experience from the participant's point of view and to understand how he/she makes meaning of his/her experiences (Seidman, 2006). Interviewing is an "interpersonal situation between two partners about a mutual interest, and knowledge evolves through dialogue and commonly involves a series of three interviews" (p. 95).

All consenting and participating SI leaders in WCU's SI program were asked to participate in three separate semi-structured interviews that took 50 to 75 minutes each to complete, which meant participants were involved in three one-and-a-half hours of interviews. Using the LID interview protocol (see Appendix C) that was developed by Komives et al. (2006), the three semi-structured interviews were conducted near the beginning of the second semester of an SI leader's tenure as a leader, mid-way through that term, and near the end of their SI leader experience. This approach was approved by the Ethics Review Boards of both the University of Calgary (2012) and of WCU.

Also, following Seidman's (2006) approach of using a three-interview series, the first LID interview focused on the students' influences and experiences with the SI program and other activities that have influenced their leadership throughout their lives. The second interview focused on their experiences with leadership—being a leader and member/participant/follower and their mid-term experiences during the context in which it occurred. Finally, the third interview encouraged reflection on the participants' SI leadership experiences, their views of leadership as they grew up, and explored the students' current views of their leadership (pp. 17-19). Interview questions focused on both key experiences and influential people in their lives, their beliefs about leadership,

and their experiences related to being an SI leader (see Appendix C). The use of three interviews allowed me, as the researcher, to develop a research context that helped the SI leaders' behaviour to become more understandable to them, as well as to me, and thus more meaningful.

As previously noted, the interview protocol was derived from the protocol used in Komives's et al. (2005) study. Although the questions were intended to reflect the concepts of the LID model, details of the model itself were not shared with any of the participants, nor were they asked to situate themselves in the model. My goal was to have students discuss their personal perspectives.

Before beginning each interview, an email confirmation of the time and place to meet (see Appendix D) and a copy of the informed consent form was sent to each participant (see Appendix E). Before the interview began, I reviewed the consent form and also answered any questions that the participant had. If they agreed to participate, each participant was then invited to pick a pseudonym, which has been used for identification and referencing purposes in this dissertation. In addition, any details that could potentially identify the participants were removed from the interviews prior to their analysis. Only I knew the actual identities of the participants. The second interview was booked prior to the participant leaving the room from the first interview. One participant could not schedule a second interview prior to the third, so both interviews were combined. All six participants completed all three of the interviews.

With permission from the participants, data from interviews were also digitally recorded using an iPhone with an external microphone. I also informed all participants that they would each receive copies of their interview transcripts for review. This process

of member checking provided them with an opportunity to read over what they had said to ensure its accuracy. Two participants sent back transcripts correcting some names and places. All documents, transcripts, and analyses were then stored securely on a password-protected personal computer in my locked office.

Drawing upon Seidman's (2006) recommendation for the writing of field notes immediately following each interview, I recorded reflective and descriptive notes from each of the interviews. Also, as recommended by Seidman, I spaced the interviews three to four weeks apart for each participant. This timing permitted the participant to have the opportunity to reflect on their previous interview, but not to lose a connection with the interviewer. As will be discussed later, the interviews were noticeably more content-rich as time went on. A contracted individual, who signed a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix F), and I shared the responsibility for transcribing the recordings of each of the interviews following the completion of all interviews.

### **Reflective Writing**

Participants in the study were also asked to reflect on and to write about their experiences as an SI leader during the 13 weeks they were involved in the study. The guided reflective questions are found in Appendix G. The process of reflecting on their experiences as an SI leader in the interviews and committing details to a journal may have also led the participants to recall more details related to their leadership experiences, which also had the potential to provide more answers to the research questions (Lyons, 2010).

The questions given to the SI leaders were meant to guide their reflective writing, focussing on their experiences in the position and what they felt and thought when they

first began the experience, as well as during the experience itself. Although the questions were intended to help guide the reflective writing, the participants submitted written answers to the questions and did not write much more than what was asked. To address the issue of time commitment and to adjust to participants who joined later in the winter semester, I accepted their responses to the guided reflective questions as they were completed. Some participants filled them out over the course of the semester, but most were unable to do so, and they sent them to me all at once at the end of the term. Some participants did not complete the last few questions due to lack of time. The data from all six participants were used, even though some participants did not complete all of their questions. Merriam (1998) would describe the reflective questions as “researcher-generated” documents (p. 119), and I, as the researcher, prepared them as the study had begun.

### **Document Review**

A document review was conducted to supplement the other methods used in this study. The documents reviewed in this study were the WCU SI training manual, SI leader job description, SI leader promotional poster, and the SI leader training schedule and training outline. The document review provided more information on whether or not the leadership development of the SI leaders was planned and/or intentional.

All the data collected were analysed as part of this study. The use of interviews, reflective writing, and document review were then triangulated to increase credibility and are discussed later in this chapter.

## **Data Analysis**

The goal of this descriptive case study was to describe the students' leadership identity development experiences and, more specifically, to explore what they experienced and how they experienced it as an outcome of their roles as SI leaders (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). During data analysis, I used all the data submitted to me from the six participants. All transcribed notes were organized, coded, summarized, and interpreted. Following Merriam's (2009) outlined levels of data analysis for qualitative research, I categorized and captured reoccurring patterns, then sorted categories and data, then named the themes. The names used for the themes were influenced by the research questions, my own experiences, and the meaning and words used by the participants (pp. 178-188).

The data were analyzed through direct examination of the interview transcripts, reflective writing submissions from each participant, and documents provided by the SI program manager. The pseudonym created by each participant was used to identify all interviews and transcriptions to increase the likelihood of anonymity. I used the NVivo software program ([http://www.qsrinternational.com/products\\_nvivo.aspx](http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_nvivo.aspx)) for computer-based analysis to handle the large amount of data produced and to maintain a complete log of sources and categories. All interview transcripts were uploaded in the program, and I was able to track my analysis using the software. The NVivo software program had many features that helped me analyze the data. I was able to colour-code data and create word clouds and word trees until I could identify themes. I carefully reviewed all transcripts to identify categories of meaning that lead to the development of themes related to the SI student leaders' experiences. Although one of the research questions used and the interview protocol were derived from Komives et al.'s (2005) study, the

themes derived from the LID model itself were not utilized or compared to these experiences and reactions until the last phase of data analysis.

### **Category Construction**

This study used the constant comparative method, as described by Merriam (1998). Constant comparative method is widely used in qualitative research; it works best when one is not seeking to build substantive theory. Each transcript was read, and categories were developed that captured reoccurring patterns in the content. Categories were shaped by my orientation and knowledge of the subject matter, by the purpose of the study, and by the meaning made by the participants themselves. Merriam noted that “the process of making sense out of the data which involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read—it is the process of making meaning” (p. 178).

### **Sorting Categories and Data**

I conducted the data analysis in three phases. In the first phase of analysis, I read through each interview transcript, reflective writing piece, and my notes for each participant, noting any general patterns that emerged. During the second reading of the transcripts, I began to identify words and phrases that signified meaning for the participant, and I created categories that were later substantiated with rich descriptions using participant’s own words from the interview transcripts. I created a code book to help identify what words were being used to code each of the transcripts. I also used the research questions to identify potential themes that I continued to code the data with. After using this process for each of the individual interviews, the text of the reflective writing was then coded and categorized into themes.

## **Naming the Categories**

Once the identification of general themes was completed, I reviewed the themes and categorized them according to the specific research questions. In the final phase of data analysis, I compared the themes from this study's data with the results of and the themes identified in Komives et al.'s (2005) grounded theory LID model to see if there were similarities and/or differences between the six stages and five influencing categories of the LID model and the themes that emerged from this study. At the conclusion of the data analysis phase, the extent to which the research questions were addressed was explored. I noted any other patterns that emerged from the analysis of the information collected that might have suggested new categories or had the potential to reinforce the LID theory. Throughout the data gathering and analysis, it was necessary to remain mindful of research confirmability and ethical guidelines.

### **Credibility, Consistency, Transferability, and Ethics**

According to Merriam (2009), there are several strategies that can be applied to enhance specific concerns in qualitative research and that "all research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner" (p. 209). One purpose of the case study methodology was to allow for potentially new constructs to emerge (Creswell, 2009). For the purpose of my qualitative research, I used the terms proposed by Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Merriam, 2009), which they called credibility, consistency/dependability, and transferability. These concepts as well as ethical considerations are addressed in this section.

#### **Credibility**

Merriam (2009) suggested basic strategies to use when establishing credibility:

1. Use multiple investigators, sources or methods;
2. Take the data and interpretations to the participants (i.e., member checks);
3. Adequate engagement in data collection and looking for data that support alternative explanations;
4. Peer examination of findings;
5. Participatory or collaborative modes of research and involving participants in all parts of the research;
6. Reflexivity: state assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study. (pp. 213-220)

To improve credibility for this study, member checking was employed, and the participants had the opportunity to review their interview transcripts for accuracy and to provide additional information on the data collected. Credibility was addressed by using multiple methods and data sources, and researcher reflexivity was stated at the outset of this study. While I was collecting the data, I was aware of my investment in the research and continuously reminded myself to keep an open mind about what I was hearing. I took notes of everything I thought and felt while listening to the participant or reading the transcripts and documents. I maintained a critical attitude with what I was reading, and using the research that had been done on SI, I contemplated what the SI program at WCU was doing differently and what it could be doing that others were. The research yielded some surprises, and I believe my willingness to be open minded produced outcomes I was not expecting.

## **Consistency**

Merriam (2009) described consistency in qualitative research as “whether the results are consistent with the data collected” (p. 221). Merriam suggested multiple methods of collecting data, peer examination, investigator’s positions, and the audit trail. The first three were used to improve credibility. To improve consistency, I used the LID interview protocol established by Komives et al. (2006), which included (a) making detailed interview notes following the interviews, (b) using digital audio recordings, (c) allowing participants to check the transcripts and the interview notes from their three interviews, and (d) using participants’ quotations when describing the findings. Further, each interview transcript and reflective writing submission was independently coded and analyzed using the NVivo software to produce an audit trail.

## **Transferability**

It was not the intent of this qualitative inquiry to generalize to all individuals, sites, or places outside of this study. Although a single-case study clearly is limited in both strength and range of transferability to the population, this does not take away from the relevant and unique attributes of the single case. Even though a researcher may be unaware of the range of transferability, it does not mean that transferability does not exist (Kennedy, 1979, p. 671). Kennedy (1979) and Merriam (1998) asserted that the judgement of whether or not a single-case study is transferable should be left with the reader and to those who wish to apply the data findings to their own situation. Merriam emphasized the strategies that would increase the knowledge transfer from researcher to reader. She asserted that if one begins with the worldview of qualitative inquiry, in which there are multiple constructions of reality, where the researcher is the primary instrument in the collection of

data and analysis, and where understanding and meaning are most important, the same issues of validity and transferability are viewed differently (p. 212). Thus, to improve the transferability of results of a qualitative study, Merriam (2009) later suggested the following strategies: (a) provide “rich, thick description”; and (b) describe how typical the program is in comparison to others (pp. 227-228).

The value of this study was the intention to explore and to explain the descriptions and themes that developed in the context of this one particular SI program and with these particular SI leaders. In addition to the above considerations, to further improve the trustworthiness of the findings, I documented my personal and professional background and potential biases about the SI program and its potential to influence the development of SI leaders *before* conducting this research and especially before conducting any interviews. This research involved human beings and, as such, adhered to ethical guidelines.

### **Ethics**

Merriam (2009) maintained that credibility, consistency, and transferability of a study relied heavily on the ethics of the researcher. The relatively small number of participants and the unique opportunity to gain access to the experiences of these participants made it necessary to employ safeguards to protect the identity of the SI leaders who chose to participate in this study and also to maintain the highest level of ethical care over both the interviews and the transcripts. Participants were informed about the purpose of the interviews prior to the start of data collection. In reporting the data and findings from this study, no reference was made to the declared majors or affiliations with a particular course for any of the participants.

Confidentiality was paramount. It was also important that participants received drafts of their interviews, as well as how they were quoted and interpreted in the research. It was also important for me to listen to concerns and to be truthful in answering them. I had no affiliation or prior experience with the SI program at WCU, but there was a chance that I might know one or more of the participants due to the small size of WCU. This was not the case. WCU's Ethics Board as well as the University of Calgary's (2012) Ethics Board both reviewed and approved the proposal for this study before it was undertaken. To further increase trustworthiness of the study and prior to conducting the research, I reflected on my biases and assumptions that may or may not have influenced how I conducted the study.

### **Researcher Bias and Assumptions**

Understanding my biases, assumptions, and my ethical stance were also paramount to the trustworthiness of this study. I had the opportunity to reflect critically on myself, as a researcher, and on conducting research within the same work context (i.e., campus) where I was employed. Although I worked on the same campus, I had no formal connection to the SI program and the SI leaders. When I was formulating my research interests and questions, I knew I wanted to study student leadership development and understand the concept of student leadership identity development further. I understood I had to find a group of students of whom I had little knowledge.

When I learned more about SI through a colleague of mine, I wondered what role the SI leader had in the programs' success. I found the literature noted the important role that SI leaders played in the success of the SI sessions. When I researched SI programs further, however, I found that the literature was sparse regarding the SI leader, a program's

impact on the success of SI sessions, and on what would impact the SI leader. I learned that SI leaders were trained to facilitate SI sessions using collaborative learning techniques and that the premise of SI was that learning occurred in a social environment (i.e., social constructivism). I believe the lack of research on the SI leader is related to the fact that the focus has been on the academic success of the students who are participating in the SI sessions. Surprisingly, little had been revealed about the SI leader's role in this success.

My biases towards student leadership development and my belief that learning is socially constructed led me to this particular research project. To defuse my power and biases with the participants, I consciously suspended judgement and ensured that I met with participants in a neutral space on campus; all interviews were conducted in a research lab. I informed participants that they could withdraw from the study, at any time, if they felt uncomfortable. I was also aware of my own biases during data analysis and recognized that my biases would influence my interpretations. In summary, I ensured that I had no contact with the SI program or with participants in this study, in any capacity, at WCU.

### **Summary**

The ontology and epistemological underpinnings of this research and the use of social constructivism as the theoretical framework that provides the foundation for SI and leadership studies have been described in this chapter. The descriptive case study methodology and methods used were detailed along with the process used to analyze the data. The issues and strategies used to address credibility, consistency, transferability, and ethics were also explained. My assumptions and biases as a researcher were critically reflected upon to provide a more transparent view of my own lens. In this next chapter, I

present a detailed description and thematic analysis of the results from the interviews and reflective writing.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: Findings**

The purpose of this study was to explore the characteristics, background experiences, academic programs, and previous leadership experiences of a group of student supplemental instruction (SI) leaders, using the leadership identity development (LID) model as a framework. The categories and themes derived from this case study data are outlined in this chapter as they relate to the following research questions:

1. What are the characteristics, background experiences, academic programs, and previous leadership experiences of the students who hold an SI leader position at WCU?
2. How does the description of these experiences align with the LID described in the Komives et al. (2005) model?
  - a. What are the factors that shape these experiences?
  - b. How does the description of these experiences align with the LID described in the Komives et al. (2005) model?

Prior to presenting the themes found in this study, I will present a thick and rich description of the case that is bounded by place and time. I will also present a description of the study participants.

### **The Case: The SI Program at WCU**

The university in this study is a Western Canadian, mid-sized, public university (WCU) located in a primarily agricultural setting. WCU has a history of offering leadership development programs in various areas, such as programs for orientation leaders, resident assistants, student group and association leaders, work-study students, and other peer-mentoring programs. The SI leader was a newly formed student leadership

position at WCU that has grown since its start in 2009. The SI program began as a pilot program in 2007, and in 2008, it won an internal WCU award for best student initiative. In 2013, an internal report was submitted to WCU indicating the learning model used in the SI program was positively impacting students' learning.

The combined mean course grade for the [supplemental instruction] participants was 2.72 as compared to 2.26 for the nonparticipants. The rate of P [Pass], NC [Not Complete], and W's [Withdraw] in the [SI] participant group (11%) was lower than the non-participant group (21%). Due to the small sample size, data must be interpreted with caution. (SI Coordinator, personal communication, September 10, 2013)

The data suggested that the SI-supported learning model made a difference in the students' learning. They were staying in higher education at a higher rate, thus affecting student retention at WCU. In this study, all SI leaders working January to April 2013, both the new and returning leaders, from the SI program at WCU were invited to be potential participants in this study (see Appendix A).

### **Course Selection**

At the time of the study, there were 36 work-study, funded SI leader positions for the 2012-13 academic semesters. Courses supported by the program were selected by attrition data (i.e., high dropout rate), high failure, and by request from students and faculty.

The SI program at WCU was similar to other SI programs found at other PSE institutions in North America and abroad. Positions include the SI coordinators, faculty, and SI leaders. However, though not as common in other SI programs, WCU also had SI mentors.

## **SI Coordinators**

SI coordinators may attend certification training with the International Centre for Supplemental Instruction at the University of Missouri in Kansas City. This is a train-the-trainer style of certification. The SI coordinators are then certified to lead the SI programs back on their campuses. The SI coordinator identifies courses that are appropriate, works with the faculty to develop the SI and the SI leaders, collects data on the outcomes and attendance of SI courses, serves as an advocate for the program, and provides the selection, training, and support for SI leaders (Van Der Karr, 2000). In the setting for this study, the SI coordinator had participated in this certification-training program and had been trained to appropriately select, train, and support the SI leaders. At the time of study, the SI program reported to the department of teaching and learning, and the program had one part-time coordinator and one part-time manager.

## **SI Faculty**

The faculty members at WCU who taught the academic courses that had been assigned to the SI leaders in this study were not required to attend any training, but were oriented to the program goals and the expectations of them as SI faculty members at WCU. The SI faculty members were also asked to give the feedback on the leaders' worksheets or session plans and were invited to participate in the SI leader training on Day 2 (see Appendix H). Typically, faculty members are strongly encouraged to meet regularly with the SI leader to help promote the program in the classroom, and they must be willing to mentor and spend time with the SI leader in order for the SI leaders' group to be successful (Kochenour et al., 1997). At WCU, as with many other SI programs, the

faculty members do not meet in advance with the students who attend the SI group; this ensures the faculty members are not biased by who is attending and who is not.

### **Role of Mentors**

The SI program at WCU also had an SI mentor program. SI mentors were senior SI leaders who had performed the duties of an SI leader and now acted as mentors to the SI leaders. These mentors had been an SI leader for one year and were interviewed after they applied to be a mentor.

### **SI Leader**

The SI leaders are student peers trained by certified SI instructors. The SI leaders facilitate and lead groups; have already demonstrated competence in the subject matter of the course they will be leading; and have participated in multiple-day training sessions that focus on learning how to facilitate student-student interactions, group facilitation, study skills, learning styles, and problem solving (Hurley et al., 2006; Martin & Wilcox, 1996). In the setting for this study, the SI leaders were paid for 10 hours of work per week over the 13-week academic term. As a condition of the work-study grants, the SI leader had to have been taking at least nine credits to qualify. SI leaders were given a staff parking discount. The process of SI leader recruitment also incorporated important elements of the SI program.

### **SI Leader Recruitment**

During the fall of 2012, the SI program received 50 applications for SI leaders, of which 24 were from male applicants and 26 were from female applicants. Out of the 50 applications, 14 leaders were hired for business, math, history, psychology, biology, chemistry, kinesiology, and English courses in which SI instruction was to be offered.

