

Constructing Leadership Identities through Participation in a Leadership Living-Learning
Community

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Abstract

This case study conceptually illustrated how a leadership living-learning community provided an educational context well suited to enhance development of leaders within changing leadership and educational paradigms. Specifically, it highlighted how both leadership and learning have come to be viewed as sociocultural processes, and presented theoretical and applied descriptions of “communities of practice” and the identity formation process of “legitimate peripheral participation” (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The unit of analysis for this case study was a first-year, leadership-themed living-learning community at a four-year, land-grant university in the Eastern United States. The purpose of the study was to explore how college students constructed leadership identities as they moved from first year members to second year peer leaders in the living-learning community.

Nine sophomore students serving in peer leader roles and four faculty members serving as program instructors were the primary study participants. In-depth qualitative interviews with students and faculty, analysis of key program documents and students’ written assignments, and a confirmatory student focus group contributed to the creation of eight primary themes and one overarching theme describing how students constructed leadership identities through community participation.

The eight themes included access to experiences of membership, meanings of the first-year experience, beliefs about leadership, peer leader roles and practices, knowing in practice, meanings of multi-membership, and embodiment of the program mission. The overarching

theme illustrated how peer leaders embody the mission-oriented program design as they move through—and ultimately out of—the community. Students' representations of their beliefs and practices enacted through community leadership roles emphasized college success strategies, foundational leadership knowledge and skill development, and preparation for future leadership roles. The findings of this study provided insight for educators who desire to design programs that foster college student leadership development. The findings revealed social and cultural implications related to higher education's call to enhance students' leadership capacity. There is a need to further explore leadership identity formation within other contexts, as well as the long-term impact of learning community experience on students' representations of leadership identity.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study explored leadership identity development of second-year college students serving as peer leaders within a leadership-themed, residential learning community. This chapter introduces the background of the study, the problem statement, and the potential significance of the study.

The Drivers of Leadership Education

While higher education institutions may have multiple missions, the heart of a university has been—and continues to be—its commitment is preparing young adults for professional roles and productive citizenship (Baxter Magolda, 2003; 2004a; Riggio, Ciulla, & Sorenson, 2003). For today's graduates, the future is one of increasing complexity and rapid change in response to technological change, social, political, economic and environmental crises, and changing organizational structures (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009a; Pink, 2006; Ware & Grantham, 2003). The problems facing our world are not clearly defined nor easily solved through technical work; rather, they are what Heifetz (1994) called adaptive challenges, in which can only be addressed through learning, innovating, and creatively increasing the capacity to thrive (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009b). Klein, Rice, and Schermer (2009) highlighted the need to prepare for and respond to rapid to change. They stated, "The place to begin is with those who exercise the most power, authority, and influence, namely our leaders" (2009, p. 1). Literature emphasizes the need for effective leaders at all levels and in all facets of society (Burns, 1978; Couto, 1995; Day, Zaccaro, & Halpin, 2004; Gardner, 1990; Rost, 1993).

Ayman, Adams, Fisher, and Hartman (2003) suggested, "As our universities stretch beyond traditional academic subjects to focus on leadership, personal growth and development, and even values, higher education is positioned to play a more pivotal role in the development of a leadership culture in our society" (2003, p. 220). Leadership educators are tasked with developing responsible citizens-leaders with the maturity, creativity, and critical thinking skills needed to not only cope, but also fully engage, with the complexities of emerging national and global trends (Astin & Astin, 2000; Elmore, 2010; Rost & Barker, 2000). To accomplish this goal requires transformative educational practices that move students from knowledge-acquirers to knowledge-constructors (Baxter Magolda, 2003). Androetti (2010) proposed that education for global citizenship requires a shift in perceptions of knowledge, learning, and the learner. Leaning into discursive and post- traditions in which language constructs reality and shapes social practice, educators are challenged to re-conceptualize knowledge, learning, realities, and identities as socially constructed, negotiated, situated, and changing (Androetti, 2010). The educator's role is one that, "enables the emergence of ethical, responsible and responsive ways of seeing, knowing and relating to others 'in context', as an ongoing project of agonistic co-authorship and co-ownership" (2010, p. 239).

In summary, these drivers: (a) the mission of higher education to prepare effective global citizens, (b) the need for global citizens to be effective leaders, and (c) the changing paradigms of learning and education associated with global citizenship, frame the need and purpose for higher education leadership education programs.

Background to the Problem

While leadership as a scholarly discipline and subject of inquiry has been prominent in the fields of management and psychology for over a century, examples of higher education

leadership education programs focused on leadership studies for the purpose of student leader development and leadership training have existed for only a few decades. Of significance in this movement was the W. K. Kellogg Foundation initiative to develop leadership abilities in college undergraduates (Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 2000). Between 1990-1998, 31 projects were funded to support and test models of leadership development that aligned with the organization's mission and conception of leadership as a collaborative process for effective, positive social change (Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 2000). Projects were selected based on the assumption that, "our society needs more and better leaders, that effective leadership skills can be taught, and that the college environment is a strategic setting for learning these skills and theories" (2000, p. 2).

Empirical studies measuring the outcomes of these leadership programs found that college students involved in leadership education and training showed growth in civic responsibility, leadership skills, multicultural awareness, understanding of leadership theories, and personal and societal values (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, & Burkhard, 2001; Zimmerman-Oster & Burckhardt, 1999). These outcomes strongly supported the belief that every student has the potential for leadership—and that higher education institutions can develop this potential through intentional leadership programs and activities—thus creating momentum for expanding and prioritizing leadership development programs on college campuses.

As the field of leadership studies and collegiate leadership programs have continued to expand, so have the challenges facing leadership educators. Middlebrooks and Allen (2008, 2009) offered a framework of key issues and questions through which to address challenges in the areas of theoretical assumptions, curriculum and pedagogy, influences on learning, and assessment.

Theoretical assumptions. There is a need for programs to be grounded by a definition of leadership; however, those leadership definitions not only inform decisions, students' experiences (Fincher & Shalka, 2009; Rost, 1993). Leadership educators need to address questions of: "What is leadership?" "Who defines it?" And, "What do we believe an 'expert' leader needs to know and do?" (Middlebrooks & Allen, 2008).

Curricular and pedagogical approaches. Critical questions around this topic extend beyond the selection of leadership content to, "How should we teach it?" (Middlebrooks & Allen, 2008). Leadership can be considered both a topic of study and a set of knowledge and skills to be applied (Riggio, Ciulla, & Sorenson, 2003). Leadership is often conceptualized as a relationship between a leader, follower, and the context (Bass, 1990), which leads to the important question of, "How do we teach context?" (Middlebrooks & Allen, 2008). Educators should be concerned with creating environments that simulate the culture and context in which leadership is practiced. Middlebrooks and Allen (2008) compared leadership education to other applied fields such as education or nursing, and suggest the introduction of curricular experiences that recreate real experiences. Balancing classroom learning and relevant experience plays a critical role in leadership studies (Posner, 2009; Riggio et al., 2003). Posner (2009) said, "Learning about leadership is not the same as being a leader" (p. 5). As we learn from leadership experiences and interactions with people, we grow in our awareness, understanding and skills. Grint (2005) described the process as "learning to lead" through, "leading to learn" (2005, p. 119). Leadership educators must move beyond talking about leadership to creating opportunities for students to engage in specific leadership issues and become leaders in their various communities and contexts (Fincher & Shalka, 2009; Middlebrooks & Allen, 2008; Posner, 2009).

Developmental influences. Of consideration is the question, "What influences college students' learning?" (Middlebrooks & Allen, 2009). Chickering and Reisser (1993) described how higher education institutions can have a significant impact on student development along seven "vectors", including: (a) developing competence, (b) managing emotions, (c) moving through autonomy toward interdependence, (d) developing mature interpersonal relationships, (e) establishing identity, (f) developing purpose, and (g) developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Some of the key ingredients for encouraging such development included frequent student-faculty relationships, relevant curriculum that integrates diverse perspectives, active and collaborative teaching, forming friendships, participating in communities that become meaningful sub-cultures, and collaboration between curricular and co-curricular approaches (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Kegan (1982) suggested that a person must be understood in terms of their evolving self. Development involves a lifelong process of adaptation, which is, "an active process of increasingly organization the relationship of the self to the environment" (1982, p. 113). Baxter Magolda (1999) described a constructive-developmental view of learning that incorporates two major concepts: (a) that students construct knowledge by organizing and making meaning of their experiences, and (b) that this construction takes place in the contexts of their evolving assumptions about knowledge itself and students' role in changing it (1999, p. 6). The implications for teaching then, becomes a matter of understanding students' ways of making meaning and engaging them in a journey toward more complex meaning making (Baxter Magolda, 1999). Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, and Osteen (2005) used a grounded theory approach to reflect the developmental experiences of college students who demonstrated a relational leadership approach. The resulting Leadership Identity Model described six

development stages that represent the process of how students situate themselves in the construct of leadership over time (Komives et al., 2005; Komives, Owens, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2009).

Assessment. A fundamental question is, “How do we know if learning occurs?” (Middleton & Allen, 2008). A distinct challenge to assessing the impact of leadership education activities lies in our ability to establish causality between measured leadership outcomes and participation in leadership education (Middlebrooks & Allen, 2008). Leadership educators operate with an assumption that leadership education programs build students’ capacity to lead, while at the same time understanding that capacity is not easily captured through quantitative measures, but rather through the description of contextual or experiential dimensions of students’ experience over time (Middlebrooks & Allen, 2008). A more critical question for leadership educators then is not, *does* leadership education increase capacity; but rather, “*How* do various leadership education programs or courses increase and enhance leadership capacity …” (emphasis mine; Townsend, 2005, p. 1). McCauley and Velsor (2004) described *leader development* is about expanding an individual's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes; *leadership development* is about expanding an organization, work group, or community’s capacity to enact the basic leadership tasks for collective work (McCauley & Velsor, 2004). The term capacity has several meanings, including an individual's mental or physical ability (such as aptitude or skills), as well as the power to produce or perform (capability) (Capacity, n.d.). Leadership capacity could therefore be described as both leadership abilities (knowledge and skills) as well as capabilities—how that knowledge and skill can be enacted (put to practice) in relationships and organizations. Day et al. (2004) proposed that helping individuals “learn how to learn from experiences” may support and accelerate leadership

development (p. 6). “Leadership can be seen as an outcome of mutual commitments, interpersonal relationships, and social processes” (Day et al., 2004, p. 7). Leader development, then, can be viewed as part of ongoing self-development in preparation for work within social contexts (Day et al., 2004).

Several recent studies indicate that participation in undergraduate leadership education programs provides experiences that build leadership efficacy, which has been shown to be a predictor of leadership behavior (Dugan & Komives, 2007; McCormick, Tanguma, & Lopez-Forment, 2003). However, few published assessments of leadership education programs in higher education call into question if and how well programs are developing effective leaders (Ayman, Adams, Fisher, & Hartman, 2003; DiPaolo, 2008). A response could be to look more deeply into the lives of students and document the processes through which they engage in leadership learning (DiPaolo, 2008).

To engage in this type of assessment, leadership educators need a new lens through which to view student leadership development that better reflects changing leadership and learning paradigms. Conventional, leader-centric views of leadership have given way to relational perspectives that emphasize the process of leaders and followers working together to create positive change (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2005; Rost, 1993). Klein et al. (2009) suggested that the complexities surrounding today's global problems must be addressed from a relational paradigm in which leaders are co-created through both internal, agentic processes and social and cultural interactions. Fairhurst and Grant (2010) described a growing body of literature concerning the social construction of leadership. Social constructionist approaches emphasize the discourses and sense-making of both leaders and followers through communicative practices within a social context (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). Ostick and Wall

(2010) suggested a need to “shift the frame of leadership education, training, and development toward a process of social construction, developed and viewed through environmental contexts, group memberships, and multiple, intersecting personal identities” (Ostick & Wall, 2010, p. 339). Alvesson (1996) asserted that to understand leadership requires exploration into language, context, and meaning. “This [kind of exploration] calls for intimacy in relation to the phenomenon under study and a depth of understanding at the expense of abstraction, generalizability and the artificial separation of theory and data” (Alvesson, 1996, p. 464).

In summary, the challenges facing leadership educators revolve around how to provide curriculum and experiences that put to practice what we know about how student learn, and also model leadership values, theories, and practices that we desire to develop in students. This is important because, “*how* a leadership program is designed and the *nature* of its content both carry significant weight in shaping students’ perceptions of leadership” (Munin & Dugan, 2011, p. 157).

Current trends in educational theory and practice reflect a conceptual shift from a focus on teaching for individual cognition, to learning and development through participation in social communities (Wildman, 2005). Higher education literature points to learning communities as a contemporary education model designed to foster professional, civic, and ethical responsibility through the integration of academic components (curriculum content), social components (interpersonal relationships) and physical components (places of meeting or residence) (Brower & Dettinger, 1998). Learning communities provide a model of leadership education in which leadership knowledge and meaning is socially constructed through collaborative engagement and practice within that community. In higher education, learning communities are often described from a design perspective (i.e., types or forms of programs and courses); however, the full power

of learning communities is best understood through an exploration of the rich theoretical and conceptual foundation in the literature of situated learning and, more specifically, communities of practice.

Theoretical Framework

Lave & Wenger (1991) described situated learning as, "an integral part of generative social practices in the lived-in world" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 25). They suggested that as learners participate in the sociocultural practices of a community, they develop mastery of the knowledge and skills of that community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The process by which newcomers become full members of a community of practice was called *legitimate peripheral participation* (LPP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Communities of practice represent both a *place of knowledge*—the social world in which the person engages in learning and also a *group of people* who share an interest, a craft, or a profession (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Communities of practice offer a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we "do", and are the prime context in which we engage in meaning-making (Wenger, 1998). Individuals make meaning as they construct their own personal experiences (Kegan, 1982); however, as Bruner (1990) proposed, meaning making is not isolated to one's mind; rather, it is connected to, and largely inseparable from, a culture's "folk psychology", or the dominant beliefs, values, desires and theories of the greater culture (with all its ordinary people, traditions, stories, and artifacts) in which the individual is situated (Bruner, 1990). Communities of practice represent the place of knowledge, the social world in which the person engages in learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Rost & Barker (2000) asserted that, "observable leadership outcomes are phenomena that emerge from complex processes" that cannot be limited to individual, self-contained measures or simple descriptive terms (p. 7). A better model

represents the influence of social and cultural values and assumptions on individual behavior (Rost & Barker, 2000).

Drath & Palus (1994) proposed meaning making in a community of practice as a different way of conceptualizing both leadership and leadership development. They suggested that leadership is primarily a meaning-making process within social communities (Drath & Palus, 1994). Meaning-making happens when members develop psychologically, when new forms of practice are created, and as structures evolve which provide new ways of bringing the community into membership with each other at large (Drath & Palus, 1994).

Learning that is situated in communities can be considered a process of identity formation. According to Wenger (1998), “building an identity consists of negotiating the meaning of our experience of membership in social communities” (p. 145). Lave and Wenger (1991) described the process by which newcomers become full members of a community of practice as legitimate peripheral participation (LPP). Their exploration of the LPP framework primarily focused on the development of knowledgably skilled identities (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Lord and Hall (2005) proposed that leadership performance is organized in terms of a progression from novice to intermediate to expert skill levels. At each skill level, the emphasis was on qualitatively different knowledge and information processing capabilities (Lord & Hall, 2005).

Based on the theoretical framework, the Residential Leadership Community (RLC) at an Eastern land-grant university could be considered an example of a leadership education community of practice. Shared practices provide a context in which to engage students in authentic activities around leadership topics. Program leaders believed that as a result of this engagement, students learn not only what leadership is, but they also experience and apply leadership in practice. Second-year students who had transitioned into roles of peer leaders

represented “full membership” in the community. It was also believed that their changing roles and how they make meaning of their experiences in the leadership community could provide insight into the construction of leadership identities.

Analysis of leadership identity construction within a leadership learning community provides a unique socio-cultural framework to address and explore many of the challenges related to leadership education. A collegiate leadership learning community represents both the content and context for learning leadership. Leadership identity represents both a product and process of becoming a leader.

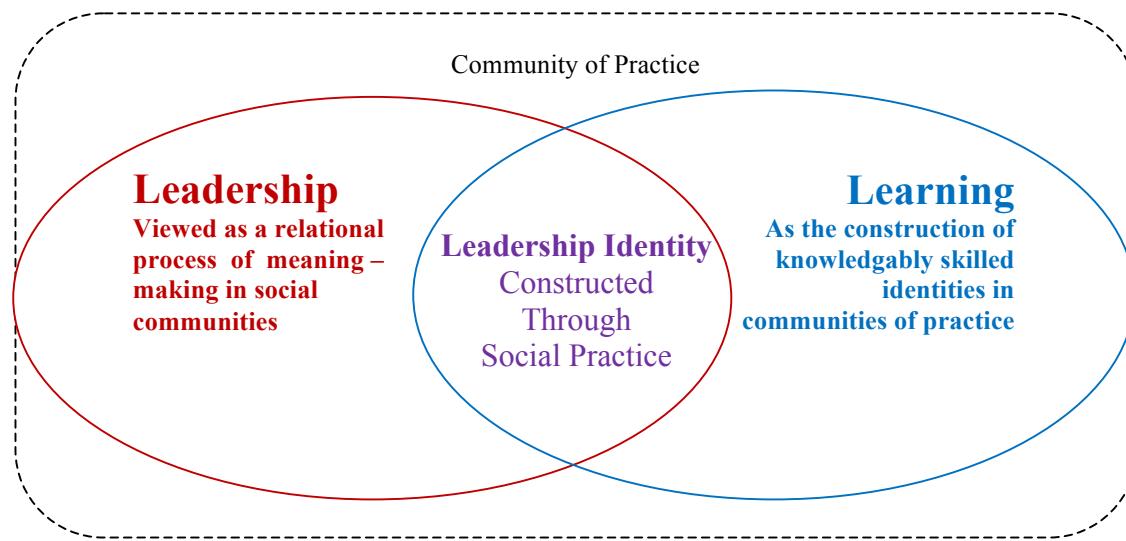


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of developmental processes within a leadership learning community/community of practice.

An exploration of leadership identity through social practice provides a more complete picture of how students make meaning of leadership and how they engage in leadership practices over time and in a specific leadership context. To the extent that their meanings and practices reflect intended (or unintended) discourse (including beliefs, values, and knowledge) and increased competence *as defined by the community* provides a unique description of increasing or changing leadership capacity as a result of participation in the leadership program.

Purpose and Research Questions

Through application of the community of practice construct to a collegiate living-learning community, the researcher sought to describe the processes of identity construction through social practice, and to make explicit the social and cultural forces that influence those constructions. This required inquiry of individuals situated in the leadership learning context. The purpose of this case study was to explore how students studying leadership within a collegiate themed living-learning community construct leadership identities as they transition from first-year members to second-year peer leaders. Understanding how students make meaning of their experiences can help leadership educators to structure curriculum and programming which more intentionally influence leadership identity development. It was assumed that members of the leadership living learning community engaged in social practices that influence identity development processes, and that identity was developed through negotiating the meaning of experiences of membership in such social communities (Wenger, 1998). In this study, leadership identity was defined as a learning process by which individuals develop a sense of who they are as leaders and how they make meaning of leadership practices through their changing roles within the community (Komives et al., 2009; Wenger, 1998). The following research question and sub-questions guided the study:

1. How do college students studying leadership within a themed living-learning community construct leadership identities as they transition from first-year members to second-year peer leaders?
 - a. How do students gain access to varying levels of membership in the residential leadership community?

- b. How do faculty and administrative stakeholders facilitate experiences of membership for students in the residential leadership community?
- c. What meanings of leadership are taken up by students as they transition from first-year members into second-year peer leaders?
- d. What are the social and cultural implications of these meanings as they relate to higher education's call to enhance students' leadership capacity?

Significance of the Study

The exploration of leadership identity formation through the social practices of a leadership-learning community of practice was significant in several ways. First, it applied a social constructionist approach to scholarship which draws attention away from, “the skills, acquisition and training instruments that have dominated the relational dynamics that structure such a space” (Carroll & Levy, 2010, p. 227). Second, it extended our understanding of learning communities beyond structural definitions, to encompass the theoretical assumptions and social processes that support and influence leadership learning. As Carroll and Levy (2010) explained, “Social construction inquiry not only has the power to reshape conceptual and theoretical understanding of leadership and its development but also to inform, refreshen and challenge practice” (p. 227). A greater understanding of identity construction through social practice informs leadership program design and pedagogy, specifically offering insight into more effective methods of integrating curricular and co-curricular aspects into leadership learning communities to enhance program goals for developing student leaders.

Definition of Terms

The following list provides definitions of key terms used throughout this research study:

Discourse: Shared language used for representing (talking about) a topic within a social

and cultural context; considered “little d” discourse (Gee, 1999; Hall, 2001).

Leader: A person who is engaged in relational influence practices.

Leadership: A complex relational process by which individuals in communities engage in meaning-making and social practices for the purpose of achieving of mutual goals.

Leadership development: An evolving knowledge about leadership and sense of self as a leader that is both shaped by, and results in, increasing competence in the social practices of a leadership learning community.

Learning community: A contemporary education model designed to foster professional, civic, and ethical responsibility through the integration of academic components (curriculum content), social components (interpersonal relationships) and physical components (places of meeting or residence) (Brower & Dettinger, 1998).

Living-learning community: A form of collegiate living-learning community that integrate students' living and academic environments, providing social and intellectual support. Students are intentionally organized into cohorts enrolled in specific curricular offerings and residing in a dedicated living space (Shapiro & Levine, 1999).

Residential Leadership Community (RLC): A leadership themed living-learning community at an Eastern land-grant university; the community of interest in this study.

Community of practice: A *place of knowledge*, or the social world in which the person engages in learning; a *group of people* who share an interest, a craft, or a profession; providing a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we "do", and are the prime context in which we engage in meaning-making (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

Practice: Learning as doing; doing within a historical context that gives structure and meaning to what we do through shared frameworks, tools ideas, information, and language (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998)

Identity: Learning as becoming; a process by which learning changes who are and what we can do within the context of our communities (Wenger, 1998). Identity can also be considered a product—or representation of—the shared language, conventions, codes, and values within our socially, historically, and culturally situated experience (Cote & Levine, 2002; Taylor & Spencer, 2004).

Leadership identity: A representation of an individual's sense of who they are as a leader (product) and how they make meaning of leadership practices through their changing roles within a living-learning community (process).

Peer leader: A second-year student in the Residential Leadership Community who is serving in a positional leadership role.

Summary

This chapter presented a rationale for leadership education programs in higher education, as well as context for current and future challenges facing leadership educators. These challenges were framed by key questions around assumptions, beliefs, and practices related to leadership and learning. The communities of practice construct was described as an educational model that provides a sociocultural frame of reference through which to explore leadership identity construction.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this case study was to explore how students studying leadership within a collegiate themed living-learning community construct leadership identities as they transition from first-year members to second-year peer leaders. Understanding how students make meaning of their experiences of membership in the community can help leadership educators design curriculum and programming in ways that intentionally facilitate leadership identity development. The researcher assumed that members of the residential leadership community engage in social practices that influence identity development processes, and that identity was developed through negotiating the meaning of experiences of membership in the leadership community (Wenger, 1998). Peer leaders, as well as key faculty and administrators, served as the population in this case study.

An exploration of leadership identity constructed through the social practices of a collegiate residential leadership community represented the conversion of three distinct, yet overlapping bodies of literature related to the social construction of leadership, social learning, and student development in higher education. Identity development—and more specifically, the social construction of identities—emerged from the literature as a common point of analysis and discussion between contemporary views of leadership, social learning theories, and higher education learning models.

Leadership as Social Construction

Leadership is a highly valued, complex phenomenon that has received wide attention from both popular press and academic literature (Northouse, 2009). Leadership has been conceptualized, theorized, classified, and analyzed within a variety of domains, including classic literature, politics, psychology, sociology, business and management, education, military, individuals, teams, organizations, and cultures (Bass, 1990). No single or common definition exists, and most traditional theorizing and analysis focus on peripheral elements (such as traits, characteristics, styles, or goal attainment), which Rost asserted was “for the most part, visible and countable, susceptible to statistical manipulation, accessible in terms of causality probabilities, and usable to train people in the habits of doing what those in the know may think is right or wrong” (Rost, 1993, p. 3). The history of leadership studies has been constructed through narratives that define leadership and the movement of leadership theory and practice in response to changing cultural influences and practices in society, the workplace, and academia (Rost, 1993).

Conventional, leader-centric views of leadership have given way to relational perspectives that emphasize the process of leaders and followers working together to create positive change (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2005; Rost, 1993). Klein et al. (2009) described changing paradigms of leadership: from the historical dominant view of leader as "self-contained ego making conscious, rational choices based upon 'real world' contingencies and possessing power and influence" (p. 2), towards a psychological-relational paradigm in which leaders are "co-created" (p. 3). They suggested that leaders are members of multiple social groups, in which "the group 'co-creates' leaders and followers who, in a mutual, reciprocal interchange, serve conscious and unconscious purposes for the group" (Klein et al., 2009, p. 4). Understanding the

concept of “co-creation” through group membership requires exploration into how individuals embedded in social contexts make meaning of their experiences (Klein et al., 2009).

Barge and Fairhurst (2008), Fairhurst (2009), and Fairhurst and Grant (2010) addressed the convergence of social constructionism and leadership, which has resulted in an approach that places increased emphasis on the ability of both leader and follower to co-construct reality through the processes and outcomes of social practices. Leadership from this perspective has been described as a "lived and experienced social activity in which persons-in-conversation, meaning, and context are dynamically interrelated" (Barge & Fairhurst, 2008, p. 228). Communication practices are integral to leadership processes, and the dominant management (or leadership) discourse at any point in time is socially and culturally determined (Fairhurst, 2010). There has been a decreased emphasis on traditional, essential theories determined through objective criteria in favor of an exploration of discourses and sense-making among unending contingencies and contexts (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010).

Grint (2000) echoed the belief that leadership is essentially a social phenomenon, and suggested that leadership is critically concerned with establishing and coordinating the relationships among four things: (a) “the who”—constructing identity and truth, (b) “the what”—a strategic vision and the invention of leadership, (c) “the how”—organizational tactics that are not easily determined, and (d) “the why”—persuasive communication to ensure followers embodying the vision, pursuing the vision, and adopting the organizational tactics (p. 27). Says Grint (2000), "... even the most powerful leaders are restricted by the social discourses in which they operate ... leaders ... are constrained by the language, the customs, the social mores, the dress code, and so on with which we all operate" (p. 10). He draws from social constructivist ideas to argue that leadership is largely a matter of perception, “rooted in and a product of the

imagination" (Grint, 2000, p. 13). This does not deny the importance of leadership, but brings to light questions of epistemology as it relates to the "who" of leadership. Rather, it brings identity construction to front and center as a critical element and task of leadership (Grint, 2000).

Leadership involves more than the question "Who am I?" Once we construct and answer that question, then we are forced to consider the "what", "how", and "why" questions (Grint, 2000, p. 13).

Leadership and Identity

Identity theories provide a useful theoretical basis from which to gain deeper insights into the ongoing and continuous development of leaders and leadership processes (Day & Harrison, 2007; Lührmann & Eberl, 2007). Hall (2004) connected a strong sense of personal identity with successful leadership, describing leadership development as the process of enhancing the fit between a personal identity and the requirements of the leader role (Hall, 2004). Day, Harrison, and Halpin (2009) also connected identity development to leader development. Identity development facilitates leadership behaviors such as interpersonal skills, decision making, and self-awareness (Day et al., 2009). They suggested that followers trust leaders with a strong sense of identity; and, that identities based on defined priorities and values help the leader define goals and direct them toward the realization of desired possible selves (Day et al., 2009).

The challenge with this perspective of identity development is that it returns to a highly personalized and leader-centric view. It assumes that the leader defines success through exercising power in rational decision-making and prescribed social relations. Green (2009) looked beyond the exploration of individual processes, asserting, "When we place leadership in identity terms, the nature of the construct broadens to include the implicit group or groups to which a leader belongs" (p. 50). The relationship between identity and leadership is better

described by representation (Green, 2009). Leaders can be selected to represent a group, not only in an elected-positional sense, but also based on self-attributions and projections or perceptions by others (Green, 2009). When a social group shares a view of identity (that is, they socially derive attributes or characteristics of the membership), and a person matches or embodies that construction of characteristics, then the person is subject to the representation (Green, 2009). Leadership becomes a representation for the group's voice and collective sense of self, embodied in the individual leader. For those who elect or are selected (emerge) as leaders, the collective views of leadership define one's leader identity. For students engaged in formal leadership training, the curriculum and educational design/environment represents a leadership discourse, and perhaps ideology, that shape a students' sense of what leadership is and how to be a leader.

Identity development literature, including leadership identity literature, traditionally focuses on stage-based development processes that represent a shift from self-identification to social identification (Day et al., 2009). These processes are not necessarily linear, but rather dynamic in the sense that individuals or groups may be present in different or multiple stages at the same time. Green (2009) identified ways in which leadership gives identity voice. As leadership identity develops, there is a shift from leadership for the individual toward transcendent leadership, which seeks to liberate others from suffering. Lord and Hall (2005) suggested that leaders' identities tend to shift from individual to more collective orientations as their leadership performance progresses from novice to expert levels of skill.

Komives et al. (2005) proposed a Leadership Identity Model that identified a developmental process describing how students situate themselves in the construct of leadership over time. Their grounded theory proposed six developmental stages, beginning with emerging

awareness of leadership and progressing to integration and synthesis (Komives et al., 2005).

Across the stages, five categories influenced the development of leadership identity: (a) a broadening view of self, (b) developing self, (c) group influences, (d) developmental influences, and (e) the changing view of self with others (Komives et al., 2005, 2009).

The Leadership Identity Model (LID) makes key connections between identity development and the changing nature of relationships with others (Komives et al., 2009). The strengths of this model are its potential for creating measurements and markers to identify stages of leader identity, and the subsequent design of educational interventions to move students to more advanced stages. The LID model adds to educators' understanding of what a leadership identity is and how it is developed. However, it is important to recognizing that these identity stages are by nature interpretive; they are themselves a social construction influenced by contexts unique to the college student experience. Any exploration of leader identity must be interpreted within the specific sociocultural framework.

Carroll and Levy (2010) challenged assumptions of identity as either a tool or personalized development journey. From a social constructionist approach, they conceptualize leadership development *as* identity construction influenced by dominant discourses and structures of our social experience (Carroll & Levy, 2010). "At its most basic, leadership development could and should enact the mind-set and practices that it is attempting to instill and embed. That is to say that one practices leadership in the process of developing it" (Carroll & Levy, 2010, p. 228).

Ford, Harding, and Learmonth (2008) discussed leadership and identity through a post-structuralist frame, in which the language defining "leadership" and "leader" are social constructions brought into being through the repetition of words in texts about leadership. From

this perspective, it becomes important to understand how the language of leadership used "brings into being that which is discussed" (Ford et al., 2008, p. 27). Leadership could therefore be defined as, "A process of influencing ... by persons known as leaders who have worked on themselves so that their very selves depend upon discourses of leadership, and they become the embodiment of leadership theory" (Ford et al., 2008, p. 28-29).

Based on the literature, it seems that a leader's identity includes both internal beliefs and external practices associated with not only formal leadership roles, but also social representations of who a leader is and what a leader does. The discourse of leadership shapes these representations. How an individual comes to think of herself as a leader is a socially constructed developmental process that is highly influenced by one's context, including community and experience.

Learning as Social Participation

Many authors have described the theorizing and research about human learning that dominated late twentieth century psychology as a shift in emphasis from the individual cognitive processes of the mind to the interactive processes of the mind in social context (Anderson, Reder, & Simon, 1996; Bredo, 1994; Brown, 1994; Bruner, 1990; Greeno, 1998; Sawyer & Greeno, 2009; Wildman, 2005). Bredo (1994) suggested that the debate between a symbol-processing, people-as-computers, formal approach to cognition and the informal, situated approach of people in everyday action is not new; it relates back to Dewey and the debate of pragmatism that existed at the turn of the century. "Dewey saw activity as involving a transaction between person and environment that changed both" (Dewey & Bently, 1949 as cited in Bredo, 1994, p. 24). In the same way that cognition is thought to be situated within the cultural context, Dewey sought to place theory within practice, and "reason in experience rather

than outside of it" (Bredo, 1994, p. 24). The fundamental question driving the progression of thought, both then and now, is both philosophical and practical. That is, "how to adapt to a changing world, whether by a more universal and scientific approach or by a more particularistic and every day one" (Bredo, 1994, p. 25).

Constructivism: Learning through interaction. Constructivism can be considered both an epistemology (philosophical explanation for learning), as well as a category of psychological theory and related educational strategies (Schunk, 2008). A constructivist approach to learning promotes individuals' construction of knowledge and understanding through interactions between existing beliefs and new situations they encounter in their environments. From a social learning perspective, those environments include other people with whom they participate in activity systems (Clancey, 2009; Schunk, 2008).

Symbolic interactionism: Social construction of meaning. Influenced by pragmatist and social psychologist George Herbert Mead, Blumer (1969) investigated how people create meaning during the process of social interaction (as cited in Blumer, 1986). Symbolic interactionism rests on three premises: (a) that human beings act toward things on the basis that the thing has meaning for them, (b) the meaning of such things is derived from social interaction, and (c) these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process (Blumer, 1986, p. 2). In other words, meaning itself is a social product; it is both interpretative and used interpretively. Meanings are not just directed towards objects or other people; meanings about self (or personal identity) are also constructed through social interaction (Clancey, 2009).

Cultural psychology: The individual in culture. Bruner (1990) suggested that in order to understand people, one must understand how their experiences and acts are shaped by intentional states; that is, internal beliefs, values, desires, and theories of how the world works

and how others think (Bruner, 1990). "The form of these intentional states is realized only through participation in ... culture. Culture is made up of a mind, not just a private mind, but a public, communal mind" (Bruner, 1990, p. 33). Therefore, meaning making is not isolated to one's mind; rather it is connected to, and largely inseparable from, a culture's "folk psychology"—or the dominant beliefs, values, desires and theories of the greater culture (with all its ordinary people, traditions, stories, and artifacts) in which the individual is situated (Bruner, 1990, p. 13). Cultures have a set of more or less connected, normative descriptions about how people act, think, what are appropriate social interactions, what kind of possibilities exist, what are realistic goals, and how to pursue them to have a successful life (Bruner, 1990). Bruner (1990) said that a culture's folk psychology is learned early in life, through both observation and language acquisition. Words give meaning to transactions within situated life, resulting in social and self-awareness that reflects what is seen and heard to be "true" within the environment (Bruner, 1990). Through this process "folk psychology becomes a system by which people organize their experience in, knowledge about, and transactions with the social world" (Bruner, 1990, p. 35).