The SI leader recruitment process included marketing, interviews, and training. The SI leader position's hiring criteria at WCU were a minimum 3.0 GPA in the course they are being assigned to lead, enrolled in nine credits (i.e., full-time status), and the ability to commit to 10 hours per week for involvement in SI for a minimum of two terms. In addition, each SI leader must have formally applied for the position and must have also participated in an individual interview with the SI coordinators.

**Marketing.** The recruitment cycle for SI leaders started in March of 2011. The SI coordinator sent a request to faculty and current SI leaders asking them to submit referrals for potential SI leaders to the coordinator. The coordinator then held a marketing session in April 2011, where all the current SI leaders were present. The leaders shared their experiences of being an SI leader and answered any questions that the prospective applicants for SI leader positions had. The interested candidates then left their applications and resumés with the SI coordinator.

**Interviews.** The applications for SI leader positions were reviewed, and the qualified students were invited for a recruitment interview for an SI leader position. The interview focused on understanding why they were interested in being a leader; what strengths they thought they would bring to the SI program, including previous leadership, tutoring or group facilitation experience; and how they would be able to meet the demands of the program and commit to it (SI coordinator, personal communications, January 22, 2013). Faculty members were also asked to provide references for the SI leader applicants.

**Training.** WCU provided a 3-day intensive training workshop for the 14 SI leaders selected prior to the semester in which the year's SI program was being offered

and ongoing in-service workshops to continue reinforcement and support during the semester (see Appendix H). At the in-service workshops, participants shared successes and concerns. During the semester, the SI mentors and SI program administrators ensured that SI leaders were provided with constructive criticism on improving sessions. The SI leaders were also encouraged to observe each other's sessions. Modeled after the SI philosophy (Hurley et al., 2006), the WCU-SI training sessions used a variety of activities that taught the SI leaders strategies that emphasize learning skills, giving individualized feedback, and using collaborative and active learning in small groups of students. The training continued throughout the semester, and three in-service training programs were also held to further refine the SI leaders' facilitation skills. During that time, the SI leaders shared their personal experiences related to the SI sessions with each other to discuss what was working and what needed to be changed (SI coordinator, personal communication, January 22, 2013). The SI program used an SI leader manual adopted from another university's program (Thompson Rivers University, n.d.). The participants in this study were all SI leaders from September 2012 to April 2013.

### **Study Participants**

This study provided more details about how the six study participants experienced their position as an SI leader than had been collected by WCU previously. The participants' reflections demonstrated the dynamic and complex process of their understanding of their SI experience and their leadership identity development. These six SI leaders were different in their personal backgrounds, in the ways they came to become SI leaders, in their experiences prior to becoming SI leaders, and in the ways they came to see themselves as leaders. However, the participants did engage in a common process

to develop their SI leadership identity. As I will discuss later in this chapter, the process each described was also aligned with the process described in the Komives et al.'s (2006) LID model.

As this is a descriptive case study, I have provided a small description of each participant who participated in this study. The six SI leader participants were all part of the SI program at WCU. To protect their anonymity, pseudonyms have been used for each of the participants.

**Bernard.** Bernard was a 23-year-old Faculty of Science student in his third year of studies at WCU. He is the eldest of four children and lived at home with his parents. Bernard was very successful at school and active within his church, where he served on missions abroad and conducted ministry visits. Bernard described himself as a hard worker and practical. He had to overcome shyness as a child. He was involved in youth groups and had experience teaching prior to being an SI leader, and he has worked in landscaping and with youth groups. Bernard applied to be an SI leader to improve his application for medical school. He was an SI leader for two course sections. He found the SI experience to be very rewarding, and he was looking forward to the possibility of returning as an SI leader.

**Dawn.** Dawn was a 25-year-old Faculty of Science student in her final year of studies at WCU. She had an older brother and lived at home with her parents. She was homeschooled for a few years. In grade six, she went to a Christian school and was involved in youth group leadership. She was very successful at school. Dawn worked as a research assistant at WCU and was recommended to be an SI leader by one of the faculty members associated with the program. She attended a few SI sessions offered for one of

her courses prior to becoming an SI leader, and she felt transformed having had the SI leader experience. She also worked many hours during the week with people with developmental disabilities while finishing her degree in three years. Dawn was looking forward to graduating and pursuing professional studies in the health sciences.

**Eric.** Eric was a 25-year-old Faculty of Arts student in his fourth year of studies at WCU. Eric came from the UK and had a brother and two parents who still lived in the UK. He did well in school and enjoyed acting and speaking in public. After high school, he worked in the private sector, met his wife, and then moved to Canada. When Eric entered WCU, he found ways to become involved on campus. He was encouraged by his wife to apply to be an SI leader. He was the SI leader for two course sections during the academic semester, and he described his experience as an SI leader as being very positive. Eric looked forward to graduate school.

**Kayla.** Kayla was a 21-year-old Faculty of Arts student in her third year of studies at WCU. She was the younger of two girls in her family and lived at home with her parents. She was very successful at school and served on a mission trip abroad with her church prior to entering WCU. She has also worked in her community while attending WCU. A faculty member recommended Kayla for the SI leader position. She was the SI leader for two different course sections. Kayla loved her experience as an SI leader and was looking forward to the possibility of returning as an SI leader. Kayla looks forward to a career in business.

**Margriet.** Margriet was a 20-year-old Faculty of Arts student in her third year of studies at WCU. She grew up in Canada and was the second oldest child in her family, with three younger brothers and an older sister. She recounted how her own medical

issues deeply impacted her view of life. She was always considered creative and academically successful, enjoyed public speaking, and after high school, ran her own painting business. When she entered WCU, she had a work-study position related to her area of study. She attended and benefitted from the SI sessions offered for one of her courses prior to being asked to apply for the SI leader position. She was honoured and nervous to be asked to take on such a prestigious position. She was presented with the challenge to bring up attendance at the SI sessions. She was the SI leader for two course sections in the winter of 2013. Margriet described her SI experience as being very positive and looked forward to returning as an SI leader in the future. Margriet also was looking forward to a career in the arts.

**Victoria.** Victoria was a 20-year-old Faculty of Arts student in her third year of studies at WCU. She was the eldest of three and lived at home with her parents. She has always loved working with children. She was very shy as a young child and became involved in her church camp and in acting. She was part of her high school leadership team and was a mentor for students in grade nine. She volunteered in a classroom and babysat while attending WCU. She decided to apply to be an SI leader after attending a few SI sessions offered for one of her courses. She was an SI leader for one course section in the fall of 2012 and then was an administrative support person for SI leaders in the winter of 2013. She was looking forward to the possibility of returning to be an SI mentor. Victoria was hoping to enter the field of teaching.

With enthusiasm, all participants in this study provided information related to their experience as an SI leader and also to their experience with leadership all through

their lives. The information the SI leader participants provided was then collected, analyzed, and organized into themes that emerged from the data presented.

### **Study Findings**

The data from the participants' interviews and reflective writings demonstrated patterns that emerged and were then organized into themes and categories. The categories and themes were then divided into four areas related to the study's research questions which included the following: (a) participants' backgrounds, (b) impact of SI leader experience, (c) factors that contributed to the SI leader experience, and (d) leadership identity development. Data related to their previous work and leadership experiences, their personal characteristics, and academic achievements also revealed several common themes.

#### **Finding 1: Participants' Backgrounds**

As unique as each individual was in this study, some common themes were derived from the data regarding their personal characteristics, key people who influenced their lives, academic achievements, background experiences, and leadership experiences.

**Personal characteristics.** During the interviews, each participant was asked to describe how he/she became the person he/she is now. All participants described what they were like as children and how some of their personality characteristics had changed and some had not. Some themes emerged related to shyness, work ethic, faith/ beliefs, values, and ethics and integrity.

**Shyness.** Some participants described how shy they were as children and how they had to learn how to become more comfortable speaking in public and overcoming their shyness.

*Dawn* recalled how growing up at a camp her parents owned helped her overcome her shyness:

Well, I was really shy when I was young, very shy. I didn't like being in groups, let alone being the centre of attention in groups or anything, but then growing up, as I mentioned, I grew up at a camp. So I became very comfortable with the skills I developed there.

*Victoria* spoke about how getting involved in acting helped her talk to others and led to her involvement on the leadership team in high school:

Every time I talk about being in a leadership position, I always remember I didn't talk in school until I was in grade two. I was super shy and didn't like talking to people. My grade two teacher half way through the year called my mom and said that she just had to tell her that I spoke on my own without being asked today. It's crazy to think about where I am now and the beginning of my life. I was so scared of talking to people [and] nervous in situations. I started to open up, got into acting. Everyone was surprised about that. I found it freeing to play a different character. People weren't going to make fun of me for what I said; it was this different person. It opened up the door to freedom to talk to new people. In high school, I was on the leadership team. So that was good.

*Bernard* and *Kayla* also spoke of overcoming shyness and being timid when they were younger, but due to the encouragement of others, they took more risks and became more confident. All participants recognized how much they had changed in their ability to speak in front of others,

*Margriet* and *Eric* described themselves as comfortable with public speaking.

*Eric* has always felt very confident working in groups and recognized how he had to learn to actually hold back from taking control of conversations.

I was always confident, outgoing, personable, feel comfortable speaking to people, comfortable being with people, but I was always a little bit . . . tendency is to be a little bit too much, dominate conversation. I remember a few times in school I was in trouble. I was talking back to teachers [and] crossing the line feeling entitled at that point.

Regardless of how they saw themselves as children, all participants spoke about how they had to learn how to communicate in front of the students in SI sessions. For some, it was learning how to be in front of others and to speak, and for others it was learning how to sit back and listen. The impact the SI leader experience had on their communication skills is explored further later in this chapter.

**Work ethic.** Another evident theme was the SI leaders' work ethic. Participants attributed their academic success to their strong work ethic. For example, *Eric* talked about how it is not about how smart he was as much as it was about how hard he worked to get to where he is at academically:

So whenever someone has said to me, "That was smart," I just work really hard. The reason . . . I worked harder than you did. If you worked as hard as I have, you would get a good grade.

*Bernard* talked about how he influenced people by working hard.

I noticed that I preferred to work faster and harder and get stuff done faster than other people did who would sometimes prefer to work for a bit then talk for a bit, but not really do both at the same time very well. I noticed I liked to do everything and work fast and efficiently with our time. Usually that would influence other people to work a bit harder too. So I didn't have to say anything really, but just by working hard, it helped other people to work hard. I didn't have to say anything. Just work hard.

A strong work ethic may have contributed to their ability to manage the demands of the SI leader positions and their own academics.

**Faith/beliefs.** One thing evident from the interviews and the reflective questions was the importance of faith and spirituality. Many participants spoke about the role their faith played in who they are. *Dawn* spoke about how she prayed prior to her sessions: "As far as for [SI] sessions, I pray before my [SI] session that it will go well and [that] I will answer any questions they have before they leave, and we have good discussions."

Many participants cited service to others as the main reason why they chose to apply to be an SI leader. Some required further encouragement and nomination by a faculty member, but most viewed the position as a way to help others. Some viewed it as a way to improve their resume, and those who did, in the end, gained satisfaction from the feeling of having helped others. *Bernard* spoke about his background of service and working in his church:

My involvement in my church is a big source for leading a good example in serving others. I've had various opportunities with them to provide service to other people, and so it's been, it's really helped me not to focus on myself and to focus on the needs of other people and to evaluate their needs. It helps you appreciate what you already have, that kind of thing.

*Margriet* spoke of how her beliefs connect to the concept of leading others, and she connected to the term servant leadership:

My religion plays a big part of [who I am]. I think, as a Christian, we have to treat others with respect and kindness and show the love of Christ to the people around you. It has really helped me recognize what a leader is and servant leadership, and it is about giving back.

*Kayla* also attributed her development as a leader to her involvement in her church and shaped by her beliefs:

Growing up in the church, having that sort of knowledge and feeling secure in myself, I can see that benefitting me as a leader. I mean I had a bunch of experiences through that [which] have helped me to develop. My beliefs are definitely part of what has shaped me.

The participants mentioned their involvement in church activities frequently, and the impact of this involvement was also evident from data collected in this study.

**Values.** As mentioned previously, many participants were heavily involved in their church and organized religion. Dawn mentioned that her faith probably has had

more impact on her than her gender and race. She spoke about how she felt more of a connection with people who shared the same values and beliefs as she does:

Probably the thing that has the biggest influence will be my faith. . . . I connect most with people that share my faith or at least my values. The people I have felt I have gotten close to, and have more of a mentor role with, end up having conversations about church along the line, “Oh, you go to church too.” It has just happened that way; we have a connection and find out that it is why we related in that way. Then again, I have not felt any difficulties with people that don’t share my beliefs.

*Margriet* also spoke about her identity as a Christian and how it has influenced everything she does. She spoke about her sense of service to others: “As Christians, we have to treat others with respect and kindness and show the love of Christ.” She reflected on how this has impacted her leadership style: “I think that has played a major role in it and that is why I don’t try to put myself ahead of anyone and be approachable and be on the same line as everyone.”

*Bernard* spoke about how his values had also impacted how he is with others. He described how “being personable, focused on helping others, focused on bringing people to a new plan or something, not a self-gratifying position” is important for him. He said,

You do your best, and you work hard. It is hard to slack off as a leader because it just doesn’t work. It can work, but if you put more effort, then everyone gets more out of it. It would be much more meaningful.

The conceptual lens of relational leadership (Komives et al., 2007) included the element of ethics—being guided by a system of moral principles. Many of the participants had strong identities connected to their religion and beliefs, and they articulated their strong moral and religious values in this study.

**Ethics and integrity.** Participants all indicated a strong sense of ethics and expectations from others in the SI team. *Eric* spoke about how ethics are covered in training and that it is assumed that SI leaders are hired with their ethics in mind.

I think it plays a big part. In [SI] especially, . . . in our pre-service training, we have a lecture on ethics and different codes of conduct because we are dealing with information. . . . At the same time, you have responsibilities. It is one of those things that the people who get hired to be SIG leaders usually have these qualities. It is built into what they already have.

The other participants described factors that aligned with the concept of ethical leadership, which complemented the descriptions of Komives et al. (2007), who had described ethical leadership as knowing your moral purpose and having the courage to live them in all parts of your life in service of the common good (pp. 189-191). *Kayla* connected leadership with ethics and integrity. She equated leadership with being able to stand out from others and stand up for what you believe in:

So somebody who is really ethical is usually taking a leadership stance because a lot of people aren't. That way they are standing out. Same with integrity, they go hand in hand. If you are being ethical, you are taking integrity.

*Margriet* and *Eric* both spoke of how ethics and integrity will build trust and that without trust, you cannot lead: "A big role because if you don't, if you are not ethical or have integrity then people don't respect you anymore or they distrust you and trust is a major role in leadership situation" (*Margriet*).

*Victoria* also spoke of how ethics and leadership are connected. She spoke about a line she would not cross and that although she considered herself more of a follower, she would not do something she did not feel was right:

I am still a follower in most situations, but there is a line I won't cross, things I won't follow, and there are situations I am the leader, even though I don't have an authoritative personality. Everyone can be a leader, and everyone is a leader in some way.

*Victoria* described a time when her beliefs were challenged, and she was being judged during a job interview. Although she was discouraged she did not get the job, she felt pleased that she had taken a stand for what she believed in:

It was good, a good experience for me to be like “NO” this is who I am. You don’t have to agree with that; that is fine. That was the first time I had to stand up and be like NO this is who I am. That was good for me. You know, I am upset I didn’t get to go, but no, it was good for me to stand up for me.

All but one participant described entering the SI leadership experience with a strong Christian identity, and, as a result, a firm sense of values, ethics, and integrity. The only outlier was *Eric*. He did not mention his current involvement in the church, but he did mention his first leadership experience as being an altar boy. He described it more as “putting on a show.”

**Key people.** The category of “key people” was created to describe the people the participants felt had influenced them and the person they had become. These people had encouraged the participants in some aspect of their growth and in different ways. When asked who had had a large part in how they became the person they are today, the participants spoke about parents, siblings, pastors, and teachers as the people who were the most impactful when they were younger. This was not surprising. Komives et al. (2005) spoke about the role of older adults in the students’ lives and that, as in this study, the adults helped build confidence and provided support and encouragement. This category included the themes of parents and family members, mentors, and peers. *Dawn* articulated this well when she described the large support system she had growing up: “My parents. All my teachers in high school. My pastor. All of my friends’ parents. Some of my professors. A lot of my friends. I have a large support system.”

All participants spoke about the impact that their parents had on their development. *Eric* reflected on how his father impacted him in that he shared some personality characteristics with his father. He felt that being quick-witted and funny has helped him be a better SI leader: “My father was a bus driver for 30 something years; he is always, not educated, not educated formally, but very quick witted and very funny guy. So I guess that kind of rubbed off on me.”

The participants also had siblings they attributed as having an impact on who they are today. *Dawn* attributed her success to keeping up with her brother:

My brother I'd say is a huge inspiration. He's always been smarter than me and better with people; mind you he's got four years on me. He was a youth leader in the youth group before I was and that is what made me want to do it. I always measured up to him. So while he aced an exam, when I am in that grade writing that exam, I need to ace it. When he is a youth leader, I need to be a youth leader.

Mentors included the older adults, teachers, pastors, advisors, and coaches. It was from these people that the participants learned what leadership looked like. While growing up, teachers played a large part in the participants' lives. The encouragement they received was recognized as a large part of their development as a person and as a leader. *Victoria* recalled her leadership teacher's encouraging influence, and *Dawn* recounted how her running coach encouraged her to take on more responsibility to lead.

The influence of peers emerged as another theme. Some participants spoke about how friends would challenge them academically or would bring in different viewpoints than what they were used to while in their families. *Margriet* appreciated her friends' different viewpoints. Each participant described how they were impacted and encouraged by others to take risks and that the support made a significant difference to them: “She kind of challenged me, opened my eyes, which was very cool because we have

completely different worldviews” (*Margriet*). *Kayla* also remembered how her friends played an important role in her academic success by challenging her to do better.

So then in high school, I always took difficult classes. I think my friend L. was a big part of shaping who I am too. We were always competitive with each other. Both good at math and science and things like that. So we would always take classes together and asked what mark did you get? So we took math 10 honours together and then Math 11 honours and then Math 12 in grade 11 and took calculus in high school. That class was actually a lot of fun. Because in high school, we had this kind of nerd group of friends who took this honours class together. I mean, I don’t know how I went to school at 7 am every other day for a year.

Linking back to the previous theme, *Dawn* mentioned how her relationship with God has impacted her and how her beliefs are the reason she is who she is today:

Also, as a Christian, it is a lot about God and what does he want for your life and things. I have learned a lot of through that aspect too, and God has a plan for you to make a difference. A lot of faith-based encouragement.

The participants all spoke about the people who had influenced them to become the persons they are and had encouraged them to apply to be an SI leader.

**Academic achievements.** Something all the participants also had in common was that they had all experienced academic success in the K-12 system and had continued to achieve high academic success in their post-secondary studies. This was not surprising since the requirement for the SI leader position is to have a grade of A or higher in the course that they would support. The participants were also from a variety of disciplines (see Table 2), which was also not surprising, since the SI program at WCU supports a variety of courses in the sciences and arts. Academic success was seen as a priority for all participants. *Kayla* spoke about how her whole identity has been about achieving high grades in school and reflected on this:

It is kind of hard to separate myself from it [school] sometimes. It is almost my identity, and I kind of think about that, and in the future, it is going to be my job too. . . . school experiences on the whole have shaped me a lot.

*Dawn* spoke about taking extra courses to complete her degree sooner while maintaining a 4.2 GPA:

I have been taking classes every term since I began, sometimes taking six courses a semester. I started fall of 2010, and I will be graduating spring of 2013, so three years later. So I have condensed my degree, which is a four-year degree plus a minor.