Cultural-historical/sociocultural perspective: Context, tools, and mediated action.

Vygotsky's cultural-historical perspective is foundational to what is considered sociocultural theory (Schunk, 2008). The interaction between interpersonal, cultural-historical, and individual factors is considered key to human development (Schunk, 2008). Vygotsky (1978) asserted, "Human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (p. 88). Socially meaningful activity has an important influence on human consciousness, and individuals construct their own sense of meaning from socially available meanings derived from interactions with other people within the context of their environment (Daniels, 2008; Schunk, 2008). According to Daniels (2008), Vygotsky also

considered individuals to be active agents in development. People are not controlled by external symbols and cultural systems; rather, they master themselves through such systems (Daniels, 2008).

The cultural-historical aspect of Vygotsky's theory stressed that learning and development cannot be dissociated from their contexts, and that mediation is a key mechanism for developing higher order cognitive skills (Schunk, 2008). Cultural tools (e.g., signs, language, and symbols) mediate, or serve as the bridge between actions of individuals or groups and the cultural-historical setting (Wertsch, del Rio, & Alvarez, 1995; Zinchenko, 1995). Because the meaning of tools depends on the context, the context has influence on cognitive development *through* the acquisition and use of culturally available tools in social interactions. Thus the use of tools is a mediator for action and the cognitions that produced them (Daniels, 2008; Schunk, 2008).

Situated cognition: Learning in context. Much of the previous discussion of approaches fits under a broader category of situated cognition theory. The situative approach focuses on "understanding activity and changes in activity systems in which knowledge is contributed and used in joint actions by the people and other resources that participate collaboratively" (Sawyer & Greeno, 2009, p. 348). Smith and Conrey (2009) suggested three levels of interpersonal context in which cognition and action are situated: (a) the immediate interactive conversational context (norms of communication), (b) relationships with other individuals, and (c) our broader memberships in social groups (social identities).

Situated cognition: Cognitive apprenticeship. Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) introduced the concept of situated cognition as it applies to the culture of learning, specifically addressing the idea of cognitive apprenticeship as an alternative to conventional school practices.

Influenced by Vygotsky's activity theory, as well as Lave's (1988) work on learning, apprenticeship, and everyday cognition, Brown et al. (1989) suggested that knowing and doing are inseparable; situations co-produce knowledge through activity within a culture. They described conceptual knowledge as a set of tools that "reflect the wisdom of the culture in which they are used and the insights and experiences of individuals" (Brown et al., 1989, p. 33). Tools can only be fully understood, or have meaning, through use; and, the occasions and conditions for use of a tool are defined by the culture in which they are used. To learn the dictionary meaning of concepts is not enough; experiencing the activity associated with the concepts, within the culture in which they will be used, is essential for learning. Therefore, learning is "a process of enculturation" (Brown et al., 1989, p. 33).

Lave's (1988) ethnographic studies revealed how, "just plain folks," learn a particular set of practices through everyday activity, that is through apprenticeship (as cited in Brown et al., 1989, p. 35). An alternative way to learn a set of practices is to enter a conventional school setting as a student (Brown et al., 1989). Craft-apprentices engage in on-the-job learning—solving problems within the context that produced them—while students often enter a "school culture" where they are taught how to *do school*; that is, how to solve well-defined problems through the use of formal definitions and fixed concepts (Brown et al., 1989). Brown and associates proposed *cognitive apprenticeship* as a method to enculturate students through authentic activity. *Authentic activity* was simply defined as "the ordinary practices of the culture" (Brown et al., 1989, p. 34). Within the situated cognition framework, this means that learning should incorporate activities that represent the culture in which they will be applied.

Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation

The concept of *situated learning* was introduced by Lave & Wenger (1991) as an evolution of the apprenticeship metaphor for situated cognition. In their view, learning is not merely situated in practice, but rather "an integral part of generative social practices in the lived-in world" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 25). They proposed that "learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29). The process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice was called *legitimate peripheral participation* (LPP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Communities of practice were described as both a *place of knowledge*—the social world in which the person engages in learning; and also a *group of people* who share an interest, a craft, or a profession (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Legitimate peripheral participation as a framework of learning practice offers two primary processes as units of analysis: (a) the development of knowledgably skilled identities in practice, and (b) the reproduction and transformation of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 55). The relationship between these two processes implies that learners embody structural characteristics of the community. This invites inquiry into how relations of power, access to resources and opportunities for learning, and discursive characteristics of the community enhance or inhibit full participation, and therefore the development of identity.

Lave and Wenger (1991) analyzed the phenomenon of apprenticeships in five communities of practice—midwives, tailors, quartermasters, butchers, and nondrinking alcoholics—and offered several core tenets of legitimate peripheral participation and its relationship to successful learning. First, engagement in practice was a condition for learning.

Newcomers entered a community with an "observational" lookout post from which they assembled a general idea about what practice looks like in the community (what they do, how they conduct their lives, how they talk and who they talk to), and got a glimpse of what they could become from more mature role models (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 95). Through access to information, resources, and opportunities for participation, newcomers gained legitimacy as they made meaning of their experiences in everyday practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Participation in community discourse and contributing to ongoing activity played an important role in legitimacy. As participants made meaning of their experiences, they increased their sense of belonging. Their movement towards full participation represented the natural changes in identity from newcomer to full practitioner (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

While legitimate peripheral participation was not proposed to be an educational form or pedagogy, much of the literature concerning teaching and learning in higher education has focused instead on design considerations for practice, i.e., *If we want to move people toward full membership, how do we best do that?* (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lea, 2005). From an organizational perspective, legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice have helped researchers to frame approaches toward the unification of working, learning, and innovation, assess workplace learning in complex institutional settings, and conceptualize implications for the design of web-based e-learning (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Hung & Der-Thang, 2001; Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson, & Unwin, 2005). However, Lea (2005) suggested that a more nuanced examination would be valuable for teaching and learning in higher education, giving insight into constraints on learning, meaning making, and full participation within a community (Lea, 2005).

Communities of Practice Model

Wenger (1998) continued to develop the concept of communities of practice, illustrating a structure of social learning systems within organization that integrates community, practice, meaning and identity. Wenger (1998) offered an iteration of situated cognition/learning through two basic assumptions: (a) "knowing is a matter of competence with respect to valued enterprises" and (b) "knowing is a matter of participating in the pursuits of such enterprises" (p. 4). Therefore, knowing involves the interplay of both experience (through practice) and competence. A well-functioning community of practice not only gives newcomers access to competence through engagement, but also provides a context for communal competence; that is, it becomes not only a community of learners, but a *learning community* (Wenger, 1998).

Practice. To understand communities of practice in action requires an exploration of the concept of practice. To practice is to "do" something. Communities of practice offer a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we "do", and are the prime context in which we engage in meaning-making (Wenger, 1998). Wenger (1998) described six facets of practice: (a) meaning, (b) community, (c) learning, (d) boundary, (e) locality, and (f) knowing.

Meaning. The social production of meaning (through experience) is the relevant level of analysis for talking about practice (Wenger, 1998). The meaningfulness of engagement in practice involves both interpretation and action, with the end result not simply resolution, but revelation (Wenger, 1998). Meaning-making involves the interactive processes of participation and reification. *Participation* involves both engagement in practice and social connections. It has transformative potential in that our engagement in practice is both shaped by and shapes our experience in a community (Wenger, 1998). *Reification* is a process that gives form to our

experience by producing objects that have meaning and shape our understanding (Wenger, 1998).

Community. Wenger (1998) describes three dimensions of practice as the property of community: (a) *mutual engagement*, (b) *joint enterprise*, and (c) *a shared repertoire* of ways of doing things. Practice exists "because people are engaged in actions whose meanings they negotiate with each other" (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). Therefore, membership in a community is more than being part of a group, team, or network defined by a particular category or goal; rather, it is defined by mutual engagement that includes diverse and complex interactions and relationships (Wenger, 1998). Through this engagement, participants work towards a joint enterprise. Mutual accountability is not only the stated goal or purpose of a group; it is a relational commitment a shared perception of what matters most (Wenger, 1998). Actions of accountability may be just one aspect of a shared repertoire—or routines, words, tools, symbols, or ways of doing things (Wenger, 1998). These three dimensions generate a kind of "social energy" that can give rise to an experience of meaningfulness (Wenger, 1998, p. 84).

Learning. "Communities of practice can be thought of as shared histories of learning" (Wenger, 1998, p. 86). As people enter and leave communities, new forms of mutual engagement, enterprise, and repertoire evolve. Therefore, practice within a community is an ongoing learning process (Wenger, 1998).

Boundaries. Communities of practice are not isolated from the rest of the world (Wenger, 1998). Often the members of a community and their artifacts and practices are shared, connected, and interwoven within and between other communities of practice. There are two types of connections: boundary objects and brokering (Wenger, 1998). Boundary objects are the artifacts and forms of reification by which communities of practice organize their

interconnections (e.g., documents, terms, and concepts) (Wenger, 1998). Brokering occurs when people (who are engaged in multi-memberships) introduce elements of one practice into another (Wenger, 1998). Making new connections across communities opens up new possibilities for meaning (Wenger, 1998).

Locality. Not every group or organization fits into the conception of a community of practice—some are simply too large/general or too small/specific (Wenger 1998). From a levels-of-analysis perspective, communities of practice are mid-level category (Wenger, 1998). Wenger (1998) described how a larger configuration is made up of a constellation of practices, or smaller groupings that are interconnected communities of practice (Wenger, 1998).

Identity. From a social learning perspective, the learning that occurs through engagement in a community of practice influences the *identity formation* of individuals. Issues of identity cannot be separated from issues of practice, community, and meaning (Wenger, 1998). "Identity in social terms does not deny individuality, but reflects how our unique and individual perspectives and understandings are shaped through our participation in social communities" (Wenger, 1998, p. 146). Wenger (1998) describes facets of identity that parallel practice: (a) negotiated experience, (b) community membership, (c) learning trajectory, (d) nexus of multi-membership, and (e) the relationship between local and global.

Negotiated experience. Identity in practice is reified in a social discourse of the self and social categories, and also produced as a lived experience of participation in specific communities (Wenger, 1998). "Identity is layering of participation and reification by which our experience and its social interpretation inform each other" (Wenger, 1998, p. 151).

Community membership. Competency gained through mutual engagement forms a sense of individuality defined with respect to a community. As one invests in shared enterprises

of the community, she gains a perspective or world view based on the forms of accountability through which she is able to contribute. Through sustained engagement she becomes part of the history of the community. Her own history of experiences becomes a source of negotiation with respect to the repertoire of a practice (Wenger, 1998).

Trajectories. Wenger (1998) described multiple trajectories along which identity develops over time. A peripheral trajectory is one in which a person has access to a community, but is not yet a full participant. Inbound trajectories describe newcomers as people with the prospect of becoming full participants. Once someone is considered a full member, they are on an insider trajectory as practices continue to evolve. Boundary trajectories describe how participants span boundaries and link various communities of practice. Outbound trajectories lead out of a community. Of interest is learning how participation enables the “what’s next” (Wenger, 1998, p. 155). Location on a trajectory may enhance or confine a member's participation. Communities of practice provide field of possible trajectories, and a set of models for negotiating trajectories, and thus propose various paths for identity development (Wenger, 1998).

Multi-membership. Membership in a community of practice is only part of one's identity; a person has to reconcile membership in multiple communities (Wenger, 1998). An important work of a community of practice is to create a picture of a broader context in which its practice is located. An identity is not just local to that community, but created in the pursuit of something bigger—how the community fits, or translates into, a bigger picture (Wenger, 1998).

Learning and Identity

A sociocultural perspective frames learning as "participation in social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities" (Wenger, 1998, p. 4). The social

structure of a community of practice, its power relations, and conditions for legitimacy define possibilities for learning (i.e., through legitimate peripheral participation, which is the development of knowledgeably skilled identities in practice) (Lave & Wenger, 1991). When describing the foundational theories that influence concepts such as LPP, Niewolny and Wilson (2009) offered the view that "adults learn embedded in and constituted by relations of power that compromise the learning experience. The idea that power recursively operates in and through both social structures and human agency is central to this perspective" (p. 27). Therefore, to define identity as a social construction through practice is to situate it in the dynamic interplay of knowledge and power.

A Foucoultian view of power links the concepts of power, knowledge, and selfhood (identity). "Power and knowledge are bound together: the extension of power involves the production of knowledge by which people can be known and understood" (Lawlor, 2008, p. 57). Learning is not the attainment of factual knowledge; rather, it is achieving *ways of knowing through discourse* (Lawlor, 2008). Hall (2007) described discourse as "the production of knowledge through language" (p. 56). It is a group of statements that provides language for representing, or talking about, a topic within a particular moment in history (Hall, 2001). Hall (2001, 2007) argued that all social practices have a discursive aspect; they produce discourse and are influenced by discourse. The dominant discourse of a topic influences or inhibits the way knowledge can be constructed around that topic (Hall, 2007). The kind of knowledge produced within discourse represents what we believe to be "facts about the external world" as well as what we believe about ourselves (Lawlor, 2008, p. 59). When human identity is viewed as socially, historically, and culturally constructed through practice, then it can be said that those identity constructions are influenced by the shared language, conventions, codes, and values that

make up the dominant discourse (Cote & Levine, 2002; Taylor & Spencer, 2004). In this way, the knowledge which discourse produces has power when exercised in practice (Hall, 2007, p. 58). Research on the construction of identities from a sociocultural learning perspective of power and discourse has been studied in both elementary settings (Faircloth, 2009), high school classrooms (Palmer, 2008), and within continuing education/workplace environments (Billett & Somerville, 2004; Ferreday, Hodgson, & Jones, 2006; Robinson, Anning & Frost, 2005).

However, within higher education, much of the research on identity—especially from a student affairs/student development perspective—frames identity differently. In their review of identity development theories in student affairs, Torres, Jones, and Renn (2009) defined identity as “one’s personally held beliefs about the self in relation to social groups, and the ways one expresses that relationship” (p. 557). Much of what they found in the literatures suggested that the dominant approaches are framed from a psycho-social development perspective that acknowledges the social construction of identity, but examines those constructions not as representations of knowledge and power; but rather through the reflexive naming of roles within a structured, classified social context (Torres et al., 2009). Such names/roles have culturally constructed meaning and expectations attached to them about how the self and others should act (Stets & Burke, 2000). Many student development theories (e.g., Chickering's Seven Vectors; Josselson's Theory of Identity Development in Women; Racial and Ethnic Identity Development Models; Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Identity Models; and Schlossberg's Transition Theory) examined the content of development and presented stage-based models which described important issues people face as they progress through their lives (i.e., how they define themselves and relationships with others) (Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito, 1998; see also Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Zaytoun (2005) argued that the interface between students' learning and identity is not yet well understood by higher education. Central to this topic is the question, "How is identity formed in social context?" (Zaytoun, 2005, p. 9). One area of higher education research that does focus on the integration of learning and identity is Baxter Magolda's (2004a) theory of self-authorship. Self-authorship is a holistic, situative approach to learning that interweaves the dimensions of cognitive development—ways of knowing, identity formation, and interpersonal relationships (Baxter Magolda, 2004a). At the intersection of these dimensions, self-authorship represents the integration of cognitive maturity, integrated identity, and mature relationships, which Baxter Magolda considered the ingredients for effective citizenship (2004a, 2004b).

Using a constructive-developmental approach, educators can create environments that focus on student experience as a context for making meaning of their experiences and their own role in knowledge creation (Baxter Magolda, 1999). Based on her research, Baxter Magolda described a *learning partnerships model* as a framework for offering both support and challenge towards self-authorship (2004b). Bekken and Marie (2007) applied principles of the learning partnerships model to an interdisciplinary, multi-semester, general education learning community. Enacting principles of situated learning and knowledge construction led students to develop more cognitively complex ways of knowing and demonstrated development in their writing and speaking abilities; increased sensitivity to ethical issues; integration of life skills to personal, campus, and family life; stronger listening skills; and a greater tolerance for ambiguity, among other outcomes (Baxter Magolda, 2004b; Bekken & Marie, 2007). Continuing to examine self-authorship processes at play within learning communities, or communities of practice, may provide an additional heuristic for understanding the interplay among learning, identity, and practice in social environments.

Learning Communities in Higher Education

Several key research studies and policy reports (Astin, 1993; Boyer Commission, 1998; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993), as well as current student development theory and models (Baxter Magolda, 2004a, 2004b; Chickering & Reisser, 1993;), provided a strong case for the need and importance of learning communities as an educational strategy. It could be said that learning communities provide the environmental climate to support actions that lead to desired educational goals and outcomes at the student level, institutional level, and ultimately, societal level.

History of learning communities. Learning communities are not a new trend or best-practice fad (Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 2004). The concept of student learning communities can be traced back to the 1920's. Early reformers who influenced the concept of learning communities were John Dewey, Alexander Meiklejohn, and Joseph Tussman (Shapiro & Levine, 1999). Dewey viewed learning as a social process, and believed that education should develop citizenship skills and promote democratic values through student-centered learning environments and cooperative learning approaches (Levine Laufgraben, 2005; Smith et al., 2004).

Meiklejohn pioneered the Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin, which was considered one of the earliest organized learning community initiatives (1927-1932) (Shapiro & Levine, 1999). Meiklejohn was concerned that the Germanic model of the research university—characterized by specialized majors and departments—led to the social and intellectual fragmentation of American universities (Smith et al., 2004). The Experimental College was designed on the principles of connected and integrated learning around the study of society. The goal was to create an educational environment that prepared students to be productive citizens

(Shapiro & Levine, 1999).

Inspired by the work of Meiklejohn, Tussman established a similar experiment at the University of California at Berkeley from 1965-1969. Tussman was concerned with the tensions between being a research university and providing a general education for undergraduate students. He sought improve the quality of the lower-division educational experience through an interdisciplinary program approach (Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Smith et al., 2004). Tussman's work influenced reform efforts throughout the 1970s, including the establishment of Evergreen State College and Patrick Hill's model of federated learning communities at the State University of New York at Stony Brook (Smith et al., 2004). The founders of Evergreen State College sought to enact the values of an interdisciplinary coordinated studies program, which included active learning and connection of theory to practice (Smith et al., 2004). Federated learning communities restructured existing curriculum by clustering courses around a contemporary issue in an interdisciplinary context. An integrated program seminar was led by a "master" learner—a faculty member who participated in full-time study with the student cohort (Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Smith et al., 2004).

The evolution and expansion of programs in the 1990s was the result of a host of researchers spreading the news of the positive academic and developmental outcomes associated with learning communities (Smith, 2001; Smith et al., 2004). As outlined in the previous section, research and assessment in higher education has provided evidence for the value of learning communities. These early models set the stage for future reformers to continue to expand and apply ideas of learning communities as a credible model of undergraduate education. Today, *learning community* is a common term, with hundreds of colleges and universities

offering a broad range of curricular and structural interventions for diverse populations of students (Smith, 2001).

Types of student learning communities. There are a variety of ways learning communities are designed and used on college campuses. When developing learning communities, it is important to consider how the community can best meet educational needs and goals, and where it best fits within the overall institution (Shapiro & Levine, 1999). For example, learning communities have been built into existing general education programs, used as centerpiece for educational reform efforts, implemented as part of a first-year experience initiative, created as a developmental program to support at-risk students, or integrated into an introductory course to introduce students to the culture of a major or department (Shapiro & Levine, 1999).

In general, learning community models can be characterized by the dimensions of *group membership* and *forms of interaction* (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999). Smith et al. (2004) and Shapiro and Levine (1999) described in detail four primary types of curricular design: (a) interest group or seminar cohorts, (b) linked or clustered courses, (c) team-taught learning communities, and (d) residential based communities.

Residential learning communities. Residential based communities, also called *living-learning communities*, adapt a variety of curricular models to include a residential component. Living-learning communities seek to integrate students' living and academic environments, providing social and intellectual support (Shapiro & Levine, 1999). Students are intentionally organized into cohorts enrolled in specific curricular offerings and residing in a dedicated living space (Shapiro & Levine, 1999). Students in residence based programs often have more opportunities for peer leadership roles; for example, serving on community councils, as resident

assistants, as peer-teachers in weekly seminars, or as tutors in residence (Shapiro & Levine, 1999).

The living-learning model allows for the integration of co-curricular activities to build community and assist students with the transition to college life (Shapiro & Levine, 1999). The role of residence life is to provide education programming and create conditions/environments that connect students' academic learning to their experience of everyday life (Levine Laufgraben, 2005). To achieve this integration, significant coordination and collaboration is required between multiple campus systems, including disciplinary departments, teaching faculty, student life/student affairs staff and programs, and housing (Shapiro & Levine, 1999).

Outcomes of learning communities. Recent studies highlighted several positive outcomes of participation in student learning communities. Smith and Bath (2006) described "learning community" as a scale, measured by perceptions of engagement in interactive, social, and collaborative learning. They found that engagement in a learning community was shown to be a strong predictor of knowledge and skills within students' discipline, communication and problem solving, and ethical and social sensitivity (Smith & Bath, 2006).

Participation in learning communities has also been shown to contribute to more positive perceptions of the learning environment, increased interaction between students, and increased student leadership development (Rosenbaum, Schwabbauer, Kreiter, & Ferguson, 2007). Zhao and Kuh (2004) studied the relationship between participation in learning communities and student success. Through an analysis of data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), they found that participation in learning communities was positively linked to student academic performance, engagement in collaborative learning, interaction with faculty members, and satisfaction with the college experience (Zhao & Kuh, 2004).

Jaffee, Carle, Phillips, and Paltoo (2008) discovered that first-year learning communities fostered peer cohorts, which promoted a sense of community, support, and a friendship network for students. Firmin, Warner, Johnson, Firebaugh, and Firmin (2010) conducted a qualitative analysis of students who had participated in learning communities as freshman. Students described the potential social impact of learning communities; specifically, that involvement in the community made the adjustments to college life easier and provided for greater involvement with faculty members, which enhanced the classroom experience (Firmin et al., 2010). Participation in learning communities also served as a springboard to other campus involvement (Firmin et al., 2010).

A great deal of the literature on learning communities has focused on *living*-learning communities. Stassen (2003) explored the effects of different types of living-learning community models on student experience and academic performance outcomes. Learning community involvement—even using the most basic model—had a positive impact on first semester GPA, first-year retention, and social and academic integration, as compared to non-learning community students (Stassen, 2003). Students within learning communities often engage in formal academic classroom experiences designed for active and collaborative learning; however, a unique feature of learning communities is the promotion of social activities that extend beyond the classroom. Domizi (2008) reported students' perceptions of informal learning experiences in a first-year living learning community. Students perceived that they were learning how to relate to peers, they were challenged to question previously held beliefs and assumptions, and they were benefiting from academic and social support through living and working with others (Domizi, 2008).

There is a question of whether or not such positive outcomes are actually indirect—that

learning communities are simply the container that provides opportunities to enhance student involvement in educationally and developmentally beneficial activities that have a more direct influence on students. Rocconi (2011) used path analysis to study the direct and indirect relationships between learning community participation, student engagement, and educational gains. Results indicated that involvement in learning communities was significantly and positively related to factors of engagement, including interaction with faculty, interaction with other students, and effort in courses (Rocconi, 2011). Student engagement was strongly related to self-reported general education gains (Rocconi, 2011). Rocconi (2011) determined that student engagement served as a mediator between learning community participation and educational gains.

Belonging and community. Creating a "sense of community" has been described as fostering: (a) feelings of belonging, (c) trust, (d) interdependence, (e) commitment, and (f) shared experiences (Hill, 1996; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Wenger, 1998). Within living learning communities, the development of an overall sense of community should come from these two separate, yet overlapping design elements, *living* (residential) and *learning* (classroom).

The Residence Life Staff Handbook (RLSH) used at an Eastern land grant university described *community* as a value that: (a) demonstrates an unwavering need to respect and value all individuals, (b) seeks knowledge and understanding about all parts of community, (c) encourages unique strengths so that our differences furnish, (d) promotes positive collaborations and interactions, and (e) provides healthy and safe environments (RLSH, 2009). According to the RLSH (2009):

"Development of community ... will help students transfer awareness and appreciation of

diverse individuals and groups to a greater understanding of and potential contribution to the larger [University], [State], national and international communities. Keen awareness, interdependence, collaboration, and team-work are expected elements of this value." (p. 2)

Learning communities are not always complex in design. For example, there are ways of developing community simply within the academic classroom. Watkins (2005) identified several of the necessary ingredients for building community within a classroom, including: (a) agency—or the belief that individuals have the power to make their own choices, and that there is also power in collective decision making, (b) belonging—or a psychological sense of membership, (c) cohesion—or a sense of commitment and investment in group goals, and (d) diversity—or positively embracing differences (Watkins, 2005). Within a classroom, various processes can influence community, especially collaborative tasks and dialogue/discussion that lead to inquiry, knowledge-generation, reflection, and problem solving (Watkins, 2005). Without a deep understanding of the factors involved in community, it could be easy for well-meaning educators to turn community into a group oriented technique such as collaborative or cooperative learning. The bigger picture of community includes designing environments and utilizing strategies that develop the capacity for connectedness between, and connected learning among, students and faculty (Palmer, 2002; Tinto, 1998).

Peer Leadership

The use of peer leaders is one way to build community in both the residential and classroom settings. Few references to *peer leaders* exist in the higher education literature; however, *peer mentors* are commonly discussed. Terrion and Leonard (2007) described peer mentoring as a "helping relationship in which two individuals of similar age and/or experience

come together, either informally or through formal mentoring schemes, in the pursuit of fulfilling some combination of functions that are career related or psychosocial" (p. 150). Career-related functions included sharing information and career strategizing, while psychosocial functions included providing confirmation, emotional support, personal feedback and friendship to students (Terrion & Leonard, 2007). Topping's (1996) review of literature identified some advantages of peer tutoring (also referred to as peer-assisted learning) in higher education. These advantages included increased student participation, higher cognitive gains, increased retention, increased motivation and commitment, higher self-esteem, and reduced social isolation (Topping, 1996).

In order to better understand peer mentoring relationships, Colvin and Ashman (2010) conducted a qualitative study of second-year students who served as mentors in a first-year experience class. They identified several key roles of peer mentors. First, mentors served as a *connecting link*, helping students get involved in campus (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). As *peer leaders*, mentors served as role models who encouraged students to get involved and practice good study skills (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). Mentors played the role of *learning coaches*, helping students identify their own strengths and weaknesses, and teaching them academic and life skills (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). They also served as *student advocates*—a liaison between student and instructor (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). And finally, students saw mentors as a *trusted friend*, or someone they could go to for help outside of class (Colvin & Ashman, 2010).

Although Lockspeiser, O'Sullivan, Teharani, and Muller's (2008) research was conducted on first-year medical school students, their results provide insight into the undergraduate experience of being taught by peers. They found that learning from near-peers (second-year students), was beneficial because the peer could explain concepts at a more basic level than the

instructor (Lockspeiser et al., 2008). Near-peers also shared not only *what* to learn, but *how* to learn it; that is, how concepts had been difficult for them in the past, and what strategies they used in the learning process (Lockspeiser et al., 2008). Being exposed to second-year students also helped first-year students alleviate fears and anxieties about school (Lockspeiser et al., 2008). First-year students felt like there was someone was "on our team"—someone there to offer them support and help (Lockspeiser et al., 2008, p. 366).

Astin (1993) made a powerful claim based on his research: "The single most important environmental influence on student development is the peer group. By judicious and imaginative use of peer groups, any college or university can substantially strengthen its impact on student learning and personal development" (Astin, 1993, p. xiv). It seems that peer leaders, when utilized to their full potential, can contribute to creating living and learning environments that promote a sense of community, as well as academic and social integration.

The RLC: Residential Leadership Community

Residential Leadership Community (RLC) is a one of the themed learning communities at a four year land grant university in the Eastern United States. The RLC was created primarily as a first-year experience program, in which students study leadership as a cohort while living in a residential environment (RLC, n.d.c). The mission of the RLC was stated as "to enhance students' leadership and interpersonal skills, enabling them to become more effective leaders in any organizational structure" (RLC, n.d.c). The RLC has several learning priorities which support the integration of social and academic life. These include being able to articulate an understanding of leadership theories and models, demonstrating behaviors that support academic achievement, choosing behaviors that influence the community in positive ways, and demonstrating behaviors that support community development (RLC, n.d.a). Said differently,

the RLC provides an environment where students study and apply leadership, practice good study skills, and engage in social and service activities that reflect and build a spirit of connectedness and community. Students have identified the core values of the RLC to include: friendships, fun experiences, social and self-awareness, and gaining knowledge to excel in future job endeavors (RLC, n.d.a).

The mission and priorities of the RLC are accomplished through engagement in theoretical leadership courses and experiential learning activities in the form of group projects. Two core courses are "linked", but not in the traditional sense. Students engage in a sequence of courses, not multiple courses the same semester. Participation in service activities and peer leadership groups support community building. The program director, graduate assistant, adjunct faculty, undergraduate interns, undergraduate resident assistants and the resident hall staff provide day-to-day leadership for the community.

RLC Peer leaders. In the RLC, peer leaders are second-year students who have previously participated in the first-year experience. Peer leaders provide classroom support for instructors and organize out-of-class activities for students, called peer-group events. These events can include tutoring sessions or study groups; however, they are primarily meant to be social in nature. In the language of legitimate peripheral participation, they have been *apprenticed* from students of leadership into community leader roles. Peer leaders represent a change in leadership identity, and their perceptions of their experiences could help researchers better understand leadership identity construction in the residential leadership community.

Conceptual Framework

Grint (2005) suggested the leadership may best be learned through a community of practice. Drath & Palus' (1994) framework describing leadership as a meaning-making in a

community of practice provided a lens by which to explore the construction of leadership identities. A higher education leadership living-learning learning community could be considered an example of a community of practice, as it has a shared domain (leadership), is designed to foster community (living and social environments), and has its own shared practices (e.g., courses, peer leaders, service projects) (Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).

If one desires to design an educational community of practice, then she must take into consideration questions of identity, such as competing sources of identification, broader economies of meaning, access to participation, and who defines success and failure (Wenger, 1998). Viewing communities of practice only as design or model for practice may limit one's understanding of the powerful social learning potential inherent in learning communities. Lea (2005) suggested a return to Lave & Wenger's (1991) heuristic to allow for a more critical view of issues like power and discourse and how they affect becoming a full member of the community; that is, how power and discourse affects the identity formation of participants (Lea, 2005). Legitimate peripheral participation provides a way to conceptualize identity development as movement towards full participation as a member of a community of practice. However, Lave and Wenger (1991) suggested that:

Any analysis of a form of learning through legitimate peripheral participation must involve analysis of political and social organization of that form, its historical development, and the effects of both of these on such sustained possibilities for learning.

The need for such analysis motivates our focus on communities of practice and our insistence that learners must be legitimate peripheral participants in ongoing practice in

order for learning identities to be engaged and develop into full participation. (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 64)

Summary

This chapter outlined the relevant literature supporting the case for exploration into the leadership identity construction of peer leaders within a leadership living-learning community. The researcher discussed three distinct, but overlapping bodies of literature related to the social construction of leadership, social and situated learning, and student development in higher education. An overview of leadership literature pointed to contemporary views of leadership as socially constructed, influenced by discourse, and represented through identities. Social learning literature pointed towards situated learning and communities of practice as a way of conceptualizing learning and identity formation. Learning communities were identified as a contemporary model within higher education that foster social learning through the integration of academic, social, and physical components. The Residential Leadership Community (RLC) was identified as a leadership-themed living learning community representative of a community of practice. Students participating as peer leaders in the RLC were described as legitimate peripheral participants (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The literature formed a theoretical rationale for the conceptual framework. In this case study, the researcher examined not only how students make meaning through experiences of membership (process), but also what meanings were actually embodied by students through their representations of leadership—their own philosophies and practices.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this case study was to explore how a leadership-themed collegiate living-learning community supports the formation of students' leadership identities as they transition from first-year members to second-year peer leaders. Understanding how students make meaning of their experiences in the living-learning community can help leadership educators as they design curriculum and activities to enhance leadership identity development. It was assumed that members of the leadership living learning community engage in social practices that influence identity formation, and that identity is developed through negotiating the meaning of experiences of membership in such social communities (Wenger, 1998). The primary question and sub-questions guiding this study were:

1. How do college students studying leadership within a themed living-learning community construct leadership identities as they transition from first-year members to second-year peer leaders?
 - a. How do students gain access to varying levels of membership in the residential leadership community?
 - b. How do faculty and administrative stakeholders facilitate experiences of membership for students in the residential leadership community?
 - c. What meanings of leadership are taken up by students as they transition from first-year members into second-year peer leaders?

- d. What are the social and cultural implications of these meanings as they relate to higher education's call to enhance students' leadership capacity?

Justification for Qualitative Research

Qualitative research methods are informed by ontological and epistemological assumptions that are primarily interpretive. An interpretive paradigm assumes that reality is socially constructed, multiple and contextual—knowledge is created through social interactions that are historical and culturally situated, and the understanding of reality is constructed through human perception and interpretation (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Qualitative research methods are appropriate for the study of research problems dealing with social or human problems (Creswell, 2007).

The research questions for this study were formed within a theoretical and conceptual framework shaped by social constructionist and ethnographic traditions. Central to the social constructionist tradition is that knowledge is co-constructed through engagement in social and cultural practices (Creswell, 2007). Of concern were questions of how people in the research setting have constructed their reality, what are their perceptions of “truth”, and what consequences to those constructions have on their own behavior and for those they interact with (Patton, 2002). The researcher was a co-constructor of knowledge through cooperative interaction and participation, analysis and interpretation (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In the case of this research, the belief that a leadership identity is socially constructed led to interpretive, human-centered inquiry methods, and allowed for the revelation of how constructions are developed, what they are, and how they influence behavior.

The goal of applied ethnographic research is to understand sociocultural problems and using this understanding to bring about positive change in communities, institutions, or groups (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). This research fell within the ethnographic tradition in the sense that the researcher was the primary tool of data collection; and, it emphasized and built on the perspectives of people in the research setting, in this case the community of practice (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). More specifically, ethnomethodology focuses in on the *everyday* practices, or the details of everyday life such as how members make sense of their social world, how people get things done, and their method of practice (Patton, 2002). In this case, narrative interviews allowed for the description of meaning making through interactions over time and within various contexts in the community—the changing person in practice. The in-depth nature of interviews from both student and faculty perspectives, along with analysis of student participants' written reflections and key training documents offered a look into taken-for-granted realities of everyday life within the community (Patton, 2002).