The diversity of the participants' academic programs was expected since the SI program is multi-disciplinary. All participants spoke positively about how the diversity in academic programs lent itself to more learning and understanding of each other's areas of study.

**Previous work experiences.** Participants recounted many of their first experiences with leadership as being related to activities in the church, school, and work. Some participants have continued to serve within their church throughout their university years, have taken on increasingly more responsibility, and have been able to experience more leadership opportunities, allowing them to develop leadership skills within their church. Other participants have volunteered or worked at WCU and in the community. The research confirmed that involvement in meaningful experiences can have a significant impact on a student's leadership development (Astin & Astin, 2000; Dugan, 2006; Komives et al., 2007; Kuh, 1991).

*Dawn* took on the manager's role at her part-time job when the previous manager quickly left and she saw a need to fill the position. *Bernard* has consistently served within his church and reflected on how his role with the teams has changed as he has gotten more experience and has grown older. He spoke of how he began as being a participant

and then was asked to take on more responsibility. He now feels more confident. He commented about how his previous teaching experience has also taught him skills and about himself:

Probably in the young men's program was one of the first times. Going from attending the activities to sometimes planning the activities and having input in that . . . helped me appreciate how much goes into planning activities. It is not just everyone shows up, and it magically works. You have to think ahead of different things, different issues that could go wrong with the activity, what can you do to make it more successful, who is bringing what, what has to be done in advanced? How will you let people know those kinds of things? Sometimes it takes delegation and those kinds of meetings. So, yeah, [it] just helped me be more aware of those kinds of things.

*Kayla* worked in her community and also took time after high school and participated in church missions:

Growing up going to church. Being involved in the community. . . . Being on mission trips to Mexico City, and we get to Vancouver for a week, that one was cool. After I graduated, I decided to do something out of my character. I always thought I would just go straight to university. So, I actually went to Austria for six months, and I went to bible school there, studied and met a whole bunch of different people. It was probably the best six months of my life; it was really, really good.

*Victoria* also worked and volunteered in church activities and babysat for families. Prior to becoming an SI leader, she taught at the day camp for her church. She reflected on how she gained confidence with her increased responsibilities:

I worked at my church doing day camps. I was the assistant director there. That was good too. We were dealing with kids and also the other interns. I was having to work with them, especially my second year with the new ones who had never seen day camp before: explain things, answering questions. It was such a casual environment that it didn't really seem like a big deal to be in that position.

The participants also gained leadership experiences outside of the church.

*Margriet* ran her own house painting business after high school and became heavily

involved in the non-profit sector as a speaker for an organization she felt personally connected to. She also had a work-study position at WCU prior to becoming an SI leader:

Then after school, I right away went into university, and the summer after I graduated [high school] was when I was going off my medication, and the summer of 2011, I worked with student works painting, and I ran my own business in the [City] area and hired painters, quoted jobs, and all that kind of stuff with the help of my district manager, and it was a really interesting experience. I learned a lot from it, and it was also very difficult. I was a good thing, and I learned about myself and strengths and weaknesses.

*Eric* worked in a variety of jobs during high school, mostly retail. He reflected on how much they taught him about working with people. Also, since coming to WCU, he has held a variety of volunteer and employment positions with Campus Student Life. He also found that those experiences helped him learn how to deal with people and to remain positive:

I have had other jobs. The one thing jobs have taught me is that if you can find something to invest yourself in, even if you don't particularly like it, if there is an element of it that engages you or that challenges you or that you enjoy, you know, something that sparks in you; that is always good I think. Because I have had jobs that are bad across the board or unenjoyable across the board, it makes a difference I think in your home life and in your professional life, and yeah, I guess . . . being positive on jobs.

*Dawn* had been working with people with developmental disabilities after high school and made the move to return to school to pursue her career goals. She continued working part-time while at WCU pursuing her degree. While at WCU, she held research assistant positions prior to becoming an SI leader and reflected that:

So, the first day of classes in fall 2011, a prof I had taken a class from before (I aced the course), and he asked me to do some research with him. That was kind of the beginning of my involvement beyond student life. That was a fantastic experience. I did that for the fall and winter semesters. In the winter semester, one of my professors, asked me to be an instructor for a research project she was doing for kids with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, which was phenomenal. She asked me to drive because I have a class 4 license. She then asked me to stay on as an instructor. That was good. I just really enjoyed being involved in the school

beyond just studies. I really wanted to get the most out of the experience, and I felt like I was.

The participants shared many examples of how previous work and volunteer experience and the SI experience exposed them to working with others, engaging in teams, and experiencing different leadership styles, and all contributed to their understanding of what leadership is.

**Previous leadership experiences.** Besides the work and volunteer experiences that the participants shared, they spoke about their previous formal experiences with leadership development activities. *Bernard* shared how his church has developed a leadership program that has guided him as he learned to serve his community better.

*Victoria* recalled how she was first introduced to the concept of leadership in high school: “I guess in leadership in high school, when . . . we started to do career tests and personality tests. . . . They started to say, “You are a leader,” and we studied qualities of leaders and started to think.”

*Kayla* recalled being part of an inaugural leadership course in high school and stated,

In Grade 12, I was in leadership as well. I always enjoyed stuff like that. I learned to, I don't know, plan lots of things. I really like being in control. I am a little bit of a bossy pants according to my family.

*Margriet* also had some involvement in organized leadership programs in high school:

Oh yeah, and throughout high school, I was involved in the Student Action Leadership Team. They called SALT because they didn't really have a council or student council so they had that instead.

Early leadership experiences the participants described focused on action and doing leadership. It was not until post-secondary that participants learned more about leadership concepts.

*Dawn* spoke about a course she took during her first semester as an SI leader that taught her a variety of leadership concepts:

This is not even in my department. I am a business minor, and there was a business course on training and development that I really enjoyed, and the three main projects were presenting information on strictly information, on a topic, and one on teaching at a deeper level, like teaching a bit of an experience, like a skill. Yeah, the first one was more knowledge based, the second one was more skill based, and then the third one was like a teamwork concept. So that one helped me become more confident in presenting information because that course had a lot of leadership identification activities. I took that last semester, so first semester of [SI], I still hadn't identified myself as a natural strong leader. It just turned out [that] me and two other people in the class were the ones who took over the leadership role.

*Eric* recalled participating in informal opportunities to mentor others in elementary school and being on sports teams, but no courses. He spoke about how many of his leadership skills have come from his work experience and working with people different from him:

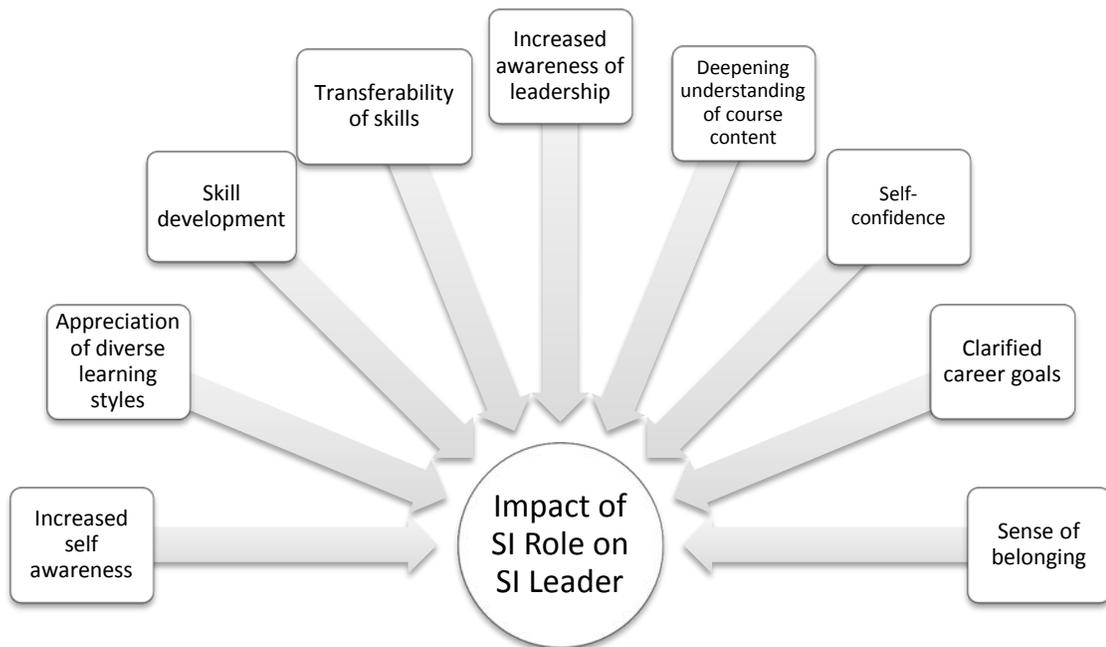
There have been informal things. Little things back in school . . . both in elementary and high school. We had a student mentor, prayer partners. It was some kind of religious way, helping people get through. Those kinds of little things, nothing formal.

Most previous leadership experience was through work and volunteer opportunities. A few participants took formal leadership courses, but they were limited in what they covered.

## **Finding 2: Impact of SI Leader Experience**

The following themes relate to how the participants described their experiences while working in their SI groups. Participants spoke about what they learned about themselves, new skills they had learned, and some observations about what the experience has meant to them (see Figure 3). Eight areas of impact emerged from a thematic analysis of the responses of the SI leaders, which included the following:

(a) increased self-awareness, which included articulating personal strengths and weaknesses and areas of personal growth; (b) greater appreciation of diverse student learning styles; (c) increased skill development, which included interpersonal skills, facilitation, critical thinking, and leadership skills; (d) transferability of skills (e) increased awareness of leadership, which included their view of how their concept of leadership changed; (f) increased self-confidence; (g) deepened understanding of course content; (h) clarified career goals; and (i) increased sense of belonging.



*Figure 3.* Impact of SI leader experience on participants.

**Increased self-awareness.** The theme of increased self-awareness was used to describe the experiences that leading SI groups had on the participants' overall sense of themselves. All participants described how the SI leader experience had confirmed or revealed personal areas of growth and strengths. Some participants were self-aware prior

to the SI leader experience. *Bernard* spoke about how his previous experiences had helped him to develop patience in his SI groups and that he was aware of the need to continue to work on this. *Bernard* knew he had to continue to improve upon that personal quality. He now thinks it is one of his better qualities, as evidenced by this comment:

I am usually very patient, but sometimes when I just explain something three times and it's not quite sinking in, I am "What's going on?" Being patient has become one of my better qualities that I'm still working on . . . certain days and with certain people.

*Eric* spoke about having developed an understanding of his strengths and weaknesses and about feeling more able to handle what might come up in SI sessions: "I am now more aware of what my strengths and weaknesses are. So, even if I have doubts about something, I have a clearer idea of what the best thing would be for me to do about it."

*Victoria* spoke about how she had learned that she was able to step out of her comfort zone and realized that "I am capable of much more than I ever thought I was." She also connected how the SI experience impacted her leadership growth and her personal growth: "Maybe it's the same thing. They focus on developing us as leaders, but it also develops us personally."

*Dawn* wrote about being more vulnerable in sessions and being increasingly comfortable with not knowing everything. She also mentioned how the skills she learned in the SI sessions have carried over a bit into her life outside of SI:

I learned to be vulnerable. I am not one to typically enjoy such a state, but I have seen the benefits it can produce. I also learned to be more comfortable in leadership. Since starting as a [SI] leader, I have seen myself take on leadership roles in ways that I would not have considered before. I think this is because I have become more comfortable with it, having practiced leading and seeing my successes.

*Eric* also talked about how he had had to learn to be more patient. He also recognized that his preference for getting things done quickly was a weakness identified in the SI sessions and that being patient was important:

I have had to learn how to be patient. I think [I'm] still learning how to be patient and find it difficult at times, because I am used to working or thinking at a certain speed in a certain order or certain skill level or whatever and then because so much of university [is] honing those skills.

The participants all became more self-aware from their experiences as SI leaders and also became more able to identify and acknowledge their areas of growth and successes.

**Greater appreciation of the diversity of student learning styles.** A common theme that all participants spoke about was learning about different learning styles. This was expected since the SI program at WCU introduced learning styles as a means of demonstrating how students learned differently. As part of their training, SI leaders assess their own learning styles and analyse how their styles affect their choices and approaches toward learning, and they come to understand ways to accommodate the different learning styles in each of the SI sessions. *Kayla* mentioned learning about her own learning style and understanding herself better:

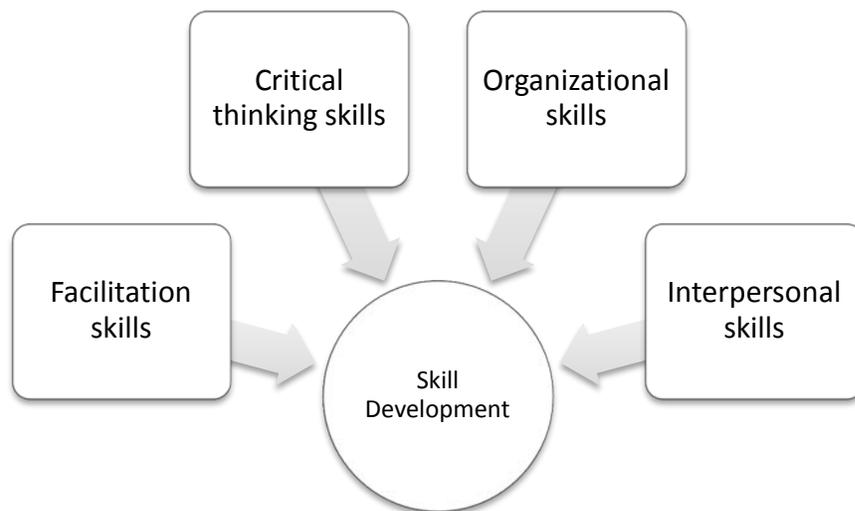
Sometimes, I feel frustrated because they don't learn the way that I do. So in that way, I have been exposed to a lot of different levels and just kind of being surprised. You are actually really smart; I don't understand why you are not doing so well. In my mind, maybe before this, effort always equals high grades, but for a lot of people it isn't. That is definitely something that has changed this year. I think I learned more about my learning style this year.

Other SI leaders interviewed felt frustrated when trying to facilitate the sessions with students with diverse learning styles. *Bernard* shared his initial feelings when he encountered the diverse learning styles and commented,

It was a little bit frustrating just to deal with that, but it was okay. It is what it is, and you can't do much about it. I worked with people who are different. For the most part, I am fairly easygoing, fairly flexible with most people I guess.

All participants appreciated learning about the learning style theories and that it had helped them to understand the students better as well as increased their understanding of their own learning needs.

**Increased skill development.** Participants spoke about the many skills they had learned and improved upon as a result of their SI leader experiences, such as facilitation skills, critical thinking skills, organizational skills, and interpersonal skills such as communication and listening (see Figure 4). They also spoke about how they had used these new or improved skills outside of the SI program.



*Figure 4.* Skill development of SI leader participants.

**Facilitation skills.** All participants spoke about how they learned to understand the difference between teaching and facilitation in the SI training program. Some participants spoke about how the facilitation of a student's learning requires patience and letting go of their own opinions. They mentioned how they had to learn to be vulnerable

and demonstrate humility in sessions. Some participants had to learn to allow others to control and participate, while other participants were open to others leading. *Bernard* spoke about how learning facilitation skills has changed the way he views teaching and how he has become more personable:

I learned that facilitating is a much better form of teaching. This is something I knew before, but I hadn't had as much experience doing it before. It is not easy to accomplish. It takes some effort and time to get the students comfortable enough for you to be able to facilitate. Being personable and real is the key to this.

*Eric* wondered about the link between facilitation and leadership in stating,

I don't know if SIG leader is a bit of a misnomer, but I guess you have to say it because we are leading the session, but at the same time, you are a facilitator. There is an element of leading in that, I guess, but I don't know.

*Victoria* spoke about how foreign facilitating was for her prior to the SI leader experience and that it has now become very natural to her: "Facilitation was not natural at all. It is a hard concept to wrap your head around. What do you mean? Am I not allowed to say anything? . . . Now it is really natural [to me]."

*Dawn* also wrote about how much she learned about herself while being an SI leader. She found it difficult to prepare for SI sessions and that learning the facilitation skills was a challenge. It took time, but she felt much more confident in her abilities when she saw success in the students. It was from seeing the student successes that she knew she had had an impact, as reflected in her comment:

I learned a lot about myself through my experience as an SI leader. I discovered strengths as a leader, social facilitation, and critical thinking skills. My successes and the feedback I received developed my confidence in these skills and allowed me to use them more effectively. My major challenges were in situations where I was faced with material I was not confident in. This taught me that thorough preparation is necessary for me to lead the best way that I can. My major successes were when students did better on their tests than they had originally expected or hoped for—that was when I knew I was most effective. I like to think that this [facilitating learning and developing independent and group study skills]

was one of the main effects I had on the group, coupled with providing motivation and direction for the future to those who were open to discussing their goals with me. I feel I was as prepared as I could have been for leading SI session. The biggest learning curve I had after pre-service training was implementing the redirection strategies we learned during training, and that simply takes time.

***Increased critical thinking skills.*** The participants learned how to disseminate the information covered in the course material and to think critically about presenting the material in a manner that would be responsive to their students' different learning styles. The expectation that SI leaders would incorporate critical thinking and problem-solving strategies into the SI session, resulted in improving their own critical thinking skills. In training, SI leaders practiced questioning, redirecting, and using open-ended, higher-level questions (Lipsky, 2006). Both *Dawn* and *Victoria* spoke about how the SI experience improved their critical thinking skills. *Victoria* said that the SI leader experience "helped develop those critical thinking skills," while *Dawn* listed the skills she felt she learned: "I learned a lot about myself through my experience as an SIG leader. I discovered strengths as a leader, social facilitation, and critical thinking skills." By teaching the students to think critically about the material covered in the courses, participants also improved their own critical thinking skills. For example, *Victoria* spoke about how the SI leader meetings were run like SI sessions and that they were taught to conceptualize, apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the information about the students in the course and their different learning styles. The SI leaders were taught to dig deeper into the course material rather than regurgitate information.

***Improved organizational skills.*** The participants had to juggle their own full-time student status (a requirement of the work-study position), maintain high GPAs, and work; all participants also worked or volunteered off-campus while in their positions as an SI

leader. It was not surprising to find that the participants had all learned to manage their time more effectively and to organize their priorities while in their SI leader positions.

*Eric*, for example, reported that his ability to manage his time improved and that this allowed him to enjoy other things:

In addition, my time-keeping abilities have greatly improved this semester, which is such a crucial component of undergraduate life, especially when you're working at the same time. As a corollary, my stress levels this semester have been considerably lower than they were during my first semester as an [SI] Leader, when they were an ongoing concern for a considerable part of the term.

*Victoria* realized how important goal setting was to being a leader, and by setting specific goals, she would be able to see how far she had come:

Definitely before SIG, I didn't think about leaders having goals about what they wanted to accomplish personally and how they want to grow as a leader and goals for the students, even in a session, what do you want to accomplish, which I never thought about. It sounds so obvious. Of course teachers had goals; my parents had goals when they were raising us. Just being really specific, learning how to be specific in those goals.

The SI leaders also met their own academic obligations and balanced the SI leader work, which also improved their time management skills. The time demands of the SI leader position taught the participants how to organize their lives more effectively.

***Improved interpersonal skills.*** The participants also mentioned how they came to realize the importance of building relationships with the students in their SI sessions. They mentioned how they thought that the SI experience had helped them to improve their communication skills. For instance, *Eric* wrote about how he had learned to stop talking and to let others speak:

Another challenge for me is to not dominate sessions. My tendency is to talk, and I enjoy the give-and-take of a robust discussion, but my personal habits have to be reined in in the SI sessions. I feel I have been quite successful at this—I am getting better at knowing when the students need me to speak and when they need me to be quiet or step back.

Most participants reported improving how they communicated with the students in the sessions. *Kayla* recalled how the SI team talked about how it was okay to be more social with the students. She had not thought about that before and was apprehensive:

If I would have known this in the beginning, I may have approached my sessions with even more of a social atmosphere so that students get to know each other and connect early on—something I want to work on next year.

*Victoria* expressed her desire to build “personal relationships” and how she held that value coming into the SI leader position. She described how important it was to invest in people by “getting to know who they are and how they work.” *Bernard* spoke about how having a rapport with the students created respect for one another: “Over time, I have been able to develop a good rapport with the students, where they respect me and I respect them.”

*Eric* described a conversation he had had with the SI faculty member he worked with, where they had discussed how teaching has changed to be more developmental and has taken a new direction that emphasizes the personal approach. He adopted this approach in his SI sessions and stated, “Getting to know students, trying to connect to them, beyond the parameters, still within the teacher-student model. I guess, again, obviously that is what is going on now that has influenced me.”

*Bernard* wrote about how, as his confidence grew, he relaxed more than he was able to before and was able to develop closer relationships with the students, which, in turn, increased his success in the SI groups: “My effectiveness of facilitating has also improved; it was much more natural by the end of the year.” *Victoria* summed it up nicely, mentioning the ability to relate to the students as the tool to a successful SI group:

It would totally fit into my definition of a leader. Valuing that personal relationship and building that up. Without it, . . . you can have all the best worksheets in the world, and you will not make the same achievement as if you have a relationship with them.

The participants experienced improved communication and relationship-building skills.

***Transferability of skills.*** All participants reported being able to apply the skills they had learned during the SI experience to other areas of their lives. This was also in line with research on the SI leader benefits (Lockie & van Lanen, 2008; Stout & McDaniel, 2006; Zaritsky & Toce, 2006). *Victoria* reflected on how she has used what she has learned outside of the SI group:

Now, facilitation is so easy. I use my facilitation skills a little bit in other classes, and they don't even know what I am doing, but it is working. Conversation dies out, and so I am like, "What about this?" [Facilitation] draws it out again. . . . It's rewarding to see those skills be used in different ways.

*Bernard* was able to use what he had learned in SI sessions with his other work teaching Sunday school and commented,

I think the facilitation skills, new teachings skills, I kind of knew, but not as explicitly as they are played out in the SI program. I've carried that over to other things, to Sunday school. I try to facilitate a little more than lecture.

*Dawn* spoke about how she was comfortable and was now more able to use her new skills while leading a workshop with a friend and that she would organize study groups for her own courses to help her study:

Facilitation and leadership skills for sure. I just led an 80-minute lecture with a friend. She was so nervous. She was white as a ghost. I was totally comfortable, probably because I have had a [SI] session bigger than the number of students [in that co-facilitated class]. I think we have 18 students in that class. I have had [SI] sessions bigger than that. So I am up front lecturing the whole time as opposed to facilitating, but I use those skills. I said, "Why don't we engage the students more, let's create discussion." I noticed she was quite uncomfortable with those silences, and I was totally fine, just letting them think it out. Picking certain people that looked like they had certain things they were not going to share. She

would want to rush on, and I would kind of bring it back and pick on people. That's facilitation for sure.

*Victoria* was excited with the skills she had learned from SI groups while presenting in a class. "It was the first time outside of a session. I was like WOW. These skills work! It's something I would have never been able to do a year ago."

Participants also reported getting involved in other leadership opportunities, both within and outside of WCU, as a result of their experience in the SI leader position. Kayla spoke about how her experience has led to opportunities outside of WCU: "It has also given me the opportunity to grow into new leadership positions at WCU and think about leading in different ways outside school."

**Increased awareness of leadership.** The participants mentioned how their leadership skills and views on leadership had changed since experiencing the SI leader position. Reflecting on her experience within the SI group, *Victoria* identified how leading an SI session was about stepping back and allowing the group to function. Her experience of leading an SI session has changed how she views leadership and how different leadership can look:

Constantly realizing the value of everyone in the whole relationship. The program does not rely on the leader. If the leaders are replaceable, someone else can do the job. One of the students if trained to do it and to realize [they can do it]. . . . I think that is something in the model that we have talked about. If you are a good leader and facilitator, you can step back, and everyone will keep going. So you don't have to always be directing each minute of the session . . . just letting them go. I realized that a successful leader could take themselves out of the picture, and the session doesn't fall apart. So realizing that and seeing it be successful, it's a different definition of a leader.

*Victoria* also realized that leadership does not look the same for everyone. She acknowledged that she sets a different "tone" than others, in "realizing everyone has

different capabilities, and everyone leads differently. I think when a leader walks into a room, they set the tone. Their tone is different than the tone I set.”

In his reflective writings, *Bernard* wrote about how he viewed leadership as a process, and he viewed his role as interdependent. He spoke about how his view of leadership has changed:

I think my definition of a leader has changed through this experience. It's not just telling people what to do or showing them what to do or just answering questions. It's really about meeting people where they are and then working with them to bring them to where you want them to get to. My leadership in this role is to be directly involved as little as possible. My job isn't to tell students how to solve a question. Rather it is to start with what they know, help them approach the question in the right way, and have them find the solution for themselves, and to get them to help each other in this process. I know I'm doing my job right when I can just sit back and watch them help each other in these steps of solving a problem.

From participating in the study and from experiencing the facilitative nature of the SI leader position, *Eric* was beginning to consider a different definition of leadership than the one he was familiar with. He saw leadership as being fluid and flexible. He viewed it as “letting go of control.” The way he described it indicated that he understood it to be a process and that everyone is responsible:

I would argue that the term “leader” in my definition is different from other definitions. It is ironic that we are called [SI] Leaders, in that our focus in sessions is *not* leading the session in the manner that a professor does (i.e., lecturing, asking questions, etc.), but in *facilitating* and *guiding* students in the sessions. Even though we might be at least partially driven by ego in our jobs as [SI] Leaders, it's not just a case of being an [SI] Napoleon—leading from the front in sessions and student interactions is definitely not a good direction to go in. My idea of myself as a leader is someone who can manage a classroom, introduce topics, guide discussion, introduce ideas, and aid the development of others. When I call myself a “leader”, these are the qualities that I think of.

*Margriet* articulated how her definition of leadership had also changed due to the SI leader experience and that it was “no longer someone who is authoritative, but

someone relatable, someone who is understanding, feels comfortable with talking about yourself.” She spoke about how a leader is a guide, role model, and “someone who becomes that person who may influence a decision you make, not necessarily the one who tells you what to do.”

*Kayla* mentioned how the SI sessions were most successful when she could let the group take care of itself. “That is the best feeling when you can sit back, they actually do it, participating, talking to each other.” *Dawn* also spoke about how her definition of leadership has changed. She saw how anyone could be a leader and stated,

I think that it is a lot more obtainable. Probably before I would have thought about leadership as: That person is a leader and that person is a leader. Now, I think I can be a leader, and really anyone can be a leader, and you need to develop those skills.

**Increased self-confidence.** A general theme all participants spoke about was how much they had increased their confidence in their ability to lead an SI session and how this confidence spilled over into other areas of their life. *Bernard* spoke about how much more confidence he felt about his role than when he first met with the students in the SI session: “I’m definitely better as a leader now than I was at the start. Back then, I was probably more stressed than the students were!” *Eric* also noticed how he feels much more confident than he felt at the beginning. He spoke about how he was able to project confidence despite feeling unconfident:

As for the leader group, during my first semester, I doubted myself quite a bit. I am always quite talkative and outwardly confident, but I definitely internally felt that I was inferior to the other leaders. However, this semester, I no longer feel that way. I think this is due to a number of factors—I have become a more assured and confident leader within myself as well as outwardly.

*Margriet* also spoke about how her experience had her thinking of exploring a teaching profession. She wrote about how the SI experience allowed her to know herself

more and identify her strength and weaknesses: “As an SIG leader I have become more aware of my strengths and weaknesses. I also have become more confident in myself in leadership situations and am not afraid to speak up in group settings.”

*Bernard* spoke about needing to find his “groove” when he first started as an SI leader:

I wish I had known at the beginning how to find my groove early on. I feel it took some time to develop that. I didn’t know how to achieve that at the beginning or how important that could be. I suppose that is something that no one can teach you, but it would have been helpful if someone could have opened my eyes to that possibility at the beginning. Once I figured out how to do that, sessions became a lot more fun for me and for the students.

Increased self-confidence was the most salient theme related to the impact of the SI leader experience. It has also been most evident in previous studies conducted on the benefits of the SI leader position (Lockie & van Lanen, 2008; Stout & McDaniel, 2006; Zaritsky & Toce, 2006).

**Deepened understanding of course content.** Some participants spoke about how since they had to refresh their understanding of the course they were leading, they found they had a deeper understanding of the course material. It impacted their knowledge and increased their understanding of the subject. *Dawn* felt she had to know the course more than did the students in her SI sessions. She studied it hard, worried she would be caught off guard:

Because at the beginning of the semester, I was probably studying more the course I am supporting than my own courses because I just didn’t want to be caught off guard. I really relaxed as the semester progressed now into the second semester. Because I realize it’s okay. There are people in my sessions who already have a degree in biology, so they know more than I do in something and that’s okay.

*Margriet* spoke about her success in having the SI group understand the course in more depth and about her own understanding deepening:

They sometimes ask me, “How do you remember all of this?” Well, it is because I have been doing it for 10 weeks in a row. I have been re-visiting it all the time. It is not super difficult or rocket science. For me, it is like taking the course all over again. It’s like if I re-learn something it is: “Oh, I remember what this is like.”

The research on the benefits of the SI leader position also found that SI leaders reported having a deeper understanding of course material as a result of leading SI sessions (Lockie & van Lanen, 2008; Malm et al., 2012; Stout & McDaniel, 2006; Zaritsky & Toce, 2006). The participants in this study improved their academic performance after they learned and facilitated the student-centred practices of SI. By continually reviewing the course material for the SI sessions, it is expected that the participants’ understanding of the material increased. They also developed session plans, created informal quizzes, took many notes, and adapted their SI sessions to the needs of the students in their courses.

**Clarified career goals.** *Kayla* mentioned having increased confidence in the ability to lead a group of people and how this confidence has helped her be better at time management and has also helped her clarify her career goals:

During my experience as an SIG leader, I have learned that I truly enjoy being in leadership and independent positions. This has been reaffirming for my career choice, and it has helped to give me confidence that I can lead groups of people. I have also been stretched to be more confident in my abilities and become more organized in time management.

She wrote that she felt that the experience showed her that she could go on and pursue more schooling. She further commented,

Finally, I think that SIG has helped me to think about pursuing higher education after my BBA. I used to think that after my bachelor’s degree, I would be finished with school, but since then, I have discovered I really enjoy learning and that I

may want to go on to a MBA or an accounting designation. I was often challenged to be creative and do my best as a SIG Leader while maintaining high standards in my courses. In the end, this became a positive experience because it showed me that I can handle a lot while still doing my best.

The impact of the SI leader position clarified career goals for some participants. For some, this clarification was due to the development and increased confidence in different abilities, and for other participants, it was their ability to handle multiple demands. Although other participants did not specifically mention an increase or clarification of career goals in their interviews, previous research on SI leaders found that SI leaders did mention similar benefits to the SI leader experience (Stout & McDaniel, 2006).

**Increased sense of belonging.** The SI leader experience also changed the way the participants viewed the university and how they engaged with the university. *Kayla's* sense of belonging to WCU led her to view it as more of her community and with a sense of how she could contribute to it. When she first arrived at WCU, she was uninvolved. She stated, "So those first two years, I would go to class and then leave. I didn't develop any friendships in any of my classes; I didn't talk to anyone around me." This changed once she became involved in the SI program as a leader: "This year has been completely different. Being part of SIG, I even feel more comfortable in my classes. I have developed friendships there: some of them because I was an SIG leader."

*Kayla* described the feeling well and stated, "Now I feel I fit." She said it was due to the relationship with the other leaders and feeling she had a purpose at school: "It's more than just school, it's going to work."

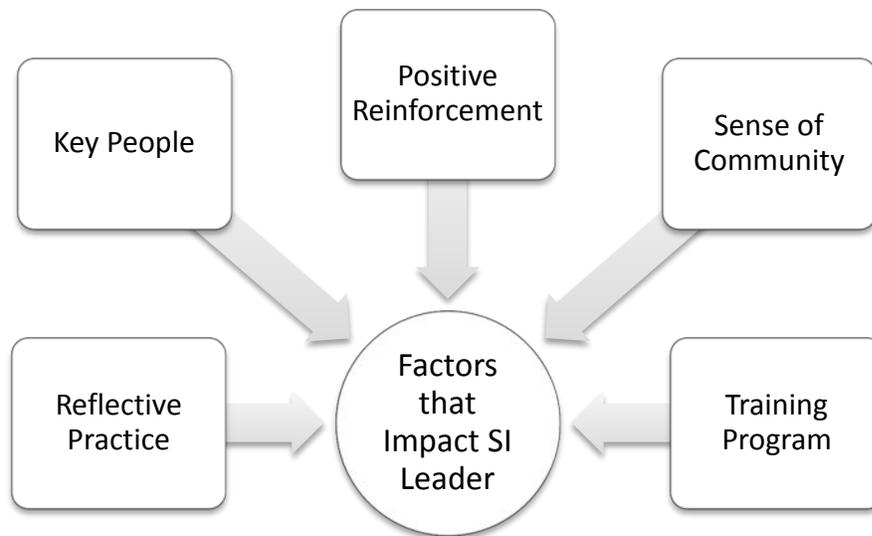
*Margriet* was surprised by the friendships that were formed with other SI leaders. She said, "I was kind of suspecting I would learn more about myself and my leadership

skills, but I wasn't expecting to create more friends." This was very impactful on her experience. She said it made her "more comfortable on campus."

The factors that contributed to the participants' experience are presented in the next section. These factors have never been mentioned in the body of research on SI leaders to date.

### **Finding 3: Factors that Contributed to the SI Leader Experience**

A synthesis of factors that influenced the experience of the SI leader positively resulted in several emergent themes. These included use of reflective practice, key people, positive reinforcement, sense of community, and training program (see Figure 5).



*Figure 5.* Factors that contributed positively to the SI leader experience.

**Use of reflective practice.** The use of reflection throughout the SI training and during their in-service sessions impacted how much the SI leaders learned from their experience. At each SI weekly meeting, the coordinators and mentors would lead the SI leaders through exercises, such as games and role plays, to practice skills and SI

facilitation techniques. With each activity, SI leaders were asked to reflect individually or in pairs on what they had learned about themselves. SI leaders were also asked to share their experiences in the SI sessions and report on any learning or questions they may have. At the end of the SI term, SI leaders were asked to reflect as a group on what knowledge, skills, and values were necessary to be a successful SI leader as well as areas in which they felt they have grown and where they still want to grow (SI Coordinator, personal communications, June 17, 2013). All participants in this study were able to articulate what they have learned and attributed the ability to do so to the practice of reflection. Some SI leaders described initially feeling uncomfortable with the practice of reflection, while others felt it was very natural. By the end of the research, all participants felt that reflection was very important to their learning. Reflection has been identified as a critical component to experiential learning process (Boyd & False, 1983; Kolb, 1984).

*Bernard* spoke about the expectation and culture of reflection that was instituted in the SI training sessions. He enjoyed taking the time to reflect and wished there had been more reflection:

All we did was reflect on things. I did like that because you see where you are, where you go. I wish we had pushed more to do it more, every week kind of thing. You do a little bit of analysis as you go through something like “okay so today’s session wasn’t that great because this”, but we don’t really sit down and formally write out . . . what went wrong and why, what can we do better the next time and really spell it out and set a goal for yourself or something. I made that suggestion for next year that we should really focus on reflecting more often.

*Bernard* was adamant that reflection is the only way to continuously improve, and he summed it up in stating, “If you are not perfect and if things are not working and you are not aware of that, then how is it ever going to improve unless you take some time to think

about it?" *Margriet* felt that reflection came more naturally to her since her academic program was based on a lot of reflection and critique:

I think I am always ready to answers questions in class and giving my input, and I have had other professors say this too. You always bring this kind of sensitivity back onto the classroom atmosphere and this kind of reflection. . . . Get people to think about what they're looking at and why they chose to do things a certain way in reference to artworks because we don't have critiques and just reflect on what we see.

For some participants, the practice of reflection was less natural. *Kayla* spoke about how difficult reflection was for her and how she had grown from the experience:

Reflection is so hard for me. That in-service was so tough for me. It's hard for me to think of really how I changed. It happened so slowly that I feel like I have been the same the whole time, but I think I really have grown a lot just personally . . . being more comfortable and confident.

*Dawn* mentioned the value of reflecting while participating in the study and that she has appreciated being able to talk about her experience while participating in this study. She stated, "I also think that these interviews have been beneficial; it has forced me to reflect and verbalize it. There is a lot of value in actually verbalizing or writing it down. That has been very helpful."

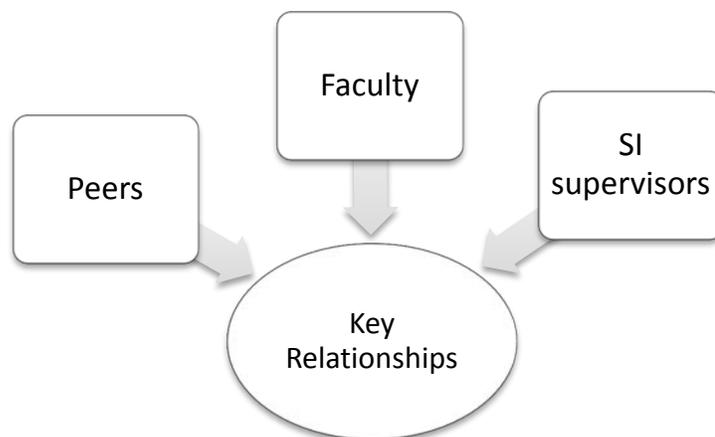
*Bernard* wrote about how the mentors and leaders helped develop the facilitation skills while using reflection and mentoring:

Our leaders and mentors were really important because they helped us maintain our focus on the program (facilitating versus lecturing) and to help us develop our facilitation skills. In trainings, we would discuss what went well and what didn't go so well, and we could solve problems as a group. The experience of our leaders and mentors was valuable since they had experienced most of these things before and were able to help us solve our problems.

Also, *Victoria* spoke about the practice of reflecting and how it impacted her ability to critically reflect personally on the SI sessions. She said that they were always asked how the session was going and to reflect on how they were personally affected and

growing from their experiences leading the SI sessions. She saw this as a unique feature of the SI program, in that “the idea of the [SI program] is to invest in the leader.” As mentioned in the literature review, critical reflective practice is a developmental influence in the LID model (Komives et al., 2005) and an important component to understanding the experiential learning process (Boyd & False, 1983; Kolb, 1984).

**Key people.** As already explored in a previous theme, there were key people in the participants’ lives who influenced them growing up; however, participants also mentioned the key people who were impactful to them in their experience in the SI groups. When asked who was influential to them at the time of their SI leader position, participants mentioned (a) their peers, which included other SI leaders, SI mentors, and the students in their SI groups; (b) faculty members; and (c) SI supervisors, which included the SI coordinator and manager (see Figure 6). Komives et al. (2005) also noted how important these relationships are to the students, since they provide the encouragement to try new things, provide positive reinforcement, and challenge them to get involved. They also found that students move into the next stage of the LID model because of these adult and peer developmental influences (p. 597).