The Research Design

Answering the proposed research questions required understanding how students made meaning of their lived experiences within the community—as first-year members, in their transition to peer leader roles, and in their full participation as leaders in the community. Because the individual cannot be separated from the learning context, it was determined that an embedded case study design would be used to explore individuals' meaning making and group meaning making within the larger community. A case study method contributed to knowledge of complex individual and group social phenomena (Yin, 2009). Through this case study, the researcher holistically examined meaningful characteristics of the activities, events, and relationships within the learning community and sought to describe how social factors influence

individual students' identity development. Using interviews with students, interviews with faculty, a confirmatory student focus group, and document analysis as the primary methods of inquiry, the researcher was able to examine the individuals situated in the context. Table 1 outlines the steps in the research process.

Table 1: *Data Collection Timeline*

Date	Data Collection Activity
October 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtained written permission from peer leader course instructor to recruit participants • Submitted and received IRB approval (see Appendix B) • Conducted pilot interview • Recruited student participants from peer leader class
November 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer leader round one interviews
November 2011 – January 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcription of round one interviews • Began collect and review of documents • Begin coding and analysis of all documents
February 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruited faculty participants • Interviewed faculty participant • Transcribed faculty interviews
March 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created peer leader round two interview guide • Conducted peer leader interviews round two • Transcribed round two interviews
April 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participated in reflexive self-interview • Create protocol for focus group • Conducted focus group • Transcribed focus group

May 2012

- Concluded coding and analysis of all documents
-

Preliminary work. This study was guided by a set of *a priori* propositions that aligned the theoretical and conceptual framework with supporting literature. These propositions, as outlined in Table 2, were aligned with the research questions, which guided the creation of the interview and focus group protocols.

Table 2: *a priori Propositions*

Proposition	Supporting Literature	Research Questions
Leadership identity is socially constructed through the negotiation of meaning of experiences of membership in communities of practice	<p>Communities of practice are the prime context in which we engage in meaning making (Wenger, 1998).</p> <p>Leadership is a type of social-meaning making process and may be best learned in a community of practice (Drath & Palus, 1994).</p> <p>Building an identity consists of negotiating the meaning of our experiences of membership in social communities (Wenger, 1998).</p> <p>Leadership identity is a learning process by which individuals develop a sense of who they are and how they make meaning of involvement in groups through various roles (Komives et al., 2005, 2009; Lord & Hall, 2005;).</p>	<p>How do college students studying leadership within a themed living-learning community construct leadership identities as they transition from first-year members to second-year peer leaders?</p> <p>a. How do students gain access to membership?</p> <p>b. How do faculty/administrators facilitate experiences of membership?</p>
Leadership identity is influenced by changing roles in a community of practice.	<p>Identity is constructed as students move from peripheral members of a community towards full membership; this process is called legitimate peripheral participation and involves the development of knowledgeably skilled identities (Lave & Wenger, 1991).</p> <p>Identity is a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates</p>	<p>a. How do students gain access to membership?</p> <p>b. How do faculty/administrators facilitate experiences of membership?</p>

	personal histories of “becoming” in the context of our communities (Wenger, 1998)	
Leadership identity is influenced by the negotiation of membership in multiple communities.	<p>Members of communities of practice are connected to other communities of practice (Wenger, 1998)</p> <p>Identity is developed through the reconciliation of membership in membership in multiple communities (Wenger, 1998)</p>	a. How do students gain access to membership?
Leadership identity can be expressed or represented through both internal beliefs and external practices.	<p>The relationship between identity and leadership can be found in representation (Green, 2009).</p> <p>Leaders’ identities shift from individual orientations to more collective orientations as they gain knowledge and experience through practice (Green, 2009; Komives et al., 2005; Lord & Hall, 2005).</p> <p>Identity reflects how our unique perspectives and understandings are shaped through participation in social communities (Wenger, 1998).</p>	c. What meanings of leadership are taken up by students as they transition from first-year members to second-year PLs?
Socially constructed leadership beliefs and practices are influenced by the shared language and discourse of the leadership learning community.	<p>When identity is viewed as socially, historically, and culturally constructed through practice, that construction is influenced by the shared language, conventions, and codes that make up the dominant discourse (Bruner, 1990; Cote & Levine, 2002; Taylor & Spencer, 2004).</p> <p>Leaders are constrained by the social discourses in which they operate (Grint, 2000).</p> <p>Leadership constructions are brought into being through language; leaders become the embodiment of leadership theory (Ford et al., 2008).</p>	<p>a. How do students gain access to membership?</p> <p>b. How do faculty/administrators facilitate experiences of membership?</p> <p>c. What meanings of leadership are taken up by students as they transition from first-year members to second-year PLs?</p> <p>d. What are the social and cultural implications of these meanings?</p>

Pilot interview. A pilot interview was conducted in order to refine data collection plans with respect to content of the data and procedures to be followed (Yin, 2009). The Peer Leader Round One Interview guide (Appendix G) was used for the pilot interview session. The participant of this interview had previously served as a peer leader for the Residential Leadership Community. She was selected because of her prior experience and ability to offer insight from the peer leader perspective. The participant indicated that she felt comfortable with the questions and did not have any suggestions for modification. No changes were made to the interview protocol.

Site selection. Rossman and Rallis (2003) suggested choosing a site in which entry is possible, where there is a rich mix of people, processes and interactions of interest, where you can build strong relationships with participants, and ethical and political considerations are not overwhelming. The Residential Leadership Community at an Eastern land grant university was a sound site for this study as it is representative of a leadership program that is facilitated through a living-learning environment.

Sampling and Selection Criteria

A purposeful sample was selected using both criterion and theory-based sampling (Patton, 2002). The primary population for this study was second-year students serving as peer leaders in the residential leadership community program. Utilizing peer leaders allowed for the potential manifestation, or representation, of leadership identity over time. Second-year peer leaders as participants represented full membership in the community and throughout their experience they are on multiple learning trajectories, including peripheral, inbound, insider, and outbound. Most were involved in other leadership positions and groups on campus and therefore also represent the negotiation of multiple boundaries. Within this group, students were recruited

and selected based on the following criterion: (a) participants were members of the RLC as first-year students, (b) participants were currently serving as second-year participants in a peer leader role, and (c) the researcher did not serve as the peer leader's supervising instructor.

All students who met the above criteria were recruited for the study. Students were recruited through a personal invitation and letter during a peer leader class meeting (Appendix C). They received a copy of the student participant consent form (Appendix D) and were given one week to respond. One reminder email was sent regarding participation. The goal was to recruit 11 participants (100%); however, two peer leaders were not included in the selection pool because at the time of recruitment they were under direct supervision of the researcher. A total of six peer leaders consented to participate in the study. The three males and three females were all 19 years old at the introduction of the study and had sophomore standing. (Note: Due to the small number of participants, the high visibility of peer leaders, and the popularity of the program, the researcher will not disclose additional demographic or academic information to protect the participants' anonymity.) The researcher obtained permission from the instructor of their peer leader class to obtain access to the students and course-related documents. Upon the request of the researcher, student participants voluntarily submitted reflection papers they had written in their leadership courses.

Faculty participants were included in the study to offer another source of data for the case study. Faculty participants were purposefully selected based on their interaction with the study participants and/or the living-learning community. The researcher identified and selected four faculty participants (two males and two females) from a list of 13 individuals who served as instructors of leadership courses during the 2011-2012 academic term. Each faculty participant worked directly as a supervisor or instructor for the peer leader participants. The faculty

represented a range of experience teaching leadership program courses (from two to 10+ years), and a variety of administrative professional positions within student affairs and housing/residence life on campus. Faculty members were recruited via an invitation email (Appendix E). All of the faculty agreed to participate and signed a consent form (Appendix F). Each of the faculty participants was assigned a pseudonym for confidentiality.

Data Collection

Data collection was guided by the research questions which were developed through the *a priori* propositions. A single case design was appropriate, as there was a clear set of propositions as well as circumstances within which the propositions were believed to be represented (Yin, 2009). This study was considered a critical case because the researcher was interested in extending the theoretical construct of a community of practice, and specifically the process of identity construction through social practice, to a leadership living-learning community (Yin, 2009). The case converged theories of leadership and learning through the lens of identity construction.

The leadership living-learning community was the site of the case and the primary unit of analysis. The interplay between the individual peer leaders and the larger social context was an important aspect of the theoretical framework. Kirshner and Witson (1997) suggested that situated cognition shifts the focus of analysis from the individual to the sociocultural settings in which activity is embedded. As Lave (1988) explained, individual cognition is a complex social phenomenon. The arrangement of knowledge in one's head not only corresponds to the social world; but rather, the individual mind and the social world are “organized in such a fashion as to be indivisible” (Lave, 1988, p. 1).

The primary methods of data collection were: (a) two rounds of interviews with student participants, (b) one round of interviews with faculty participants, (c) one student participant confirmatory focus group, (d) analysis of student participants' written works, and (e) analysis of educational and training documents. Table three outlines the duration of the individual interviews with student participants and faculty participants, as well as the student focus group. Interviews varied in length, and only four of the six student participants were able to participate in the focus group session.

Table 3: *Interview Duration*

Interviewee	Round I	Round II	Focus Group	Total Duration of Interviews Per Participant
Student Participants				
Emily	49 min.	24 min.	43 min.	116 min.
Hannah	53 min.	30 min.	43 min.	126 min.
Morgan	29 min.	23 min.		52 min.
Jacob	66 min.	39 min.		105 min.
Alex	34 min.	30 min.	43 min.	107 min.
Daniel	45 min.	19 min.	43 min.	107 min
	276 min.	165 min.	43 min.	
Faculty Participants				
Instructor Charles	28 min.			28 min.
Instructor Sandy	15 min.			15 min.
Instructor Robin	20 min.			20 min.
Instructor James	32 min.			32 min.
	95 min.			
Total Duration of Transcriptions	371 min.	165 min.	43 min.	

Interviews with student participants. Interviews are one of the most important sources of case study information (Yin, 2009). In this case, reflective interviews were a means for exploring participants' perceptions of their lived experiences, and for gathering narrative data that contributed to a deeper understanding of their experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The

researcher conducted a series of two in-depth interviews with each of the student participants. At the recruitment meeting, participants reviewed and submitted a copy of the informed consent (Appendix D), detailing the purpose of the study, researcher and participant expectations, and the rights of the participant. A follow up email was sent to the student participants to schedule a date and location for the first interview. Each participant agreed upon a location based on their convenience and comfort. All interviews followed the pre-determined protocol (Appendix G). At the onset of the first interview, the researcher reviewed the informed consent to check for understanding and answer any questions. The participants signed a second copy of the consent form. One copy was given to the participants, and the other was kept by the researcher. The researcher explained the use of the digital recorder and told participants they would have the opportunity to review the transcripts. The researcher also asked students, if they were comfortable, to share a copy of their first-year leadership philosophy papers, as well as their revised leadership philosophy papers via email.

Round one interviews ranged in length from 29 minutes to 66 minutes, totaling 276 minutes (4.6 hours) of recordings for transcription (Table three). The researcher downloaded each of the digital recordings, converted them to mp3 format, and stored them on a password protected computer. Each recording was transcribed using HyperTRANSCRIBE™ software, which produced 118 pages of data for analysis. Each transcript was converted to Microsoft Word™ document and sent back to the participants via email for review. This process of participant review helped to establish credibility, as participants were allowed to clarify or make changes to any of their original comments (Creswell, 2007). All transcripts were approved with no additions or corrections; however, several student participants commented on their feelings upon reading their thoughts in print.

The second round peer leader interview protocol (Appendix H) was developed to allow for the expansion of topics identified by the first round interview, faculty interviews, and document analysis. Students were sent an email to schedule the second round interview at a convenient time and location. The students' second round interviews ranged from 19 to 39 minutes, totaling 165 minutes (2.75 hours). At the conclusion of this interview, the researcher students to submit a copy of their final paper from their fall leadership course via email. The audio recordings were again converted and transcribed, resulting in 67 total pages of data. Participants were given the opportunity to review these transcripts. Once again, all transcripts were approved with no additions or corrections after this round.

Student focus group. An email was sent to the student participants notifying them of the upcoming focus group. A Doodle® poll was used to coordinate the meeting time. Student participants were given a numbered code to use when completing the poll in order to maintain anonymity online. While initially, all participants indicated their availability for the final date and time, only four of the six student participants were able to attend. The focus group protocol (Appendix I) guided the discussion. The researcher's goal was to engage participants in discussion on themes that had emerged from the data thus far. This confirmatory focus group was used for as a form of member-checking, as well as a tool for reflection on topics that arose during analysis of the interviews (Morgan, 1997). Focus groups reveal aspects of experiences and perspectives that are best attained through group interaction (Morgan, 1997). Observations of how participants shared and compared experiences and perspectives provided additional insight into how students construct meaning of self and practices within social communities (Morgan, 1997). The focus group was digitally recorded, lasting 43 minutes. It was transcribed by the researcher, producing 8 additional pages of data.

Faculty interviews. In a case study, multiple sources of evidence are desired (Yin, 2009). Interviews with key faculty served two purposes: (a) a source of evidence for triangulation with students' perceptions of community experiences, and (b) additional insight into the social and cultural context of the leadership learning community. Participants were selected from current a current list of faculty and recruited with an email letter (Appendix E). Each of the four faculty members selected agreed to participate. A pseudonym was assigned to each faculty participant to ensure anonymity. A follow up email was used to schedule a time and location that was convenient for them. At the beginning of the interview session, the researcher reviewed the informed consent (Appendix F) and the faculty participant signed two copies. The participant kept one and the researcher retained one copy. The researcher reviewed the purpose and procedures, and discussed that the interview would be audio recorded and transcribed. Following the interview protocol (Appendix J), these in-depth, reflective interviews ranged from 15 to 32 minutes, totaling 95 minutes (1.58 hours). The recordings were converted to mp3 and transcribed, resulting in 24 pages of data. The researcher also used member-checking to assist in validating the transcripts. The transcripts were sent in a Microsoft WordTM document format to each faculty for review. Only one participant, Instructor Robin, made minor revisions for the purpose of correcting grammar and clarifying a key point. The researcher replaced the original transcript with the revised one in the case study. All other transcripts were approved without edits or additions.

Documents and texts. Yin (2009) suggests that documentary information is relevant and useful for case studies to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources. In this study, documents took two forms: (a) written documents in the form of reflective assignments produced by student participants through their leadership coursework in the community, and (b)

documents used as part of peer leaders' education and training in the community. These documents provided insight into the discursive context of the community—that is, the “language of leadership” that was communicated both formally and informally—and helped to paint a picture of the programmatic goals and the related roles of students, faculty, and peer leaders. A complete list of documents analyzed is listed in Appendix K.

Written assignments. The researcher collected four writing assignments from each of the student participants, including: (a) their “final leadership paper” from their first-year, first-semester, LDRS 1015 course; (b) a “revised leadership philosophy papers” written upon completion of their LDRS 2964 course in their second year, first semester; (c) “peer event” description and reflection papers (3 each) completed in the first semester as a peer leader; and, (d) and a copy of their final summation paper from their first semester of the LDRS 2964 peer leader course. These documents totaled an additional 95 pages of narrative text. All the documents were submitted electronically and were stored in source file on a password protected computer.

Program documents. Yin (2009) advises that a systematic search for relevant documents is an important part of the data collection plan. In this study, relevant documents were identified at the onset of the study; however, some documents were added in response to emerging data to gain additional insight into contexts and topics. A variety of documents were collected from password-protected resource folders archived in the RLC Faculty Scholar® and RLC Operations Scholar® online workspaces. As a faculty member in the RLC, the researcher had access to these documents. The documents included peer leader selection materials from Fall 2010, training materials from Spring 2011, course syllabi and assignment rubrics for LDRS 1015 and 1016 from Fall 2010, Fall 2011 and Spring 2012, and syllabi for LDRS 2964 (peer leader course)

from Fall 2011 and Spring 2012. These documents were selected because they were used during the time frame of the participants' experience. The researcher also reviewed the RLC website the university's Housing and Residence Life website. All documents were electronic, and were stored in a source file on a password protected computer. Some hard copies of documents were printed and kept in a locked archive file in the researcher's office.

Reflexive self-interview. Due to researcher's role as both a faculty member and administrator in the program, she engaged in a self-reflexive interview conducted by a former graduate student. She utilized the faculty interview protocol as a guide for this interview. This exercise allowed the researcher to describe her own experiences and beliefs, as well as reveal how she made meaning of the data in light of her insider role in the community. The interview was digitally recorded via Call Recorder for SkypeTM. As the purpose of this interview was reflexive, the audio was reviewed and reflexive memos were made by the researcher. However, it was not transcribed and data from this interview was not included in the final results of the study.

Data Analysis Procedures

Analysis is a transformative process by which raw data becomes results (Loftland, Snow, Anderson, & Loftland, 2006). The researcher employed a variety of analytic tools to generate, develop, and verify concepts over time (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These tools included sketching ideas, taking reflective notes, identifying codes, writing memos, asking questions, diagramming concepts, reducing codes to categories, counting frequency of codes, and relating categories to the analytic framework of literature (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Loftland et al., 2006). The researcher used an open research journal to make notes, record observations, and generate reflexive memos and diagrams throughout the research process. All data, including interview

transcripts, writings, and documents, were organized and managed using the HyperRESEARCH™ computer program.

Interviews, focus group, and students' writings. For this case study, the students' written essays were analyzed in the same manner as the interview and focus group transcripts. The researcher began analysis of these documents by reading through the transcripts and making notes. This allowed her to get an overall feel for the data, form initial codes, and start focusing the analysis (Creswell, 2007). Based on the framework and context of the study, several types of codes were used throughout the analysis, including structural, descriptive, in-vivo, process, and values codes (Saldaña, 2009). Using HyperRESEARCH™ software the researcher grouped codes by concept and capture analytic and reflexive memos for both individual codes and grouped codes. The process of category creation was an iterative, reflexive process utilizing constant comparative methods (Glaser & Straus, 2009). While the purpose of the study was not to develop grounded theory, the method allowed the researcher to use the insights gained at each step of the data collection to inform the next iteration of data collection and analysis. As the researcher analyzed new codes through the lens of old data, she was opened up to the possibilities new meanings and/or new insight on previously established themes.

Document analysis. As previously mentioned, the program documents were selected based on relevance to the study. Documents were analyzed systematically in response to the overarching research question. In light of emerging themes from the interviews and writings, the researcher was interested in discovering how peer leader roles were identified or expressed through training documents, and what leadership discourses were prevalent in course curriculum materials. Also, the researcher was looking for insights into the overall purpose and mission of the community, or a guiding cultural discourse.

It is important to note that the document analysis was not a formal discourse analysis; rather, a content analysis with a discursive focus, as it sought to identify "language used in the situation network" (Gee, 1999, p. 85). The researcher sought to identify and describe relevant design attributes that influenced the community culture, definitions of leadership, and meanings of leadership roles within the context of the leadership community. Documents were coded accordingly and also analyzed in terms of how these codes support or contradict the themes identified through the interviews and writings. In this way, the document data served as a point of triangulation.

Evaluation Criteria

The evaluative criteria for qualitative inquiry has been highly debated and discussed by researchers within and among academic paradigms (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). When measured against traditional positivist criteria of validity and reliability, qualitative inquiry is often found lacking (Anfara et al., 2002). However, research within a social constructionist paradigm is conducted with a view of reality that is socially constructed and culturally embedded (Patton, 2002). According to Lincoln and Guba (1994), the researcher and participants co-create findings as the investigation proceeds. A central assumption of social constructionism is that "our practices of language are bound within relationship and our relationships are bound within broader patterns of practice" (Gergen, 2000, p. 11). That being said, Patton (2002) suggested that the purpose of language was not to discover the true nature of reality; but to, "communicate the social construction of the dominant members of the group using language" (p. 101). Gee (1999) described validity not in the sense of reflecting reality; but rather showing how findings (humans constructions of reality and language) are reflexively related to situations so to make them meaningful. The researcher herself was an instrument by which such meanings were made.

Lincoln and Guba (1986) proposed a set of criteria that was more appropriate for naturalistic inquiry, emphasizing that trustworthiness was established through credibility, transferability, and dependability. Patton (2002) suggested credibility of qualitative inquiry depends on (a) rigorous methods that yield-high quality data, (b) credibility of the researcher, and (c) philosophical belief in value of qualitative inquiry. Rigorous methods may include lengthy contact with the phenomena, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member-checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Triangulation of sources involves checking out the consistency of different data sources within the same method. As Patton (2002) noted, the purpose of triangulation is not to find same result from different sources, but to test for consistency. Yin (2009) suggested that multiple sources are important in establishing a case study's credibility. In this study, multiple sources of data were compared ensure that the researcher has accounted for the complexity of the case she sought to understand (Rossman & Rallis, 2009). For example, student interviews transcripts were compared against students' writings and faculty observations.

Researcher credibility is based on the principle that it is “important for the researcher to report any personal and professional information that may have affected the data collection, analysis, and interpretation—either negatively or positively” (Patton, 2002, p. 567). As the researcher was also a faculty member and administrator in the program (see researcher stance to follow) she had prolonged engagement with the study. According to Hockey (1993), the advantages of researching in familiar settings included enhanced rapport and communication the ability to gauge the honesty and accuracy of responses. Wicks and Roland (2009) suggested that insider status helps more than it hinders, and that the common knowledge shared by the researcher and the participant allows for “easy conversation” (Hockey, 1993, p. 10).

The researcher had insight and knowledge of the types of activities and curriculum content that students were experiencing. However, the researcher was also challenged to avoid taken-for-granted assumptions as a result of this insider knowledge (Hockey, 1993). Hockey (1993) warned that researchers with insider status need to be aware of their partialness and take care that their views are truly representative of the case at hand. Thus, the researcher also used member-checking and peer-debriefing to establish credibility. After each individual interview, participants were sent a copy of their transcripts to ensure that the data collected accurately represented the participants' thoughts and feelings. The researcher also utilized peer-debriefing with professional peers in order to reflexively process emerging concepts. The researchers sought to authentically represent the students' intended meanings throughout the analysis and reporting process.

Lincoln and Guba (1986) described transferability as the development of "thick descriptive data", or "narrative developed about the context so that judgments about degree of fit or similarity may be made by others who wish to apply all or parts of the findings elsewhere" (p. 77). While the findings of this case were unique to the leadership learning community of practice, the researcher sought to include sufficient detail of the community itself so to infer potential replication or application of the research with similar collegiate living-learning communities.

Dependability or confirmability was established through the creation of an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Yin (2009) specifically highlighted the importance of creating a survey database and maintaining a chain of evidence that clearly cross-references methodological procedures and resulting evidence. Figure 2 depicts the chain of evidence for this study. First, existing literature and prior work in the areas of leadership identity, social learning, and

communities of practice were summarized into guiding *a priori* propositional statements. The research question and sub-questions were then identified and mapped against the theoretical propositions. The research questions guided the development of the methodology, including data collection procedures and resulting interview and focus group protocols.

Data were collected through audio recordings that were transcribed into text documents, and also through the collection of electronic documents. These documents were organized and stored in the case study database. As data were coded and analyzed, eight primary themes emerged in response to the research sub-questions. These themes pointed towards one arching theme which answered the primary research question. This completed the chain of evidence linking theoretical propositions, questions, methods, and ultimately the results presented in chapter four.

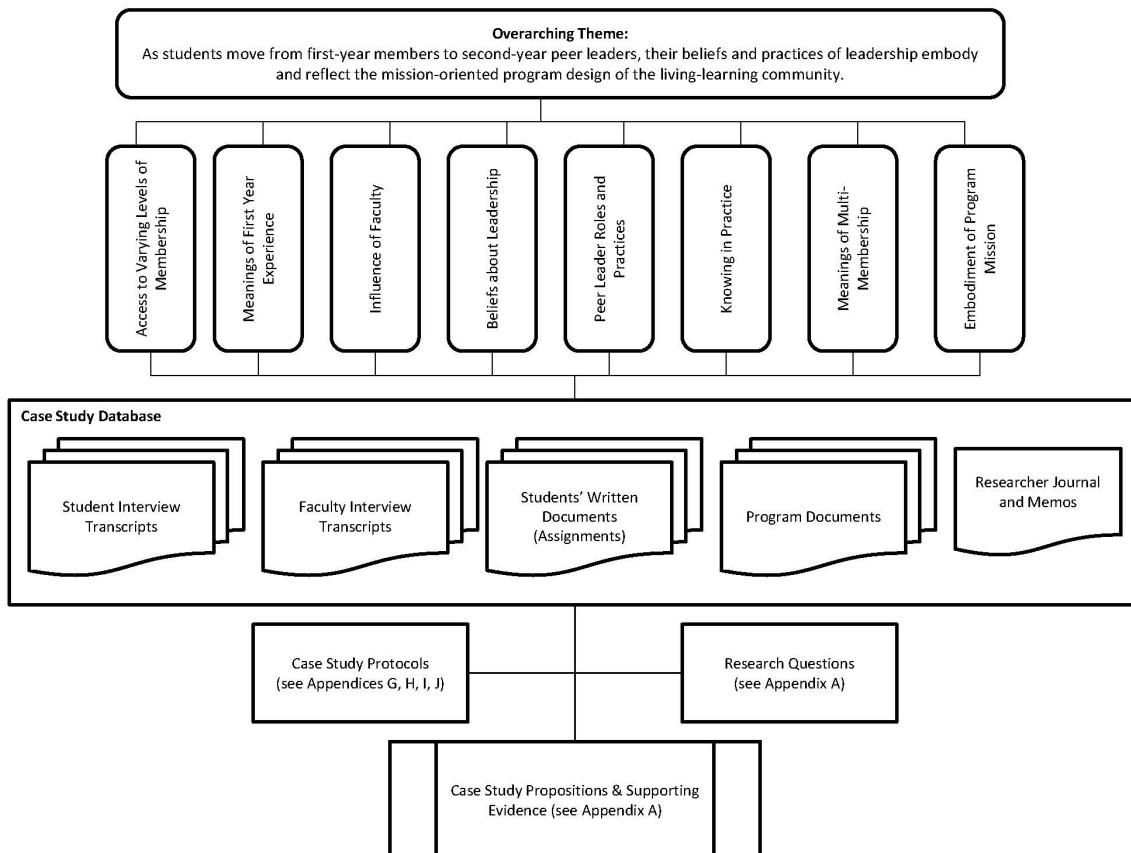


Figure 2. Chain of evidence.

Researcher Stance and Limitations of the Study

Reflexivity and epistemology. It is important for a qualitative researcher to acknowledge the impact her writing has on herself as a researcher, on the study's participants, and on the reader (Creswell, 2007). How I write is a reflection of my own interpretations based on my culture, social and economic status, gender, and personal politics (Creswell, 2007). Writings are co-constructions between researcher and participants and will also be subject to the interpretations of the reader (Creswell, 2007). It was important for me in this research to make explicit my background factors as well as my past and present roles as a member of the community being researched.

I have always been interested in leadership as both a topic of study and as a practice. As an undergraduate, I was an active student leader on my campus and pursued an academic minor in leadership studies. After college, I worked four years for a leadership development organization which specialized in the design and delivery of training and resources for personal and professional growth. My academic interests in leadership grew out of a desire to help people grow. I believe that through the practice of leadership people can have better lives and, in turn, help improve the lives of others.

For over a year I served as the interim director for the residential leadership community that is the focus of this research. For three years prior to that, I was the graduate assistant for the program, teaching freshman-level leadership theory and skills courses and coordinating leadership training programs for students. The students participating in this study may include students who were formerly in my classes. As an administrator, I directed curriculum development, selected and supervised faculty, guided the overall budget and programming for the community, and managed a team of student staff who facilitate the various events and

activities. I have been deeply invested in the outcomes of the leadership program; my participation in the community of practice has shaped my own leadership identity. I have been the program's greatest advocate and chief storyteller. My interest in this research has grown out of a desire to tell the story of leadership education, and also tell the story of our program. The participants in this study have been my partners in crafting this story. I believe it is my responsibility to tell their story not just positively, but authentically—with the belief that the words will have power as they influence the practice of future leadership educators.

I am committed to the beliefs that knowledge is a socially constructed and learning occurs as a process of identity formation within a community of practice. Leadership is a lived social activity, in which language and discourse play an important role in shaping beliefs, attitudes, and practice. There is not one best way to lead; effectiveness is determined by context. However, I also believe leadership qualities and skills can be learned and developed. Students are reflective and have agency in the learning process; they are able to partially shape their realities through their experiences, and the way that design elements of the community help or inhibit their development as leaders can be revealed through investigation into social learning processes, views of self and others, and individual and collective meaning making. I believe leadership should be committed to ethical action and social responsibility. Leadership educators should be committed to transformative leadership educational practices that recognizes and explores taken-for-granted knowledge, ideologies, and political processes.

Finally, I believe research should be useful for pedagogy. As I explore and develop curriculum and teaching methods that acknowledge the role of discourse, I am taking ownership of my responsibility to develop relationships, considering multiple points of view, and

developing critical thinking skills—in both myself as an educator and researcher, and in my students whose identities are influenced by my words and actions.

Limitations of the study. The proposed study was subject to several limitations. First, while the findings describe and outline a variety of social and cultural factors that influenced peer leaders' identity development, the researcher recognized that the participants were also influenced by a variety of other personal and social factors not addressed by the study. The findings applied specifically to peer leaders situated in the living-learning community being studied, and were not meant to be generalized to other groups.

There were also several limitations to the methods used. First, the participants in this study were selected from a small and specific pool of students and faculty. Peer leaders represented only a small percentage of all community members; however, their position and tenure in the community allowed for a more comprehensive and theoretical exploration into identity development. Given the emphasis of the study on every day practices of the community, a more ethnographic approach would have been a useful form of data collection—specifically observations of meetings, classes, peer events, and community events. Because I was also the director of the program, I was concerned that my presence at such events could be disruptive to the natural environment and practices of the instructors, peer leaders, and students. While students shared written descriptions and verbal examples of events and experiences, I was not able to observe their leadership practice first-hand. This created a possibility for the misinterpretation or misrepresentation of actual events. Another limitation could be the slight inconsistency between prompts given during the open-ended interviews. While I attempted to maintain consistency from one interview to the next with word choice, I also felt free to explore unexpected relevant topics generated by the participants themselves.

Summary

This chapter provided the rationale and justification of the qualitative methodology used in this case study. The research design outlined the sampling and selection criteria and methods used for data collection and analysis. The case study database included multiple forms of evidence, including interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. A chain of evidence was outlined, establishing trustworthiness and credibility. The researcher stance and potential limitations of the study were also discussed.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS: HOW STUDENTS CONSTRUCTED LEADERSHIP IDENTITIES THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN A COLLEGIATE LIVING-LEARNING COMMUNITY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore how a leadership-themed collegiate living-learning community supports the formation of students' leadership identities as they transition from first-year members to second-year peer leaders. The primary question and sub-questions guiding this study were:

1. How do college students studying leadership within a themed living-learning community construct leadership identities as they transition from first-year members to second-year peer leaders?
 - a. How do students gain access to varying levels of membership in the leadership learning community?
 - b. How do faculty and administrative stakeholders facilitate experiences of membership for students in the residential leadership community?
 - c. What meanings of leadership are taken up by students as they transition from first-year members into second-year peer leaders?
 - d. What are the social and cultural implications of these meanings as they relate to higher education's call to enhance students' leadership capacity?

Six second-year students serving in a peer leader role were the primary participants in this case study. Each participated in two rounds of in-depth narrative interviews, and submitted

copies of written reflective assignments for analysis. Four of the six student participants also participated in a confirmatory focus group session. The researcher also conducted one-on-one interviews with four program faculty, and analyzed program documents, including course syllabi and training materials. This chapter overviews seven primary themes and sub-themes that emerged from the case. The themes are presented in the following order:

1. Access to varying levels of membership
2. Meanings of the first year experience
3. Influence of faculty on experiences of membership
4. Beliefs about leadership
 - 4a. Leadership representations in first year
 - 4b. Leadership representations in second year
 - 4c. Influential theories
5. Peer leader roles and practices
 - 5a. In-class
 - 5b. Out-of-class
 - 5c. Connecting in- and out-of-class
 - 5d. Negotiating roles
6. Knowing in practice
7. Meanings of multi-membership
8. Embodiment of the program mission

Each of these themes connected directly to one or more of the research questions, as outlined in Appendix L. It was also determined that these themes are further summarized by one overarching theme for the case study: *As students move from first-year members to second-year*

peer leaders, their beliefs and practices of leadership embody and reflect the mission-oriented program design of the living-learning community.

Theme 1: Access to Varying Levels of Membership

This theme begins to answer research sub-question a: *How do students gain access to membership?* Access to resources and opportunities for learning can enhance or inhibit full participation in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger 1991). Student participants described how the program design and relational factors influenced their entry into the program, and illustrated their movement from newcomers to full participants in a peer leader role. Table four previews the emergent categories that supported this theme.

Table 4: *Theme 1*

Theme	Categories
Access to varying levels of membership	Joining the RLC Becoming a peer leader Relationship with peer leader model Continuing participation in community

Joining the RLC

The starting point for leadership community membership was applying for the program. RLC members were required to complete a written application through the university's online housing system. What motivated students to apply to the RLC? Student participants discussed their expectations related to the context and design of the living-learning community. In terms of context, students expressed an interest in the topic of leadership. Morgan said, "Leadership has always been a big part of my life ... it was something that interested me." Alex was challenged and intrigued. He said, "I guess it kind of made me wonder, 'Can you learn leadership?' Because I'd always pictured people just become leaders whether by societal

measure or naturally." Jacob was also curious about leadership. He recalled, "I think I was really excited coming in to take the leadership classes. Especially not knowing anything about them. Because you are just curious about how it would go."

The reputation of the living-learning experience was also attractive to students. Emily explained her expectations this way:

So I heard that you are in suite style so you'll know everyone in your suite really well.

And everyone's in the same class so you'll know more people from different floors. So I thought it would be good, being a freshman at like a big school.

Emily added, "And of course, the added benefit of air conditioning." Alex echoed this, "Of course, the A/C was a plus." It was clear from the students' responses that living in a suite-style dorm with air conditioning was considered a perk of community membership. However, the residence hall represented more than a comfortable physical space. It was also known as a place of learning. Daniel said:

I actually heard about it from a junior here now ... And she said it's a really great program, it's a great way to jump start your career at Tech. It [residence hall] is a good place to study, and they said the dorm was nice which was also a very large role in applying.

Daniel's quote also highlighted how he learned about the program from a former student. All of the student participants shared that they knew someone who had been in the program, heard about it from a friend, or—like Alex and Jacob—received an invitation as part of a scholarship program. Jacob explained, "I got the Pamplin Leaders scholarship, and they were basically like, you are very strongly recommended to join in the Residential Leadership Community now. So at that point it kind of made my decision for me."

Students desired to connect with a group of people with common interests, and believed they would find that in the RLC. Hannah emphasizes this belief:

I thought it would be really cool to be around people who I knew would have similar interests as me. Whereas if you go into a random dorm, you don't get guarantee that. And ... also I wanted to be surrounded by people who weren't going to neglect their classes and be out all night partying. So I just wanted people who like, I would actually be able to become friends with.

Hannah's statement suggested a belief that RLC membership involves a special quality that is different than a "random dorm". Emily heard about the program from a friend too, and she made meaning of it in this way:

They said that everyone in the RLC really seemed like they were confident, and in a community on campus. More than just like a regular freshman who goes to class, comes back, and doesn't really know, they might know the people on their hall a little bit but not really that much.

During the focus group session, the participants commented on the idea of being part of something special or different. Emily reiterated, "I think the RLC's different because everyone has to apply ... So, by them just taking the initiative to apply, they are already showing some leadership skills in that." Daniel also commented, "I think it's different also because most of the students are motivated students that are actively involved, they care about school." Hannah agreed, "I think a lot of the kids when they were in high school did a lot of different clubs, sports, a bunch of different activities and want to do the same things in college."

Becoming a Peer Leader

The movement toward becoming a peer leader began early in the first semester of membership. First-year students who desired to be peer leaders for the next year were required to complete a written application and participate in an interview selection process. Participants described the formal process as a series of steps. Morgan explained, "I told my teacher I was interested, I went to the information session." Hannah also talked about the interest meeting, and outlined the rest of the process, "And so I filled out the application and then I had an individual interview with the interns. And then I made it to the second round and got a group interview. And then, after that I was selected."

However, there was also an informal, relational process to becoming a peer leader that happens through participation in events led by a current peer leader (called a peer leader model here so not to be confused with the participants themselves). Emily described how she observed her peer leader models and also talked to them about their role in the community:

Well, from the beginning of the year, we had three PLs in my class first semester. And I saw how they kind of connected well with the freshman—even though they didn't know us at all coming in—and that process of getting to know us, and going on peer events. ... And, I got talking to some of them about their responsibilities as a peer leader and what extra they had to do outside of the classroom. And it sounded like it would be a good experience. So then, I applied because I wanted to give that peer leader feeling that I had from my PLs to the freshman coming in this year.

Emily's participation and interaction with her peer leader models influenced her decision to continue her own involvement. Jacob attended the information session where current peer leaders talked about their experience. He reflected on his thoughts at the time:

I guess they sold me on it pretty well. I went in with kind of an open mind on like, 'Would I be interested in this?' And, when I was there, you hear these things like ... you know, it's so rewarding being able to work with all of the freshman. ... And I was like, you know, I'm still interested in continuing on with leadership, maybe taking a role. It could be fun to be there to help freshman. So I guess that's what kind of put me on the track to be a peer leader.

In this quote, Jacob illustrates how he began to realize he wanted to be a peer leader. As the student participants reflected on their motivation to be a peer leader, the reasons varied between things they would gain, such as credit for the minor, living on campus, an enjoyable experience, and friendships; to things they wanted to give—primarily the desire to have the same influence as their peer leader model and help freshman like they had been helped.

Hannah described the benefit of earning credit as a peer leader this way, "I wanted to be able to get credit for my leadership minor in an interesting way." She also was candid about the desirable living situation. Hannah explained, "I also liked that I would be guaranteed [on-campus] housing for the next year." Hannah and Daniel both thought being a peer leader would be a great way to stay involved in the RLC. Daniel said, "I thought about it ... I have no leadership role to participate in Tech and I feel like I would really like to live in PY and stay a part of this really good program." He expressed a desire to continue learning and put his learning to practice:

... I just wanted to remain a part of this program ... I think I learned a lot of leadership last year but I felt like I didn't learn enough and I really need to try to put the stuff I learned last year into practice while still getting the environment that would provide me that

knowledge again which would help me sort of nail down a lot of the theories and the methods of effective leadership.

Morgan said, "It was something I wanted to do as soon as I heard about peer leaders and fully understood what they were and what they meant for the RLC." What did peer leaders "mean for the RLC"? The students recognized peer leadership as an opportunity to help others like they had been helped. Hannah reflected on the tough challenge of getting adjusted her first semester. She said, "I wanted to be there for the people who were in the same situation as I was." Alex shared how his experience influenced his desire to help others:

Just being in the community helped me so much. And then I wanted to have that same impact on someone else. I wanted somebody to feel like I had changed them for the better. That I'd had a meaningful impact on their life.

Daniel also wanted to give back to the program. He said:

I applied mainly under the impression that I would have the opportunity to improve the experience of the freshman and have the effect my peer leaders had on me. So it was really more of an opportunity for me to give back to the program that gave me so much.

Relationships with Peer Leader Models

What was the influence of that peer leader model on these students who desired to continue in peer leader roles? Daniel described how his peer leaders served as role models:

My PLs really demonstrated leadership on campus. They were doing well in school, they were active in service and they just really helped me transition from high school to college. They were there to help me whenever I encountered challenges or problems, or if I just needed to de-stress and talk to someone—they were really there to talk to me. So,

I think just helping me get through that difficult first semester was one way they led me to become a good leader.

Student participants saw peer leaders as mentors who encouraged them to get involved, gave advice, and helped with their transition to college. Alex credited the relationship with one of his peer leader models, Charles, with helping him grow as a person and a leader. Alex explained:

I will credit Charles with my entire existence as a peer leader. He helped me change in ways I didn't think I could. And, I really just became a believer in the peer leader itself and what kind of impact the peer leader could have on the first-year students. I really wanted to continue that.

Alex went on to describe his relationship with Charles as "life changing. ... Because I'd always been the cloistered little shy kid in the corner and now I feel I'm not that way anymore because of him. It really helped me to see the value in myself." Emily also described the life-mentoring role of her peer leader models:

They acted more as mentors, so they didn't just limit themselves to, 'Oh you can ask me questions about leadership and that's it.' They were very open to, 'Do you want to know more about ... going to football games, or going to the gym, or about this class?'

Emily emphasizes how helpful her peer leaders were in connecting her with opportunities to get involved on campus. She said, "They there were like, 'I think you would be good if you joined this organization because you seem like you have interest in that.'"

Continuing Participation: Internship

When asked to reflect on the question, "What's next?", only one student participant planned to continue formal participation in the community as an intern. The rest of the students planned to transition out of the community after completion of their peer leader role. Hannah

said, "I don't see myself having any more involvement in the RLC because I don't want to be an intern and that seems like really the only other way to stay involved with it." Alex decided the internship wasn't for him because of the time commitment. While being an intern was not the direction he wanted to go with his experience in the RLC, he said, "I look forward to being involved somewhere down the road as an alumnus."

The student participants described their relationships with the current interns differently than they did with their peer leader models. Hannah described her interactions with interns, "It's hard to see them as normal students because they spend so much of their time working with the RLC. I feel like I have to be very professional with them." Alex said, "I have no idea what the interns do." Jacob also emphasized the more formal nature of their interactions. He said, "We don't really see the interns much. It's like we'll have email communication with them, like, 'Hey, we need you to do this.'" The lack of connection with current interns seemed to reinforce the power a peer model has in influencing students' decisions to engage pursue further levels of involvement.

In summary, this theme described access to experiences of membership through community design and relational factors that influenced their entry into the program, movement into a peer leader role, and plans for continued membership. Students were motivated by the reputation of the living-learning experience as a common place of learning with a group of people who shared common interests and goals. Becoming a peer leader is a formal process; however, it was the informal, relational connection with the current peer leader model that motivated students to apply. The students had a limited connection with the program interns, and also limited view of what additional opportunities for participation existed within the community other than the internship. Most planned a trajectory out of the community. While

this theme focused on access as a function of design, experience, and relationships, the next theme narrows the focus of access specifically to how the first year experience contributes to becoming a peer leader.

Theme 2: Meanings of the First Year Experience

The meanings made through participation in the first year experience were motivational factors for continued involvement as a peer leader. Jacob highlighted how his experience in the RLC as a first-year student influenced his desire to be a peer leader:

I really enjoyed my time in the RLC. ... So that was a big part of me being a peer leader is like, I enjoyed this experience. So I would like to be able to be there to help other people be able to enjoy the experience. It's one of those—I went through freshman year and I know how things work, so why don't I return that to other people that might also want to know how freshman year works.

What about the experience was so meaningful to Jacob and to the other student participants? As students described the benefits of being part of the RLC as a first-year student, three main categories emerged, as outlined in Table 5. The benefits of belonging, personal growth, and the opportunity to build relationships and make connections were also reiterated and supported by faculty as they described their interpretation of the value of students' participation in the program.

Table 5: *Theme 2*

Theme	Categories
Meanings of the first year experience	Experiences of belonging Experiences of personal growth Developing relationships and connections

Experiences of Belonging

The previous theme explained how students were attracted to the program because of the perception that they would be part of a place that supported their learning, and part of a group of people with whom they shared interests and experiences. Daniel expressed how that expectation was met through his experience in the first year:

It just really provides a good environment, it helps you develop relationships with other students who share similar goals and are academically devoted to their studies. And I think just being around those people helps benefit yourself cause you're not becoming distracted by, like for example in other dorms, people partying and drinking all the time. Whereas in the RLC you are really around people that really want to do something with their lives.

Hannah also talked about the value of having things in common with other people:

When you come in to your freshman year, it is really scary. But you are already part of a community. And so, you know that you have these things in common with people. And you see them in your dorm and in your classes.

A sense of comfort came with belonging to community. It made the large campus feel smaller and helped ease the transition to college. Emily said, "I think it's a good place for freshman to come to feel like they are part of a smaller community within the larger Virginia Tech community—the idea of finding a home on a smaller campus." Instructor Sandy had a similar sentiment. She said this about the RLC, "It makes a large university seem much smaller since they all live in the same hall and take similar classes. So it makes it easier for them to feel part of a community versus just being a number."

Morgan found value in not just being part of a community, but in contributing to a community *with a purpose*:

It's just made me feel like I'm part of something that actually matters. 'Cause it's easy to feel like you are alone and lost. Especially like on a big campus. But I feel like I'm part of something and I'm needed in something. And, it's a great feeling 'cause I feel like I can contribute to it and make it better.

That sense of purpose was connected to students' learning experiences. Jacob explained that the RLC is, "not an empty club." He said, "You do learn something from it. And when it's something you're asked about later, you have real experiences that you can say you gained from it." Authentic, meaningful experiences in a small community contributed to students' sense of belonging.

Experiences of Personal Growth

Student participants described how they experienced life-changing personal growth as a result of their first year experience in the RLC. Daniel said, "One of the benefits, I think, of being in the RLC is that it really develops you as an all around person." He explained it this way:

The relationships I built and the people that I learned things from you know it really started my transition into college life and getting involved with all of my organizations. And really starting to become more social and taking on more responsibility as an adult, and ... really I think it just helped me develop good [academic] habits...

Daniel's statement suggested that he had experienced growth in multiple dimensions of student life. Charles, an instructor of the first-year course, talked about "the personal growth and development you can see" –a tangible change in students' level of participation in the classroom

during the first year. James, another instructor of the first year course, saw growth starting with an exploration of personal values. He said:

They learn a lot about themselves and I think there's a lot of value in that. Being able to articulate some of their own core values and some of their own beliefs and then connecting it to leadership. And the connection helps give them the practical application. I feel like many students walk out knowing what they value.

Instructor James and Instructor Robin both described the RLC as an environment for exploration. Robin connected that environment to their growth this way:

The RLC gives them a safe environment to explore that where they can try, and maybe fail—hopefully succeed—and start figuring out what their individual leadership style is, and what they are naturally good at. And then, find ways to get engaged and connected in with the rest of the university to explore what they've already started.

The learning community provided an environment that fostered personal growth in first-year students. This growth was recognized by the students themselves and by their instructors. As students grew from their experiences, they were also motivated to pursue increased levels of involvement.

Building Relationships and Connections

Instructor Charles also noted, "They get engaged with the campus so quickly. It's just amazing." What fostered their desire to get involved? Emily said, "I feel like in the RLC, everyone around you is encouraging you to be involved in multiple organizations and apply for things." She shared how participation in the RLC influenced her, saying, "Coming in as a freshman last year it really helped me, encouraged me to apply for more organizations or like extra trips, like study abroad trips." Being around other motivated and active people encouraged

involvement and engagement with the larger campus and community. Alex explained how his participation in the RLC also fostered relationships. He said:

It's really just helped me get involved. It's helped me develop good relationships with people. I mean, just living in the suite, I've developed a strong core of friendships that I know are going to last. And I feel like if I hadn't lived in the RLC, I wouldn't have had that.

Jacob also emphasized the value of friendships. He said, "My closest group of friends that I have is from the RLC. I still hang out with and get lunch with them all the time and see them on the weekends." He credited suite-style living for facilitating close bonds with a core group of people. He said, "We referred to it as like our 'family' all the time." Student participants repeatedly described that their "best friends" were made in the RLC.

Hannah noticed how the RLC "opens up a lot of doors" and, "gives you a leg up" when pursuing leadership positions and roles in other organizations. She talked about the perception associated with the RLC name:

I also think that it has opened doors for me with other organizations. Because by saying I'm in the Residential Leadership Community, it shows people that I do have a passion for leadership and that I have experience. And so, that has helped me get a job this summer. It helped me get into an honor fraternity. It helped me get a position in Relay for Life. And so, I think that even just having the name of it helps outside of the organization.

Current and former RLC members formed a network of peers who acknowledged the value or credibility of membership. Instructor Sandy explained how students who want to get involved have a network of peer leaders, interns, and other students who are already connected in

organizations like fraternities, sororities, and student government. She described how being part of the community "connects them to people and organizations in the university quicker than they might if they weren't in the RLC." Instructor Charles also explained how the RLC "opens so many doors" in this way:

They go into their student organizations and they say, 'Oh there's so and so, I know he used to live with me freshman year, he's great we had class together, this is someone we need.' And they just have a network ...

Instructor James tied all the ideas of belonging, growth, and connections together through the metaphor of a tree:

They belong to the RLC. And there's a sense of pride there. I call it a sense of belonging. And they feel like, 'I am known within my community and I know.' And they start to outreach to others, and say, 'Well in the RLC I learned ... Or, 'When I was talking to so and so, they were in the RLC with me, we did this together.' And so they branch out. And so it's almost like the collective experience and that feeling and connection is like the trunk of the tree, and then the second piece of community are the branches. And when they start to branch out and really just spread what they've learned.

Alex shared an example that brought this metaphor to life. When asked about the benefit of the RLC, he reflected on how he talked about the program in one of his (non-leadership) courses:

[The study of leadership] changed my life. I actually gave a presentation last week ... the 'about me' slide was my name, I'm a sophomore, and the RLC. And everyone in the class was like, 'What's the RLC?' So I told them, 'Leadership was the study of how to interact with people.' And that's something I was never very good at until I went through this program. And I feel like that will help me with every aspect of my life, here on out.

Alex actually shared three things here: (a) that he identified himself as a member of the RLC outside of the RLC, (b) what he believed leadership was, and (c) how participation in the RLC helped him grow relationally. Role identification and beliefs will be discussed in more detail in later themes.

In summary, students who continued in peer leadership roles felt like they were part of a supportive community that helped them grow as individuals and develop close friendships. They had a built in network to support their transition to college and connect them to further campus involvement. The RLC provided a community environment that supported these experiences, in the form of small classes and suite-style living. An important ingredient to the facilitation of these environments is the involvement of faculty. The next theme describes the influence of role of faculty on experiences of membership, and more specifically their influence on peer leader development.

Theme 3: Influence of Faculty on Experiences of Membership

The RLC utilized adjunct faculty from a variety of academic and administrative programs to serve as instructors for the leadership courses taken by students in their first year and by the peer leaders. The faculty instructors supervised the peer leaders through weekly interactions in class, and through weekly or bi-weekly meetings for the purpose of reviewing course material, getting and giving feedback, and planning for assignments and events. The categories that emerged from the student and faculty participants are outlined in Table 6. Faculty saw their role as being a resource for students and a connection to a larger network of people and opportunities around campus. Peer leaders specifically identified their supervising faculty as professional mentors and a personal resource.

Table 6: *Theme 3*

Theme	Categories
Influence of faculty on experiences of membership	Role of faculty in RLC Faculty as professional mentor Faculty as personal resource

Role of Faculty in the RLC

In their one-on-one interviews, faculty talked about their perception of their role in the community. Instructor James described the role of faculty as "creating the environment that students want to interact, not only with each other but also with us." He suggested a key role for faculty and administration was to be present. He further explained:

... creating things like events, or attending events that students are creating. To just be there, because then it feels like to the students, at least I've observed this, and in a couple cases it's been articulated to me. It means something to know that anybody who's an administrator, whether it's the residential learning coordinator in [the residence hall] and the RA staff, or it's the director of the RLC, and the interns, they are just there and it's cool for them to see there's more to this than just me going to class. And there's more to this than me just knowing my roommate and the people in my suite. There's a whole network. And I think our job is to really be there, be visible and be supportive. But also to help students see that you can create that network, the branches that I mentioned before. There are ways others can help you reach out. That's the foundational role I see.

By "being there", or being present, faculty modeled what community *is* and *is about*; and, they were also more accessible as a resource for the students. Instructor James outlined several ways that faculty and administrators provide access to resources. He said:

They could be financial resources, educational support, knowing the university resources on campus. It could be following up with students that either need help or have had

something going on in their own lives. Or are requesting more experiences with leadership, helping connect them with resources that we either have or know of.

For Instructor Robin, being a resource started with "a good grounding in leadership," but involved much more. She described the role of faculty as:

... helping in that student developmental phase of choices and consequences and having those teachable moments. And so it's a lot of email. It's a lot of face time with students. It's a lot of problem solving and marketing and getting into their heads and trying to figure out what it's like to be 18, 19 years old in today's world. And how to make things relevant to them. It's being a resource to the students, and being there to answer questions. We have to be modeling the behavior we expect to see in our students, so we have to be on our game, making sure that we're doing what we say is expected of them. And that we're modeling good and effective leadership in our daily activities.

Instructor Robin highlighted being a resource through both answering questions and serving as a model. Faculty members served as models as they communicate the subject of leadership in a relevant way, and also through their everyday lives. Instructors came from a variety of backgrounds and departments. Instructor Sandy said:

I think what's really neat about the RLC is that the instructors come from so many different places. It's not everybody from one department, it's people who are passionate about whatever they are teaching. ... they are able to connect the students to other opportunities that traditional faculty might not be able to unless it was academic related.

All the faculty participants commented that they enjoy building relationships with students. Instructor Sandy also commented on how the small class size (25 to 40 students) allowed the students to, "get to know instructors in a way that they might not otherwise." She

said, "One of the most important things research has shown for students is being connected to faculty. Everybody wants to be recognized, to be known by name." Both Instructor Sandy and Instructor Charles described how they frequently write reference letters for current and former students.

Faculty as Professional Mentor

The student participants talked about their interactions with faculty, particularly the instructors of the LDRS classes in which they serve as a peer leader. Through their interaction with faculty, the peer leaders gained greater insight and understanding into the classroom component of the program. The instructors set the tone and expectation for what roles and practices were required of the peer leader in the classroom, and assisted them in developing the knowledge and skills necessary to meet those expectations. Daniel explained what happens in his weekly meeting with his instructor:

We meet and talk about class. We work together to come up with fun activities. Because our class doesn't like to sit and listen to PowerPoint. So we've really started coming up with new ideas to engage them. We've been doing skits, we've been doing debates and I can tell that our freshman, because of our collaboration on class curriculum, they are really starting to like the material better than at the beginning of the year when he was just doing PowerPoint.

Daniel described his relationship with his instructor as collaborative. By sharing power and responsibility in the classroom with the peer leaders, faculty modeled collaborative leadership. Emily also described how her supervising instructor invited her to be part of the teaching team:

She taught us teaching techniques as well, and facilitation techniques. Not just, 'Oh, you are a PL you can just sit up here and grade papers.' It was more like, 'Oh would you like

the opportunity to plan this message one day?' And, we planned I think three lessons throughout the semester and taught on three days. And she was still there and she helped, but we were the main ones, we made the groups.

Several of the peer leaders were actually working with an instructor and in a class that they had taken in the first year. Jacob talked about the value of having experience with the instructor:

Because [co-peer leader] and I both took her class, we've been able to provide ideas of—when we first sat down at the beginning, she said, 'Look at this syllabus—what do you like? What do you not like?' So, we've been able to help change the class, or improve it I guess you could say.

Meeting with the instructor regularly also helped the peer leaders know what to do. Morgan described her weekly meetings this way:

I'm actually more involved with the faculty this semester, specifically my teacher. We meet every week for at least an hour, my co-PL and I meet during that time. And it just helps us stay organized because we plan out the next two classes every time we meet. And, it helps both of us prepare better and I think that's why that also helps my confidence. Because last semester we didn't meet as often, and I was still kind of out of the loop. I was like, 'I don't really know what I'm doing,' and that affected me as to how good of a PL I was.

The faculty helped students to troubleshoot issues related to peer leading, and also emphasized concepts that students were learning in their peer leader class or in the freshman leadership class itself. Like Morgan, several of the peer leaders noted that their interactions and expectations of the instructor were more involved during the second semester. Hannah said this

about her second semester professor, "she's very much more organized and likes to mix things up and likes to have me and my co-PL doing a lot more in the classroom." Further, Hannah mentioned that her teacher asked her for feedback on the course and about students. She also learned from observing the instructor give feedback. She offered this observation of instructors:

I think they know more so than anyone else what the freshman are actually wanting to learn and what they are going to learn. And, so they know where to focus their energy and curriculum. And it's just been very interesting, especially this semester ... I've actually been learning a lot, which has been really helpful. And, learning about different learning styles and how teamwork needs to work and everything like that.

Faculty served as professional mentors to the peer leaders by inviting them to contribute to class planning and facilitation. Through weekly meetings that emphasized reflection and feedback, they helped peer leaders to gain skill in confidence on how to lead in and out of the classroom.

Faculty as Personal Resource

The students valued their personal relationship with faculty, and saw that faculty were interested in their lives, made them feel known and cared for, and were able to offer advice on personal issues. More specifically regarding her peer leader experience, Hannah said, "The instructor for the leadership class that I am a PL in, we have a really good relationship. ... We have a really open relationship so we are not afraid to talk about things. So we kind of say whatever we feel. Both of us."

Morgan said this about her experience in the RLC, "You get to know teachers who really care about you and you get to form a relationship with them." Morgan worked with the same instructor for four semesters, two as a first-year student and two as a peer leader. She said that

because of this, "I feel comfortable going to him about life in general. And he's really helped me grow as a person and I feel like I'll like stay in touch with him after this year." She described how her instructor gave her honest and constructive feedback, and also gave her advice about her future career.

Emily said her instructor was, "Not only helping us as a peer leader, but she was always interested in what we were doing outside of class to better our leadership skills or just whatever we were doing outside of class." Alex was surprised at how well his instructor knew him. He said, "She knew me a lot better than I thought she did." The personal connection with his instructor opened up the door to grow as a peer leader. He said, "She was constantly giving me feedback, and I could go to her for help. It was really nice having that relationship, she really helped me find my role as a peer leader, and how I wanted to perform it."

In summary, this theme answers research sub-question b, illustrating *the influence of faculty on students' experiences of membership*. First, faculty described their own role in the community. They suggested that through being present and building relationships, they served as a resource and provided connections for students to other opportunities. Student participants also reflected on their interactions with faculty, noting that they were influential to their personal growth and development as a peer leader. Specifically, peer leaders described the influence of faculty within the categories of a professional mentor and personal resource. Through their mentorship, student participants had more confidence and ability to serve in peer leader roles in and out of the classroom, also they had someone to go to for personal advice and help if needed. The personal relationship within the community of practice supported students' professional growth as they served in the role of peer leader.

Theme 4: Beliefs about Leadership

This theme begins to answer research sub-question c: *What meanings of leadership are taken up by students as they transition from first-year members to second-year peer leader?*

This question is theoretically connected to the proposition that leadership identity can be expressed or represented through both internal beliefs and external practices. According to Wenger (1998) meaning is a way of talking about our changing ability within situated experience. Students' meanings of leadership were expressed as students shared, both textually and through interviews, their beliefs about leadership. The data related to this theme illustrated how their beliefs changed within their situated experience of both first-year membership and in a second-year leadership role.

Each of the student participants shared copies of scholarly essays written in their first year, as well as a revised philosophy written in their second year as a peer leader. These essays were analyzed and coded for descriptions of their beliefs and examples of learning influences and experiences connected to beliefs. The researcher found that the student participants' beliefs about leadership changed over time as a result of their participation in the practices of the community. Related questions were asked in the participant interviews, faculty interviews, and student focus group in order to triangulate these findings. Course syllabi and assignment rubrics were analyzed to gain insight into the course design, assignment expectations, and curricular content. The results were organized into three sub-themes as outlined in Table 7. The sub-themes and related categories represent the temporal and developmental nature of the beliefs (first year to second year), and also include the influence of the theoretical discourse on students' changing beliefs and practices.

Table 7: *Theme 4*

Theme	Sub-themes	Categories
Beliefs about leadership	Leadership representations in the first year	Early leadership definitions Changing leadership philosophies Influence of community experience Meanings applied to future roles
	Leadership representations in the second year	Changing beliefs Beliefs become "real" through practice
	Influential theories	"Favorite" theories Theory influences beliefs and practices

Sub Theme: Students' Representations of Leadership in the First Year

In the students' first semester of participation in the community, they were required to enroll in a common class, *LDRS 1015—Exploring Citizen Leadership: Contexts and Competencies*. According to the course syllabus, the purpose of this course was to "explore the language, theories, ethics, and competencies of leadership as a framework for participation in the residential learning community" (RLC, 2010a, p. 1). The syllabus goes on to say that "community members will be immersed in an experience that will help them to develop and exercise competencies as leaders" (p. 1). A key competency related to beliefs about leadership was described this way: "Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to ... effectively write a personal definition of leadership that demonstrates critical reflection on contemporary leadership challenges and demonstrates knowledge of leadership concepts introduced in the course" (RLC, 2010a, p. 1).

Early leadership definitions. Students completed several written reflection papers, including a "final leadership paper" referred to by one rubric as a "personal theory of leadership" (RLC, Fall 2010b, p. 1). The purpose of this paper was to "reflect about the theories you have

read about in class. You should be able to demonstrate your ability to define leadership, assess your personal style of leadership, and apply concepts learned throughout the course" (RLC, Fall 2010b, p. 1). A series of question prompts asked students to define leadership, discuss their leadership style, and apply concepts learned in the course (RLC Fall 2010b). Analysis of these written assignments revealed that the student participants' early leadership definitions (expressed as beliefs when entering the RLC) were primarily person-centered, represented positional forms of leadership, and simple in nature.

Jacob wrote about a person-centered view. He said, "Before having any classes I described leadership as a person that was able to motivate people to do what the leader wanted." Jacob also described his beliefs before the class as "a very linear view of leadership." He acknowledged his own naivety about leadership when he wrote, "I had never thought about the fact that there are different ways to lead in any scenario." Emily acknowledged her original definition of leadership was "very vague" and she "viewed leadership as an attribute." Morgan shared how her beliefs had been shaped by her prior experience with positional leaders. She wrote, "Before this semester, leadership to me was always the 'popular' kids in school. Because they were popular, people looked up to them as leaders and even voted for them when they ran for leadership positions."

Daniel said, "At the beginning of the class, I believed that leadership was just being in charge of something and being superior to the followers." Hannah defined leadership as, "the practice of guiding others to achieve a common goal." Alex's definition of leadership at the beginning of the semester was, "Leadership is an individual's ability to bring together a group of people with diverse talents and abilities in order to achieve some goal." Both Hannah and Alex acknowledged additional aspects of leadership, such as "other people" and goal achievement;

however, their emphasis was primarily on the leader's ability. This was common in the student participants' writings about their pre-RLC leadership beliefs.

Changing leadership philosophies. The reflection papers showed evidence that the student participant's leadership beliefs changed through their first semester in the community. Specifically, their changing leadership definitions and descriptions reflected relational processes between leaders and followers for the purpose of goal achievement. Jacob cited several key tenets to describe his expanding view of leadership, including that "leadership is a process" and "the leaders have to work together with the followers to accomplish the task." Alex acknowledged his changed view:

I now see that there is much more to leadership than just a leader. There is a leader and his or her followers and how the two groups interact with one another. This relationship is what defines leadership and how it propels groups to accomplish more than they could have alone.

Hannah said that she now believed that, "leadership is more than just guidance." She said, "My current definition of leadership is openly directing, supporting, and actively participating with followers and other leaders in a combined effort to achieve a common goal."

Emily recognized her own evolution of thought. She said, "My ambiguous original definition of leadership has evolved into: The ability an individual has to make a connection with a group of people, articulate a vision and create success within a group." While the emphasis was still on the leader's ability, the difference here was the explanation of what the leader does in relation to other people. Morgan described a focus on others when she said that leadership is "both a desire and ability to help others reach a goal. ... It is a self-less act of not wanting to leave

anyone behind by motivating everyone to reach the finish line." Daniel tied the person and the process together in this way:

I define leadership as a process between a leader and followers where the leader, who is able to relate to the followers, motivates a group of people to achieve a common goal in a positive way, and if possible, exceed the goal.

Influence of community experience on leadership beliefs. As they described their changing beliefs about leadership, student participants identified influences on their new definitions. These influences included learning about theories in class, participation in service, reflection, and observation of others. Hannah talked about several of these influences:

I have seen my definition utilized by many leaders. At my community service project ... my task leader gave us specific instructions on how to fulfill our designated tasks, was very encouraging, gave constructive feedback, collaborated with the other task leaders, and worked with us when necessary. Through their leadership, we were able to prepare thousands of meals for those devastated by the earthquake in Haiti. I modeled my definition of leadership after the behaviors of leaders that I admire and wish to emulate, including my wonderful peer leaders, my favorite professors, and other members of the Residential Leadership Community.

All of the student participants referenced "learning about leadership" as influential to their change in beliefs, ranging from exposure to various readings and resources and being introduced to new concepts and theories. Daniel said, "As I have studied various leadership theories, my perspective of leadership has changed enormously." The experience of leadership coursework had an influence on Morgan. As she was exposed to different aspects of leadership

through her classroom learning, she gained a language for talking about leadership that helped her make meaning of her current and past experiences. She wrote:

I am able to tell when I am using leadership skills and when I am solely a follower.

However, before taking this class, I lacked the knowledge to know what theories I was utilizing let alone know that different theories of leadership existed. Regardless, I still used the various theories. I simply did not know it.

Morgan began to notice leadership in herself, and in others. She added, "I have also become more aware of people around me and when they exemplify leadership theories and concepts with others." As part of the leadership course, Daniel had the opportunity to reflect on experiences from high school. He began to recognize how those past experiences connected with his current learning. Daniel said:

These experiences have affected my viewpoint on leadership, and my time in leadership class has taught me many valuable leadership skills that I can use to be a more effective leader in the future. These influences, in real life and in class, have allowed me to create and improve my personal leadership style.

Meanings applied to future roles. The student participant's writings in the first year primarily described beliefs about leadership. However, another way to understand the meanings of those beliefs was through their descriptions of future practice. They were motivated to act out leadership through future roles of service on campus and in the larger community, as well as through the peer leader role. Daniel said:

Now that I have learned more about leadership, I plan on becoming even more involved in leadership positions to improve my own skills as a leader. In the future, I want to

become even more involved in service projects that help benefit the community. I also want to join more organizations to create a positive impact on and beyond campus.

Emily identified herself as a citizen-leader. She said, "In the future I hope to heighten my involvement in community service projects." Jacob connected service with citizen leadership. He said, "I will continue to be involved with service projects in the RLC next year, most of which are good examples of citizen leadership." Daniel talked about multiple areas in which he can apply his learning. He said:

Now that I have learned more about leadership, I plan on becoming even more involved in leadership positions to improve my own skills as a leader. In the future, I want to become even more involved in service projects that help benefit the community. I also want to join more organizations to create a positive impact on and beyond campus.

Daniel also commented on his future peer leader role. He said, "By becoming a PL, I will get to continue practicing leadership with the RLC by participating in next year's leadership classes and helping the incoming freshmen transition to college life." Alex also emphasized his desire to apply what he had learned to the peer leader role. He said:

I intend to use most if not all of the skills that I have learned this year as a PL in the RLC next year. This will be a great opportunity not only to practice being a leader and helping new students, but reinforcing my knowledge of the material when I help teach it to the students.

In summary, students experienced changes in their leadership beliefs as they progressed through their first year semester of membership in the community. Students' beliefs changed from simple, person centered views of leadership to more relational, process-oriented views of leadership. Changing beliefs provide insight into students' leadership identity development.

Their beliefs were influenced by their experiences in the community, including coursework and service experiences. The students expressed a desire to apply what they had learned through participation in service and in future leadership roles, both inside and outside of the RLC. The peer leader role provided a meaningful trajectory for leadership application.

Sub-Theme: Leadership Representations in Second Year

Changing beliefs. During their second year of membership, the student participants were required to enroll in two semesters of LDRS 2964, a leadership practicum course designed specifically for peer leaders. According to the fall course syllabus, they were asked to write a "Leadership Philosophy revision" paper (RLC, Fall 2011c, p. 2). In this paper, they revised their leadership final leadership paper written in the freshman course (LDRS 1015). Guided questions prompted students to reflect on how their philosophy had changed, what influenced their philosophy, and how their philosophy influenced their actions as a peer leader (RLC, Fall 2011c). These written works were collected and analyzed by the researcher. The data revealed that student participants' leadership beliefs became more sophisticated and complex, and focused in greater detail on leader-follower relationships, goals, and transformation/change that occurs in self, others, or community.