*Figure 6.* Key relationships for the SI leaders.

**Peers.** The influence of peers on the participant's development also emerged as a salient theme. This theme included other SI leaders, SI mentors, and the students who participated in the SI group sessions. *Victoria* wrote about stepping out of her "comfort zone when surrounded by people that I trust. I also have realized I am capable of much more than I ever thought I was." *Eric* also wrote about the other SI leaders and how they had helped him learn:

All of us leaders learn from one another. At first, I was unable to see how mixing/working with leaders from other disciplines could help me as a Humanities leader, but now I think that the most valuable advice comes from people who are working in different settings and using different content/approaches/philosophies. We have training sessions every four weeks or so, and the cumulative effect of those sessions really helps. You're constantly being confronted with other peoples' approaches and methods, which causes you to reflect on your own.

In her reflective writing, *Dawn* wrote about how important another SI leader had become to her since they shared a lot in common and supported one another:

We have been able to encourage each other to find time for SI and academics in our busy schedules. We have also bounced session ideas off each other to see if they sound good. We encourage each other in work, academics, faith, and life so it has been great having her support.

The literature did not include any information about the influences of students who participate in the SI groups on the SI leader. In this study, the impact of the positive feedback received from the students in the SI sessions was very significant.

*Kayla* spoke about the impact the students in her sessions played on her experience. She mentioned that it was "extremely rewarding to impact other students learning." *Victoria* spoke to the positive feedback received from the students and

realizing the impact she had on the students. *Bernard* wrote about the positive feedback he received from the students and how that impacted him positively:

I think I was able to have a significant impact on the group. We had a great relationship, and it was really easy for me to work with them, and it was really easy for them to work with each other without my direct intervention. I know it helped them gain confidence and skills and that they really appreciated my work. One student wrote me an email at the end of the semester saying, “Thank you for all your help throughout the semester, and actually giving me something to look forward to on Tuesdays.”

*Eric* spoke about how the students in the SI group had helped him develop, since he was learning so much from them each time he met with them:

It seems an obvious thing to say, but the students in the SIG sessions are always helping me to develop. No two sessions are ever the same, so as a leader you’re constantly modifying your style and approach every time you walk into a classroom. The dynamic atmosphere and mood is always different from the last time.

The participants’ peers included SI mentors who are experienced SI leaders and who also contributed by providing guidance and advice as a peer. *Margriet* had been assigned a mentor from another discipline in her first semester as an SI leader. Although she learned from this mentor, she mentioned how it was helpful, in the second semester, to have a mentor who was from the same discipline.

**Faculty.** All the participants mentioned the positive impact that faculty members had on them, and many were referred by faculty members for the SI leader position. However, in this study most did not have a relationship with the SI faculty member assigned to them in the SI program, which had been found to be an important benefit of being an SI leader by other researchers (Zaritsky & Toce, 2006). The one participant who did have a good relationship with his assigned SI faculty member was positively impacted. *Eric* spoke about how much he appreciated this faculty member: “It’s really

good; I have known [faculty] since I took a class with her. Yeah, she's a great teacher and great person, and she keeps me incredibly up to speed with everything."

Other participants had developed positive relationships with faculty members not involved in the SI program. *Dawn* remembered how her relationships with the faculty who taught her first-year classes became influential in how she became more involved in the SI program and how another faculty member encouraged her to instruct a class. She stated, "That was good. I just really enjoyed being involved in the school beyond just studies. I really wanted to get the most out of the experience." A few participants mentioned the relationship they had with their SI faculty member, but most mentioned other faculty members with whom they had developed relationships.

***SI supervisors.*** This theme included comments about the SI coordinator and the SI manager. The literature on supplemental instruction identified the SI supervisor and SI administration as being an integral part of the success of the SI program (Zaritsky & Toce, 2006). The role is mostly administrative, but in this study, the participants talked about how the SI coordinator and manager assisted them developmentally. In his reflective writing, *Bernard* wrote about how important the manager and coordinators of the program were to his SI experience. *Victoria* also mentioned the role everyone in the program had on her learning:

They have helped me to grow as a leader and as an individual by challenging my thinking and being supportive every step of the way. The other leaders and mentors are also really helpful. Everyone is really open and willing to listen to new ideas or offer advice.

In summary, all these people provided a support system that influenced participants' development. *Margriet* articulated it best when she described the "big circle" of support that she experienced from everyone involved:

I really believe in SI, and I really believe it works. You learn so much more than when you learn it from your peers. Just the way it's not a pyramid system, not hierarchical, but it's got so much support behind. It all connects back to each other. You got the support from the manager, coordinator, who supports all the leaders, then the leaders support each other, and then they give positive feedback back to the manager and coordinator who then feel good about their work. Then you get positive feedback from your students. It's a big circle that really works well because you can learn from your manager and coordinator what you need to learn; you can learn from your mentor or from your peer SIG members and students.

The system of support fostered a community spirit among the SI leaders. The positive impact that the student-faculty interactions and the role that mentors had will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. These relationships all contributed to the sense of community that was noticed in the data.

**Positive reinforcement.** Participants were asked if they considered themselves to be change agents. All were able to talk about how they saw the positive impact on the students who had participated in their SI sessions. They also spoke about how they heard positive feedback directly from the students in their SI sessions. The participants all took ownership of being part of that change. In turn, the positive reinforcement they received from seeing the change and hearing from the students impacted their confidence. *Bernard* expressed a lot of excitement when he spoke of the change he witnessed in the students in his SI sessions:

It's pretty neat. It's kind of fulfilling if you have people sort of reach what you think they can reach and become what you are trying to get them to become—whether that is to become self-sufficient in chemistry or to discover something about [them] or just to interact more with somebody. It is kind of fulfilling; you feel good about yourself. You have improved that person's quality of life in whatever small measure.

*Kayla* reflected that even the small changes in the students made her feel good about the work she did as an SI leader:

My successes have come in the form of re-enforcement from students telling me that I helped them! This wasn't necessarily a big deal to me before I started, but it has been extremely rewarding to impact other students learning.

*Margriet* saw the students grow over the time they were in her sessions, and she received positive feedback from them: "So this is how I can see some people grow over eight months. I have students come up to me and tell me that I helped them pass a test."

However, *Victoria* remained modest and unsure about her ability to impact change:

As far as changing how someone studies, it seems like a little thing. I don't know. It won't change the world. I don't know if I see myself as changing . . . like changing how people think, ideologies, or anything. I don't think I could do that. I mean a little bit, just in . . . like . . . I don't know.

*Dawn* spoke about being a change agent in her work in the community and in her role as an advocate for people with disabilities:

[What] I can do to make their lives better, whether it is socially, transportation, or access to any sort of activities they want to do—anything to improve their lives. I am really excited . . . it gets me pumped when I see that anything I try to help can succeed.

*Eric* talked about how he felt he had influenced change in students through the SI sessions:

I think SIG is a slow burner, ultimately. Some students go into one session and come out and think, "I can do this." The kind of lasting change takes a long time to surface [and] for the person to realize it. Then again, there is the challenge we cannot force students to change. We can't force students to think a certain way to take information. If we are filling them in [with] information, it is not the point of SIG.

These SI leaders were positively impacted by observing the change occurring in the students who attend their sessions. This kept the participants motivated and built their self-confidence. The success of the SI sessions was important to all the participants, and the participants appreciated being able to receive feedback. In their book, *Exploring*

*Leadership*, Komives et al. (2007) wrote about how change is a major component of leadership.

**Sense of community.** Participants spoke about the sense of community and camaraderie that was formed, which they felt allowed them a safe place to learn and grow. Research also supported the positive impact that belonging to groups and the experience of being in groups has on the student experience (Komives et al., 2005; Webber et al., 2013).

*Margriet* wrote that the camaraderie helped create a positive atmosphere for learning and that it promoted “an atmosphere for encouragement.” She found that speaking with other leaders about her experience fostered “new ideas and approaches to the sessions that we lead.”

*Victoria* spoke about how creating the community made the difference in her SI sessions. She attributed her success as an SI leader to the “social aspect and the relationship you are building more so than the content.” She saw the link between the comfort level of the students and their attendance and stated,

That is why people come back, and there are people who are doing great in the class, and they come every week. They like the environment, and they like the people. [They take] the time for that and appreciate the personal relationships that come out of [SI] and not about the grade they get, but about what you are building in that group and what they are teaching you.

*Eric* wrote about being a part of something big and important on campus. He saw his role as “a cog in this wider machine and that we all have roles to play.” He saw how he was part of the bigger picture and that he helped the SI program and that, in turn, has helped him: “This has helped and continues to help my personal development by

reminding me of the bigger picture, both in terms of building the [SI] Department and building my own reputation on campus and for the future.”

Participants also learned a lot from having different disciplines represented within the SI leader team. This allowed them to see how different disciplines require different techniques. *Margriet* spoke about the community and the opportunity to meet people from different disciplines. She also felt she had met people similar to her:

I think that what was hard was trying to keep it organized. One of the things that surprised me the most was the camaraderie and amazing people that I met. All these people who are leaders and [have] the same work ethic, similar personalities, not all the same, and I don't think I would have met as many people from different departments if I hadn't.

*Bernard* spoke about the diversity within the SI team and its positive impact on him as an SI leader. He found it to be rewarding socially and stated,

This has been kind of neat in that I have worked with people of different disciplines and radically different backgrounds in some ways. It's been fun to get to know other people. I probably would never have met: people like the business students, because we don't overlap. That has been fun to do that.

**Training program.** Participants were asked about the training they received.

Training was identified as a critical factor that influenced their experience within the SI groups. There was also evidence from other studies that if SI leaders are trained well, they will be more successful in the SI sessions (Peterman, 2003; Zaritsky & Toce, 2006).

*Kayla* spoke about the usefulness of sharing best practices:

This past one I really enjoyed because everybody was talking about their best practices, so we have to think about what we do best and tell everybody about it. It was kind of neat because we have to break it down into a model and explain it to everybody, so that was cool, and then we were talking about how it's okay to be social with the students.

*Bernard* remembered feeling overwhelmed by SI training and that the fun atmosphere and excitement of learning had enabled him to continue through the term:

The training was fun. It was neat getting to know the other leaders. I was surprised by how much “stuff” there was to know! All the different learning strategies and ways to engage students, etc. I’m not sure what I had been expecting, but I think it’s fair to say I felt a little overwhelmed initially. This suddenly seemed like a much bigger job than I had imagined. Still, I was excited to start something new, and we were assured that even if we were nervous, that was normal.

The training sessions provided a safe place for participants to practice new skills and learn new techniques. They received much feedback and eventually gained confidence running their SI sessions. *Bernard* eventually found his nervousness replaced by excitement and stated,

We practiced class introductions and running sessions and that helped me see what I was to do. I think I was less nervous after that. I was excited to begin helping students succeed. That was important to me since I never had the [SI] program available to me when I was in first year.

#### **Finding 4: Leadership Identity Development**

In this study, participants were asked to describe how their own view of leadership had changed since they were younger. They all indicated that their definition of what a leader is and what leadership is had evolved over time. However, it was challenging to examine the participants’ responses and then, using the LID model, to identify each participant’s current stage. Participants indicated that they were in different stages of leadership identity development and did not solidify or articulate one common viewpoint or stage.

During an interview, *Victoria* compared how she now viewed leadership with what she thought of leadership growing up:

Myself, I didn’t think of myself as a leader for the longest time, but I was leading people. It’s not a title, I guess. Before it was always this title; you were in that role. That was how you were defined. I think it’s a lot more fluid than that. People can be led, and be followers, and be leaders. All different . . . kind of all the same time in different circumstances that you are with.

*Victoria* described leadership as the person “who influences others and is able to lead a group of people as they work together to achieve a common goal.” This is how she defined herself in the SI leader role, and she felt that she was constantly playing the role of a leader and also a learner, as she led with new techniques and information. She spoke of the roles people have in groups, but felt that each person has an important role.

*Bernard* reflected on his past views on leadership and how there were good and bad leaders: “I learned a lot about leadership—obviously how to be a good leader, how not to be good leader, sometimes unintentional trial and error.”

*Eric* wrote about his struggle with the term leader and how he found it difficult to describe himself as one. He equated the term leader with having an ego and being better than others. His understanding of leadership changed as he was participating in this research, as reflected in this comment:

As I have said previously, the term “leader” does sit a bit uneasily with me. I haven’t really viewed myself as a leader as such. This may have something to do with dealing with day-to-day life, my own studies, my home life, etc. In the daily grind, where you’re trying to keep your head above water at some points (at a *lot* of points!), it is easy to lose sight of your identity in SIG. I think there is a positive side to this in some respects: If I walked around all day proclaiming that I was a leader, I think I would disappear up my own backside! However, when I do have time to reflect (and especially in the process of conducting this research), I have been able to come to terms with the title “leader”.

*Kayla* described her view of leadership as “someone who is different than everybody else, because then they would just blend in, right?” For *Kayla*, leadership was about being different, and she was not sure if she had a definition: “I don’t know if I have a definition. I know it is more than being yourself and being confident. I don’t know how to put it into words.”

*Margriet* explained how her views of leadership changed as she grew older, and she spoke of how leaders need to relate and influence:

I think, when you are really young, 5 or 6, it's the person in an authority positions, in charge, the person who tells you what to do, as you grow older, the person who influences your decisions, the person who helps you grow and your role model. It's no longer someone who is authoritative, but someone relatable, someone who is understanding, feel comfortable with talking about yourself, talking about where you are. A leader is someone who can guide you in the right direction instead of someone to tell you what to do, someone who becomes a role model or someone who becomes that person who may influence decisions you make [and] not necessarily the one who tell you what to do.

*Dawn* spoke about the “discomfort” she felt when she was thrown into leadership positions and that there was always a level of discomfort. She recognized that after a while, she was the person to step up even if it was discomforting, as she knew it would get more comfortable. Stages 3, 4, and 5 of the LID model are outlined in Appendix I, with quotes from the participants to indicate each stage.

*Victoria* summed up her thoughts on how the SI sessions should be able to function without the leader. She said, “I think that is something in the [SI] model that we have talked about. If you are a good leader and facilitator you can step back and everyone will keep going.” She demonstrated an interdependent view of self with others when she said that SI leaders should be “constantly realizing the value of everyone in the whole relationship.” *Victoria* viewed the SI leader role as letting others take responsibility for their learning.

Analyzing the data with the LID model in mind, I found themes that aligned mostly with two stages of the LID model: Stages 3 and 4. I also found themes that aligned with the transition from Stage 4 to 5. Through observations and discussion with participants, it is my assessment that they exhibited their emerging, immersion, and key

transition changes through these stages as viewed through the lenses of developmental influences, developing self, group influences, changing view of self with others, and broadening view of leadership. I have also applied the developmental stages of the model as experienced by these research participants in summarizing themes and using the participants' quotes from this study (see Appendix I).

**Changing view of leadership.** The LID model describes/identifies a student's change in the way he or she views leadership through his/her lifetime (see Figure 2). The research conducted on supplemental instruction to date lists *leadership skills* as one of the outcomes of the SI leader experience. Study participants in this research also described how their views of leadership had changed. Firstly, participants had thought of leaders as someone external to them. Secondly, they viewed leaders as being someone who is in a leadership position. Thirdly, they viewed leadership as demonstrated by someone not in a leadership position, and finally, how everyone in a group demonstrated leadership.

**Developing self.** The participants spoke about how much they had learned about themselves prior to taking on the SI leader position and how much more they had learned about themselves having experienced being an SI leader. These volunteer and work experiences all provided opportunities to develop new skills, and participants all reported having learned from those out-of-classroom experiences. The positive nature of the SI team and the positive feedback from the students attending SI sessions all impacted the SI leader's confidence.

**Group influences.** Participants spoke of the impact the SI team (i.e., coordinator, manager, SI leaders, students, and mentors) had had on their experiences in learning. The

experience in the SI team and in their SI sessions with students provided the opportunity and the feedback to SI leaders that then helped them to discover more about themselves.

***Developmental influences.*** Komives et al. (2005) found several developmental influences that impacted a student's leadership development. These influences include adult and peer influences, meaningful involvement, and reflective practice. All of these categories were evident in the data provided in this study.

***Adult and peer influencers.*** Participants spoke about the variety of adult influencers, which included parents, faculty, SI coordinators, and community members who were impacting and informing them both within and outside the program. They also spoke of how peer influencers impacted their SI leader experience, which included peers, other SI leaders, SI mentors, and certainly the students in their SI groups.

***Meaningful involvement.*** This included the work that the participants did prior to and during the SI leader position. The participants in this study had extensive experience both on and off campus prior to beginning their SI leader experiences. For many of the participants, their involvement in church-related leadership programs not only impacted how they viewed leadership, but also established deep personal value systems that impacted how they viewed their SI leader roles and their leadership in general. According to Komives et al. (2006), these experiences have a significant impact on the SI leaders' leadership development.

***Reflective practice.*** Finally, reflective practice was also found to be a large and influential component of the SI leader experience and training program and, thus, contributed to the participant's leadership identity development. Although few

participants mentioned it directly, it is also likely that the opportunities provided by this research also contributed to their learning.

**Changing view of self with others.** Komives et al. (2005) described how developing oneself intersected with group influences to produce change in how the participants viewed themselves in relation to others or when engaging in groups. Komives et al. also described how participants in their study were initially dependent, and then, as they became more engaged, they would take one of two pathways: independent or dependent (p. 604). On the independent path, some participants aspired to be a positional leader and had a strong motivation to change something. Others continued to be dependant and preferred to be members or followers in groups. This change in perspective was also evident in the current study.

Participants in this study recollected how they had changed their view of themselves within their SI groups. In the early stages of their experiences in groups, they were dependent on others. The participants relied on adults and older peers for affirmation and support. For instance, some participants mentioned how they applied for the SI leader position after someone told them to. Some participants originally thought that they wanted to be a positional leader and expected the SI leader to come in and be in charge. Some spoke about their preference to be a follower and to let others lead. Eventually, the participants all saw the value in allowing all SI group members to lead. An interdependent view of self in relation to others was demonstrated when they came to believe that leadership came from anyone in the group (Komives et al., 2005).

***Stage 3: Leader identified.*** Participants came into this study demonstrating their view of leaders at Stage 3: “Leaders Identified” (Komives et al., 2005, p. 599). Most

participants had leadership experience in organizations for years, which included high school, part-time and full-time jobs, clubs, church, and schools. Participants spoke about how these organizations had a purpose and structure, with designated people (i.e., leaders) who got the job or the work of the organization done. Most participants indicated that within the SI experience, leadership was shared by all and could be initiated by anyone in the group. It was difficult to determine which stage of the LID model each participant identified with past Stage 3. The participants would make statements that indicated their view of one stage of the LID model and then make another statement that related to another stage. It is likely that they were transitioning in their identities as leaders.

***Stage 4: Leadership differentiated.*** Using what the participants said about their roles in their SI groups, I determined their descriptions most reflected the characteristics of Stage 4 of the LID model: Leadership Differentiated (see Appendix I). They were learning group skills and understood that the SI group shared the tasks of learning. Most participants understood that SI groups functioned best when participants led in a participatory way. As they were ending their terms as an SI leader, participants were all beginning to see the importance of building relationships in the SI sessions and of forming a community with the participants.