These changing beliefs were also supported by the student participant interviews. As the peer leaders reflected on their prior definitions in light of their current experiences, they made new meanings of leadership. Alex highlighted how his philosophy continued to change:

My philosophy has evolved from the singular idea that a leader gets things done into an idea that encompasses many more attributes. To me, leadership still knows how to influence others in order to accomplish a goal, but a great leader is also a mentor and coach. The leader must be willing to get to know their followers on a personal level and

be there for support whenever they are needed. The goal of a leader should be to invoke a change within a person, whether it involves their beliefs, actions, or tendencies.

Here Alex described leadership as complex and multi-faceted. Also, the relationship with followers was not only for the purpose of goal achievement, but also for the purpose of the follower's own growth and development. The leader should care about both task and person.

Emily also expressed her changed belief about the important impact the leader has on the follower:

After my first semester in the RLC as a freshman, I saw leadership as a one-way street. I believed that it was the leader's goal to spark motivation in the followers in order to achieve a common goal. I didn't see the leader benefiting from anything more than attaining the goal. Now, I believe that the leader grows continuously, hence my belief in continuous self-evaluation of the leader. A leader can make an impact on their follower's morals, character and values by investing enough time in getting to know them. The leader can also benefit from this because he/she becomes aware of different cultures and ways of life while rekindling motivation to continue the leadership journey so that he/she may continue to impact others.

As Emily also points out, it is not only the follower who is changed, but also the leader. Hannah talked about her own change, not only in belief but also in practice. She said:

When I came into college I, had always kind of done leadership like, 'I'm the leader—like bow down.' Not really but that's kind of more my mentality. I liked to control things. Whereas now I've gotten to the point where I realize, that's not leadership. And so I've gotten to the point where I am more like a step back and provide encouragement, and provide instruction and let other people grow.

As her orientation of leadership changed from self to others, her approach to leadership changed as well.

In his individual interview, Jacob walked through how he has made meaning of leadership through his time in the RLC:

One of the biggest overarching themes was that you walk in thinking leadership is simple. Leadership is a leader that takes a position and leads the followers. And, so one of the biggest things that I use or have learned is that really it's like a two way street. And I think ... when we were actually in class, we were drawing on the board and talking about how it's really a two way street between the leaders and the followers. And I think that's really important because—especially in high school, before you realize it—you're not looking for much feedback. You're like, 'Well I'm the leader, I'm going to set the plan and here we are going to go.' And I think realizing that you need feedback is important. I see myself now a lot more—if I sit down in a situation and I'm saying things, I'll just turn it over and be like, 'Is everyone ok? Let's get some ideas, what's everyone's feedback.'

Jacob's changed belief that leadership was a "two-way street" caused him to consider the use of feedback from his followers. This belief prompted him in practice to actually turn the focus to the followers in order to get feedback.

Beliefs become "real" through practice. How did the student participants—now in their second year and serving as peer leaders—come to these changed beliefs? According to their reflection papers, they were influenced by learning about leadership through their classroom experiences and experiencing leadership through their peer leader role. Students also discussed how involvement in campus organizations and work experiences provided an opportunity for

practice, reflection, and observation, which led to an increased awareness of self and others in peer leader roles.

Alex wrote, "The most impactful event on my leadership philosophy has been my role as a peer leader." In particular, he found that his interaction with the freshman helped him to realize the need to play different roles as a leader. Morgan's experience as a peer leader helped her move her beliefs from just theories she thought were important to theories that worked in practice. She wrote:

Last year was my first introduction to leadership; therefore, my philosophy emphasized the different theories and aspects I thought to be most important. Now, in addition to learning even more about leadership, I have had the opportunity to gain more experience as a leader through my role as a PL. While last year I spent most of my time with my nose in books reading about theories, this year, I have been able to firsthand apply those same theories and see their full potential.

Alex also found that involvement outside of the RLC had been influential to his changing beliefs:

Getting involved with different groups on campus had absolutely influenced my leadership philosophy. It has been eye-opening to be immersed in different settings and being challenged to become a leader in these varying situations.

Participants confirmed in the focus group that the study of leadership becomes more "real" or "personal" after participating in changing roles in the community. Emily said it this way:

Last year it was more, I focused more on the theories and just learning the material and don't think I really saw it in practice because I didn't have any leadership roles on campus

last year. And this year I've been able to practice leadership in different organizations, and I've been able to see. I guess as a freshman I would look at the organizations I was involved in and try to match it with the leadership philosophy I saw in class or like what I thought like how they should be leading. But, this year I've been able to put those theories into practice ... So I think just that made it real, like you could actually use this. And you could actually use what we learned freshman year in real life, it's not just something coming out of a book.

In summary, student participants in their second year of membership experienced changing leadership beliefs. Descriptions of their leadership beliefs in the second year were more complex and emphasized leader-follower relationships not only for goal achievement, but for follower transformation. They believed that their beliefs changed in response to learning more about leadership in class, through their experiences as a peer leader, and also through campus involvement. Practicing leadership allowed them to see how theory was applied in real life. The influence of classroom learning is important to consider further, because theories and concepts taught in the classroom provide an available discourse (or language of leadership) from which students can make meaning of leadership. The influence of theories is explored in the next sub-theme.

Sub-Theme: Influence of Theories

A review of course syllabi revealed that leadership theories were a signature component of the student participants' first semester course. The faculty confirmed that the fall semester course focused on foundational theories of leadership. Instructor James said, "The first semester is really laying a foundation for multiple things, whether it's various theories and approaches to leadership. So if nothing else you could call it, information about leadership." Table 8 provides

a list of the primary topics/theories covered in LDRS 1015, as identified by lesson topics outlined on the RLC faculty resources site and the course outline contained in the syllabus (RLC, n.d.b, Fall 2010a).

Table 8: *Lessons by Topic for LDRS 1015*

Fall 2010 Course Topics
Historical Leaders
Contingency Theory
Trait Approach
Path-Goal Theory
Skills Approach
Transformational/Transforming Leadership
Charismatic Leadership
Citizen Leadership
Servant Leadership
Ethical-Moral Leadership
Followership
Power & Influence Tactics
Women & Leadership
Leadership Across Cultures

Instructor Robin noted how introduction to theory gives students a common language to talk about leadership. She said:

For the freshman there's a common curriculum for the first semester. So they are all getting a very solid overview of citizen leadership, perspectives of leadership, theories, major constructs, and a good basis of what leadership is and isn't. So that there's some good common conversations.

Because the leadership paper assignment rubric specifically asked students to describe theories that were influential to their beliefs, it seems natural that they would appear in those writings. However, student participants also used "theory language" (that is, they used formal terms associated with various theories) in their interviews, and were able to identify and discuss the influence of theories in their individual interviews and focus group. Faculty also used "theory language" when talking about the courses and students' learning. Theory was an influential part of the discourse of the community and influenced beliefs and practices in multiple ways.

"Favorite" theories. Student participants most frequently mentioned the following theories in both their written essays and in their individual interviews: (a) path-goal leadership, (b) servant leadership, (c) transformational leadership, and (d) leadership skills or traits in their writings about leadership (see Appendix M for brief description of these theories). When asked to share a "favorite" theory, or a theory they aligned with the most, their responses included not only the name of the theory, but also what the theory meant to them. For example, Morgan compared two theories, explaining why she favored one over the other:

I just think my favorite has always been the skills approach. Because when we first learned about trait theory, I was kind of like, oh I don't really like the idea that people are born leaders, and that it's not for everyone. Even though I agree that there are some people who are just made to be a leader, I like the idea that people who usually are kind

of quiet and sit back can gain the confidence and skills to lead something one day. So that's always been an inspiring one for me. I don't like when people are like, 'Oh, he's a leader because he's tall or he's born,'—the stereotypical leadership descriptions always bother me a little bit.

Hannah connected her favorite theory to the larger community of practice:

I mean I definitely love service leadership. I know the RLC does too. I think that leadership is more about serving people than just having power. And I think that theory just makes a lot of sense in practical, everyday use.

Hannah aligned with theory that she saw was practical and useful. Jacob also identified with a theory that fit with his personal style:

I guess the view that I align with a lot is just the achievement-oriented part of path-goal. That's how I operate a lot. So, I don't need a lot of hands on with other people, or a lot of motivation from other people to push me towards the goal. ... I think what works well for you, you try to use with others.

Emily did not use the words “path-goal” when sharing her favorite view, but she did describe the meaning of the theory and how she utilized various styles. Alex also aligned with styles of path-goal. He said:

I really like that theory [path-goal] just because in some of the other theories we've gone over, you don't always get the leader and the follower aspects. And I feel like it really is that interaction. And with path-goal it's all about what type of leadership fits with what type of follower characteristics and being able to recognize that. And I feel like it's just a much more effective way to get things done.

Daniel's favorite theory was transformational leadership. He wrote about the motivational aspect of transformational leadership:

I believe that motivational leadership is crucial to effective leadership because it pushes everyone to achieve the goal, while transformational leadership goes even farther to even exceed the goal and to push both the leader and followers to higher levels of motivation and morality.

In his individual interview, Instructor James noted that first-year students tended to connect with a few core theories. When asked to elaborate, he first described traits and skills:

A lot of students find it very easy to explore various traits and [the] skills approach, because it's a little more inherent ... they understand the learning process associated with certain skills, as well as the talents they already have that are inherent to them.

He also found that students latch on to concepts around transformational leadership. He said:

And what I get really proud of is when they talk the talk and use the language without saying the word transformational. But you know that's what they are talking about.

When they talk about inspiration and motivation. They talk about intellectual stimulation. They talk about the I's without saying, 'The four I's are ...'

Finally, Instructor James mentioned the students' connection with servant leadership. Specifically, he described how students reference servant leadership as they reflect on their experience of getting involvement on campus. He said, "The components of servant leadership, they talk about as they are branching out. That's what they are talking about, especially when it's related to service. Whether it's projects, or philanthropy, or whatever."

Theory influences beliefs and practices. Theory gave students a framework and a language from which to make meaning of their experiences. The theoretical discourse in turn

influenced students' developing beliefs and practices. In their individual interviews, students were asked to describe how their "favorite" theory has influenced their beliefs and practices as a peer leader. Hannah incorporated the theory of service (or servant) leadership in this way:

I've definitely started to see leadership more as a service and not selfish. Before I came to the RLC, I kind of just saw leadership as having a position of power. And just kind of like leading or delegating things and telling people what to do. But now I see it more as helping people reach their goal—your common goal. And, helping other people grow in the process.

She said she had become "more selfless"—putting her students' needs above her own because, "I knew it was in their best interest."

Morgan's emphasis on leadership skills helped her realize that leaders are not just the popular kids. And it helped her to see that "anyone can be a leader, you just need to like have the courage and strength and confidence to put yourself out there." Morgan said that because of this knowledge, she has "grown more confidence and I've been aware of the skills I have. ... So it's made me feel like, oh I don't need people to be convinced that I'm a leader, I can just put myself out there and they can decide themselves based on my actions."

Transformational theory helped Daniel to see that leadership was a change process—not just for followers, but for himself. This process challenged him to see things from other people's perspective, "... and then I use that vantage point to figure out ways that I can challenge them to become better and then evaluate how I'm doing to see how I can improve."

Path-goal theory (a motivational, adaptive leadership styles approach) helped Emily, Jacob, and Alex to realize that leadership is situational. Emily said, "You have to take the setting and the people involved and the resources you have into account when you are leading. So, I've

learned that it's very situational, and you always have to be willing to change." Jacob realized that it's important to figure out a style that works best for you, but realize that it may not work in every situation. As a result, he's learned how to adapt his style to fit the situation. Jacob illustrated his approach through this example:

I guess whenever I'm in a situation where I'm a PL for a group, or anything like that, I kind of take that [achievement oriented] approach. And sometimes I guess that can be difficult because if it's a project group where they don't really know what's going on, you might need to take more of a directive approach. But I like to kind of step back and say, 'Ok, what are you guys' goals for it. And you know, look at what your outcome can be and see if you can really work there. And I'm here, but I'm not going to be like super drilling into you the whole time.' So, I find myself taking that road. And a whole lot of times it works really well because you kind of give them freedom and you don't feel like you are all over them. But at the same time I feel like sometimes groups are like, 'Ok can we get more help?'

Jacob, Emily, and Alex commented on how they have learned to recognize the needs of students. The realization that he could approach leadership differently in various situations was actually very freeing for Alex. He shared an example of his thought process as he was figuring out how to help a student in conflict:

When I first started this [being a PL], I was not sure what direction I was going to go in and I was always trying to be the semi-overbearing leader. ... Trying a little too hard, and I wasn't always reaching every student. And, when I started thinking about it, I already knew I loved path-goal and I feel like it just allowed me to relax and kind of let things come as they would. Like eventually I'd get to know the student and figure out what their

personality was and how I could best influence that. ... But when I recognized what he needed, I was able to provide that. And I feel like being under the path goal was just, I was laid back, I allowed him to come to me, it was just—it was nice, because I saw that in action. It was like, 'Wow.'

The focus group dialogue confirmed that the prominent theories identified (servant, transformational, path-goal, and skills/traits) were indeed influential. When asked why they believed these were most commonly referenced, Emily commented, "I would say that these are the ones that most come up and most people tend to remember because their practical to like the situations that you're put in as a college student." Daniel and Emily went on to make the connections back to their peer leader role. Emily noted how she sees the path-goal approach applying to any type of group project they (and first-year students) have done, because it provides a model for goal accomplishment. Daniel said this:

I think transformational is extremely relevant in the PL role because you are trying to push the freshman to transcend anything they think they want to accomplish. So you are really pushing them to do more than they thought they could.

In summary, as students made meaning of their experiences through the lens of theory, it helped them to develop confidence, focus on relationships, identify uniqueness in others, and recognize the needs of a situation in order to adapt their leadership style to be most effective at accomplishing the group's goal.

This theme described students' meanings of leadership in the form of leadership beliefs. Beliefs about leadership changed from simple and person centered to more complex, relational, and goal-oriented over time as the students moved from new members into peer leader roles. Changing beliefs were explained through reference to their own experiences of community

membership, including classroom learning, service projects, and leadership roles. The leadership theory presented in the first semester course provided an available discourse, or language of leadership, through which students could express their beliefs and make meaning of their experience.

Students met the course purpose and objectives as they related to understanding and describing beliefs about leadership. But, as Jacob explained, the goal of the leadership community was not so much what students know, but what they can do. He said:

At the end of the day, I think what judges a successful student that's come out of the RLC is not that they can tell you what Kouzes and Posner's 'Big 5' are, but the fact that when they are in a position ... they kind of know more of what they are supposed to do. Or, what they think they know they are supposed to do is better for the group than it was before.

This theme provided evidence that peer leaders' leadership beliefs influenced their leadership practice. The next theme delves deeper into leadership practices, specifically addressing how students make meaning of their position and related roles through their experiences as a peer leader in the community.

Theme 5: Peer Leader Roles and Practices

Meanings of leadership were also expressed through role representation. The position of leadership in the community, and the accompanying title of peer leader, gave students the opportunity to experience leadership in practice. As mentioned in the previous theme, students found that their experience of being a peer leader was influential to their leadership beliefs. The meanings made through leadership roles helped students to apply theories of leadership to their practices of leadership within the community.

It seems important to note that all of the roles associated with peer leadership are practiced under a primary role of *student of leadership*. This means that each of the roles described is situated in the context of the learning community and the larger college campus community. The student participants enrolled in courses that helped to define their role(s) and provide learning opportunities in response to those roles. As stated in the "Peer Leader Application":

The Residential Leadership Community offers the Second-Year Option Program as a component that will allow students to continue their involvement in leadership studies. The program's purpose is to build upon the foundation from the first-year experience through the Peer Leader (PL) position, where second-year students work with experienced leadership faculty and lead discussion groups for first-year students. (RLC, Fall 2010c, p. 1)

In the focus group session, Emily confirmed this through her own personal reflection:

Well this semester as I'm like writing my final paper for leadership I've noticed that, the RLC is structured so that peer leaders can grow too. It's not just freshman. Like we're growing our leadership, we're learning more. Not only by seeing the leadership theories taught again to freshman, where we were last year, but just from practicing the leadership skills that we learned. So I've definitely seen the way the RLC is designed—that it is helping us grow and it's not just to benefit the freshman.

How did Emily come to this understanding? What were those practices helped her to grow? A review of documents highlighted the program's expectations of the peer leader role. The student and faculty participant interviews also revealed multiple and changing roles that

represent *who peer leaders are* and *what they do* in the community. Instructor Charles shared his perspective on the valuable role of the peer leader in the community:

I think they have a very unique role. And I think it's all in a name. Peer leaders. I've heard so many debates about what peer leaders should be called. ... We believe they're involved with the learning. And so ... changing the name of student teaching assistants to peer leaders, there's just a lot of power in words. That we believe in them. That we think they have a very important role to play.

What were those roles and how did students come to understand them? To better understand the design of the peer leader experience, the researcher analyzed training and curriculum documents. Newly selected peer leaders participated in a series of three training sessions during the spring of their first year, in preparation for serving as a peer leader in their second year. According to documents from their first training session, dated February 2011, one of the training purposes was to "understand the role of a PL and what is expected of you" (RLC, Spring 2011a, p. 1). The corresponding training PowerPoint outlined four roles: (a) group leader, (b) classroom assistant, (c) community builder, and (d) liaison (RLC, Spring 2011b). Analysis of the peer leader course syllabi from both the fall and spring semesters also outlined the expectations of peer leaders. The researcher summarized and categorized the list of expectations as representing practices related to: (a) modeling expectations, (b) serving as a classroom support, (c) leading peer events, and (d) supporting student service projects and/or small group projects (RLC, Fall 2011c, Spring 2012, p. 1). While these categories provided a formal description of what was expected of peer leaders, the researcher was interested in how students themselves identified the roles related to their leadership position (peer leader) and the meanings associated with those roles.

Student participants talked about their roles and practices throughout their individual interviews and focus group, as well as in their peer event reflection papers. Faculty also shared their perspectives on peer leader roles. Both faculty and student participants described peer leaders as having *in-class* and *out-of-class* roles. These categories were used as primary organizers, or sub-themes. However, in some cases there was overlap between these two themes, resulting in a third sub-theme of *connection between in- and out-of-class*. Table 9 outlines the peer leader roles and related categories.

Table 9: *Theme 5*

Theme	Sub-themes	Categories
Peer leader roles and practices	In-class roles	Teaching assistant Student-teacher liaison Peer teacher/facilitator
	Out-of-class roles	Helper Role model/mentor
	Connection between in- and out-of-class	Lead peer events Coach group projects
	Role negotiation	Not an RA Friend vs. PL Changing student needs

Sub-Theme: In Class Roles

Teaching assistant. Spring training documents described the role of a peer leader this way: "To assist in LDRS 1015 and LDRS 1016 in a way that the instructor deems appropriate within guidelines" and, "To follow and understand the class material and be able to answer questions and participate in discussion if necessary" (RLC, Spring 2011d, p. 1). Instructor Robin commented on this aspect of the peer leader role, "In some respects, they are kind of like a teaching assistant, because they do help the instructors with classroom management." Instructor Robin helped create the peer leader class syllabus, which outlines peer leader expectations in this

area as, "including, but not limited to: taking attendance, passing out handouts, returning papers, informing the instructor of any issues/problems among students, and celebrating student success" (RLC, Fall 2011b, p. 1). Instructor Charles provided a more detailed description of the various ways peer leaders assist him in the classroom:

I think there are two levels. There's the basic task: 'I need you to help me do this, this, and this.' Take attendance; help facilitate these quizzes and exams. And help grade these quizzes and exams. And help do those very administrative details. And I think that's just the easy part. And then the middle level would be, 'Ok, everyone's in groups. Why don't you go around and monitor these groups. Make sure conversations flowing. If it's not, jump in and help them with conversation.' And then there's the very high range where it's, 'What do you think you could do to contribute to the class?'

Instructor James also talked about various ways that peer leaders support the in-class learning environment:

There's a classroom component to it. There's supporting the learning environment in the classroom. Some of it might be administrative, some of it might be as a peer role model type, and some of it might even be instructional from time to time, depending on the topic.

Morgan was assigned as the peer leader in Instructor James' class. Her description of her tasks in the classroom reflected his description:

I go to the classes for the freshman and I do a variety of things, basically based on the teacher's needs. Like, I'll take notes in a notebook for him to use later when we like come up with the quizzes. Or, I'll write notes on the board. Sometimes I get to actually teach parts of the sections.

Emily described her role in the classroom as more than just administrative help to the teacher; she was a contributor to the class itself:

And then our class ... obviously I go to that and help [Instructor] out with whatever she needs that day. Or, if we're teaching, I help set that up or participate in class discussion. I think that's a big part of the peer leader is to participate in class discussion, at least ... talk one time during the class about a question [Instructor] asks the whole class. That just helps the freshman see that we're still engaged in what they are learning. And I think that is one of the reasons why [Co-Peer Leader] and I get a lot of questions about the material in class, because they know that we're still paying attention to what they are learning.

Emily believed that her participation in class set an example to the first-year students. Alex also emphasized his role in helping students learn through his own participation. He said his role in the classroom was:

... to convey the message of the lessons if you can tell the students aren't quite grasping the concept, maybe trying to put it on a level they can understand. And of course, helping the professor with anything they might need logically. But I feel like more important is the making sure the message is conveyed. And I think it's realizing what it is and how they can maybe put it into practice.

Student-teacher liaison. Jacob said, "The neatest thing about a PL is that there's some middle ground between a teacher and a student." He said first-year students feel comfortable coming to peer leaders with questions because they recently have been "in their shoes." Jacob described peer leaders as "almost a liaison to the teachers." He shared an example to illustrate:

I like to use myself as an example when I'm talking to students. A lot of students come in and they take that first class and they are like, 'I don't know what I'm getting out of this.'

I'm just learning the theories.' ... when you look at a teacher, you are looking at them as somebody that's totally devoted to this subject because they are teaching it. You can look at a peer leader and they are still a student that just has an interest in that subject. So when the students can look at the peer leader and say, 'Ok, these are normal people that like have lives and do things, but they're still interested in this leadership thing. I think that makes the freshman more inclined to be like, 'Ok, maybe there's something to this.' Or, 'Maybe I should kind of pay attention more.' Or, 'Maybe I'll stick this thing out.' And having us there as a peer leader to say, 'Ok guys, like seriously, you might not like this, but pay attention cause you'll benefit from it.'

Daniel also understood his role to be a connection between the students and teacher:

Because a lot of time, especially at the beginning of the year, students were a little more intimidated by their professors than they were a student who was just a year older than them. So a lot of times they would come to me if they were having a problem. And if it was a problem I couldn't fix I could go to [Instructor] and talk to him about it and see what I could do to resolve it.

Both Jacob and Daniel provided insight the influence peer leaders have on students' perspective toward both the faculty and the course content. Faculty can be seen as intimidating experts, at least early in the semester, and peer leaders offered a trustworthy, relatable source for making meaning of experience and/or getting help with problems.

Peer teacher/facilitator. While the student participants did contribute to classroom discussion and planning in their first semester as peer leaders, it was in their second semester that they not only acted like a teacher, but also began to think more like one. Emily noticed how her role evolved from just "grading papers, handing out worksheets, a little bit of participation when

they are doing group work" to being more involved in class. She said, "When we divide up in groups I'm participating more—facilitating small groups more than last semester." Hannah said that her instructor expected her to "speak up, put in my own two cents" during discussion. When the class is divided into groups, Hannah said, "I have to go and make sure I'm facilitating their discussions, rather than just letting them run free." Morgan described what small group facilitation looked like in her class:

I'm actually like going and sitting down with them and kind of walking through the process with them, instead of kind of letting them do it on their own and then checking on their results. And, so I sit with the group, I kind of act like a group member and help them out. ... I didn't do that last semester.

Alex also shared an example that illustrated the classroom environment:

We are putting a much stronger emphasis on class discussion. We actually finally got a breakthrough this week where we got really good debate going in class and the kids enjoyed it so much. Like they came to it after class, like that was awesome. And we've been trying to get them to do that all semester, and we finally got them to do it.

Notice how Alex used the term "we" in this quote. He took ownership of his role in the students' learning and considered himself part of the teaching team.

Jacob was able to reference his own experience in the class (the year before) as a gauge for participation. In this example, he shared how his prior experience helped him be better facilitator:

I think it's so helpful if you can get a PL that's into a class that's already taken that class before. Because knowing how the class went, and knowing what things we could talk about. ... For the first time last Thursday, our class finally did what our class did last

semester—or last year every time—and that's just like really debate a topic the entire class. Normally, [Instructor] will be like, ‘Do you have any questions, or any thoughts about the article?’ And they will just kind of sit there. And this one was about like, teenage oppression so everybody had their own thoughts on it. And literally for the entire hour and 15 minutes, everybody was just going back and forth and sharing their thoughts. And it's like, that's ideally what we are looking for the students to do. So being in the class and knowing what last year had prompted discussion and stuff, I would just kind of raise my hand and be like, ‘Well, what do you guys think about this?’ So, it's like we can also help—we're like two extra people to help facilitate discussion as well.

As the peer leaders took a more active role as facilitators in class, they were challenged to really listen to what students were saying, and challenged them to think differently or more deeply. When a peer leader had experience in the course itself, they were like an "expert", and used that expertise to help guide conversation. They began to recognize what would help the instructor to keep class discussion flowing, and they took initiative to ask key questions or offer direct input.

Instructor Sandy noticed how her peer leaders grew from their experience, and began to see through the lens of an instructor. She said:

Well they really mature a lot. ... having been through a class and then seeing it from a different angle. And I think they enjoy seeing the students kind of wrestle through some of the topics that they've already been through. They get really excited.

Instructor Sandy recalled how her peer leaders commented that students continue to talk about the class as they walk back to their residence hall. She said, "I think they kind of feel like they're part of that and they like that."

In summary, peer leadership "in-class" was indentified through the roles and practices of a teaching assistant, student-teacher liaison, and peer facilitator. As the peer leaders gained experience in the peer leader role, they were able contribute more in both planning and facilitating course discussion. Because peer leaders had prior experience as students in the courses, they were able to be a resource to both the students and the instructors. Morgan said this:

When it [peer leadership] is working well I think we are doing everything we can to help the freshman. We are going above and beyond and showing them we are there for them both in and outside of the classroom.

Sub-Theme: Out-of-Class Roles

Peer leaders were required to live the residence hall with first-year students. All peer leaders share a suite with first-year students. This design element created an intentional space for interaction with students outside of class. The faculty identified the purpose of the peer leader as contributing to an out-of-class experience as well. Instructor Charles said, "Their role could be anything. It could be as diverse as helping someone with their homework to having a conversation with them when they are going through a life-changing event." Instructor James spoke about the value of being able to interact with peer leaders in the hallway, in the suites, or even "checking their mail." He described his impression of students' out-of-class interaction with peer leaders:

I'm hoping most of it does not have to do with the class and it's just, 'How's it going?' ...

'I'm signing up for classes, you might know about this.' And it gives them that upper-class student, upper-level student, veteran student ... a student who has been there, done

that. It gives them an example and someone to go to ask that isn't going to give them the instructional lens. They are going to give them the peer lens.

Through their written reflections and interviews, the student participants identified out of class peer leadership through the roles of a helper and a role model that is also a mentor to first-year students.

Helper. Peer leaders spent a lot of their time, especially in the first semester, answering questions. The helper role included being a resource for students and helping them with their immediate needs. Morgan said this about her role:

I think it's just primarily to help out the freshman in any way they need even if it's like's beyond leadership material. Kind of like being, even though we're only a year older, someone they can come to for advice or experience help.

Emily described how she managed questions about class assignments. She said, "Usually I'll have at least four emails a day from them about that. And then I'll try to help them at night."

Hannah also said, "I have numerous people throughout the day come and ask me question or email me or call me. And not even just people in my own class but people in my suite, in my hall." She described her approach to helping:

I consider myself like a good resource for them. A lot of the students will come to me and ask questions and I'll help them come up with the right answer. Well, not the 'right' answer, but a solution.

Hannah also talked about helping students to "come out of their shells." She saw students get excited and make friends through peer events. She said, "And I think that's a really cool part, I'm helping make that happen." Through their interactions, they were helping students grow. Jacob described helping in this way, "Well, obviously I help in the class and help get those

leadership philosophies across, but I feel like at the same time, I'm here to help them grow as leaders. Help them to see how they are leaders." Daniel also said, "The part [of being a peer leader] I enjoy the most is just seeing these freshman grow as leaders, and really beginning to recognize how I am being able to have a positive impact on them."

Role model/mentor. According the peer leader training documents, modeling expectations was an important aspect of the peer leaders' role (RLC, Spring 2011b). Modeling expectations was expressed as "communication, professionalism, code of conduct, being a role model, a member of the RLC staff, and upholding the RLC core principles" (RLC, Spring 2011b, slide 9). Instructor Sandy confirmed this expectation in her interview. She said, "I think ... they just serve as role models and mentors to the freshman. ... They provide some assistance in the class but it's really more about somebody that students can look up to."

Throughout the reflection papers and interviews, the role of mentor and model seemed to go hand in hand. In Daniel's first interview, he explained how he thinks freshman view peer leaders as role models, and the value being a model has on them. He said:

I think really they're just finding a role model. They're finding someone that has been able to overcome a lot of the problems they have encountered in college. A lot of times, they'll see them as people who have the ability to make good decisions. I feel like a lot of them see us, and they see what we are able to do, and it makes them realize that they could do the same thing. So I think being around us gives them sort of the opportunity to think, 'Hey, I want to do a leadership role and do something similar to them.'

Instructor Charles confirmed that peer leaders are models of what students could become. He said about some of the peer leaders he has worked with:

I see another that might be SGA president some day, just moving through leadership positions. I think the students see that too. They see that person working for the [College Newspaper] and he's also a peer leader. [They think], 'Maybe, you know, that's a path for me too. Maybe that will help me inspire things that I want to do.' So I think they [peer leaders] are such a good example for everyone else of what they can do. ... They just open everyone's eyes to everything.

Daniel made it a goal to lead by example. He reflected on being a role model in his final paper at the end of his first semester as a peer leader. He wrote:

I believe I have been able to lead by example. Throughout the semester, I have maintained my integrity by abstaining from poor decisions like drinking, skipping class and the like. This established a high standard for myself, and I believe others have noticed it. Doing this created a positive image of myself, which, in turn, created a positive role model for the freshmen to follow.

Daniel connected leadership to making moral decisions, and believed that his own actions helped students to make good choices.

The peer leaders were more than just a model for students to observe; they formed connections with students outside of class. Through these connections they became like mentors. Morgan described "forming relationships with students" as the most important thing she did outside of the classroom. Hannah found that by "being there for the students and helping them get to know each other" outside of class, she was helping them become friends. Alex said, "I feel like so much more of the position is taking place outside of the class cause that's where you spend so much more time with them." He said a lot of his interactions and sharing advice happens when, "we're just hanging out in someone's common room and just talking." Alex also

believed students came to him for help because he had "been through it." He said, "I know what they are going through and I feel like that's what gives me my best advantage as far as PL goes. ... I know the stress involved with all the reading and studying and projects."

Daniel said a lot of his role had been "advice-giving and mentoring them through all the difficulties of the first semester." He explained how students come to him with problems they encounter in college. Daniel said:

If one of them is upset because they are having roommate trouble, if one of them is stressed out because they've got a test and they just want someone to talk to, I can go talk to them and help them through some of those issues, because I've encountered them myself.

Morgan and Hannah also talked about helping students adjust to college life. Morgan said, "I feel like they look up at us, even though we are only a year older ... it makes a difference cause freshman year is a really big adjustment." Hannah said that she saw herself "helping them make that transition. ... Those first few months of college are a really big change." She explained:

And so, I feel like when we are doing our job well, they aren't freaking out all the time. I mean, a little of a freak out is normal. But they aren't so stressed because they have someone older to reassure them that even if they are worried about something, it's not the end of the world. So, seeing people grow, and be able to take care of themselves and become more independent. That's definitely showing that we've been doing our job.

In summary, living in the residence hall with the students provided an opportunity for peer leaders to interact with students outside of class. Peer leaders served as helpers, role models, and mentors to the freshman students. They not only answered questions and acted as a

resource to students, but through relationship-building and interactions, they believed they were helping students grow. Morgan summed up her role this way in her final reflection paper:

Reflecting back on the semester I believe my greatest accomplishment was serving as a role model to the freshmen and through that relationship, having some freshmen come up to me and tell me that I am one of the main reasons they want to apply to become a peer leader, that peer leaders in general have made them realize how great of a fun and educational opportunity it is.

As was discussed in the theme of access, peer leader models had an influence on students' decisions to continue in a leadership role in the community. Morgan became that same model to others.

Sub-Theme: Connection Between In- and Out-of-Class

According to the [University] Housing and Residence Life website, one of the purposes a living-learning community is to "strengthen a sense of community among students and bridge students' academic and social lives" (DSA, n.d.a). RLC training documents said that peer leaders "lead small group discussions, study groups, and out of class programs such as peer group events and service learning programs" (RLC, Fall 2010c, p. 1, Spring 2011d, p. 1). All of these activities may be considered "out-of-class" practices on paper; however, based on students' descriptions in their interviews, as well as through their reflection papers, these activities served as a connection, or bridge, between the academic course and the community. In particular, leading peer events and coaching teams for service and group projects emerged as two connecting roles.

Leading peer events. Hannah said simply, "I love doing the peer events." The student participants frequently mentioned peer events when they talked about the most positive aspect of

their position. Peer events were considered a significant part of the peer leader role. Peer events were required in the first semester for peer leaders to host and for students to attend. Peer events had multiple purposes, including helping students get to know each other, helping them get connected to the larger campus, and helping them make learning connections with the classroom.

The researcher did not observe peer events; however the peer leaders submitted copies of their written reflections on peer events they had organized and facilitated. Peer leaders described three main types of peer events: (a) events related to classes, such as studying or tutorials, (b) social events, such as eating together, hanging out, or playing games, and (c) events related to campus activities, such as guest speakers or organizational fairs. Daniel held a social so that students could prepare for a "name quiz" in their leadership class. Afterwards, he said, "We just sat around and talked and got to know each other." Morgan reflected on how a game night turned into a time to bond and talk about class:

People laughed, got frustrated when they were wrong in the game, laughed some more, and even became sympathetic when learning something sad about an individual. The game lasted about forty minutes, and we ended up talking casually for another twenty minutes where we discussed the leadership class and where the freshman had a chance to ask questions.