***Stage 5: Generativity.*** Based on the data collected in this study, all participants indicated that they were moving from Stage 4: Leaders Differentiated, from the emerging to immersion phases, and some indicated transitioning to Stage 5: Generativity (Komives et al. 2005, p. 599). They all indicated they wanted to return as SI mentors, whether or not they could, indicating that they were in a transition phase from Stage 4 to Stage 5.

However, participants in this study did not articulate a fully developed philosophy of working effectively with others towards change, as was indicated in the Komives et al, (2005) model. Perhaps SI leaders in this study did not see the impact they had had on the students in the SI sessions as producing change. Komives et al. (2007, 2009) found that students who transitioned into Stage 5 of the LID model had done so after they were exposed to formal leadership education. Komives et al. (2007) explained that people who were transitioning into Stage 5 did so after being triggered when the

task of doing something is too big or complex to do it alone. . . . It may be triggered when students learn the language of leadership, through leadership courses or retreats, and begin to realize there are other approaches and strategies that fit their view of themselves and how they want to work with others versus feeling like they were bossing people around. (p. 400)

### **Summary**

Much information was collected about the SI leaders' experiences and learning from the interviews, reflective writings, and the documentation, and in this chapter I reviewed the findings that were relevant for this research study. Overall, this study found many similar themes found in previous research on the SI leader, such as increased self-awareness, increased skill development, increased awareness of leadership, self-confidence, and clarification of career goals (Lockie & van Lanen, 2008; Stout & McDaniel, 2006), as well as other themes that had not been reported in previous research, such as an increased sense of belonging, the relevance of SI leader backgrounds, and the factors that impact their experience, such as faith (Zaritsky & Toce, 2006, 2013). In Chapter Five, I will review the findings of the study and address their implications and recommendations for practice.

## CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion

The primary goal for this study was to explore the impact of assuming the SI leader role on the students who hold SI leader positions at WCU. Gaining a deeper understanding of the characteristics and previous leadership experiences of students who become SI leaders is important in order to plan for possible future recruitment and training of these student leaders. Researching students' experiences as an SI leader also has the potential to contribute to the body of SI research and will be used to recognize the impact the SI leader role has on the students who hold the position.

To provide a deeper description of the SI leaders' experiences of the WCU-SI program, this descriptive case study sought to understand the academic backgrounds, characteristics, and work experiences the SI leaders at WCU brought with them to the SI leader position as well as their experiences as SI leaders. This research was informed by two main research questions:

1. What are the characteristics, background experiences, academic programs, and previous leadership experiences of students who hold an SI leader position at WCU?
2. How does a student who holds an SI leader position at WCU describe the experience of working with their SI groups while in their SI role?
  - (a) What are the factors that shape these experiences?
  - (b) How does the description of these experiences align with the LID described in the Komives et al. (2005) model?

The leadership identity development (LID) model was used as a framework to explore SI leaders' perceptions of their leadership development based on their

experiences in this role. Through a descriptive case study design, six SI leaders at a western Canadian university were interviewed on three separate occasions, and they were asked to submit written reflections to specific questions about their experience in this role. This reflection was meant to aid participants in understanding their experiences and what it meant to them to be an SI leader. This study also sought a deepened understanding of the LID model. Specifically, this research explored the transition undertaken as students moved from seeing themselves as leaders to the *demonstrating* or *doing* leadership stage. In addition, this research sought to determine the impact and influence of others (e.g., family, older peers, teammates, group members) as models and mentors to the developing leader. In this final chapter, I summarize the major themes identified in the study, outline the significance of these themes, list opportunities and implications, address limitations and suggest recommendations for future research.

### **Summary of Study Themes**

The findings from this study were categorized and organized into themes that emerged from patterns in the data from the participants' interviews and reflective writings. The major themes identified provide opportunities and may have implications for student affairs professionals who work with SI leaders and other student leaders. The themes discussed in this chapter include the following: (a) participants' backgrounds, (b) impact of SI leader experience, (c) factors that contributed to the SI leader experience, and (d) leadership identity development.

#### **Theme 1: Participants' Backgrounds**

At the time of this study, there had been no published research on the previous backgrounds and experiences of students who hold/have held SI leader positions. The SI

leaders in this study had diverse experiences and backgrounds, yet there were also some similarities. This particular group of SI leaders was very involved in community, work, and in school prior to beginning their SI leader experience. Of the six participants, five were heavily involved in their church, and all participants were also involved in other activities throughout elementary and high school. Some had taken formal leadership courses in high school, and others had been part of leadership development programs in their church.

The findings presented in Chapter Four highlighted the importance of knowing and understanding the SI leaders holistically. By taking the time to do so, SI administrators could then fully understand the impact of the SI leader experience on the individual. This includes knowing the SI leaders' backgrounds, such as personal characteristics, key people, their academic achievements, their previous work experience, and their previous leadership experiences. Data found in this study have added to the body of knowledge on SI leadership identity development.

Most of the participants had had limited involvement in activities at WCU prior to assuming their SI leader position. This could be due to the fact that WCU was primarily a commuter campus and that the participants were already heavily involved in their communities off campus. Participants varied in their experiences of working with people from diverse backgrounds and in their understanding of how this involvement impacted them as leaders. The participants in this study were not culturally diverse, and there was little mention in the interviews with SI leaders on how their own race, gender, and sexual orientation would impact or has impacted their leadership. Their experience of working with people from culturally diverse backgrounds was also limited, as were their

reflections on how these types of factors have the potential to influence how they are perceived by others and how they interact with others. Some participants recognized this limitation and realized the need to gain more experience.

### **Theme 2: Impact of SI leader Experience**

This study found that participants benefitted greatly from their SI leader experiences. The benefits they identified were described using the following terms:

- Increased self-awareness
- Greater appreciation for diversity of learning styles
- Skill development
- Greater awareness of their leadership
- Increased self-confidence
- Deepened understanding of the course content
- Clarified career goals
- Increased sense of belonging

Several of these benefits have also been confirmed in a few other studies on the benefits of the SI leader experience. Previous research found that the SI leaders reported a better understanding of course material matter; the experience helped them choose a career; they gained a greater appreciation for diverse learning styles; their self-awareness increased; their leadership and communication skills improved as well as their organizational and planning skills; they experienced enhanced integration with faculty, staff, students, and other SI leaders; and their self-confidence increased (Lockie & van Lanen, 2008; Stout & McDaniel, 2006; Zaritsky & Toce, 2006). Stout and McDaniel (2006) wrote about how the facilitative nature of the SI leader role increased self-

confidence and enhanced self-esteem. The SI leaders reported being seen as a mini celebrity on campus and that the network of friends has increased SI leader retention in the program. SI leaders also gain multiple abilities related to leadership, teamwork, verbal and written expression, and self-assurance (p. 59).

More recently, Malm et al. (2012) looked at specific competencies developed as a result of being an SI leader, whether being an SI leader was an advantage when applying for a job, and if SI leaders used the skills they had gained later in their professional lives. They found that SI leaders gained several benefits from their SI experiences. The main themes found in their study were improved communication, interpersonal, and leadership skills; improved self-confidence; and a deeper understanding of course content.

This study also identified themes that had not been discussed in previous research, which including the finding that the SI leaders in this study reported an increased sense of belonging and the use of reflective practice since beginning their SI leader experience.

### **Theme 3: Factors that Contributed to the SI Leader Experience**

Equally as important for SI administrators is to know what factors contribute to the SI leader experience. These factors included use of reflective practice, key people, positive reinforcement, their sense of community, and the SI leader training program. Understanding what impacted the SI leaders' experiences had never been explored prior to this study.

Some participants spoke about how they felt that the amount of reflection used in their training was excessive at first, but that they began to appreciate what the time taken for reflection did to solidify their learning. By the time their semester and term as an SI leader was wrapping up, one participant craved more reflection. I was encouraged to hear

two participants share that they had enjoyed participating in the study, as it also had given them the opportunity for reflecting on their experiences. Students gained much from the opportunity to reflect.

The participants also reported that there were key people who had positively reinforced their participation in a variety of roles that had them practice their leadership skills. Although faculty members did not appear to have had as much as an influence on the SI leaders in this study as was previously mentioned in research conducted by Lockie and van Lanen (2008), or Stout and McDaniel (2006), the participants reported that there were other people who influenced them. There were people who positively influenced them throughout their lives, such as teachers and pastors. Also, the SI coordinators, SI mentors, other SI leaders, and the students in their SI sessions were reported to be key people who had positively impacted their leadership experiences. According to Campbell, Smith, Dugan, and Komives (2012) and Komives et al. (2005), adults and other key people may have a positive impact leadership identity development. There were also elements of Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1963): data in this study demonstrated that people learn from each other by observation, imitation and modeling.

The positive reinforcement the SI leaders reported they received from these key people contributed to the sense of community formed during training and also assisted the SI leaders by creating the trust needed to be able to receive feedback and learn. The efforts by the SI coordinators to form a close-knit group of SI leaders had a positive impact on the SI leaders' experiences and were mentioned frequently in the interviews. Finally, the training program provided the knowledge, skills, and practices that the SI leaders needed in order to gain the confidence they needed to perform their duties. All of

these factors had a positive impact on the SI leaders' experiences and may have also contributed to their leadership identity development. More research on these factors and the impact they have on the student identity development is recommended.

#### **Theme 4: Leadership Identity Development**

The findings from this research indicate that the developmental influences outlined in the LID model were aligned with what the SI leadership participants described and identified as learning in their interviews. I also found that the study participants spoke about their views of leadership while in the SI group in much the same way that Komives et al. (2005, 2009) had outlined in the LID model. However, I was not able to find evidence that the participants had entered Stage 5: Integration/Synthesis (Komives et al., 2005, p. 599). This may have been due to their lack of opportunity to develop this stage of leadership identity, or perhaps it was due to the lack of the use of *leadership language* that Dugan, Kodama, and Correia & Associates (2013) and Komives et al. (2007) identified as having a significant impact on a leadership development program's effectiveness.

In summary, I have outlined the main themes derived from the findings of this study. Each of these themes positively impacted the SI leaders' experiences and their leadership identity development. Therefore, I recommend some areas on which student affairs professionals and institutions can focus that have the potential to produce the most positive impact on the leadership development of SI leaders. And also may be useful for students in other related positions.

## Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, some conclusions were identified to further enhance the development of students as leaders.

First, when looking at student LID with SI leaders or with any student leader, it is important to understand, acknowledge, and know *the whole student*. Acknowledging a student's previous experiences and learning may also have the potential to facilitate their learning and to engage them as participatory learners rather than as passive learners. The participants in this study began their formal leadership development with informal leadership experiences in their communities, churches, families, and schools. These students, as young adults, have had life experiences that likely both influenced and impacted their experience in the SI leader positions and also their leadership identity development. Identifying and acknowledging the previous learning experiences that a student brings to their position will allow student affairs professionals the possibility of building upon their previous learning.

Secondly, many other learning outcomes, such as increased sense of belonging and the use of reflective practice, associated with the SI leader position were found in this study and warrant more emphasis in the SI literature and SI leader training. The data collected identified that the impact of the involvement in the SI leader position is very positive.

Thirdly, although there was little mention of the impact of the faculty member on the SI leaders in this study, the SI and LID research emphasised the importance of the faculty member on the SI leader's experience. This may also be an area that could be investigated in more depth in future research.

Fourthly, LID appeared to occur for the SI leaders because of the reflective structure and the nature of WCU's SI program philosophy itself, as well as from the specific SI program in-service training for the SI leaders.

Finally, post-secondary institutions and the institutions' student leadership programs need to adopt an explicit leadership philosophy and ground their student leadership development in leadership scholarship, language, and theory to inform their programs. In the case of supplemental instruction, although the LID of the SI leaders was not a prominent or identified outcome, the findings from this study demonstrated that LID is likely occurring. The opportunities and implications drawn from the study conclusions are discussed in more detail in the next section.

### **Opportunities and Implications**

Based on the findings from this study and organized around the four research questions, the significance of the opportunities to enhance SI programs at PSIs and implications for future research will be discussed in relation to the following topics: (a) understanding and recognizing the importance of the life experiences of the student, (b) recognizing the impact of involvement in SI leader position, (c) the important role of the faculty member, (d) the impact of reflective practice, (e) the importance of the in-service training program, (f) promoting learning leadership. These topics each were found to have the potential to positively impact the SI leader experience, the SI program at WCU, and, possibly, SI programs in general. For example, considering a student's background experience is an important aspect of ensuring the whole student is acknowledged.

## **Understanding and Recognizing Students' Life Experiences**

Understanding the participants' backgrounds provided the researcher with more information with respect to aspects of students' leadership development and previous experiences that had contributed to their SI experiences. To date, the research on the SI leader has focussed *only* on the benefits of the SI leader position on the student (Lockie & van Lanen, 2008; Stout & McDaniel, 2006; Zaritsky & Toce, 2006) and not necessarily on their involvements before and/or outside of the SI leader position or on what brought them to this position. This study revealed a strong connection to and influence of how involvement in previous groups, such as the church, had impacted their self-awareness and personal identities.

This study provides a to reminder student affairs professionals that it is important for students to have the opportunity to explore their spiritual as well as their academic identity. As Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2011) wrote,

To ignore the spiritual side of students' and faculty's lives is to encourage a kind of fragmentation and lack of authenticity, where students and faculty act either as if they are not spiritual beings, or as if their spiritual side is irrelevant to their vocation or work. (p. 7)

Although not expected, for all but one of the participants, religious beliefs and values were important factors in their leadership development. Leadership skills are enhanced by self-awareness, "including meditation and self-reflection, as well as faculty use of assigning reflective writing/journaling as a pedagogical strategy" (p. 132). This is a reminder to pay attention to students' spirituality and religiousness, as well as to academic and other characteristics. It appears that the impact of the church may have as much influence on the student as does their family upbringing, but very little research has been done on the interconnectedness of students' spiritual development with other areas

of their learning and development, besides a few studies on religious development at religious-affiliated institutions in the United States (Astin et al., 2011).

There has been much research attention on measuring *outward qualities* of students (e.g., leadership skills), little has been done to understand the “sphere of values and beliefs, emotional maturity, moral development, spirituality, and self-understanding” of the student (Astin et al., 2011, p. 2), which describes how students changed during their college years and the role that college played in facilitating the development of their spiritual qualities. Astin et al. (2011) distinguished between spirituality and religiousness in stating,

Spirituality has to do with the values that we hold most dear, our sense of who we are here—the meaning and purpose that we see in our work and our life—and our sense of connectedness to one another and to the world around us. (p. 4)

Having so many of the participants in this study speak about their spiritual views and how passionate they were about their faith reminded me that student’s self-awareness and leadership identity is complex, holistic, and is also heavily influenced by their pre-postsecondary beliefs, faith, and values. All but one participant mentioned that previous and current experiences with his/her church and community had had an impact on how he/she perceived his/her role as an SI leader. This study revealed how important faith and spirituality were to these students and how intertwined their spiritual identity was with their leadership identity. This is a significant finding for both this particular SI program and a reminder for student affairs practitioners to be aware of a student’s prior relationship with their faith and also their communities.

As I will discuss later, the participants’ discussions on diversity could have enabled more discussion and understanding of diverse views and meanings for them,

which could also have created more opportunities for learning for the SI leaders. The impact of their involvement as SI leaders resulted in much learning and also how connected they felt to WCU.

### **Impact of Involvement**

This study found that there were many direct and indirect benefits and outcomes related to the experience of being in the SI leader position at WCU. The SI program at WCU created an open learning group whose members spent an extensive amount of time learning from each other. Considering that many of the participants in this study had not been previously involved socially in any way at WCU, the sense that they felt they belonged to something as a result of their SI leader experience was perhaps not surprising. Webber et al.'s (2013) recent research found that the benefits of involvement included more time devoted to academic study, course work preparation, and interactions with faculty, staff and other students. They asserted that "time and/or frequency of involvement can lead to greater satisfaction and academic success" (p. 608). This is important information for WCU, which is a primarily a commuter campus, and the role of the SI position in enabling this involvement is also important to appreciate.

Van Der Karr (2000) found that the SI positions are seen to be what he termed *justifiable involvement* on campus. He described how academically successful students are attracted to the SI leader position because it is viewed as impacting academic success and, therefore, is judged as being useful, is seen as being more than an interest, and is responsive to students' values and goals: "SI assessments, reports and marketing should include data and information on SI as an effective academic support, opportunity for involvement, social support, and a program for leadership development" (p. 250).

The WCU-SI leaders from this study gained much learning and self-understanding from their SI leadership experiences. They credited the SI coordinators, the training, each other, and the students in the sessions they facilitated as the sources of their learning. Faculty members have also been found to be important partners in the SI leaders' experiences.

### **The Role of the Faculty Member**

This study has highlighted the important role that adults and peers play in the SI leader experience and in leadership identity development (Komives et al., 2005). Campbell et al. (2012) wrote about the role mentors and different faculty positions play in student leadership outcomes. The literature on SI has examined the important role that various positions and people play in a successful SI program (Zaritsky & Toce, 2006, 2013). Stout and Macdonald (2006) explained exactly how the faculty could play a large mentorship role for the SI leader. In this study, people such as SI supervisors, SI mentors, other SI leaders, and the students in the SI sessions were all mentioned as providing support, encouragement, and positive affirmation for SI leaders. Looking at previous research, it was expected that participants in this study would have reported enhanced closer relationships with their SI faculty member (Lockie & van Lanen, 2008; Stout & McDaniel, 2006). However, it did not seem that participants developed closer relationships to the SI faculty as a result of the SI experience.

I recommend that WCU consider recruiting and training specific faculty for these important mentorship roles and that the SI leaders be encouraged and enabled to seek out these relationships with faculty. These recommendations are explored further under the

subtopics of (a) recruit and train faculty to be developmental mentors, and (b) Facilitate SI leaders' relationships with faculty.

**Recruit and train faculty to be developmental mentors.** Zaritsky and Toce (2006) recommended that SI programs carefully select SI faculty who will contribute fully to the SI program and who will also commit to the mentorship of the SI leaders. The role of the faculty is not only an important role in the support of the SI leader and SI program; it is also an important developmental role for the students who are in the SI position. Fostering mentorship relationships with students can be complicated. Dugan et al. (2013) explained that just because someone wants to be a mentor does not mean they are capable of doing so and that the most powerful mentoring relationships have developed organically. That being said, Dugan et al. recommended the need for a purposeful context for mentoring and that it should focus on leadership development.

Based on their findings, Campbell et al. (2012) suggested that SI faculty mentoring programs would benefit from a focus on the SI leader's personal development (p. 619). They found the process of mentorship makes the difference as to whether or not a student grows personally. They also found that the person who did the mentoring is equally important. Students mentored by student affairs professionals demonstrated greater leadership capacity than those mentored by faculty. SI programs could provide such opportunities and training for faculty.

WCU could improve faculty mentorship by involving SI faculty more in their pre-service and in-service training programs. WCU may want to consider a mandatory training program for SI faculty members that would include how to be an effective

mentor to the SI leader. SI leaders can also be encouraged to reach out to faculty to facilitate the relationship building.

**Facilitate SI leaders' relationships with faculty.** Providing the SI leaders with the skills and confidence to seek out these relationships with SI faculty is an important part of the SI program, and the onus to develop these relationships cannot rest on the faculty members only. As noted by Komives et al. (2011),

Efforts to do this often concentrate on the education of faculty regarding the importance of engaging with students outside the classroom or an overreliance on a select few faculty identified as “believers” in co-curricular learning. An alternative approach would be to train students as well, providing them with the skills and confidence to proactively seek out and develop relationships with faculty. (p. 73)

As mentioned previously, most participants had previously experienced positive relationships with WCU faculty members, but in the interviews, only one participant mentioned the value of the SI faculty member assigned to him/her.

The reasons for differences in this finding are unclear. One possible reason is that the role of the faculty was perhaps emphasized more in other SI programs. Alternatively, it could be a result of the open nature of the interview questions (see Appendix C) and that there were no specific questions that explored participants' relationships with the faculty. However, it was expected that the participants might have mentioned their relationships with their SI faculty member as much as they mentioned the impact of the other members of the SI program, but that was not the case. The research and information from this study may provide some further insight for WCU's administration with regard to the SI leaders' experiences of the SI faculty's role. WCU did focus on incorporating reflective practice into all aspects of the SI leader's training and meetings, which was shown to have a positive impact on the participants.

## **Adopt Reflective Practice**

In this study, the use of reflective practice and activities for building community were identified as being factors that had impacted the participants' SI leader experiences and practices. Boyd and False (1983) defined reflection "as the process of creating and clarifying the meaning of experience (present or past) in terms of self (self in relation to self and self in relation to the world)" (p. 101). Though there is much information on reflective learning and the role it plays in the experiential learning process (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 2013; Fenwick, 2001), this link to reflection has not been reported in previous research on SI leaders. The participants in this study noted that they learned through observation, practice, feedback, and self-reflection within the supportive SI group. As a result, the participants began to simulate the community environment they were experiencing in their own SI sessions by building relationships with the students. In their study of how peer mentors learn, Bunting, Dye, Pinnegar, and Robinson (2012) also found that peer mentors' stories revealed that they had learned through observation and self-reflection and that this then led to changes in their own practices as students. Boyd and False concluded that reflective learning was the key element in learning from experience, and they stated,

The process of reflection is the core difference between whether a person repeats the same experience several times, becoming highly proficient at one behaviour or learns from the experience in such a way that he or she is cognitively or affectively changed. (p. 100).

This finding is also consistent with the foundational work of Kolb (1984) on the importance of reflection in converting experience to learning. It is recommended that the use of reflective practice be introduced within the pre-service training sessions and then

continued throughout all training sessions and team meetings. The importance and value of the in-service training program was found to be key to the SI leaders' development.

### **In-Service Training Program**

WCU's training program included a pre-service component that explored and explained the SI philosophy, expectations, facilitation skills required, and team building. As described previously, participants were able to learn through observation, practice, feedback, and self-reflection. The in-service training focused on specific topics and provided time to review any issues and receive feedback from the SI group and also included having other SI leaders observe the participants' SI sessions. Regular in-service training meetings provided the opportunity for critical reflection and learning for both the leaders and for the co-ordinators. Martin and Wilcox (1996) wrote that the biggest challenge with supervising the SI leader is when the SI leader slips back into traditional lecturing methods and strays from the facilitator role. They also recommended regular in-service training to help prevent this. Based on the findings from this study, I would recommend that regular in-service and pre-training continue to be offered, with an emphasis on purposeful reflective practice.

Participants in this study said they would connect with like-minded people if the topic of their faith came up, but otherwise, there was no opportunity to share their beliefs about their faith with others in the SI group. According to Dugan et al. (2013), making time for discussion among SI leader peers on diversity issues and allowing the SI leaders to develop self-awareness and learn more about each other could increase diversity awareness amongst SI leaders. Students in any student leadership role may, in fact, benefit from having discussion about values, culture, and beliefs with other student

leaders. In this study, the participants' beliefs and values played a large part in forming their personal SI leader experiences. Although being participants this study provided an opportunity for them to reflect on these parts of themselves, there was no indication that conversations about culture, values, and beliefs were a part of the formal SI leader training or program.

The participants in this study were asked how aspects about themselves impacted their leadership, such as their gender, sexual orientation, and race. Within the WCU-SI training program, discussion about diverse learning styles was present, but there was no mention of the inclusion of training on other types of diversity. Addressing WCU's diversity and the SI leader's own worldview in training could potentially help the increase the SI leaders' self-awareness and, thus, positively impact their development as a leader. Komives and Johnson (2009) wrote, "Discussion may help students see the points of views and positionality of others contributing to their ability to work with others more effectively in organizational setting" (p. 37). In 2006, Pascarella called for the need to expand our notion of diversity and stated,

[There was] recent evidence to indicate that classroom and non-classroom experiences that introduce students to issues of diversity other than those based just on race or ethnicity (e.g., diversity of political or religious views, diversity focused on social class or sex, value diversity, background diversity of friendships, and the like) also enrich and enhance the impact of college. (p. 510)

According to Dugan et al. (2013), socio-cultural conversations with peers are the "strongest predictor of socially responsible leadership capacity for students across all demographic groups" (p. 8). Dugan et al. defined social cultural conversations as:

Formal and informal dialogues with peer about differences (i.e., topics which elicit a wide range of perspectives) as well as interactions across differences (e.g., with people who have different backgrounds and beliefs than oneself). Topics

include, but are not limited to, race/ethnicity, lifestyles and customs, social issues, political values, and religious beliefs. (p. 8)

Dugan et al. (2013) also suggested the college experiences that contribute most to leadership development were “the frequency of engagement in discussion of socio-cultural issues, such as political, religious, social change and other diverse views outside the classroom with peers” (p. 8). The impact that these conversations have on students’ development cannot be ignored, and it is suggested that these be included in all student curricular and co-curricular learning.

It is also possible that WCU-SI leaders could also benefit both personally and socially if a portion of their training included discussions on socio-cultural conversations. Opportunities that permit discussion could provide the opportunity for students who identify strongly with religious values and beliefs could not only express themselves, but other students who may not have the same beliefs and values would benefit from having the shared exposure. For instance, WCU could include a chapter in their manual on all forms of diversity. The demographic information about the WCU campus and its students, faculty and staff, discussion questions, and activities could promote discussion that may aid in further developing supplemental instruction programs, including the potential role of the faculty members who participate in the SI program. Further research is needed to understand how facilitating conversations on diversity has the potential impact on the SI leader experience.

The participants in this study seemed to learn just as much about themselves as they did about learning to lead SI sessions. There needs to be a safe and open place for the students to explore all aspects of themselves. Similar to what Palmer (2010) addressed in his book, *The Courage to Teach*, the concept of allowing “the self to show

up” (p. 171) is important for both the student and the professor. This is also important for the development of the SI leader. As Posner (2009) asserted, leadership education must begin with facilitating the inner journey of the students. Leadership development is self-development.

### **Learning Leadership**

Data from this study and others have indicated clearly that leadership development is a potential benefit of the SI leader’s position (Congos & Stout, 2003; Kochenour et al., 1997). This study explored more closely the leadership identity development, the factors that contribute to the SI leader’s development as a leader, and their views of leadership. Evidence of leadership identity development was found in this study, though mostly unintentional. The focus of the SI leader training was on learning active and collaborative learning skills, and participants noted that they had also learned much about themselves and about leadership in the training and practice of the SI sessions they led.

To best influence leadership development, Day et al. (2009) insisted that leadership identity development must be incorporated into leadership development programs. They argued that having a well-defined leadership identity provides a leader with more consistent behaviours, reliable priorities, and defined goals. The use of the LID model (Komives et al., 2005) could assist SI practitioners in understanding and developing an SI leader’s leadership identity development.

Incorporating leadership identity development activities and philosophy into SI programs has the potential to strengthen the already present self-awareness and leadership benefits that SI leaders have reported in this study and in previous studies.

Having a language of leadership for administration and students to refer to would impact the ability to measure leadership development and to ensure everyone is referring to leadership in the same way.

The SI leader position, and the training that both assists and informs it, can contribute to a student's leadership identity development and leadership skills. The components that Komives et al. (2005) indicated exert an influence on leadership identity development all exist in the SI leader role. However, leadership identity development was not an intentional goal of the SI leader position at WCU.

SI programs are an opportunity to engage academically successful students in a relational leadership role. For participants in this study, the experience of taking on and being trained for the SI leader role allowed them to gain the leadership experience, paid work on campus, and work in their area of study. Until the SI leader role was established, students in this study wanting leadership experiences had taken positions on campus, such as research assistants, or they worked off campus. Most of the participants did not take positions or become involved in roles that were more "service" orientated, such as elected/unelected positions or orientation leader. They chose to live at home, so they were not able to participate in the opportunities residence life offers. Participants spoke about how the SI leader position was attractive to them, as it was a paid position, it required high academic grades, and it marketed the development of leadership skills. Initially for some participants, this position was something they felt would look good on their resume.

Previous research has indicated that SI leaders increased their leadership skills while in the role of the SI leader position (Lockie & van Lanen, 2008; Stout & McDaniel,

2006; Zaritsky & Toce, 2013). This study took a more in-depth look at the concept of leadership and explored the notion of development by using Komives et al.'s (2005) LID model and relational leadership theory. The importance of adopting a leadership theory/philosophy as well as the importance of incorporating the language of leadership into the program was identified.

**Adopt a leadership theory/philosophy.** The adoption of a clear definition of leadership within the WCU-SI program would also potentially help create a language and community awareness about the development of leadership as one possible outcome the SI leader experience. As mentioned in the literature review, there have been shifting theoretical definitions of the concept of leadership (Endress, 2000; Komives et al., 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Historically, leadership has been viewed through an industrial lens characterized by management, power, productivity, and authority (Rost, 1993). Dugan and Komives (2010), however, wrote about the importance of using theory in leadership development:

The typical lack of definition parameters, overuse of the term, and potential emotional response individuals have to the work contribute to a learning context in which leadership educators must over-come assumptions and perceived barriers to influence development, a process best done through the use of theory. (p. 526)

Some of the participants mentioned how being in the study had helped them to understand the concept and language of leadership. More research is needed, however, to more fully understand how the language of leadership influences an SI leader's leadership identity development.

**Language of leadership.** Although not intentional, the experience of being an SI leader positively contributed to the leadership identity development of the participants in this study who were SI leaders. It is recommended that SI training programs for SI

leaders encourage discussions on leadership, and that they also include activities focused on individual leadership development related to group processes and self-development. The use of a language of leadership and leadership definitions may further impact the SI leader's leadership development.

By the end of this study, participants were more comfortable with the term *leadership* and were looking to improve their new leadership skills elsewhere. Komives et al. (2007) wrote about how learning the language of leadership opens up more possibilities for students to practice their leadership. They stated,

It may be triggered when students learn the language of leadership, through leadership courses or retreats, and begin to realize there are other approaches and strategies that fit their view of themselves and how they want to work with others versus feeling like they were bossing people around. (p. 400)

Since the SI leaders in this study were never formally introduced to the language of leadership that the LID model is based on (Dugan et al., 2013; Komives et al., 2007), it is possible that connections between their experiences and the leadership development model were not made. For instance, if SI coordinators had explained that the SI leaders were change agents and then introduced a change in the way the course material is learned to the students in the SI sessions, the SI leaders may have seen their leadership role differently.

Through their LID model, Komives et al. (2005) explained how, after experiencing feelings of dissonance or discomfort, students changed the ways they acted towards others. According to Komives et al., the discomfort that a student felt would indicate that development of their understanding of what leadership is was occurring, since discomfort has been associated with the experiential learning process (Komives et al., 2007).

Since the leadership learning process can begin at any of Komives et al.'s (2005) stages and is continuous, there is no limit to the amount of learning a student can acquire from a single learning situation. The SI leaders interviewed in this study spoke about the amount of reflection they were doing and, although uncomfortable for some participants, how helpful it was in their personal learning. Dugan et al. (2013) and Komives et al. (2007) asserted that without reflection, we would simply continue to repeat our mistakes. As Keeling (2006) wrote, the teaching and learning processes that embrace the transformation of the student through his/her own meaning making while experiencing the SI leader position must become common post-secondary education practice (pp. 1-7). As mentioned previously, the ability to examine the experiences of SI leaders using the LID model also has the potential to give further credence to the title of leader, to assist WCU in achieving its institutional learning outcomes, and could also add value to the experience that the SI leader position can offer students. There is enough evidence from this study and the research conducted by Dugan et al. (2013) to confirm that that the introduction of leadership scholarship and theory would likely benefit and inform students' development as leaders. Data collected have indicated that tremendous unintentional learning occurs during the experience of being an SI leader. Despite all the data generated and the important findings from this study, it also had some limitations.

### **Limitations**

Since this study was limited to an analysis of student leadership development in one particular SI program at one particular institution, students who hold SI leader positions at another institution may or may not reveal different leadership experiences and may or may not develop their leadership identities differently. While the discussions

and collected data were strengths of this study, as they permitted further exploration of the SI leader position and its developmental aspects, it is up to the reader to determine applicability of the findings from this study to their own context.

Secondly, most of the participants in this study had strong links to their faith communities and also had previous leadership experiences with their church that may or may not have also influenced their leadership development in ways that were not explored in depth in this study.

Thirdly, the participants in this study represented the characteristics and the unique aspects of students from a particular geographical area, which may or may not be similar and/or transferrable to other settings. However, although this study had limitations, I believe that the findings provide suggestions and opportunities for practice and also for future research.

There may also be limitations to using the LID model to assess the development of leadership competencies. Similar to Onorato's (2010) findings, I found that identifying the particular stage of the LID model a participant was exhibiting was not an easy task, as participants demonstrated several different levels during their interviews. Instead, they appeared to be *transitioning between several stages* as leaders, with the SI leadership opportunity possibly providing the impetus for these transitions. Although there were similarities between some aspects of the LID model and the SI leader experience, there were also some factors not included in the LID model that were evident in the participants' SI leader experiences in this study. One such factor is the impact that gender plays on a leaders' experience. Onorato posited that the LID model does not address the "influence of gender and ethnicity on the student's leadership identity development, nor

the influence of institutional context” (p. 214). Onorato also argued that the limitations of the stage-based model made it difficult to identify where a student placed when looking at only one specific area of their lives (i.e., the SI leader position).

The impact of faith and beliefs was also not addressed in the LID model. Participants in this study repeatedly spoke about the value of service to others, which indicated a higher LID stage when compared to how they spoke about their roles in groups. The data in this study also suggested that participation in organized religion (leading bible study, organizing events for their church, involvement in leadership positions in the church) may play a pivotal role in the development of leadership identity for some students.

In summary, this single case study provided both some unique insights into and much information about the SI leader experience in one post-secondary institution in Canada. The study explored the SI leaders’ backgrounds and also documented some of the outcomes of the SI leaders’ experiences. It also identified factors that contributed positively to the SI leaders’ experience as an SI leader, which included (a) use of reflective practice, (b) key people, (c) positive reinforcement, (d) sense of community, and (e) the training program. Some of these factors warrant more exploration, as they connect the literature on SI with the literature on leadership identity development and are included in the recommendations related to the SI leader experience, the SI program at WCU, and for SI programs elsewhere. More specific recommended areas for future research are discussed in the next section and relate to exploring the SI leader position still further.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

Most of the previous research regarding SI has focused on the evaluation of the instructional program itself; very little research has been conducted on the experience of the SI leaders, who were viewed as trained peer leaders until this study. A cross-institutional study on teaching-intensive universities in Canada has the potential to provide a greater sense of how the SI programs are impacting the students who are SI leaders. There is also an opportunity for more research on SI programs and student leadership development in Canada.

The lack of leadership language was apparent in descriptions of WCU's SI program or in job profiles for SI leaders. Therefore, it would be interesting to compare leadership development between SI programs that are part of campuses that subscribe to a formal leadership model and those that do not. Also, as suggested by Burkhardt and Zimmerman-Oster (1999) and Cress et al. (2001), more research is needed to examine the role of faculty members in facilitating the development of SI leaders.

When applying the LID stages, it was difficult to place the SI leader participants in any of the identified stages. This was made more difficult as the participants and the study focused the participants' responses on questions related only to their SI leadership experiences. Therefore, the participants may or may not have been exhibiting different stages of leadership in other leadership experiences outside their SI leader experience.

The SI leader experience itself is a role-oriented position on campus. So it may be important to consider whether/not this position itself could potentially limit their ability to move into another stage of leadership development? Could introducing the theory and stages of leadership development to the participants as part of their training have

produced different results? It would be interesting to see how these participants view their leadership after another year as SI leader and, especially, as an SI mentor.

How does gender impact the SI leader experience? According to Onorato (2010), gender played a pivotal role in the leadership identity of the students in her study. However, she was surprised that the participants in her study did not demonstrate awareness of how their gender impacted their LID. Although Komives et al. (2005) referred to gender as one aspect of their participants' self that led them to view leadership contexts differently, they did not address gender as a specific influence in the LID. While the current study did not provide enough data to further explore the influence of gender, such research would definitely be a valuable contribution to the future student leadership development literature.

What roles do spirituality, religion, values, and beliefs play in leadership identity development? This study uncovered a strong connection to organized religion among the student participants. For most participants, faith impacted their values and beliefs, which in turn, has impacted their leadership identity development. More research on the impact of values, faith, and beliefs is warranted.

Finally, SI has also become more available online. Does the SI leader of an online SI session have the same experience as those who lead sessions in person? This could be another area of future research.

### **Summary**

In this final chapter, I summarized the major themes and findings from the study, outlined the significance of the findings, addressed limitations of the study, listed opportunities and implications, and suggested recommendations for future research into

SI. Through the experience of completing this dissertation, I am aware of and embrace the notion that this research has raised more questions and that they have the potential to be as valuable as the findings I have documented. The students in the WCU-SI program entrusted me with their stories and offered their insight into something I could never have understood without their honest and willing participation. I was very fortunate to have entered a setting that allowed me to be an observer and participant in this learning community and in the lives of these students.

This qualitative case study was used to explore the leadership development of six students who held a SI leader position at WCU from January 2013 to April 2013. The findings indicated that leadership identity development is complex and that, although WCU has not formally adopted a leadership philosophy within the SI program, leadership development was occurring. The data also indicated that the students who participated in this study and also held the SI leader role at WCU had many experiences outside of WCU that contributed to their leadership development prior to taking on their SI leader experience.

The results of this study have implications for action, for policy, and for new research. This study found that the participants experienced many benefits from the SI leader experience that had not been documented previously. The participants in this study not only indicated that they had developed leadership skills, but they had also developed an understanding of what leadership is to them *personally* from this experience. Finally, this study also uncovered how holistic attention to factors such as previous experiences, influential people, leadership theory, and diversity have the potential to impact how much SI leaders learn about their own leadership identity and their development as a leader.

This study supported the assumption that the SI program is not only an effective academic and social support, but is also a program that can provide student leadership identity development.

There were also some very special unexpected results. My assumptions were challenged. I expected the participants would have more awareness of how gender and diversity affect their leadership and would have expressed more self-awareness in that regard. I was not expecting to have participants share their religious beliefs as openly as they did. Personally, I was not surprised, knowing the local community the participants come from, and I felt privileged that they shared their beliefs and values as openly as they did. As a student affairs professional, I learned that to consider the whole person, then spirituality must be a part of it. I am also aware of my own spirituality and how I have also explored what is important to me. This awareness will always remain with me as a scholar-practitioner in student affairs.

The SI leader experience was transformational for these WCU students. It encouraged them to see themselves and others in new ways and to discover more about what they are capable of. In the same way the students were transformed by their experience in the SI leader positions, I have also been transformed by my experience of conducting this research. The circle of learning continues...

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## Appendix A: Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

**From:** Tracey Mason

**Sent:** Wednesday, January 23, 2013 5:33 PM

**Subject:** Invitation to participate in a Research Study

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear [SI] Leaders,

I hope your semester has gotten off to a great start and your time as an SI leader has been all that you have hoped it would be.

Let me introduce myself. I am a doctoral student and employee at the University X. I am currently the [position] and, in my limited free time, have been a full-time distance student at the University of Calgary.