Emily turned a trip to a local pumpkin patch into a learning activity, using the corn maze as an exercise in communication skills. She said, "Some of the students' action plans were to improve communication skills so this turned out to be a beneficial activity for all involved."

Peer leaders described the value of their peer event experiences as being able to help students build friendship and get to know each other, to be able to answer questions and talk

about college life, to help students prepare for class, and extend classroom learning. Hannah talked about the impact she saw on an individual student:

I think in terms of community building, this was my most successful peer event. One of the students who attended is really quiet and didn't really participate much in class.

However, having the small group to interact with was great. He put himself out there and was making everyone laugh. After that night I've seen him participate more in class and talk to his classmates more. I think he was able to feel more comfortable with everyone.

Morgan noticed at one of her events that the students were "no longer just classmates. I could tell everyone had already formed friendships and were busy talking about their new life here at [University]." Morgan reflected on how her peer group event fostered a sense of community. She said, "After the event was over, I could tell that this group had bonded and witnessed a glimpse of what a community truly feels like: knowing each other, accepting each other, having fun, and being supportive." Morgan explained the benefit of study sessions when she wrote, "Overall, I think it helped the freshman realize what the important topics were to focus in on, and it helped them understand the material in its basic forms."

In their individual interviews, the peer leaders also talked about peer events. When describing the types of peer events she planned, Emily said, "I try to make it a mixture of fun and learning about other things on campus." Alex also used peer events to help his students get connected to campus. He talked about taking his students to a campus-organization fair:

One of the hardest things to do in college is find an organization to be a part of and become passionate about. This process took me a rather long time and I wanted to help my class gain exposure to what opportunities [University] has to offer. Many of the

students seemed as though they had found at least one organization on campus that they were truly interested in joining and becoming active in.

The peer events may have been a required activity for the class, but Emily saw the value of peer events for mentoring:

I think peer events are supposed to be more about them getting to know us as mentors. ...

More just about me getting to know their interests, so I can help freshman better, like, I can talk them through problems that they may have later if I know what their interests are now.

Hannah connected the peer events to classroom learning in this way:

I think that [peer events] help them get to know each other better and become more comfortable with each others. So when they are in the classroom, they are able to communicate better because they are comfortable around everybody. And so they don't feel intimidated about speaking up in class or letting their opinions be heard.

Peer events occurred outside of the classroom; however, they impacted the in-class environment as well. Through a mix of study sessions, social times, and learning activities the peer leaders helped to enhance in-class learning and build community.

Coaching group projects. Service projects and group projects were used in the first year courses to help students develop teamwork skills and connect in-class learning to real-life, or authentic, experiences. A review of documents showed that there was some inconsistency in the language used to describe the peer leader's role in these activities. The syllabus for the peer leader class described how peer leaders were to "coordinate community service experience for two groups" in the fall freshman course (RLC, Fall 2011c, p. 1), and "actively work with

students on their small group projects" in the spring course (RLC, Spring 2012, p. 1). A training document titled "2011 Service Project Experience Description" said this:

Each team will be coached by a peer leader. Each PL will be responsible for two groups from their class. They will *assist with* general project management related to: (a) communication/coordination with community partner; (b) coordination of transportation; (c) pre-service meetings; (d) on-site administration and reflection. (RLC, Fall 2011a, p. 1)

In the spring semester, peer leaders were asked to keep a project management journal to "document the role you play as a facilitator with the first-year students and their social change projects" (RLC, Spring 2012, p. 2).

Instructor Sandy confirmed the important role that peer leaders play a role in team projects. She said:

I think they provide a lot of guidance for the team project, because they've already done it, they've been there, been through that process. And, they have experience with a peer leader too, so they know what maybe they would have liked, what was really good and want to be able to serve in that same kind of way for these students.

However, the student participants did not have as much to say about this particular role in their interviews. Often, their comments related to the service project were in response to the negative aspect of their role first semester. Hannah explained, "When we have the service projects, that took up a lot of time. Attending their meetings and going on the projects with them. Organizing things for them." Morgan actually worked with four groups instead of two groups as described in the expectations. She wrote in her final paper first semester about how she dealt with the challenge:

My greatest challenge as a Peer Leader this semester was dealing with the Service projects. ... I had no idea how to coordinate with all of the groups, meet with all of them, and make sure they were all on track. However, by setting up meetings with my teacher, I was able to stay organized and realized that this was a confusing process for everyone. We as a class learned from the projects together and went through the different stages of the project together one step at a time.

Daniel also found coordinating service projects to be "extremely challenging." He described his role this way:

I had to make sure the groups were able to schedule meetings that everyone would be able to attend, and I had to make sure the groups were making sufficient progress with preliminary planning.

Daniel saw himself more as a resource to students for the service project, and described his role as different in the second semester "because we are more of the coaching role." Emily explained how she helped her students with group projects second semester:

We're forming their group projects right now, and we are trying to set up weekly meetings and get a communication interface down. Like a Google doc or something that everyone can have access to. So, I guess teaching them how to use different communication devices and explore everything that's out there for them to use.

It seemed like the coaching role was the most ambiguous in terms of expectation, and even though students had experience in participating in service and group projects "coaching" teams through the process was a challenge. The student did not use the actual term "coach" that often, and when they did, it tended to be in reference to being involved "less" or helping students

come to their own conclusions or solutions about things. This was referenced both in the project groups, but also in relation to the changing nature of relationships. For example, Daniel said:

I guess the biggest change that's happened this semester is that we're not as actively involved in the students' lives. They are a little more independent of us and we're more of a coaching role, where we're really just there if they need anything. We are not really playing as active of a role anymore.

In summary, as peer leaders organized and facilitated peer events and assisted student project teams, they helped to bridge connections between in-class and out-of class learning for first-year students. This "connecting" role helped to fulfill the purpose of living-learning communities.

Sub-Theme: Negotiating Roles

As students talked about their roles, it became clear that they were challenged by the negotiation of power, authority, and accountability associated with their various roles. This sub-theme provides additional insight into how students made meaning of the roles associated with peer leadership. Instructor Charles said:

I think it's hard for the PLs to establish themselves as an authority figure when you have the instructor in the classroom. When you have the residence life staff in the halls ... and then you say, 'Oh here are two students that are peer leaders for your class and they're here to help.' It's hard for them; it takes them some time to establish their role with students.

How students negotiated between various in and out of class roles was based on how they made meaning of their level of influence within the community. Students were "not resident

advisors" struggled to balance being a "friend" versus "being a peer leader" and recognized how the students changing needs influenced their practice of leadership in various situations.

Not a resident advisor (RA). Student participants identified themselves as what they were not—a resident advisor (RA). This seemed to be an important component in determining how they build relationships with students. Morgan explained how it could be confusing for new students to know the difference between a peer leader and a resident advisor:

It's overwhelming being like, 'Oh my gosh, like there's a PL living right across from me or like with me.' And they're like, 'What's a peer leader?' And we are kind of just like, 'Oh well, we are kind of like teaching assistants in your classes.' And they are like, 'Well, why are you living with me?' And we have to explain it. Because to them they are thinking [we are] like an RA. I think people's most common association is that RAs are going to get us in trouble when we do something we aren't supposed to be doing. And it's like, as peer leaders we still don't want them to put themselves in bad situations, but we are more here to help them with their transition and with their leadership classes. And it was just like hard to put that into words sometimes.

Alex explained how he wanted students to feel like they could trust him. He said, "I don't want to be seen as the RA that knows if they are doing anything bad ... that they can't talk to me about anything." Instructor Robin framed it this way:

They are also not the disciplinarians. So they kind of have to walk this fine line of—they're not a resident advisor, so they're not the ones who are trying to keep them on track with all the housing policies, and conduct referrals. But, they're also trying to help model the behavior that we expect in the freshman.

While peer leaders were in a leadership position, it was perceived that they did not have the authority to "get students in trouble"; however, they were expected to model appropriate behaviors. Interestingly, the Housing and Residence Life website emphasized the RA position as relationship-oriented through this description: "The RA's primary responsibility is to develop relationships with each and every resident in their community so that residents can know and be known" (DSA, n.d.b). However, their job description does include counseling and behavior management, of which one aspect is "policy enforcement" (DSA, n.d.b). "Policy enforcement" was not specified in any peer leader description and the peer leaders did not identify themselves as policy enforcers.

Friend versus peer leader. The term "friend vs. PL" appeared in the PowerPoint from the peer leaders' first training session (RLC, Spring 2011b, slide 10). The brief description suggested a dichotomy of expectations in terms of how the peer leaders form relationships with students. To be a "friend" means you are just another student, self-focused, and "talks about problems" (RLC, Spring 2011b, slide 10). Whereas a peer leader is part of the RLC staff, is focused on others, and "refers problems" (slide 10). While the description was limited the impression was strong. Language referencing the "friend vs. PL" tension was used repeatedly by students throughout their interviews. The faculty also described the challenges they saw peer leaders face as they negotiated power and influence in the context of the community.

Instructor Robin noticed that the peer leaders were challenged by living in the residence hall, and sometimes sharing rooms and suites with students who are in their classes. She said:

So how do you bridge the gap between being a roommate, suitemate, friend and ... the teaching assistant peer leader for this class? And yeah, 'I have to do your grades; I have to check whether or not you are tardy to class.' And, 'Am I going to give that person

more lee-way because I'm friends with them?' They have that issue that they really have to struggle with as well.

Instructor James noticed that peer leaders struggled in understanding and exercising their level of authority and influence. He explained the struggle this way:

I think at the beginning, the challenge is for them to understand how much power/influence they, and I'll word it as 'they are allowed' to have. By me as the instructor in the classroom. And out of the classroom for that matter. The challenge is for them to look at someone who's just over or just under right at a year younger than them, most cases, and in some cases the same age, and understand that dynamic. ... So I think the number one challenge that pops into my head is at the beginning of the peer leader experience, what authority do I have and how do I use it?

Alex talked about the challenge of having the title of peer leader in terms of building relationships. He said, "Some of the students have even admitted they see us as the authoritarian figure, whereas we're not. And sometimes that stigma just creates a barrier that sometimes can't be overcome with some people." Hannah described how having a peer leader role gave her a certain level of recognition and status among freshman. She said:

I mean since we do have a role in the community, like more than a member, people recognize us for that. And since we actually are older students, they also recognize that for us. ... So if you say, I'm a peer leader, they'll be like, 'Oh, ok.' The students will understand who you are.

Jacob also noticed a difference in how people initially treated him because he was a peer leader. He said:

I could walk around the RLC and not say that I'm a PL and be exactly like them, but once the title is put in there, [I am seen] like—I can still be friends, but at the same time I can give advice.

In their first individual interviews, both Jacob and Daniel talked about the challenges associated with holding roles both inside and outside of class. Daniel believed he had a role in class participation, but felt that he was "sort of held back by a position that doesn't really allow me to be a student, but I'm not a teacher either." As a liaison between the teacher and student, Daniel said, "I am able to be friends with the students but I'm also maintaining an authoritarian role as I work for my teacher, and I'm here to help you [student] become a good leader." Jacob explained his view on class participation as well. He said:

You are still kind of participating in class, but you are not really in class. Which is a very interesting parallel. And you are still a part of the community, you are still living in the dorms and the rooms down the hall, and you are still technically in the RLC, but you're not really in the RLC.

Daniel felt like he has to "watch" what he said and did around freshmen, who were still learning to be leaders. He said, "As a peer leader you've got to be that leader. And you've got to be able to make the good decisions and be able to help out the freshman in ways that they need it." But, Daniel also felt that he had developed friendships with students. He explained:

I don't think it's a bad thing. I know being a friend can pose problems when you are in the classroom as to, like, grading and stuff. And then, making sure that you're fair to the students that you aren't [friends with].

Alex felt like in the first semester he had to be very formal, especially in the classroom. He said that he could "laugh and joke with them before class starts but the second the clock hits

11:00, I'll be like, 'Here are your quizzes, go.'" He talked about the tension he felt between being friendly and professional:

You know it's become more of a friendship more as the semester has gone on. But it started out as a very formal, 'I'm above you' kind of relationship. And it's not so much that I'm becoming equals but more like we are becoming closer. But yeah, I always try to maintain that certain level of, 'Here's what has to be done, here's how I can help you get through it.' ... It's like I want to be friends with all of them and I can't. Or at least I try to restrain myself from becoming good friends with all of them. ... Because I realize I'm in this position that I can't. I have to maintain a certain level of professionalism.

Emily also talked about needing to find a "balance between the PL and friend." She said the balance existed when:

... the students in your peer group at least, feel like they can come to you and talk to you about more than just what's in the classroom. More than just the leadership material we are working on. ... I feel like just being really open enough to the point where they can come to you and feel like you are not going to tell all their friends what they say if they have an issue or just that they want to come hang out with you, that's great too.

Jacob explained how "friend" or "peer leader" played out based on the context of the situation.

He said:

I feel like there's the leadership position that kind of comes in the classroom. You know like I'm basically the teaching assistant. There's a leadership aspect as far as like, I'm going to have peer events that people are going to have to come to, I'm going to be the one that's watching over you when you are doing your service projects, I'm going to help you in class. If you have questions about homework you can come ask me. Then I feel

like there's another kind of aspect ... almost a friend aspect in a sort of way. Which is more moving outside the classroom. Like the relationships that you're forming with students, whether those students are in your class or down the hall or whatever. And that's like the more close—if they have a problem and they have question for you. Or, when I get to the peer event, I always like to start off with my leadership hat on, I guess you would say. With like, 'Do you guys have any questions about class, like anything you want to ask?' But after that I really like to take that off and just kind of become one of them.

The students' examples illustrated how they negotiate leadership roles in an environment designed to foster friendships, while at the same time placing them in a position of authority and influence over their peers.

Changing needs of students. The practices associated with peer leader roles were also negotiated through the participants' response to first-year students' needs and motivations. This was most evident in the student participants' interviews as they described their changing roles in the second semester of peer leadership. Emily found it was harder to get students motivated "because many of them are starting now to get spring fever and they feel like they are not freshman anymore. Because they've had a semester under their belt and they just are slacking off a little bit." She noticed that students did not seem to be taking their leadership classes as seriously in the spring semester. Daniel described students as "a little more independent of us." Hannah noticed that, "the freshmen are much more accustomed to the university now. And so they don't really me as much with like the little things. Or much at all." She added, "I really don't have my people coming by my room to ask questions very often." However, Hannah also

felt like the freshman friendlier towards her in the second semester. She didn't feel like her relationship had to be as professional. She said, "They feel like they can like hangout with me."

Jacob felt like the first semester was a lot more "hands-on" as he got to know the students through peer events and in class. He said, "They were much more willing to come to you with stuff, because they had more stuff that they needed help with." He gave this rationale for why students needed them less in the second semester:

And I think the other big thing is, first semester you might not have developed really close friendships as a freshman, so a PL might be somebody great to go to with things that you have. But when you've got into second semester, some of the same questions that you might have gone and asked a PL, you could go ask a brother in the new fraternity or sorority you joined, or your friend, best friend that you met down the hall or something like that.

Daniel, Jacob, and Hannah noted that while they were less "close" to the freshman in their classes during the second semester, they still had a strong connection with students from their first semester class. Hannah said that the freshman she interacted with most (e.g., talking with or getting lunch together) were "pretty much just the ones I had formed relationships with last semester." Daniel noticed, "This semester ... they seem to go more to their PL from last semester. Because I think they developed that strong relationship because they needed us a little bit more last semester." Jacob also said, "I think some people even might feel more asking their first semester PL stuff than their second semester PL. Just because they got really close."

Meanings associated with their title, including not being an RA, balancing friendship with the position of a peer leader, and recognizing that students have changing needs, helped students to negotiate in the moment or negotiating in the moment how to exercise various levels

of power, authority, and influence within various physical and social contexts of the community. Participants in the focus group commented on how this challenge of negotiating roles influenced their own growth. Daniel realized that he can have different roles. He explained:

Like, I'm friends with people in my freshman leadership classes. When I'm outside of class, I can be friends with them. But inside of class if I need to be stern about something I can tell them, 'Hey, you need to get this done.' And that won't affect our personal relationship outside the class. So I think it's helped define what our roles are.

Hannah made a connection to future workplace interactions. She said:

Like, you are going to make relationships with people and even if you are their superior or something like that, you have to maintain professionalism. And you can't give preferential treatment to people you have close relationships with. So I think definitely understanding that this is a thing that exists was an area of growth.

Power and influence is a prominent topic in the study of leadership. Students learn about it in their curriculum. However, it was not until peer leaders experience the tension of role negotiation, that it has a tangible meaning. As Hannah said, "It is a thing that exists."

Figure three presents a visual summary of this theme: *peer leader roles and practices*. Students, faculty, and program documents described peer leader roles situated in two primary contexts, which were identified as the sub-themes of *in-class roles* and *out-of-class roles*. However, the third sub-theme described roles *connected in- and out-of-class roles*, thus connecting the classroom to the larger community. The sub-theme of *role negotiation* described how students made meaning of peer leadership as they negotiated experiences of power, influence, and authority associated with their roles and relationships with other students.

Context	Role Identification	Meaning of Roles	Practices Associated with Roles	
In-Class	Teaching Assistant	Help teacher Help make curriculum real In-between students and teacher	Grading Admin work Classroom Management Small group discussion "Teaching" a class Help with class planning	
	Student-Teacher Liaison			Role Negotiation
	Peer Teacher/Facilitator			Not an RA
Connecting In- and Out-of-Class	Lead Peer Events	Help students build relationship Help with group work	Peer Events Service Projects Group Projects	Friend vs. PL
	Coach			Changing Student Needs
Out-of-Class	Helper Role Model/Mentor	Be a resource Build relationships Meet students needs Help with transition/adjust Help students grow Model of student leader	Answer questions Encouragement Hang out/do life together	

Figure 3. Relationship between peer leader roles and practices.

Meanings of leadership, as expressed through changing leadership beliefs and role representation points toward the social and cultural implications of learning in community. Repeatedly, the categories outlined in the previous themes described social forces—people and programmatic/design forces—that have influenced learning. The next theme draws on this cross-cutting influence to address the concept of situated learning, or knowing in practice.

Theme 6: Knowing in Practice

Hall (2007) suggested that learning is not the attainment of factual knowledge, but rather achieving ways of knowing through discourse. When knowledge is exercised in practice, it represents dominant beliefs about the external world and beliefs about ourselves (Lawlor, 2008). To truly understand the identity-related beliefs of the students in this case required an examination of what "living-learning" meant in regards to *knowing in practice*. Essentially, how did the peer leaders achieve ways of knowing in their community experience? While previous themes have offered clues to this, a clearer picture emerged from responses to the specific interview question, "How do you know what to do as peer leader?" The student participants shared multiple examples throughout their interviews, writings, and focus groups that supported three categories, as outlined in Table 10. This theme first discusses the idea of "not knowing" what to do, and then clarifies two broad categories of how students come to know in practice: (a) through the formal training and curriculum, and (b) through their experience, that is, being a peer leader.

Table 10: *Theme 6*

Theme	Categories
Knowing in Practice	"Not knowing" Knowing through training and curriculum Knowing through experience

"Not Knowing"

It is interesting to note that early in the interview process, when students were still new in their positions, students' ways of knowing were still limited to ideas of rules, expectations, or what comes "natural." When asked directly, "How do you know what to do?" some students

acknowledged that, “they didn’t.” For example, in her first one-on-one interview, Emily said that she “didn’t see a clear set of rules to follow as a peer leader.” She explained:

I know there's the basic—go to class, help your teacher with whatever—and then your [LDRS] 1015 teacher has like a list of expectations they have for you to help out with the class. But, there's really no clear direction on, ‘Oh, we're supposed to make sure we engage with this many students about this topic during the semester, or anything like that.’

Hannah also said, “I don't think I ever learned how to be a peer leader”; however, she followed that comment with an explanation of her initial training:

When we had our training sessions both freshman year and then before the semester started, that helped put into perspective what exactly we'd be doing and gave a few tips on how to be open to meeting new people and how to engage with them. But, other than that, I mean I take what is said in our seminar class, and I try to apply it.

Emily, Hannah, and Daniel talked about adapting to problems “as they come.” Daniel explained how he used a situational approach to “know what to do”:

I guess I never really know, and just figuring out what the best action is to take in that particular situation. I feel like the role of a PL really changes with the situation so you've got to really adapt to each situation accordingly. So I don't think you ever really create a particular path to go as a PL, I think you've just sort of got to take that PL position and mold it to how you want it to be and how you want to really make a good impact on the program and on freshman.

Hannah described how she tries to "do what feels natural, because I don't want to be too structured and intimidating to the freshman." She said that she uses her instincts because in the

moment she doesn't have time to plan out her reaction. Hannah said, "If I do [have time], then I'll try to utilize different things we've talked about in our classes or learned in our textbooks. But, for the most part it is really just on my gut feeling." Morgan also said:

I usually just like kind of go with my gut feeling. It's usually like what you think you should do. Or, if I'm really not sure, it's a really good feeling that I have a lot of people above me that I can ask. Like I have my teacher I can ask, my other, like my co-PL, what they think. It's good to know I'm not alone. I'm not making decision alone if I don't feel with that.

Peer leaders acknowledged that even though they received training and classroom instruction, they still felt like knowing happened in the moment. What did they learn in class? How did their experience play into how they make decisions in the moment? These questions are explored further throughout this theme.

Knowing through Curriculum and Training

Throughout their interview sessions, peer leaders elaborated on their perceptions of the peer leader training and courses. Students were required to take a peer leader practicum class (LDRS 2964) in both the fall and spring semesters while they served as peer leaders. The syllabi for these two course sections outlined the learning objectives and peer leader expectations. The course was designed to: (a) help students develop and practice group leadership, team-building skills, and group facilitation skills; (b) to develop and expand on their personal leadership philosophy; and (c) to "understand challenges and opportunities associated with leading peers" (RLC, Fall 2011c, p. 1). This was accomplished through a variety of reflective assignments associated with peer events, service projects, group projects, and individual reflective activities.

The curriculum was based on several texts and readings related to peer mentoring, emotional intelligence, and relationship building (RLC, Fall 2011c, Spring 2012).

The student participants acknowledged that the peer leader class was helpful to their learning. Morgan said, "Every week I feel like I learn something new in my peer leader class with [Instructor]. Because we talk about different topics like, 'Oh, I didn't even think about that.'" Jacob said training helped him to "establish guidelines that I can follow, and let me see things that I can watch out for. Like, you can be friends with them, but like, make sure there is a certain line with people." Emily also said that the peer leader course "gives you reminders about different things and teaches you to keep that balance between like a teacher and a mentor and a PL and all that." Morgan noted how the spring semester class helped her manage the student project groups:

We do journals and track our group presentation project groups. We record like the progress we made. And I actually think that's a good thing because we didn't do that last year with the service project. So kind of reflecting on it each week and seeing how much the groups have progressed kind of helps everyone stay on target to make sure they can get everything done on time.

Students believed that learning occurred through talking about what was happening with each other and with the instructor. Jacob said that first 10 minutes of class was usually set aside to discuss what's going on in their [LDRS 1015 or 1016] classes and talk about any challenges they were having with students. He said, "People ask questions all the time like, 'I don't know what to do about this.' And we can all talk." Morgan said that the peer leader class involved "learning about how to improve upon what we are doing. Learning about mentorship and

coaching and different techniques and strategies to use when dealing with the freshman and what they have to deal with."

The peer leaders talked more specifically about the curriculum and design of the class.

While the text provided a basis for discussion, Emily said that the class "is guided by the PL group pretty much." She described class this way:

We read the lesson and reflect on those questions. But often we go off experiences that we've had and we share them with the class. And, we go off of examples that we know from like politics or just in the community. And, I would say it's kind of self-led, with prompts I guess throughout.

Hannah wished they had more time "to just kind of address what we are facing as a PL. And base our curriculum kind of off that." She explained:

I feel like if we were able to get feedback from the other PLs on what we were facing and from the instructor on like how we can be doing things better, I think that would be a lot more helpful.

Jacob also explained how these types of interactive discussions were helpful. He said,

I think the one thing that really helps as a PL is you can hear what other PLs are doing. And then you can do that as well. Or, if you have a problem, especially second semester a problem with a student, the PLs that had them first semester can give you advice or something like that.

While the students had mixed reviews on their experience in the peer leader class, they did acknowledge that the course influenced their practice. Hannah said, "Well, last semester it definitely gave me ideas of what I needed to be doing, and it just really helped me get back on track if I lost sight of what was actually going on." Emily talked about the usefulness of the

topics covered in class. She said, "I tend to notice that I focus more on those topics the next week or the next two weeks after the class. ... Then at the end of the semester when we write our final paper I try to focus on all of them and see how I've improved." Emily said that sometimes that application happens naturally, but sometimes she finds herself thinking, "Oh, that's what we talked about in PL class." Morgan felt the project management journal helped her to "stay more organized."

Knowing through Experience

In the community, peer leaders' learning was not only experiential; rather, their classroom learning was situated within a role of leadership and experienced through the practices of the community. Emily talked about the reflexive nature between her classroom learning and experiences:

I think I take stuff from that we learn in PL class about being a mentor or friends, being like in the living-learning community, but I also reflect back on problems that either I had myself last year as a freshman or my other friends had. So, I take like experiences and more like concrete what the book says to do.

Daniel agreed that he learned how to deal with problems through experiences, "and especially through the service projects." He said, "I mean, we had training, but I think a lot of it has been a lot of trial and error, a lot of it has ... self evaluation." Morgan explained how she also learned from her mistakes:

I think just through what has worked and seeing what is taking with the students and what is not. ... What I've learned from my own mistakes, and what things I've learned from other peer leaders' mistakes, or what they've done really well.

Jacob elaborated on the learning that comes from the experiences of being a peer leader. Referring back to previously mentioned practices, Jacob explained that it [knowing what to do] can depend on your instructor, the peer leader's personality, and even the students themselves. He said:

I think most of the 'how to learn to be a PL' comes from being a PL. You know what you do depends on the teacher you have. You know it really changes. Is your teacher asking you to like teach a class some days? And grade lots of stuff? Or, is your teacher just going to kind of have you be there to like facilitate things and have you help out in discussions? So you know that's one really big thing that I don't think anybody can specifically learn in a training session. And then the other part is you know ... You can be given those guidelines on what you want to do or how to interact with the students on like a coaching level, but that also comes with learning. Depending on your personality, like how I'm different from each other PL, like reflects how I'm going to interact with the students, how I'm going to get close to them, and how they're going to come to me. So I feel like I learn by experience with the help of some, like, overarching principles or boundaries that we're given.

Lave and Wenger (1991) described how within communities of practice there may be a *learning curriculum*, implicit through everyday practice, as compared to what is intended to be taught through an explicit, *teaching curriculum*. Ultimately, curriculum and training and experiences of peer leadership could be considered everyday practices in the living-learning community. While students may have started out with naive views of "how they know", their ways of knowing were influenced by the discourse produced through the classes and enacted through their lived experiences as a peer leader in the community.

Theme 7: Meanings of Multi-Membership

The Residential Leadership Community is situated within the larger [University] community, which is situated within the larger town and regional community. In order to answer research sub-question d: *What are the social and cultural implications of students' meanings of leadership as it relates to higher education's call to develop leaders?*, it was necessary to explore students' experiences of multi-membership within the larger campus culture. This theme aligns with the proposition that leadership identity is constructed through the negotiation boundaries of membership in multiple communities. The student participants in this study were also members of other clubs, communities, and organizations. Table 11 outlines the categories that emerged through the student and faculty interviews. The meanings of multi-membership were described through: (a) the impact of multi-membership on the peer leader role, (b) the impact of the peer leader role on outside involvement, and (c) the perception of how the experiences prepared students for future roles.

Table 11: *Theme 7*

Theme	Categories
Meanings of multi-membership	Influence of multi-membership on the peer leader role Influence of the peer leader role on other involvement Preparation for future roles

All the peer leaders interviewed were involved in other communities, organizations, or work experiences. Involvement included major-related clubs and organizations, campus wide events like Relay for Life, student ambassador programs within academic majors, leadership and service organizations, and career-goal related work experiences or internships. In their first round of interviews, peer leaders described themselves primarily as active participants in other communities, explaining that they did not hold any particular roles. By their second semester as

peer leaders, the students had taken on roles in other communities and/or were considering what types of roles they wanted to be a part of in the future. The experience of being a peer leader was influenced by, and influenced, their experiences in other communities.

Influence of Multi-Membership on the Peer Leader Role

When asked how involvement in other groups or communities influenced her role as a peer leader, Hannah initially said, "I don't really know if they do. Because I try to keep things separate." But other peer leaders saw clear connections between their involvement and their role. Morgan and Emily believed participation gave them access to examples and opportunities they could share with the freshman. For Morgan, participation in other groups and honor societies encouraged her to be a good student and get involved. She said, "If I'm a peer leader I can help the freshman see how beneficial these kinds of opportunities are." For Emily, it helped her to see how her own learning was applied, and then provided examples that she could use when she was working with students. She said:

I can see the leaders of those organizations and I can apply the leadership theories that the freshman are learning in the classroom and that I learned last year to how they are leading and I also think that it broadens my awareness of the scope of the Virginia Tech campus and that better helps me to understand where other freshman are coming from if they have interests that are different than me because so many people in these organizations have so many interests. So just being immersed in that all the time has helped me understand them, and then I have more networking resources for them to use if they have questions.

Alex, Jacob, and Daniel talked about the personal benefit of being involved in other communities. Alex said that involvement in other groups "really allowed me to realize what I'm

passionate about." Jacob learned a lot about "how to work with diverse groups of people". He explained further:

[Working with diverse groups of people] definitely helps with being a PL. Because when you walk into a room, there's going to be people that you gravitate towards and those are the people you form friendships with. But as a PL you've really got to be friendly with everyone and find a way to, you know, be able to include everyone. So I feel like working in bigger, other organizations has helped me in that respect. How can I include everyone or be friendly with everyone.

Daniel talked about how he developed communication and problem solving skills through his other involvement, which "translated into my role as a PL." He said:

If someone comes for advice I've learned to ask really good questions and help them try to develop a solution to their problem by themselves. But if I realize if they don't, I can try to provide them with a solution.

As students participated in experiences of membership outside of the community, they gained access to examples and opportunities to enhance their own, and their students', learning. Participation in other communities also allowed them to gain experience working with diverse groups of people and develop problem solving and communication skills needed for their work as a peer leader.

Influence of the Peer Leader Role on Involvement in Other Communities

As students negotiated boundaries between being a peer leader and involvement in other organizations and groups on campus, they were able to apply their learning as a peer leader to their other roles. Emily found that she was able to apply theory in real-life situations. She explained, "Usually I make suggestions [in meetings] if we could do things a little bit more

effectively based on the leadership theories that I've learned." Having leadership experience also made Emily more confident:

In the leadership aspect it definitely helps being a peer leader. And, being even just like a member of the other organizations because you feel more confident and willing to give ideas and present new ideas and be active in those organizations. Because you're in here doing the same thing.

Hannah described herself as "more outgoing" as a result of her peer leader role. Morgan was also more confident in her communication. She said:

I'm more willing to put myself out there. Because I'm usually kind of shy when you meet me. And so it's helped me grow as a person so I can kind of use those skills and other aspects in groups that I'm a part of.

Not only were the students more confident to speak up, they also found that they were more open to hearing ideas from others. Several of the students talked about how they applied their leadership as a facilitator. Emily said, "I think the RLC has taught me to be more open minded to everyone's ideas and not turn anything away until you know more about it. So, I use that in the organizations." Hannah said she now uses a style that's not so much about being a "dictator", but rather "being more of a facilitator and getting other people to do the work." She explained further:

Instead of just telling people what they need to do, it's getting people to step up and do it on their own. So, I think having that mindset now helps me in the other groups to not just say, 'I think we should be doing this.' I'm a lot more encouraging of others to speak their minds.

Jacob also said that as a result of being a peer leader, the way he "goes about leading" is to "throw out an idea and get everybody's feedback ... instead of just being like, 'This needs to be done or this needs to be done.'" He used this approach outside of the RLC as well. He said, "So ... it's the same way, working with different groups of people and being able to like mentor people and help people through things."

Alex felt the overall benefit was being able to work with people. He said, "There are organizations where you constantly have to work with people. I feel like I learned all those skills here in the RLC. And I'm continually practicing them whether it's as a peer leader or in those organizations." As Alex reflected on how being a peer leader has helped him, he said this:

It [the RLC] teaches you inner leadership and how you like to lead, but I feel on a more basic level that it really opens people up and teaches them how to interact with people in any given situation. And when you are talking about getting involved in organizations and things like fraternities and sororities, being able to interact with people is so important. Communication skills, everything else, it's just good life lessons and things that all people should know and it really helps.

Instructor James emphasized how students need to be able to work with others, "because our world is set up where you pretty much have to collaborate with someone, anything that you do whether it's paid, volunteer, your own passions, it doesn't matter." He also described how students are gaining social skills through the community experience:

And so I think the community is really a lot about relationships and interactions that are organic. They just develop based on the conversations and experiences that the students have. And that in my opinion is the best part of the community, is students are learning how to interact.

The student participants believed that their experience as peer leaders helped them to become more open minded and outgoing. They found themselves using a more relational, participative style of a facilitator when working with others. These collaborative social skills were seen as necessary and highly valued in the "real world."

Meanings for Future Leadership Roles

As mentioned in theme one, most of the student participants would not continue direct membership in the community after the peer leader role. All of the student participants expressed a desire and readiness to take on future leadership roles outside of the community. Daniel shared how he had recently interviewed for a leadership role on campus. He said:

I think it's [peer leadership] prepared me more so that next year when I start taking on these larger roles it will be a whole lot more helpful. Because when I was doing my interview yesterday, they kept asking these questions about how will you problem solve, how will you time manage, and I think nearly every single question I answered, I referred to something about being a PL here in my interview.

In the focus group session, student participants confirmed what their experience meant for their future roles. Emily believed that her experience will be "helpful to any leadership situation you are going to take on in the next year or two, and also in the future." She explained:

Just practicing being a PL this year, we've applied it to so many situations—service, event planning, like a coach, mentor, professional situations as well—that it will help us as we become like the upperclassman and get involved in leadership roles on campus. [We have] diversified our range of skills and abilities as a leader.

Daniel and Hannah talked specifically about the value of experience with group work. Daniel said:

I feel much more prepared to participate in group work. I think managing these service projects in the fall semester and workshops projects this semester, it's really helped me realize how important people's strengths and skills are, and putting that together like a puzzle and finding out the best way groups work.