I am excited to begin my research study and data collection, which is why I am emailing you. I would like to invite and encourage SI leaders to participate and share their valuable experiences and insights towards helping to inform student leadership identity development theory.

As you may be aware, there is a lot of information on student leadership development, but little to no research on the [SI] leader position.

If you are interested in participating, contact me. I am looking for six to eight [SI] leaders to interview two or three times and to also write about their experience. Please note I am flexible with your time and want to respect your ability to commit. How and when you contribute is flexible.

I will be attending your February 8<sup>th</sup> [SI] In Service to introduce myself be able to review more about this exciting study and answer any questions. Your participation is entirely voluntary and confidential.

If you are interested and want to learn more prior to the information session on February 8<sup>th</sup>, please feel free to contact me at [email address] or [phone #].

I look forward to meeting you all and hope that a few of you want to contribute your voice to this important study.

Sincerely,

Tracey Mason-Innes

## **Appendix B: Demographic Survey**

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study. We have reviewed the consent form. Are there any other questions you would like to ask before we begin?

Date/Time:

Location:

Participant Name:

Pseudonym:

Birthday or Current Age:

Gender:

Hometown:

Area of Study

Year of Study:

Date you began [SI] Leader position:

Date you ended your [SI] Leader position:

Course(s) you are [SI] leader for:

Other group involvement/ peer leadership positions on and off campus:

Other group involvement/peer leadership positions prior to postsecondary:

## **Appendix C: Supplemental Instruction Leadership Identity Development Interview Protocols<sup>1</sup>**

### **Overview of interview focus for Interviewer**

#### **Interview one:**

*Briefly describe the purpose of the proposed research. Then, have participant review and then, if they agree, sign the Ethics Approval form.*

- 1) Explain process of producing /reviewing interview transcripts.
- 2) Ask students to identify experiences and influences with SI (and other activities??) that have shaped them.

#### **Interview two:**

- 1) Identify the student's experiences with leadership—being a leader and member/participant/follower).
- 2) Give participants a demographic survey (Appendix B).

#### **Interview Three:**

- 1) Explore how the student viewed leadership as they grew up; what stages they think they went through.
- 2) Explore the student's views of their leadership now.

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<sup>1</sup> Leadership Identity Development Interview Protocol obtained from S. R Komives (personal communications, November 8, 2010). Reprinted with permission.

## **Researcher's Roles and Responsibilities**

- 1) Manage individual interviews
  - a) be friendly, conversational, keep them connected.
  - b) be sure they know how you look forward to the next meeting.
- 2) Take interview notes
  - a) identify things to come back to or follow up with
  - b) note working hypotheses or possible research themes
- 3) manage the tape/transcript
- 3) Set up iPhone and mic before hand
  - a) Label each file (e.g. Chris #2)
  - b) get audio file to have transcribed
  - c) review transcript and make notes for the next interview
  - d) get copy of transcript to participant (via file transfer if possible)
- 4) Handle all correspondence with the participants
  - a) send reminder to participants before each interview
  - b) send them their transcripts
  - c) receive demographic info survey

### **Notes for Interviewer—Interview One:**

1. Thank them for agreeing to be in the study. Tell them who I am.
  - a. Discuss the research process a bit. Ask if you may refer to them by their first name as you go through the interview but explain that you will give them a chance to make-up pseudo name in the study that would be used, if they prefer.
2. Give them the informed consent form to sign *prior to beginning any interview questions*.
3. Ask if they have any questions.
4. Explain you will be recording the interviews and taking notes so you have a record and can understand their ideas.
5. Tell them you will be sharing a copy of the transcript of each interview with them if they would like to read it to expand or correct anything.
  - a. Ask if they'd like the transcript as an e-mail file attachment or in paper form.
6. Turn on the audio recorder.
7. Ask research questions detailed below.

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. This interview is to help me understand your life experience. This is your story.
2. Start back in elementary school and bring me up to the present about how you have become the person you are now. Think about key people and key events to return to discuss more later. So start with some of our earliest memories and tell me your story.
3. I will ask you questions to go into more detail on several of the things you share.

### *Prompts*

Can you tell me more about what else was involved at this point?

Who was involved at this key point? What did they do?

What was happening then that contributed to this outcome?

What happened next?

How did that change or shape how you saw yourself?

After you have the details you need of this interview:

1. THANK them—turn off the recorder.
2. Remind them to send you their comments on the transcript for this session when they receive it. (Arrange by email or paper)
3. Arrange time for the next interview.

## Interview Two:

Greet the student—tell them you enjoyed what they shared last session

Turn the tape recorder on.

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Were there other events or experiences that come to mind we did not talk about last time? Tell me about those.
2. Tell me more about \_\_\_\_\_ that you mentioned last time.
3. *[INTERVIEWER: Go back to key events/experiences from the transcript that you want to probe more about]*
4. Were there any classes that changed you—that helped you to learn about yourself?
5. Tell me more about experiences you had learning to work with other people? What did those various experiences teach you?
6. What about working with people different from you?
7. How did you begin to think of yourself as a person who could engage with others and get things done (that is, do leadership)? When did that start to happen—tell me about that process?
8. How did you learn about being a member, participant, or follower?
9. How did you really begin to learn about yourself as a leader?
10. Were there role models for you in learning this?
11. Did you process your various leadership experiences with anyone- like a parent, an advisor?
12. Did you learn about leadership in any formal way at this time?
13. Did anyone encourage you that you could make a difference? How did this happen?
14. Tell me about how you came to be an SI leader?

After you have the details you need of this interview:

1. Turn off the audio recorder
2. Thank them
3. Tell them the next session will focus on their views of leadership. Schedule next interview

### Interview Three:

#### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

In the last two sessions, we have talked about you and some things about leadership. Some of these questions may feel repetitive, but it will help to see if new thoughts have come to mind.

1. Were there other events or experiences or meanings that come to mind we did not talk about last time? Tell me about those.
2. Tell me more about \_\_\_\_\_ that you mentioned last time. [*Go back to key events/experiences from the transcript that you want to probe more about – particularly make sure you have the meaning of the key experiences*]
3. In our last interview you described \_\_\_\_\_ as the first time you were aware of being involved in leadership, tell me more about what you did, what happened? How did you become aware you were involved in a new way? [*Interviewer pick key event*]
4. What is the influence of things about you (like your race, gender, sexual orientation) on your leadership? [*Follow up with whatever aspect isn't mentioned*]
5. Do you believe you can influence change? What does it mean to you to be a change agent?
6. When do you truly first remember thinking about what leadership was generically? (I do not mean about YOU as a leader but when you were aware there was leadership/leaders happening around you?). What did you think leadership was then?
7. How do you view leadership differently now than when you first became aware of leadership?
8. What approach to leadership do you try to take now? What is your philosophy of leadership now?
9. What role do you believe ethical behaviour and integrity play in effective leadership? [*Follow up with: Can you think of a time you were concerned about the ethics of a leader you were working with? What did you do? Has anyone ever challenged your ethics or integrity? Tell me about that.*]
10. When you think of all the things (such as people, experiences, inner focus) that helped you develop the views of leadership you now hold, what are the most important to you?
11. Now that we have thought about this together for 3 sessions, how would you describe the process of how your view of yourself as a leader has changed over time and since you were young? How has this evolved? Summarize this for me as if it happened in steps or stages or some process.
12. What's next for you? What are you working on to be an even more effective leader?
13. How do you react to people calling you a "leader"?
14. Is there anything else you want to add about leadership or your SI experiences?

After you have the details you need of this interview:

1. Turn off the audio recorder
2. Thank them
3. Present them with a Starbucks gift certificate of \$30 as a token of appreciation for their time. Explain how data will be sent to them for them to review prior to use.



## **Appendix D: Interview Confirmation**

Date

Hello [],

Thank you for volunteering to participate for my research project: The leadership identity of supplemental instruction leaders.

Our first interview will take place on Thursday, March 14th at 4:30 pm in B162, the Social Research Lab.

I have attached the Informed Consent form for you to read over and we will both sign one of these when we meet. You do not need to bring anything with you. Please note that the interviews will be audio-recorded.

If you need to reach me, my cell is [phone #]. I can also be emailed at [email address].

If you have any questions at all, please let me know. Otherwise, I will see you then!

Thank you very much for your participation,

Tracey Mason-Innes  
University of Calgary EdD student

## **Appendix E: Consent Form**

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Tracey Anne Mason-Innes, Student Researcher and

Acting Manager, Residence Services, University of the Fraser Valley

Supervisor:

Dr. Margaret Patterson, Faculty of Education

Title of Project: The leadership identity development of supplemental instruction leaders

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

### **Purpose of the Study:**

The purpose of this research is to:

- i. Explore the experience of assuming the [SI] leader role on students at the University.
- ii. Explore what experiences and influences have contributed to how and why a student becomes an [SI] leader.

The research design and your potential role in it are summarized below.

The research model I am using for this study is a qualitative one through which I am seeking comprehensive depictions or descriptions of your experience. In this way I hope to illuminate and answer questions about how the [SI] leader position has impacted you and how you have developed your identity as a student leader.

I hope to understand the essence of your experience as student leader. You will be asked to recall your leadership journey, the people who impacted you, and how you arrived at the [SI] leader role. I am seeking vivid, accurate and comprehensive portrayals of what these experiences were like for you; your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, as well as situations, events, places, and people connected with your experience. More specifically this research seeks to explore, through semi-structured in-depth interviews: your learning journey and your experiences as an [SI] leader.

You may also volunteer to share with me reflective writing logs, related correspondence or other ways in which you have recorded your experience as an [SI] leader. For

example, letters, poems, photos, or artwork may be helpful in representing your experience.

### **What Will I Be Asked To Do?**

If you agree to participate within this study, you will participate in three approximately 30 -45 minute interviews between January 2013 and May 2013. The attached interview protocol serves as a guide for our time together during the first two interviews. Please do not feel constrained by these questions; they merely serve as a launching place and you are encouraged to explore this topic and your own story and experiences in a way that is most comfortable for you.

This study is designed to explore the experiences of supported learning group leaders in a vivid and descriptive way; it is not designed to cause upset or distress. **You are not required at any time to answer any question that you do not feel is helpful or relevant to your experience or this research.**

After the interviews are completed, you will have a minimum of two weeks to review the interview transcripts. You will be invited to submit written feedback. If after two weeks, feedback is not received then the narrative will be considered in order and does not require revision prior to being incorporated into the final dissertation submission. This two-week time limit is set to avoid delays in the finalization of the research.

I request permission to interview you in person between January 2013 and May 2013. I will consult with you to arrange a mutually agreed upon time and location for the interviews.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in parts of the study or you may withdraw from the study at any time and without penalty.

There will be no cost to you for participating in this study other than the investment of your time. There is a \$25 gift certificate as remuneration for participating in this study. However, arrangements for bus fare or campus parking fees will be arranged if needed.

### **What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?**

*Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide your gender, age and academic major.*

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some or none of them. Please put a check mark on the corresponding line (s) that grants me your permission to:

Arrange face-to-face interviews with you. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Digitally audio tape each interview with you. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Transcribe your interview recording to text. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Make copies of data related items (i.e. notes, course outlines, poems, artwork etc.) you volunteer to share as a representation of your experiences. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Quote you, using your pseudonym. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Publish your narrative, using your pseudonym, in my dissertation, conference proceeding and presentations, and other publications such as academic journal articles. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

The pseudonym I choose for myself is: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?**

Your participation in this study will have no effect on your academic standing or on your relationship with the University of the Fraser Valley or with the Supported Learning Groups program.

There are no known risks for you for participating in this study. It is possible that some of the questions may be upsetting or may raise emotional or unresolved issues for you. If needed, the University's counselors are available to you at no charge and I can assist with setting up an appointment.

As noted above, you are not required at any time to answer any question that you do not feel is helpful or relevant to your experience or this research.

You may withdraw from the study at any time. *All interview data collected at the time of withdrawal will be used in the final research report.* Any personal participant notes or artistic forms of data will be returned to the participant at the time of withdrawal and will not be used in the final research report.

### **What Happens to the Information I Provide?**

Participation is completely voluntary and confidential. You are free to discontinue participation at any time during the study. No one except the researcher and her supervisor will be allowed to see or hear any of the reflective writing or the interview tape and transcripts. There are no names on any of the materials. You can provide a pseudonym that will be used to present any quotes. The data are kept in a locked cabinet only accessible by the researcher and her supervisor. The confidential data will be stored for three years on a computer hard drive, at which time it will be permanently erased.

### **Signatures (written consent)**

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research subject.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Questions/Concerns**

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

*Mrs. Tracey Mason-Innes  
Faculty of Education, Graduate Division of Higher Education  
University of Calgary  
[email address]  
[phone #]*

*And*

*Dr. Margaret Patterson  
Faculty of Education  
University of Calgary  
[email address]  
[phone #]*

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Senior Ethics Resource Officer, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at [phone #]; email [email address].

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

## Appendix F: Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement

### Research Project Title: The leadership identity development of supplemental instruction leaders.

Dear Transcriber:

Thank you for agreeing to transcribe the digital audio-recording data collected from the research participants. Please take the time to read this carefully to understand any accompanying information.

Any and all information disclosed in the interview is to be kept absolutely confidential by you as a hired transcriber. The individual participant digital recordings will disclose information regarding research participants' experiences as student leaders. Your role as transcriber is to transcribe 100% of the disclosed information in a word-for-word format from the audio-recordings into an electronic text version to be sent to me, the researcher, upon completion of transcriptions. Once I, the researcher, have confirmed reception of the transcribed digital recordings for each participant you will be instructed to delete individual participant data and information upon completion; erase all electronic data and shred all paper copies containing data on the particular participants as their transcribed information is passed on to me, the researcher.

### Signatures – Written Consent

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your role as a transcriber in this research project, 2) agree to perform your role with absolute confidentiality and respect for the participants, and 3) destroy all digital, electronic, and paper versions of transcribed materials upon instruction from researcher (once all data has been transcribed and transferred to me, the researcher).

Transcriber Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Transcriber's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation as the transcriber, please contact:

Tracey Mason-Innes

[phone #]

[email address]

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

## Appendix G: Guiding Questions for Reflective Journals

*“A writer’s journal can hold many things: thoughts, ideas, stories, poems, and notes. This research study is interested in learning more about your experiences as an SI leader and what has lead you to become an SI leader.*

*You are encouraged to write about your experiences while in the SI leader position. To help with your journaling, I will also send you questions.”*

The following guiding questions will be emailed out to the participants every two weeks to help with reflective journal writing:

**Week 2:** Write about your experiences in training and your first SI group meetings. What are you excited about? What are you nervous about?

**Week 4:** Think about your experiences thus far as an SI leader. What has been a challenge, what successes have you had?

**Week 6:** Who are there people who are you are working with that are helping you? What impact have others had on your personal development?

**Week 8:** Thinking of your role in the SI group, what does the term “leader” mean to you and how do you view your own leadership?

**Week 10:** Think about your experience thus far, what have you learned about yourself?

**Week 12:** Think back to when you first began. How do you think you have impacted the SI group?

**Final Journal:** Summarize your experience as an SI leader. What did you learn? What were your challenges and successes? What do you wish you knew then that you know now? What impact do you think you had on the SI group?

## Appendix H: SI Leader Training 2012 at WCU<sup>2</sup>

<p>Day 1</p> <p>Introductions to each other</p> <p>Introduction to the [SI] model</p> <p>Relationship Building</p> <p>Administrative- Learn what forms need to be filled out and when they are due to Coordinator.</p> <p>Intro speech which leaders make in class first day (practice and feedback)</p>
<p>Day 2</p> <p>Helping student learn and learning strategies.</p> <p>How to use collaborative learning techniques.</p> <p>Session planning- Using existing rubric to structure plans and prepare a mock plan to present on</p> <p>Practice opening and closing of [SI] sessions</p> <p>Orientation with Faculty</p>
<p>Day 3</p> <p>Present plan to leaders</p>

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<sup>2</sup> SI Coordinator, personal communication, June 17, 2013.

Mentors present an actual plan

Guest speaker will conduct a mock session of a “good” [SI] plan

Modeling and Practicing group facilitation skills

In-Service Training for SI leaders at WCU

Fall Semester	Winter Term
1) Stress/Exam preparations	1) How to use games in sessions
2) Advanced facilitation	2) Best practices
3) Reflection	3) Reflection

## Appendix I: Leadership Identity Development in Stages 3, 4, and 5

Stages	Stages						
	Stage 3: Leader Identified			Stage 4: Leadership Differentiated			Stage 5: Generativity
Key Categories	Emerging	Immersion	Key Transition	Emerging	Immersion	Transition	
Descriptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Trying on new roles</li> <li>•Taking on individual responsibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Managing others.</li> <li>•Leadership seen largely as positional roles held by self or others; Leaders do leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take on more complex leadership challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Joining with others in shared tasks/goals</li> <li>•Need to learn group skills</li> <li>•New belief that leadership can come from anywhere in the group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Seeks to facilitate a good group process</li> <li>•Commitment to community of the group</li> <li>•Awareness that leadership is a group process</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Active commitment to a personal passion</li> <li>•Accepting responsibility for the development of others</li> <li>•Promotes team learning</li> <li>•Responsible for sustaining organizations</li> </ul>
Changing view of leadership	<i>“I would step up and get things done” Victoria</i>	<i>“When you are a leader, it implies that your job is to help others do something” Bernard</i>	<i>“I just jumped in and did it because there was no manager” Dawn</i>	<i>“I might know the answer, but I know someone else isn’t sure of it, so I am not going to answer” Dawn</i>	<i>“I can step back and let the students take over” Eric</i>	<i>“I am excited to return next year” Kayla</i>	

*Table continued*

Stages	Stages						
	Stage 3: Leader Identified			Stage 4: Leadership Differentiated			Stage 5: Generativity
Key Categories	Emerging	Immersion	Key Transition	Emerging	Immersion	Transition	
Developing self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Positional leadership or group member roles</li> <li>•Narrow down to meaningful experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Models other SI leader</li> <li>•Leader struggles with delegation</li> <li>•Moves in and out of leadership and member roles, but still believes the leader is in charge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Recognition that I cannot do it all myself</li> <li>•Learn to value the importance/ talent of others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Learn to trust and value others &amp; their involvement</li> <li>•Openness other perspectives</li> <li>•Develop comfort leading as an active member</li> <li>•Let go control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Learns about personal influence</li> <li>•Practices being engaged member</li> <li>•Values servant leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Focus on passion, vision, &amp; commitments</li> <li>•Want to serve society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Transforming leadership</li> <li>•Concern for leadership pipeline</li> <li>•Concerned with sustainability of ideas</li> </ul>
Group influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Leader has to get things done</li> <li>•Group has a job to do; organize to get tasks done</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Involve members to get the job done</li> <li>•Stick with a primary group as an identity base; explore other groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Meaningfully engage with others</li> <li>•Look to group resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Seeing the collective whole; the big picture</li> <li>•Learn group and team skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Value teams</li> <li>•Value connectedness to others</li> <li>•Learns how system works</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Value process</li> <li>•Seek fit with org. vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Sustaining the organization</li> <li>•Ensuring continuity in areas of passion/ focus</li> </ul>
Developmental influences	Take on responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Observe &amp; model older peers and adults</li> <li>• Adults as mentors, guides, coaches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Adults &amp; older peers as sponsors, mentors, &amp; meaning makers</li> <li>•Learning about leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Practicing leadership in ongoing peer relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Responds to meaning makers (student affairs staff, key faculty, same age peer mentors)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Begins coaching others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Responds to meaning makers</li> </ul>
Changing view of self with others		Independent			Interdependent		Interdependent
		Dependent					