Adding to Daniels' comments, Hannah said:

I think being an outside person looking in on their group experiences has given like an interesting insight. Because you are not actually part of their group, but you can see what's going on for them, what's working for them, how they are doing things. And you can kind of analyze it without being a part of it. Which has helped me; I had a huge group project this semester, and like having that insight from peer leading has definitely made that process a lot easier. ... Because you don't really get that experience often to be an outside person looking in on a group and how it's working unless you are the instructor or something. So I think it's a great learning experience for that.

In summary, throughout their experiences of membership in the living-learning community, peer leaders were also involved in other classes, groups, and organizations. This involvement provided authentic contexts to apply their own learning. As they shared their own experiences in these groups, they helped other students also get connected to resources and opportunities. They applied lessons learned as a peer leader within other groups and settings. The student participants believed that their peer leader experience prepared them for future involvement in various academic, social, and career-oriented communities.

Theme 8: Embodiment of the Program Mission

The stated mission of the program is, "to enhance students' leadership and interpersonal skills, enabling them to become more effective leaders in any organizational structure" (RLC,

n.d.a). The previous theme described how peer leaders felt prepared to lead in future roles. This could be interpreted as fulfilling the stated mission. However, this does not tell the whole story of the community experience. In a community of practice, "practice" is understood by the meaning people make through mutual engagement in a joint enterprise—the shared expectations and accountability understood through shared discourses, tools, and events (Wenger, 1998). This theme illustrates this "joint enterprise", as it understood and experienced by the student and faculty participants.

This theme addresses the meaning of the mission, not as it is formally stated, but as it is *lived* by the participants of the community. For the purpose of this study, the term "mission" was used to describe the overarching purpose or goals of the community, in essence, "Why does the community exist?" The *lived mission* was integral to students' leadership practice. Table 12 outlines the key categories of this theme. Describing how students perceived and embodied the mission of the program provides insight into research sub-question d: *What are the social and cultural implications (for higher education)?*

Table 12: *Theme 8*

Theme	Categories
Embodiment of Mission	Perceived program mission
	Peer leader role embodies mission

Perceived Program Mission

To understand the potential reasons the program exists, the researcher coded program documents for various expressions, or meanings, of the purpose or mission. These meanings were compared to the student and faculty participant interviews. Three main elements of a lived mission emerged: (a) to assist with students' transition to college and college success, (b) to develop foundational leadership knowledge and skill development, and (c) to prepare students

for (campus) leadership roles. Table 13 outlines each of these elements, and provides evidence in support of these elements.

Table 13: *Elements of the Program Mission*

Element of Mission	Source and Number of Codes	Sample Quotes
Promote College Success	PL Interviews	I think the mission would probably be to successfully help freshman adjust to college life. (Daniel)
	Faculty Interviews	I think there are multiple goals. One it's a learning community that eases the transition from high school to college. (Instructor Sandy)
	Documents	Research shows that LLC students have higher cumulative GPAs and increased interaction with faculty (DSA, n.d.a)
Foundational Leadership Knowledge and Skill Development	PL Interviews	I would describe the goal of the RLC would be just helping incoming freshman develop leadership skills. (Daniel)
	Faculty Interviews	It gives them a foundation in terms of leadership theory and then practice in a specific area. (Instructor Sandy)
	Documents	The purpose of the RLC for me is one of helping students develop their individual leadership skills by enabling them to be in a common context in a community setting. (Instructor Robin)
Preparing Future Leaders	PL Interviews	[The goal of the RLC] is to provide them with the tools and encouragement to become leaders on campus. Or wherever else they might want to be leaders. (Hannah)
	Faculty Interviews	I think the purpose of the RLC is to build a strong core of campus leaders. (Instructor Charles)
	Documents	The mission of the Residential Leadership Community is to enhance students' leadership and interpersonal skills, <i>enabling them to be more effective leaders in any organizational structure</i> . (RLC, n.d.a.)

For the students, these elements were very integrated. In particular, students linked the themes of college success and leadership development. For example, Morgan described the mission to "successfully help freshman adjust to college life and then to expose them to leadership." Daniel also said:

I would describe the goal of the RLC would be just helping incoming freshman develop leadership skills and succeed during their four years of college. I think that is one of the main goals that I've seen come out of the RLC.

College success was defined by the data as helping students adjust to college academically and socially. Hannah's perspective on the goal of the RLC was to "help freshman make their adjustment into college life and to provide them with the tools and encouragement to become leaders on campus. Or wherever else they might want to be leaders."

Jacob didn't remember the actual mission statement, but felt confident sharing his view. He said:

It [the RLC] is definitely big on building community—being able to build friendships [through] peer events and different things that are geared toward how can we get people closer, getting to know each other. And at the same time, being able to instill a sense of leadership. Whether that is a theoretical, know these theories leadership style, or whether it's a practical use of this.

Emily believed that mission was not only to help students understand what good leadership was, but also to "understand the importance of the role of a leader in society." She said that part of the mission was simply exposing students to the topic of leadership. She explained:

I think leadership is a really new topic that is good for students to become aware of, because if you know how to lead someone you can apply that to any subject. ... So I think the mission is to help students see that.

Foundational knowledge and skill development was defined by the data as learning about leadership and practicing leadership. The RLC website stated, "The RLC is founded on a strong sense of purpose to build leaders that are socially responsible, educated in theory, demonstrate leadership accountability, and who grasp a deep understanding of effective leadership behaviors" (RLC, n.d.a). Instructor Sandy believed that the RLC helped students to develop knowledge about leadership, and to develop leadership skills through applied practice. Instructor James said:

[The RLC] is for any students interested in being in a leadership or management type position. For engineers, a lot of times it's a project manager. For students that want to be in business, it's good to know what is a leader versus what is a manager. So it provides a lot of that theoretical foundation for people specifically in being a leader or a manager.

Instructor Robin said that the purpose of the RLC was for "helping students develop their individual leadership skills."

Instructor Sandy and Instructor James shared their belief that the RLC provides opportunities for students who were engaged in high school leadership to extend their learning and involvement to the college environment. Instructor Sandy said the RLC "gives them an opportunity to continue to grow in terms of developing their leadership potential."

One might argue that learning about leadership and developing leadership skills is a form of preparation for leadership roles. However, the distinction within the data had to do with the

specificity of application. For example, both Instructor James and Instructor Charles saw the purpose of the RLC as preparing campus leaders. Instructor Charles said:

I think the purpose of the RLC is to build a strong core of campus leaders. ... In a few years those students will be taking over the campus and all the leadership positions that happen will be, you'll find at least one RLC student in the bunch, for it seems like every organization that you work with.

Instructor James agreed. He said:

I think ... from a university standpoint I think the outcome's really creating opportunities for students who want to be involved on campus. To learn the theory and the approaches and just some foundations of what it means to be a leader. ... It helps them say, 'Ok, I know this stuff, now I can go out and do something with it, the practical application.'

Hannah and Alex expressed that leadership involvement in college was not automatic; rather, it was a choice by the student. However, they acknowledged that the RLC helped set them on the path. Hannah described how she saw the RLC accomplishing this:

We are not putting freshman into leadership positions. We are not making them do much, but we are kind of giving them the experiences, like through the service projects. To want to be leaders. And to know more about it. So if they do decide to take on leadership roles, they will kind of know what they are doing. And they'll have background. And also being surrounded by people who want to be involved on campus and want to have leadership roles makes everyone else kind of want to be that way too. So it's kind of, everyone feeding each others' desire to step up and make a change.

Alex also said:

In my mind I see it as to develop lifelong learners of leadership. Lifelong leaders. I feel like once you walk out of this building you are more than capable of becoming a leader and it's up to them to say, 'Do I want to become a leader? And if so, what of?' I just feel like most people that go through this program become better people through the course of that year.

The mission elements revealed why the program exists, and gave insight into what students do in the program. Students who participated in the leadership community were being helped in their transition to ensure college success, they were developing foundational leadership knowledge and skills, and they were being prepared for and connected to campus leadership roles. These elements were based on the students' lived experiences which have been outlined repeatedly in previous themes—experiences in the residence hall and in the classroom; through peer events, service projects, and group experiences; and through relationships with each other, with peer leader models, and with faculty members. In this sense, the RLC could be seen as not only a program with a mission, but as a missional program (see Manciani, 2008 regarding the term *missional*). The mission was not simply a design or methodology, but a way of life—a way of being in community.

Peer Leaders Embody the Program Mission

Students who were serving in peer leader roles were not only being influenced by the mission, they were also part of the mission. They embodied the mission as they practiced leadership in the community. The students recognized the role they played in supporting the lived mission of the RLC. As Alex said, "I'm facilitating community." Daniel understood his role in helping students achieve success in college. He said:

As a peer leader I feel like I am one of the main influences in helping them get through the transition so they can transcend into good leaders on campus. So feel like I'm sort of one of the moving forces behind getting them through exams, getting them through all these difficulties they have their first semester. I feel like I'm sort of just like a moral support system for them to become good leaders.

Emily talked about how she helped students learn about leadership through real-life examples:

I think I try to in the classroom I try to give real life examples of leaders ... so that they can understand that leadership is a real thing that's being used outside of this classroom. Because I think that will better help them next semester or next year when they are in the same place I am, joining all the organizations. And they can pinpoint what leadership tactic someone, like the executive board of their organization, is using or what they could be using to help better.

Morgan and Hannah talked about how they serve as resources for students and referred them to other leadership opportunities. For example, Hannah said:

I've referred people to a lot of different things. Like, even if you don't think you want to, try, go to a meeting for something. Try out FLEX or Leadership Tech, whatever. I also try to encourage them to look out for organizations to join and get involved. I think also from them witnessing students who are involved on campus—I mean just like the peer leaders—seeing what everyone else is involved in they can kind of figure out if they have similar interests and they can go to that person and see if they could find out more about something. So I definitely consider myself just as a resource for them developing as leaders.

Alex saw himself helping others the way his peer leader model had helped him. He said:

I like to think that I'm helping to instill confidence in people's perceptions of themselves. That was the biggest thing [Charles] ever did for me, he just gave me the confidence to believe in myself. And I feel like that's one of the biggest things I can do for the students who are here this year, is help them believe that they can do whatever they set their minds to and that you know just that confidence, hopefully will make a difference.

The peer leaders' embodiment of the mission reflected not only their individual identity development, but also the reproduction of the community of practice itself (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The peer leaders' practices as second year members facilitated for other students the same kinds of experiences of membership that were influential in their own lives as first-year members.

The peer leaders' meanings of leadership beliefs and roles were discussed at length in previous themes. While the descriptions of students' experiences of membership, changing beliefs, changing roles, and future goals are not specifically mapped to each of these mission elements, the elements provide a common thread, weaving through and across themes to paint a picture of peer leader identity development. This common thread is expressed through the overarching theme.

Overarching Theme: How Students Constructed Leadership Identities

The overarching research question guiding this case study was: *How do college students studying leadership within a themed living-learning community construct leadership identities as they transition from first-year members to second-year peer leaders?* The previous eight themes contributed to an overarching theme that summarizes students' identity construction as both a process and product of the experience of membership in the residential leadership community.

The overarching theme is this: *As students move from being first-year members to being second-*

year peer leaders, their beliefs and practices of leadership embody and reflect the mission-oriented design of the living-learning community.

Within each theme, the researcher highlighted multiple curricular and design elements identified within the program documents and described by the participants themselves. These design elements were reflective of the missional elements of the community. For example, students' college transition was supported by a living-learning style program, the integration of peer events into the curriculum, through students' reflections of their experiences of membership in the first year. The syllabi outline topics, projects, and assignments designed to support learning about leadership and developing leadership skills. Faculty interactions and exposure to peer leader mentors provided students with connections to greater involvement and potential leadership roles on campus.

The curricular and relational design was connected to the reputation of the program. The reputation of the program attracted students into the program. Experiences of membership in the program encouraged students to continue in a peer leader role. Students' changing beliefs and practices were influenced by experiences related to their changing role(s) as a peer leader in the community. Students changing beliefs and practices were influenced by the theories and concepts taught in the leadership courses associated with the community. The curricular and relational design of the program influenced the available leadership discourse and opportunities for practice. This included the topics and theories taught in the classes, as well as the assignments and activities designed to foster leadership practice, including the peer leader role itself.

Students in peer leader roles were influenced by, and had influence on, the larger campus community through involvement in other groups and organizations. Peer leaders' trajectories into, within, and out of the community illustrated the embodiment of the RLC mission.

Summary

This chapter provided results of the analysis of multiple interviews with peer leaders and faculty stakeholders, students' written works, and program documents. From this work, eight primary themes and one overarching theme emerged as a means to address the research question and sub-questions that guided this case study. The first sub-question asked: *How do students gain access to membership in the residential leadership community?* Theme one described *Access to Varying Levels of Membership* in the community, illustrating the movement from joining the RLC into full participation in a peer leader role. Several relational and design-oriented factors were key forms of access, including the program's reputation, the relationship with a peer leader model, and the opportunity to continue involvement in the program. The second theme narrowed the focus of access to how experiences in the first-year contributed to students' motivation to be a peer leader. Theme two, *Meanings of the First-Year Experience*, described the meanings made through participation as first-year members. The RLC provided a supportive community that was like a home within a large campus. Students experienced personal growth and fostered strong friendships. They were connected to a larger network of campus leaders and opportunities for involvement.

The second research sub-question, *How do faculty and administrative stakeholders facilitate experiences of membership for students in the residential leadership community?*, was answered through theme three, *Influence of Faculty on Experiences of Membership*. Faculty participants believed that by being present and building relationships, they served as a resource

and facilitated connections for students to other campus opportunities. The peer leaders also reflected on their interactions with faculty. They described the faculty as both a professional mentor—someone who provided guidance and support in their peer leader role, and as a personal resource—someone to go to for personal advice and help.

The third research sub-question was: *What meanings of leadership are taken up by students as they transition from first-year members to second-year peer leaders?* This question was addressed by the next two themes, *Beliefs about Leadership* and *Leadership Roles and Practices*. Meanings of leadership were analyzed through the ways students talked about their changing ability within their situated experience. Student participants' *beliefs about leadership* were drawn primarily from written essays, from their interviews, and the focus group session. Faculty interviews and document analysis helped to present a holistic view of students' changing views within the larger context of community participation. This theme was organized into three sub-themes to represent the developmental nature of beliefs from the first year to the second year, and to recognize the importance of the community's theoretical discourse on those beliefs. The first sub-theme was *students' representations of leadership in the first year*. As students progressed through their first semester in the community, their beliefs changed from simple, person-centered views to more relational, process-oriented views of leadership. These views were influenced by their experiences the community, including coursework. The students expressed a desire to apply what they had learned in future service and leadership roles.

The second sub-theme was *students' leadership representations in the second year*. The students had an opportunity to reflect and expand on their early leadership beliefs through a second-year essay called a “leadership philosophy revision.” Their revised statements showed continued evolution of their beliefs. Their descriptions in the second year were more complex

and emphasized leader-follower relations for both goal achievement and follower transformation. They attributed their changed beliefs to their classroom learning, campus involvement, and the peer leader role itself.

The final-sub theme was the *influence of theories*. Students talked about their “favorite” theories, and shared examples of how their beliefs and practices were influenced by those theories. Course syllabi and faculty interview data revealed an emphasis on theories used in the first-year, first-semester course. Students most often identified with the theories of: (a) path-goal leadership, (b) servant leadership, (c) transformational leadership, and (d) leadership skills or trait approach. Students affirmed that these theories were most relevant and practical to the situations they experienced as a college student, and more specifically, as a peer leader.

Meanings of leadership were further explored through expressions of students’ *leadership roles and practices*. Peer leaders were second-year students in the community, so their leadership role was situated within a context of learning. A variety of roles and practices were identified based on the students’ interviews and writings, faculty interviews, and program documents. This theme was organized by four sub-themes. The first sub-theme was *in-class roles*. All students in the community were required to take leadership courses. Peer leaders served as teaching assistants, liaisons, and facilitators in the classroom. The second sub-theme was *out-of-class roles*. Peer leaders lived in the community with students and engage in both formal and informal interactions outside of class. Peer leaders saw themselves as a helper—someone who could be a resource for students, answer questions, and encouraged students to get involved. They also saw themselves as a role model and mentor. Through leading by example, they formed connections with students, gave advice, and helped students adjust to college life.

The next-sub theme illustrated how peer leaders were a *connection between in- and out-of-class* learning. Through leading peer events and serving as a coach for group projects, they were a bridge between students' academic and social lives. The peer leaders helped to enhance in-class learning and build community through a mix of study sessions, social events, and learning activities. As peer-coaches, they provided guidance and support for team learning.

A final sub-theme, *negotiating roles*, was also discussed. As students talked about their experiences, it was clear that they were challenged by the negotiation of power, authority, and influence associated with various roles. How they approached their roles was influenced by their identification as “not an RA”, the tension between being a “friend versus being a PL”, and by the changing needs of students. However, students recognized that by navigating these tensions, they were growing as leaders.

The last research sub-question was: *What are the social and cultural implications of these meanings as they relate to higher education's call to enhance students' leadership capacity?* This question was addressed by the next three themes: *Knowing in Practice*, *Meanings of Multi-membership*, and *Embodiment of the Program Mission*. The theme *Knowing in Practice* addressed a cross-cutting question that emerged from the data; that is, “How do students achieve ways of knowing in the community?” While some students expressed naïve beliefs of “not knowing” what to do, the data revealed that students came to know through the training and curriculum, and also through experience.

The next theme, *Experiences of Multi-Membership*, explored students' negotiation of boundaries of membership with other communities in the larger campus context. The students found that participation in other communities influenced their experience as a peer leader, and also believed that by being a peer leader, they were better able to lead in other organizations. All

of the participants expressed a desire and feeling of preparedness to take on future campus leadership roles.

The final theme, *Embodiment of the Program Mission*, outlined three primary elements of a lived program mission as described by program documents and the participants themselves. It was determined that the primary purpose or mission of the RLC was to promote college success, develop foundational leadership knowledge and skills, and prepare students for future campus leadership roles. Peer leaders were not only a product of that mission, but were also instrumental in carrying out the mission. As they moved from first-year members into a community leadership role, they embodied the mission elements through their own leadership practices.

Finally, the integration of the primary themes pointed towards an overarching theme: *As students move from being first-year members to being second-year peer leaders, their beliefs and practices of leadership embody and reflect the mission-oriented program design of the living-learning community.*

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, & IMPLICATIONS

Study Summary

The challenges found at the intersection of society's need for leaders, and the academic institution's evolving role in developing citizens who will lead, frame the purpose and role of collegiate leadership education programs. Leadership educators are tasked with developing students' leadership capacity; however, leadership as a construct is not easily defined and measured. Contemporary views of leadership emphasize social construction, or the meaning-making of leaders and followers through communicative practices within social contexts (Drath & Palus, 1994; Klein et al., 2009; Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). Current trends in educational theory and practice reflect a movement toward learning and development through participation in social communities (Wildman, 2005). Higher education learning communities offer a contemporary education model designed to foster academic and social integration among students (Brower & Dettinger, 1998). Higher education leadership learning communities provide a social context to explore leadership development through a sociocultural lens.

Shifting the frame of leadership education towards a process of social construction allows leadership development to be viewed through contexts, group memberships, and identities (Ostick & Wall, 2011). In this study, the communities of practice construct (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) applied to a leadership learning community offered a way to conceptualize leadership learning as a process of *legitimate peripheral participation* (LPP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991). A community of practice represents both a place of learning and a group of who share an interest, craft, or profession (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Legitimate peripheral participation is an

identity formation process by which new members gain full membership through the mastery of the knowledge and skills of that community (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The purpose of this study was to explore how students studying leadership within a collegiate living-learning community construct identities as they transition from first-year student (new members) to second-year peer leaders (full members). This study was guided by the following *a priori* propositions (see also Appendix A): (a) that leadership identity is socially constructed through the negotiation of meaning of experiences of membership in communities of practice, (b) leadership identity is influenced by changing roles in a community of practice, (c) leadership identity is influenced by the negotiation of membership in multiple communities, (d) leadership identity can be expressed or represented through both internal beliefs and external practices, (e) socially constructed leadership beliefs are influenced by the shared language and discourse of the leadership learning community, and (f) the culture of a community influences students' leadership identity constructions. The *a priori* propositions influenced the creation of the primary research question: How do college students studying leadership within a themed living-learning community construct leadership identities as they transition from first-year members to second-year peer leaders? Four sub-questions guided this study: (a) How do students gain access to varying levels of membership in the residential leadership community? (b) How do faculty and administrative stakeholders facilitate experiences of membership for students in the residential leadership community? (c) What meanings of leadership are taken up by students as they transition from first-year members into second-year peer leaders? And, (d) What are the social and cultural implications of these meanings as they relate to higher education's call to enhance students' leadership capacity?

The theoretical framework of this study reflected an interpretive paradigm, calling for the use of qualitative methods that reflected knowledge as historically and culturally situated, and reality as constructed through human perception and interpretation (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

The researcher utilized an embedded case study design to analyze the situated leadership learning community (Yin, 2009). Data were collected through in-depth interviews, document analysis, and a focus group. The Residential Leadership Community (RLC) at a four-year, land-grant university in the Eastern United States was selected as the site of the study, as it was representative of a leadership program facilitated through a living-learning environment. Six students serving in peer leader roles were selected as primary participants because they represented full membership in the community. Four faculty members were purposefully selected as participants to offer insight into social and cultural context of the community. The case study database also included copies of students' written assignments and program-related documents. Data were collected and analyzed over an eight month period, resulting in the emergence of eight primary themes that provide an understanding of students' learning within the leadership community:

1. *Access to varying levels of community membership* was influenced by reputation, experience, and relationships;
2. Experiences of belonging, personal growth, and building relationships *in the first year* were motivational factors for continued participation as a peer leader;
3. *Faculty presence* was important for the learning environment, and faculty served as professional mentors and personal resources for peer leaders;
4. *Students' beliefs about leadership* changed from simple, person centered views to relational process-oriented views as they moved from being RLC member to being

- peer leader. The peer leaders' views were influenced by both their experience and by the theoretical discourse taught in the classroom;
5. *Peer leaders negotiated multiple roles* inside and outside of the classroom, and served as a bridge for first-year students' academic and social development;
 6. *Students' ways of knowing* in the community included both formal and informal training and experience;
 7. The experience of peer leadership influences, and was influenced by, *membership in multiple campus communities*; and, peer leaders felt prepared to take on future leadership roles in other communities;
 8. Peer leaders both fulfilled and *embodied the lived mission of the program* as they helped other students achieve college success, develop foundational leadership knowledge and skills, and prepare for future leadership roles.

Together these themes contributed to one overarching, interpretive theme which answered the primary research question: *As students move from being first-year members to being second-year peer leaders, their beliefs and practices of leadership embody and reflect the mission-oriented design of the living-learning community.*

Discussion

Theoretically and conceptually, leadership identity constructed through social practice represented the convergence of learning theory and leadership theory viewed through a sociocultural frame. Describing the identity construction process of peer leaders in the RLC extends our understanding of collegiate living learning-communities as a community of practice (Wenger, 1998), and peer leadership as a form of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). It also adds to the body of knowledge related to college students' first-year

experience, peer leaders/mentors, and college student engagement, and answers the question, “Leadership for what?” as it relates to the contextual, discursive nature of leadership development.

Research Sub-Question a: How do students gain access to varying levels of membership in the leadership learning community? Wenger (1998) suggested that the design of an educational community of practice must take into consideration questions of identity, including access to participation. Access to resources and opportunities for learning can enhance or inhibit full participation in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Students talked candidly about their expectations when joining the RLC, as well as their motivation to take on peer leader roles. Aspects of both people and place (or space) emerged as prominent enhancers for participation. In regards to place, Brower and Dettinger (1998) mentioned that the physical component is an important factor in higher education learning communities. Several students acknowledged that living in “nice dorm” was something they liked about the program.

Relationships with peers and peer leader models enhanced participation. Students described a perception that the RLC was “different” than other dorms in terms of the group of people who made up the community. The students wanted to be around people who were like them—motivated, active, and cared about school. Students also described the significance of their peer leader model in their first year. Through interaction with peer leader models, the student participants gained self confidence and got connected to opportunities for involvement, including applying to be a peer leader themselves. The importance of peers to leadership identity development was also emphasized in Komives et al.’s (2005) Leadership Identity Development (LID) Model. In the LID study, students described how older peers became role models who served as both motivators for involvement and provided models of friendship (Komives et al.,

2005). Astin (1993) claimed that the single most important environmental influence on student development in the peer group. Tinto (1993) also stressed that peer mentors (and first-year residential learning programs) contribute to student retention because of the increased interaction and involvement.

Residential learning communities are designed to facilitate participation that integrate students' living and academic environments and provide social and intellectual support (Shapiro & Levine, 1999). Theme two highlighted how the meanings made by students through their participation in the first year experience were motivational factors for continued involvement as a peer leader. Their positive experiences of belonging, personal growth, and the opportunities to build relationships and connections could be considered ingredients for encouraging student development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) stressed that students need to find "academic and social niches" early in their academic career (p. 654). This helps student to feel connected to the institution and allows for the formation of friendships and observation of role models (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). The peer leaders in this study acknowledged a sense of comfort that came from being part of a smaller "home" within the large university. Students in this study talked repeatedly about the friendships made in the community. Both faculty and students recognized the value of getting connected to campus organizations, and described how the RLC provided a network to easily accomplish this.

While the research question under discussion was not specifically intended to highlight the first year experience, the data revealed that experiences of membership in the first year were meaningful as it related to students' movement towards more advanced levels of membership. The benefits of participation in the first year described in this study were consistent with other literature. First-year learning communities have been shown to promote a sense of community,

support and friendship networks (Jaffee et al., 2008), as well as make the adjustment to college life easier and served as a springboard to other campus involvement (Firmin et al., 2010). Based on this study's conceptual model, identity formation is constructed through the social processes of the learning community. Theme one and two not only provided insight into issues of access and opportunities for community participation, but also highlight how leadership learning is situated with social and cultural context of a first-year experience program. The social processes that influenced a positive first-year experience also influenced students' leadership identity construction.

Research Sub-Question b: What is the influence of faculty on students' experiences of membership? The positive influence of faculty-student interaction on student learning and development is well documented in higher education literature (Astin, 1993; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Firmin et al., 2010; Tinto, 1993). The faculty recognized that the community is more than the classroom. Faculty members were influential in creating environments and fostering relationships that developed the capacity for connectedness between and among students and with faculty (Palmer, 2002; Tinto 1998). They took ownership in walking the talk—they not only taught students about leadership, but also modeled for students what leadership looks like through their own roles inside and outside of the RLC.

Komives et al., (2005) described the developmental role that adults play in students' leadership identity formation. According to the Leadership Identity Model, adults served as affirmers, models, sponsors, mentors, meaning-makers, and friends (Komives et al., 2005). In this study, faculty members were also meaning makers. Instructors influenced students learning in the first year through instruction of the curriculum, and they also set the tone and expectations for the role and practices required of the peer leader in the classroom. The peer leaders described

their supervising instructor as a professional mentor who helped them to understand and perform their peer leader roles. The faculty served as the “expert” to whom students could go to for help. Faculty believed peer leaders played an important role in the community, and that came through as peer leaders described their interactions with the faculty. Peer leaders said that they felt cared for and known by their instructor, and utilized them as a personal resource. In this way, the faculty became to the peer leaders what peer leaders were to first-year students.

Research sub-question c: What meanings of leadership are taken up by students as they transition from first-year members to second-year peer leaders? Within the framework of this study, leadership was conceptualized as a social meaning-making process within a community of practice (Drath & Palus, 1994), and leadership identity was described as a learning process by which individual develop a sense of who they are and how they make meaning of involvement in groups through various roles (Lord & Hall, 2005; Komives et al. 2005, 2009). Literature supports the proposition that leadership identity can be expressed through both internal beliefs and external practices (Green, 2009; Lord & Hall, 2005; Wenger, 1998). That is why "meanings of leadership" in this study were represented by theme four, *Beliefs about Leadership*, and theme five, *Leadership Roles and Practices*. The findings provided a developmental view of how students' meanings of leadership changed over time in response to, and within, the students' situated experience. Meanings of leadership were not only represented as general beliefs or descriptions of leadership, but also through authentic application within the leadership learning community.

Theme two was primarily organized temporally. This was influenced by Wenger's (1998) assertion that “negotiation of meaning is a fundamentally temporal process, and one must therefore understand practice in its’ temporal dimension” (Wenger, 1998, p. 86). Students shared

written assignments from their leadership classes in which they reflected on their definitions of leadership. These writings, when viewed in light of program documents, faculty perspectives, and students' individual interviews, provided insight into how students' learned leadership in community. Students' reflections on their beliefs upon entering the community illustrated simple, person-centered beliefs that emphasized leadership as a position. After participation in one semester in the leadership community, students expressed leadership definitions and shared examples reflective of relational processes between leaders and followers for the purpose of goal achievement. They attributed their changing beliefs to their own experiences of learning in class, participation in service, reflection and observation of others. The student participants expressed a desire to enact leadership through future roles of service on campus and in the local community, as well as through the peer leader role.

Students' second-year representations of their leadership beliefs were more sophisticated and complex, focusing in even greater detail on leader-follower relationships, goals, and transformation/change that occurs in self, others, or communities. The students' identified learning in the classroom and experiences in the peer leader role as influential to their changing definitions. They also described how involvement in campus organizations and work experiences provided an opportunity for leadership practice, reflection, and observation-leading to an increased awareness of self in relation to other peer leaders. Students affirmed that the peer leadership experience helped bring to life the concepts they had learned in class.

Leadership identity literature traditionally focuses on a dynamic, stage-based development process that represents a shift from self-identification to social identification (Day et al., 2009). Lord and Hall (2005) suggested that leaders' identities tend to shift from individual to more collective orientations as their leadership performances progress from novice to expert

levels of skill. In this study, a “shift” in beliefs was evident as students moved from first-year members to second-year peer leaders. The peer leaders’ development of knowledge and skills as defined by and applied to the community modeled what Lave and Wenger (1991) described as legitimate peripheral participation.

Komives et al. (2005, 2009) described how students’ leadership constructions change as they take on complex leadership challenges within a context that allows them to meaningfully engage with others, including older peers and adults as mentors and meaning makers (Komives et al., 2005, 2009). According to the Leadership Identity Model (Komives et al., 2009), the peer leaders in this study seemed to be experiencing a transition from an “independent view of self with others” (leader identified, stage three) to an “interdependent view of self with others” (leader differentiated, stage 4) (p. 18-19).

While the LID model offers a constructive-developmental description of identity formation, the goal of this research was to extend our understanding of leadership identity using a social-constructionist framework. Within this framework, "leadership" and "leader" are considered social constructions brought into being through the repetition of words in texts about leadership (Ford et al., 2008). Grint (2000) suggested that leaders are restricted by the social discourses (language, traditions, and ways of life) in which they operate. Exploring the influence of theories was important to this study because theories provided an available discourse, or language, from which students could make meaning of their leadership experiences. According to course syllabi, students were exposed to a variety of theories in their leadership classes. However, several theories emerged as "favorites", including path-goal leadership, servant leadership, transformational leadership, and leadership traits and skills (see Appendix M for a brief description of these theories). Students were able to express how these theories had

meaning in their own life and how they influenced their individual practice of leadership in the peer leader role. As students made meaning of their experience through the lens of theory, it helped them to develop confidence, focus on relationships, identify uniqueness in others, and recognize the needs a situation in order to adapt their leadership style to be most effective. Participants did not struggle to name a favorite theory—the “theory language” was on the tips of their tongues. The students had, through previous coursework, thought about the connections between theory and practice. Peer leaders expressed a leadership discourse, or language for talking about leadership, within their particular historical and cultural situation (Hall 2007). Hall (2007) explained that the knowledge which discourse produces has power when exercised in practice.

In this study, meanings of leadership were also expressed through role representation and associate leadership practices. Interviews, writings, and documents revealed the stated expectations of the peer leader role, as well as the multiple and fluid lived roles that represented who peer leaders were and what they did in the community. Peer leader played in-class roles of a teaching assistant, student-teacher liaison, and peer teacher/facilitator. As peer leaders gained experience in these roles, they were able to contribute more than just administrative help to the teacher. They engaged in planning and facilitating course activities and discussion. The participants identified peer leaders’ out-of-class roles as a helper and a role model/mentor. Peer leaders answered questions and acted as a resource for students; they believed that through building relationships with students they were helping students them grow. Peer leaders also played an important connecting role between the classroom and community environments. As peer leaders facilitated a variety of events and coached student teams, they helped to bridge the academic and social components of students’ lives.

It is interesting to note the consistency between the descriptions of peer leadership roles that emerged in this study and other research on peer mentors/peer educators. For example, Colvin and Ashman (2010) studied second-year students who served as peer mentors in a first year experience class. They differentiated a “peer leader” as a dimension of peer mentoring. A mentor was acting as a peer leader when they encouraged involvement and good study skills (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). Other roles of a peer mentors included serving as connecting link to campus involvement, as learning coaches, as student advocates (liaisons between students and instructors), and a trusted friend (someone to go to for help outside of class) (Colvin and Ashman, 2010). Although categorized differently, these roles were also identified by the participants in this study. This study was interested in how the roles and practices represented students’ meanings of leadership; however, these similarities bring forth implications of the powerful contextual influence of the higher education learning environment in shaping role identification. What makes this research on peer leader roles meaningful is the insight into students’ role negotiation and how through the practice of these roles they embody and reflect the leadership discourse of the community.

Peer leadership in this case was more than a title or position. It represented the embodiment of relational leadership processes through the practices associated with multiple roles. As students talked about their roles, it became clear that they were challenged by the negotiation of power, authority, and accountability associated with their various roles. The students negotiated leadership roles in an environment designed to foster friendships, while at the same time placed them in a position of authority and influence over their peers. They were "not an RA"—meaning that they did not see themselves as having the authority for policy

enforcement, and did not want students to see them as someone who could potentially get them in trouble.

The student participants also struggled knowing when to be a "friend" versus being a "peer leader". Students learned how to balancing those roles based on context of the situation and changing needs of the students they were leading. How students negotiated meaning in various situations (and adapted their styles or approaches accordingly) may be explained through the embodiment of situational leadership theories expressed by students. While that was not explored directly in this study, it could be a point for future research more specifically focused on connecting theory and practice.

This study utilized beliefs about leadership and role identification to describe how meanings of leadership were embodied by students as they transitioned from first-year student into peer leader roles. These findings provided evidence that participation in the learning community enhanced students' leadership capacity; and that "capacity" itself was defined by the shared language, practices, and design of the leadership learning community.

Research Sub-Question d: What are the social and cultural implications of these meanings as they relate to higher education's call to enhance students' leadership capacity?

This question challenged the researcher to reflect on and describe the social and cultural factors that influenced students' meanings of leadership, and also to reveal the outcomes of those meaning in relation to the communities in which the students were situated—the Residential Leadership Community itself and the larger land grant institution. It was assumed that within a leadership community of practice, meaning was made through a process of negotiation that combines both participation (action and connection of community members) and reification (turning abstract theory into forms by which we experience or "do" leadership) (Wenger, 1998).

Learning is our personal history of *doing, with others, in a situated context* (Wenger, 1998). As Hall (2008) described, learning is not only attaining factual knowledge, but achieving ways for knowing through discourse.

Theme six knit together concepts appearing throughout multiple themes to identify students' ways of knowing in practice. Students come to know what to through both participation in formal training and curriculum (courses), as well as through their non-formal experiences of community membership and leadership roles in practice. This aligns with what Lave and Wenger (1991) described as the presence of a both "teaching curriculum", largely constructed for the instruction of "newcomers", and a "learning curriculum", or the learning resources identified by the learner through everyday practice (p. 97).

Even with training and resources, students sometimes felt like they "did do not know" what to do, so they would "go with their gut"—or what felt natural. It is worth noting that from a social constructionist paradigm, "going with one's gut" would also be considered a socially constructed practice. It could be assumed that what feels "natural" may actually be a cultural default, or response that is representative of meaning making in the moment based on prior experience either within or outside of that community.

The social processes within a community of practice cannot be considered in isolation (Wenger, 1998). That is why theme seven, meanings of multi-membership, was important to this study. Students described their involvement in other communities, organizations, and work-experiences. While they did not yet hold "leadership positions", they were engaged as members in practices of those other communities. Students described how participation in other communities influenced their peer leader role. They gained access to examples and opportunities that enhanced their own learning, which they could also share with the students they were

leading. Students gained experience working with a diverse group of people and testing out problem solving and communication skills needed for their work as a peer leader. In turn, they were able to apply their learning as a peer leader to other roles. Students described how they utilized theory to be more effective in other roles. Some students felt more confident in themselves and their ability to communicate. Others utilized a participative, relational leadership style to help facilitate goal achievement in other groups. And, all of the students described a desire and readiness to take on future leadership roles outside the community. An important implication to consider is that students do draw from the larger culture to make meaning of leadership, and apply these meanings through practice in other communities. As most students are on a trajectory out of the community, it is important to understand how students' experience in the program prepare them for "what's next" (Wenger, 1998).

While theme seven provided evidence that peer leaders fulfill the stated program mission, "to enhance students' leadership and interpersonal skills, enabling them to be more effective leaders in any organizational structure" (RLC, n.d.a.), theme eight offered insight into how the peer leaders embody an "unofficial" lived program mission. Documents were analyzed alongside participants' own descriptions of their experiences in the community. What emerged was an overview of the taken-for-granted realities of what the program's purpose or mission is—why it exists.

The mission of the RLC was expressed through three dimensions, or lived elements. First, the program exists to promote college success, and specifically enhance students' transition to college and integration into campus involvement. Second, the program provides foundational leadership knowledge and skill development. As has been discussed, "foundational knowledge" is determined by the theoretical and topical discourse of the community.

The third element of the mission was to prepare students for future leadership roles. Within this element there were conflicting interpretations of “future leadership roles”. While the current mission statement says explicitly, “any organizational structure”, the lived experience and everyday practice of faculty and students serving as peer leaders in a first-year leadership learning community suggested that “future” roles referred to the next larger community of practice; that is, the campus and surrounding community. This study showed that peer leaders not only construct identities in fulfillment of the program mission, but they also became instrumental to the reproduction of the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In peer leader roles, they embodied the mission-related elements—their leadership in practice helps new first-year students to also fulfill the mission.

Overarching theme: How students constructed leadership identities. The findings expressed through the eight primary themes integrate into one overarching theme: *As students move from being first-year members to being second-year peer leaders, their beliefs and practices of leadership embody and reflect the mission-oriented design of the living-learning community.* The identity construction process of peer leaders is represented visually through Figure five. The overarching theme summarizes students’ identity construction as both a process and a product of the experience of membership in the residential leadership community. The theme and model provide a basis for applying the results of this study to leadership education and research.

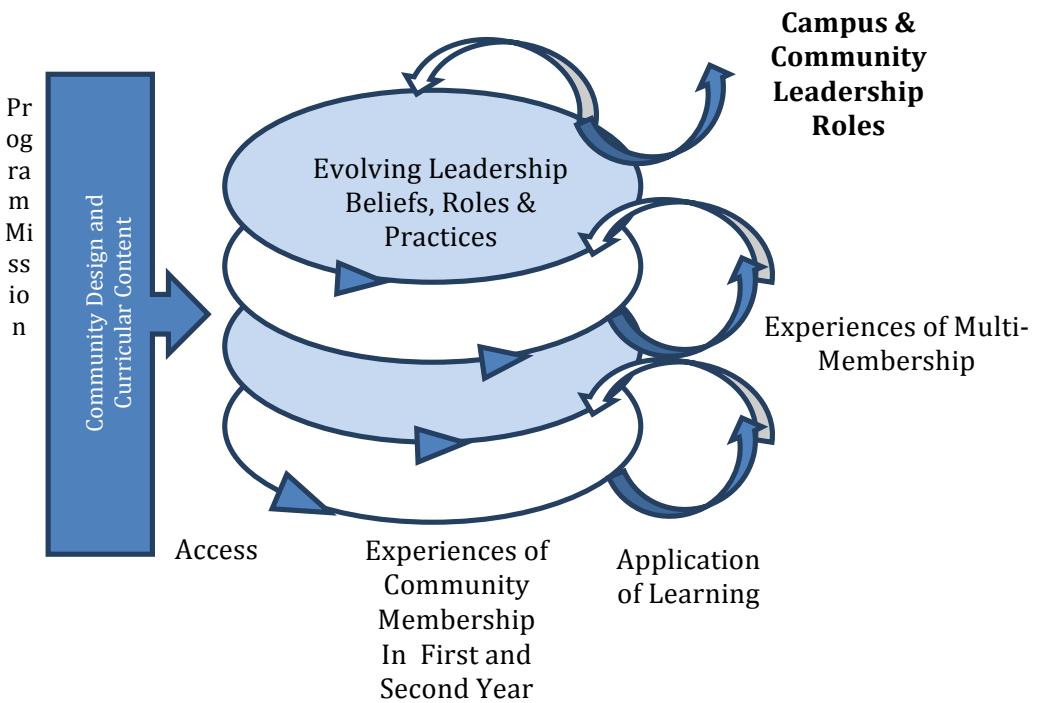


Figure 4: A proposed model of leadership identity development within a collegiate living learning community, showing how students embody the mission oriented design of the community.

This study was unique in that it theoretically converged situated and social learning theories with contemporary leadership perspectives to explore leadership identity construction in a higher education setting. In particular, it applied the communities of practice construct to leadership living-learning community, and illustrated leadership identity formation as a process legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). A greater understanding of social learning processes informs student leadership program design and pedagogy, and offers insight into how learning communities can promote holistic student development while achieving higher education goals for leadership development.

Implications for Practice

A challenge for leadership educators is to provide curriculum and experiences that put to practice what we know about how student learn, and also model the leadership values, theories,

and practices that we desire to develop in students. The findings of this study point towards several broader conclusions and implications for leadership educators:

The mission of the program defines the community of practice. In this case study, the lived mission represents more than a stated goal. Rather, it reflects mutual accountability—a relational commitment a shared perception of what matters most (Wenger, 1998). The practice of leadership is understood by the meaning students make through their engagement with others towards a common interest, shared purpose, and through shared discourses in the community (Wenger, 1998). The community provides a learning trajectory for learning through participation in the community, and ultimately, out of the community. This matters because that trajectory answers the question, “Leadership for what?” In this case, members were moving towards leadership roles in the RLC itself, and eventually in other campus and community organizations. Recommendations for practice include:

- Revising the stated mission to better capture the lived experience of students and faculty.
- Strategic planning decisions should be mindful of the ways that community design inhibit or enhance community engagement.

Peer leaders’ development is largely an apprenticeship process. This study illustrated how peer leaders are legitimate peripheral participants within the leadership learning community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As students move into the community, they have peer leader models and faculty to help them who help them make sense of new information, new environments, and every-day practices of the community. They participate in the authentic activities of being a college student in the RLC. Brown et al. (1989) also calls this a process of cognitive apprenticeship. As we saw through the findings, as students become peer leaders, they

become the “expert” who apprentices new members. Yet, even in the second year, peer leaders were still learning and they looked mainly to each other and to the faculty to help make sense of their experiences of leadership practice. In light of this, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

- Continue to provide opportunities for students to engage influential older peers and adults. Due to the significance of the peer leader/student relationship, it may be beneficial to have additional peer leaders in the community to interact with first-year students.
- Create learning environments that provide meaning-making opportunities for students, especially peer leaders, to reflect through dialogue with each other. Peer leaders noted how important it was for them to talk to each other about their experiences.
- Continue to utilize peer leaders as facilitators in the classroom. Faculty plays an important role in mentoring peer leaders, especially by inviting them into the instructional planning process.
- Peer leaders may benefit from a more formal mentoring relationship (perhaps with an intern or alumni member) during their second year.
- Considering that most students do not have the opportunity to continue membership as a peer leader, it could be beneficial to have more exposure to alumni or older students who serve as models of “what’s next”.

The curriculum matters. This may seem self-evident. However, as this study points out, students learn from both a formal, course based curriculum, and also through their informal experiences of membership. The design of in- and out-of-class experiences should be

intentional. The theories and concepts utilized in course discussion and reinforced through assignments created a leadership discourse for the community. Theories were applied and embodied through the peer leaders' experiences.

As program administrators and faculty consider program design, it is important to consider not only the questions of "What is leadership", but also "Leadership for what?" This helps to frame from a theoretical perspective what an "expert" leader needs to know and do. In the case of the Residential Leadership Community, peer leaders were attracted to relational, process-oriented theories that they found most relevant to their college experience. While curriculum should provide a foundation in leadership theory, it should recognize that "foundational" is subjective and socially constructed. It is important to enhance the curriculum with information and experiential learning to assist peer leaders identifying and negotiating their roles. The researcher makes the following recommendations:

- Re-evaluate and clarify what "foundational" leadership knowledge and skills are for first- and second-year college students in the RLC.
- Faculty and administrators may need to re-evaluate what kind of "authentic" experiences are facilitated through classroom assignments. If the program desires to develop leaders for more than college leadership roles, then there needs to be further connection with "real life" experiences and direct opportunity for engagement off campus.
- Provide space for conversation around the social construction of leadership. A curricular emphasis on the situational and contextual nature of leadership definitions and practice could assist students in making meaning of various roles inside and outside of the community.

Research Recommendations

This study was utilized a situated learning framework to explore leadership identity as a process of legitimate peripheral participation. The resulting findings provided a picture of how peers make meaning of leadership, and also how they engage in leadership practices as they move through the community. The following topics are recommended for future research in the area of leadership education and higher education learning communities:

- There is a need to conduct longitudinal research on peer leaders to understand how leadership identity changes over time. As members continue to lead in other communities, what roles do they play and how do their beliefs evolve in response to the design of those communities?
- Additional research should be conducted with students who did not choose to continue participation as a peer leader. Of interest is the question: Does the RLC have the same level of influence on their leadership identity without the second-year, reinforcing experience? Or, do students find that their learning is reinforced through external experiences?
- Utilizing a social constructionist framework calls for ethnographic methods allowing for observation of students' every-day, lived experiences. This study could be repeated with a new peer leader cohort to include participant observation. It would be beneficial to begin the case study earlier in their situated experience; for example, when they are applying to be peer leaders. Documenting their experience through the training process, as well as through their year in the leadership position, could allow for even greater understanding of the social and cultural forces at play in the identity formation process.

- There is a need to explore leadership identity construction in leadership learning communities that are not first-year experience programs and not living-learning communities. For example, on same the campus of the land-grant university where the study took place there are several other leadership programs organized around a major (business), a social sub-culture (military), and a certificate program (co-curricular training).
- Additional research could be conducted on living-learning communities where leadership is not the explicit topic of study. Do peer leaders engaged in those communities construct identities differently? It would be interesting to explore how different contexts play into students' understanding of meanings of leadership in a more specific, career or interest-related field of study. Perhaps this would give greater insight into whether it is the design or the textual discourse (theories) that is more influential to identity formation in a higher education context.

Finally, this study provides a foundation from which to explore the discursive nature of leadership. Discourse analysis offers tools to further explore patterns in and across statements about leadership, and identify the social consequences of different discursive representations of leadership (Gee, 1999; Jorgenson & Phillips, 2002). Barge and Fairhurst (2008) also identified a systemic constructionist approach guided by three interrelated questions related to language, knowledge, power and identity development (i.e., How is leadership performed? What counts as leadership? And, what are consequences of particular leadership constructions?) (p. 230-231). As social constructionist approaches to leadership continue to evolve, discursive forms of inquiry will likely become, as Carroll and Levy (2010) suggested, increasingly valuable in shaping both our conceptual understanding of leadership and challenging leadership education practices.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – *a priori* Table

Proposition	Supporting Literature	Research Question	Data Collection
1. Leadership identity is socially constructed through the negotiation of meaning of experiences of membership in communities of practice	<p>Communities of practice are the prime context in which we engage in meaning making (Wenger, 1998).</p> <p>Leadership is a type of social-meaning making process and may be best learned in a community of practice (Drath & Palus, 1994).</p> <p>Building an identity consists of negotiating the meaning of our experiences of membership in social communities (Wenger, 1998).</p> <p>Leadership identity is a learning process by which individuals develop a sense of who they are and how they make meaning of involvement in groups through various roles (Komives et al., 2005, 2009; Lord & Hall, 2005).</p>	<p>How do college students studying leadership within a themed living-learning community construct leadership identities as they transition from first-year members to second-year peer leaders?</p> <p>a. How do students gain access to membership? b. How do faculty/administrators facilitate experiences of membership?</p>	Student Interviews/Focus Group Faculty Interviews Document Analysis
2. Leadership identity is influenced by changing roles in a community of practice.	<p>Identity is constructed as students move from peripheral members of a community towards full membership; this process is called legitimate peripheral participation and involves the development of knowledgeably skilled identities (Lave & Wenger, 1991).</p> <p>Identity is a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of “becoming” in the context of our communities (Wenger, 1998)</p>	<p>a. How do students gain access to membership? b. How do faculty/administrators facilitate experiences of membership?</p>	Student Interviews Faculty Interviews
3. Leadership identity is influenced by the negotiation of membership in multiple communities.	<p>Members of communities of practice are connected to other communities of practice (Wenger, 1998)</p> <p>Identity is developed through the reconciliation of membership in membership in multiple communities (Wenger, 1998)</p>	<p>a. How do students gain access to membership?</p>	Student Interviews and Focus Group
4. Leadership identity can be expressed or represented through both internal beliefs and external practices.	<p>The relationship between identity and leadership can be found in representation (Green, 2009).</p> <p>Leaders' identities shift from individual orientations to more collective orientations as they gain knowledge and experience through practice (Green, 2009; Komives et al., 2005; Lord & Hall, 2005).</p> <p>Identity reflects how our unique perspectives and understandings are shaped through participation in social communities (Wenger, 1998).</p>	<p>c. What meanings of leadership are taken up by students as they transition from first-year members to second-year PLs?</p>	Student Interviews and Focus Groups Student documents (philosophy paper)
5. Socially constructed leadership beliefs and practices are influenced by the shared language and discourse of the	When identity is viewed as socially, historically, and culturally constructed through practice, that construction is influenced by the shared language, conventions, and codes that make up the dominant discourse (Bruner, 1990; Cote & Levine, 2002;	<p>a. How do students gain access to membership? b. How do faculty/administrators</p>	Student Interviews & Focus Group Faculty Interviews Document Analysis

leadership learning community.	Taylor & Spencer, 2004). Leaders are constrained by the social discourses in which they operate (Grint, 2000). Leadership constructions are brought into being through language; leaders become the embodiment of leadership theory (Ford et al, 2008).	facilitate experiences of membership? c. What meanings of leadership are taken up by students as they transition from first year-members to second-year PLs? d. What are the social and cultural implications of these meanings?
6. The culture of a community influences students' leadership identity construction	Learners embody structural characteristics of the community; the social structure of a community, its power relations and conditions for legitimacy define possibilities for learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Processes of leadership are connected to the larger cultural frame in which they occur; culture-building is the primary process of meaning making in collective experience and the primary leadership process. (Drath & Palus, 1994) Learning is a process of enculturation, the definitions and use of conceptual tools (knowledge and skill) is defined by the culture in which they are used (Brown et al. 1989)	c. What meanings of leadership are taken up by students as they transition from first year-members to second-year PLs? d. What are the social and cultural implications of these meanings?

Appendix B – IRB Approval Document



VirginiaTech

Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060
540/231-4606 Fax 540/231-0959
e-mail irb@vt.edu
Website: www.irb.vt.edu

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 24, 2011

TO: Rick Rudd, Kerry Priest

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires May 31, 2014)

PROTOCOL TITLE: RLC Leadership Identity Study

IRB NUMBER: 11-877

Effective October 24, 2011, the Virginia Tech IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore, approved the new protocol for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at <http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm> (please review before the commencement of your research).

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved as: **Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 5, 6, 7**

Protocol Approval Date: **10/24/2011**

Protocol Expiration Date: **10/23/2012**

Continuing Review Due Date*: **10/9/2012**

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federally regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals / work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

Invent the Future

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution

Appendix C – Peer Leader Recruitment Letter

Date

Dear (Insert Name):

You have been identified as a resource for your work as a peer leader in the Residential Leadership Community at Virginia Tech. Because of your work as a peer leader and as a first-year member, I believe you can provide essential information and insight regarding your experiences as a student in a leadership living-learning community. Your insight and relationships with students and faculty offer a perspective that is unique to many issues and topics related to leadership and student development.

While working as the graduate assistant for the RLC, as an instructor, and now as the director, I have become very interested in how students learn, experience, and practice leadership in a community environment. I have found an opportunity, through my research, to highlight our unique environment as a potential model for other leadership educators with the goal of developing student leaders.

Therefore, I would like to ask you to take part in a study of PLs' participation in a leadership living learning community. By participating in this study, your commitment would consist of two interviews and a focus group session. As a participant you will be asked to:

- Participate in two one-on-one interviews where you will be asked questions about your experience in the community, your attitudes and beliefs about leadership, and your own practice of leadership. These should last approximately one hour each.
- Participate in a focus group with other PLs to discuss study findings. This should take approximately one hour.
- Allow any journals or papers written for your peer leader class to be included as data for the study. These will be analyzed for content only, they will not be graded by me and my findings will not impact your grade in any way. Any identifying information will be removed from your paper, so your confidentiality will remain protected.

If you are interested in setting up a time to interview or would like more information about this study, please contact me at the email address or phone number below. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Kerry Priest, PhD Candidate in Agricultural & Extension Education/Leadership
kpriest@vt.edu
770.605.3946

Appendix D – Student Consent Form

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent for Participants in Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Consent Form Student Interviews, Focus Groups, and Documents

You are invited to take part in a research study focused on Virginia Tech Residential Leadership Community. We are asking you to take part because you have been a student in the RLC program and are now serving in a peer leader role. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before you consider taking part in this study.

What the study is about: The purpose of this study is to describe leadership identity formation of peer leaders within a collegiate leadership living learning community.

What we will ask you to do: If you agree to participate in this study, you will take part in two one-on-one interviews and a focus group, each lasting approximately 60 minutes at a location on campus. The interviews and focus group will take place over the next 5 months. These sessions will be audio recorded. You will also be asked for permission to see documents used or created by you in your daily activities and coursework.

Risks and benefits: We do not anticipate any risks associated with you participating in this study, other than those encountered in day-to-day life. The study will not have any direct benefits for you, but your participation will help us learn more about how students learn leadership in a learning community environment.

Compensation: There will be no compensation for your participation in this study.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to refrain from participating in the interviews now or at any time in the future. If you decide not to take part it will not affect your current or future relationship with Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time.

Confidentiality: Your name will not be used in the recording of the interviews, focus groups or in any written publications. The audio recordings from the interviews will be kept in a secure file. Only the researchers will have access to this material. The written transcript of the observations and electronic file will also be kept secure. This consent form will be stored in a locked file separately from the tape and transcript. Personal identifiers will be removed from all documents you disclose.

If you have questions: The researchers conducting this study are Dr. Rick Rudd, Professor, Agricultural & Extension Education, and Kerry Priest, PhD Candidate in Agricultural and Extension Education and Interim Director for the RLC. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Kerry Priest at kpriest@vt.edu or (540) 231-6649 (office) or (770) 605-3946 (cell). If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board for Human Participants (IRB), <http://www.irb.vt.edu/>.

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

I understand that this interview will be audio recorded.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Additional Participant Information Requested:

Age _____

Gender: _____

Appendix E – Faculty Recruitment Letter

Date

Dear (insert name):

You have been identified as a resource for your work as a faculty member (administrator) for the Residential Leadership Community at Virginia Tech. Because of your work, I believe you can provide essential information and insight regarding your experiences teaching students in a leadership living-learning community. Your relationships with students and other faculty offer a perspective that is unique to many issues and topics related to leadership and student development.

While working as the graduate assistant for the RLC, as an instructor, and now as the director, I have become very interested in how students learn, experience, and practice leadership in a community environment. I have found an opportunity, through my research, to highlight our unique environment as a potential model for other leadership educators with the goal of developing student leaders.

Therefore, I would like to ask you to take part in a study of PLs' participation in a leadership living learning community. By participating in this study, your commitment would consist of a one-on-one interview. As a participant you will be asked to:

- Participate in a one-on-one interview where you will be asked questions about your experience in the community, your attitudes and beliefs about leadership, your observations of student learning, and your own practice of leadership. These should last approximately one hour.
- Allow copies of your course syllabus and other instructional materials used in your class/programming to be included as data for the study. These will be analyzed for content only. Any identifying information will be removed from the texts, so your confidentiality will remain protected.

If you are interested in setting up a time to interview or would like more information about this study, please contact me at the email address or phone number below. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Kerry Priest, PhD Candidate in Agricultural & Extension Education/Leadership
kpriest@vt.edu
770.605.3946

Appendix F – Faculty Consent Form

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent for Participants in Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Consent Form Faculty and Administrator Interviews and Documents

You are invited to take part in a research study focused on Virginia Tech Residential Leadership Community. We are asking you to take part because you have been or are currently serving as a faculty member for the RLC, and/or you serve in an administrative role that supports the RLC. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before you consider taking part in this study.

What the study is about: The purpose of this study is to describe leadership identity formation of peer leaders within a collegiate leadership living learning community.

What we will ask you to do: If you agree to participate in this study, you will take part in a one-on-one interview lasting approximately 60 minutes at a location on campus. This session will be audio recorded. You will also be asked for permission to see documents used or created by you in your daily activities and coursework related to the RLC.

Risks and benefits: We do not anticipate any risks associated with you participating in this study, other than those encountered in day-to-day life. The study will not have any direct benefits for you, but your participation will help us learn more about how students learn leadership in a learning community environment.

Compensation: There will be no compensation for your participation in this study.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to refrain from participating in the interviews now or at any time in the future. If you decide not to take part it will not affect your current or future relationship with Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time.

Confidentiality: Your name will not be used in the recording of the interviews, focus groups or in any written publications. The audio recordings from the interviews will be kept in a secure file. Only the researchers will have access to this material. The written transcript of the observations and electronic file will also be kept secure. This consent form will be stored in a locked file separately from the tape and transcript. Personal identifiers will be removed from all documents you disclose.

If you have questions: The researchers conducting this study are Dr. Rick Rudd, Professor, Agricultural & Extension Education, and Kerry Priest, PhD Candidate in Agricultural and Extension Education and Interim Director for the RLC. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Kerry Priest at kpriest@vt.edu or (540) 231-6649 (office) or (770) 605-3946 (cell). If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board for Human Participants (IRB), <http://www.irb.vt.edu/>.

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

I understand that this interview will be audio recorded.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix G – Peer Leader Interview Guide – Round One

The purpose of this interview is to obtain some background information and describe students' experiences and impressions as a first-year student and second-year peer leader in the Residential Leadership Community.

Note for any of the following questions, these follow up questions may be asked:

- Please tell me more about that.
- Please explain what you mean by (when you say that)
- What does that look like? Or, what does that feel like?

Interview Protocol	RQ
Review Informed Consent and ask if there are any questions.	
Thank you again for participating. First, I would like to get to know you a little better by learning about your experiences before the RLC:	
1. Describe your leadership experience before college.	A
2. Why did you apply to be in the RLC?	A
Now I would like to know a little more about your experience as a first-year student.	
3. Upon joining the RLC	A
a. How did you meet other students?	
b. What were your first impressions?	
4. Describe what you believe/feel are the benefits or value of being a member of the RLC.	A, C
5. What was your most memorable experience as a first-year student in the RLC?	A, C
Now let's talk more about your experience as a peer leader	
6. Describe how you became a peer leader in the RLC.	A, C
a. For what reasons did you want to be peer leader?	
7. What do you do as a peer leader in the RLC?	A, C
a. What do you see as your primary role?	
b. Describe your typical week as a PL?	
8. How did you learn <i>how to be</i> a peer leader?	A, C
a. How do you know what to do?	
b. Where do you go for help?	
9. Describe the part of your role do you enjoy most.	
a. Now, describe the part of your role you enjoy the least.	
b. Follow up: Please explain your reasons.	
10. Describe what happens when peer leadership is working well.	
a. Describe what happens when it is not working well.	
b. Follow up: How can you tell?	
11. What is different about being a peer leader in the community as opposed to being just a member?	
Let's talk a little bit now about how peer leaders interact with other people inside and outside of the community ...	
12. Please describe your interactions with others in the community:	A, B, C, D
a. First year students	
b. Other peer leaders	
c. Instructors and administrators	
d. Residence Life Staff	

e. Are there any others that you interact with?	
13. What other communities, organizations, or groups are you a part of?	A, B, C, D
a. What role do you play in these other communities?	
b. How do these other groups impact your role as a peer leader?	
c. How does being a peer leader in the RLC impact your role in those other groups?	
I have a few more questions related to your beliefs about the RLC ...	
14. In your own words, how would you describe the goal or mission of the RLC?	B, C, D
a. In what ways do see yourself as a peer leader contributing to the goals or mission of the RLC?	
15. Is there anything you wish you could change about the RLC?	B, C, D
16. How has the RLC impacted your overall college experience?	B, C, D
17. My final question is ... What's next for you? What do you plan to do after serving this year as peer leader?	D

Thank participant.

Remind student that they will have the opportunity to review the transcript.

Confirm that you will be contacting them in several weeks to review the transcript and set up a second interview date.

Ask if there are any questions or concerns you can address.

Appendix H – Peer Leader Interview Guide – Round Two

The purpose of this interview is to obtain additional detail and reflection to better understand how students make meaning of their peer leader experience in the RLC, and how their role and practices have changed over time.

Note for any of the following questions, these follow up questions may be asked:

- Please tell me more about that.
- Please explain what you mean by (when you say that)
- What does that look like? Or, what does that feel like?

Interview Protocol	RQ
Review Informed Consent.	
Thanks for continuing to participate in this study. In this interview I'd like to learn more about your experiences as a peer leader in the RLC. First, I'd like to hear about how this semester is going ...	
1. As you think about the different between last semester and this semester, describe what you feel like has been the biggest change in your role as a peer leader	A B
a. What do you do differently in class? b. What do you do differently out of class? c. How do you interact with faculty this semester? d. How do you interact with students this semester?	
2. As you think about the roles you play, your leadership in action, how do you describe your leadership style?	C
a. How has your leadership style or approach changed this semester? b. How did this change come about? Or, to what do you attribute this change?	
3. Let's talk a little more about the peer leader course. How would you describe the curriculum of this course? a. How has it influenced what you do as a peer leader?	B C
4. In the RLC, it sounds like you've had an opportunity to learn about a lot of different leadership theories and approaches. Describe a topic or theory that you align with or find significant, or that is your "favorite"? a. How has this influenced your own philosophy or definition of leadership? b. How has it influenced what you do as a peer leader	C
5. Thinking about all the people you interact with, who has been most influential in your learning and growth as a PL? a. How have they been influential? Or for what reasons have they been influential?	B
6. My next couple questions relate to culture and community of the RLC. a. How would you describe the community culture of the RLC? b. How has this culture impacted your experience as a student? As a leader?	D
7. Describe an event or interaction that you feel was a real success ... something you felt proud of? How did you learn from that experience? a. Now how about the flip side? Was there an event or interaction you felt was a challenge or maybe didn't go so well? Tell me about that. How did you learn from that experience?	A C

-
- | | | |
|----|--|--------|
| 8. | Let's say you are giving some advice to next year's peer leaders. Describe what it takes to be a "good" leader in the RLC? | A
C |
| a. | How did you come to this belief about what "good" leadership is? | D |
| 9. | Since we last talked, how have you gotten involved (or more involved) in campus/outside the RLC? | A
D |
| a. | How do you feel the RLC helps or hinders your ability to get involved with other communities? | |
| b. | How do you balance all your responsibilities? | |
-

Thank participant.

Ask them to for permission to review their final leadership paper from PL class.

Remind student that they will have the opportunity to review the transcript (in next week or two)

Confirm that you will be contacting them in several weeks to set up a focus group date.

Ask if there are any questions or concerns you can address.

Appendix I – Peer Leader Focus Group Guide

The purpose of this focus group is to provide a forum to confirm and further discuss topics that came up repeatedly during the first two interview rounds and participants' submitted writings about leadership. Through this process, I will share my interpretations of your comments related to your experiences in the community and your role as a PL. As outlined in your consent form, your participation is voluntary. This focus group will be recorded and transcribed in order to accurately capture your responses to the questions and to allow for further analysis. Because this is a confirmatory focus group, these quotes may or may not be used in the final document; however, your identity will remain anonymous in the final written report. It is implied that each participant will keep the comments discussed here confidential as well. Please feel free to share openly in response to the questions.

Focus Group Protocol

Thank you for your participation! Your contributions are very valuable to this study and to the RLC.

Review Informed Consent and Purpose

Can I answer any questions at this time?

1. In the first round I asked you about why you joined the RLC and also what were the benefits of participation? Responses varied, but most people talked about knowing someone who was already in it, as well as the reputation of the RLC (as a suite style dorm with AC) and also as something different than "other" dorms—some participants were drawn to the idea of experiencing more than a "regular" freshman. You desired to be around people who were similar to you. This idea carried over into your descriptions of benefits of participation. Some people found that it was beneficial to be around people with common interests, and you recognized that there was something different, even special, about being part of the RLC. I would like to reflect a little more on these thoughts:
 - a. In your mind, what makes the RLC "different" or "special"?
 - b. What are some of the commonalities among RLC students?
 - c. Do you think people come into the community with these commonalities or are they formed as part of the community?
 1. In the first round we talked about the mission/goals of the RLC you mentioned things like developing an understanding of leadership, developing leadership skills, helping students transition to college, helping students become campus leaders, and fostering meaningful relationships. You also expressed your role in relation to the mission as a moral support/encourager/confidence builder, resource and connector to campus opportunities, role model, and facilitator (that helps them understand the value of the curriculum).
 - a. Is there anything you would like to add based on your experience?
 - b. What aspect or part of your role has been most important/essential to achieving the mission/goals of the RLC?
 2. Continuing to explore the PL role, many of you described in both your leadership philosophies and through the interviews that the style you use is based on the situation – how you think about your role and how you practice leadership is based on things like the social context and the students' motivation and engagement. I'm interested in understand this a little more. <If it's helpful you could diagram this on a flip chart.>
 - a. Can you describe/clarify how your understanding of your leadership situation(s) changed over your time as a PL? and,
 - b. How have you seen your own and others' roles changed in response?
 - c. Do you feel like you have "mastered" peer leadership as it is defined through your
-

participation in the RLC?

3. Based on your leadership reflection papers and writings, as well as through the interviews, I noticed a progression in how you express your leadership beliefs over time:
 - Early philosophies were expressed as person centered, positional, and simple
 - Your expression of philosophies moved into a reflection of processes between leaders and followers for goal achievement. There was an emphasis on future practice related to helping others grow.
 - You identified these things as influential to your change in philosophy (first semester): classroom learning about theories, participation in service, reflections, and observations of others.
 - Your revised philosophies seemed to focus more on leader-follower relationships, goals, and some sort of transformation/change that occurs in self, others, or community.
 - Your second-year philosophies were highly influenced by PL experiences, involvement in campus orgs/work, and increased awareness of self and others (reflection and observation), as well as continued class assignments and discussions.
 - a. How did study of leadership become more "real" or "personal" after participating in your changing roles in the community?
 4. Throughout the interview rounds, a topic that was repeatedly mentioned was related to the challenge of "friend versus PL"; or negotiating in the moment how to exercise various levels of (power-authority, influence, and accountability) within various physical and social contexts. For example, you expressed that PLs are "not an RA", and "not the instructor" but also "not really a student/member".
 - a. Can you elaborate on the challenges associated with this "middle" ground?
 - b. How did working through this influence your own growth as a leader in the community?
 5. I'd like to share a more general set of themes that seem to have emerged from your interviews and writings in relation to students' leadership development as part of the community:
 - The design of the community facilitate relationships (design being anything from physical structure/layout of building to types of assignments in the curriculum)
 - Relationships facilitate involvement and sense of belonging in community and campus
 - Involvement in community and campus facilitates leadership practice (application)
 - a. What are your thoughts on these themes?
 - b. Do you have any additional examples that would support these ideas? ?
 6. Some of the theories/concepts that have been most prevalent—either implicitly or explicitly - as they relate to your philosophy and practice are transformational, servant/citizen, path-goal (and related styles), traits/skills, and strengths.
 - a. Do you agree with this list?
 - b. Are there any others you would include?
 - c. Why do you think these theories have been most relevant to you (as PLs)?
 7. When asked what you are doing next or how PL role has influenced your other commitments, you gave a variety of responses, ranging from increased confidence, improved communication and people skills, to taking on new leadership positions and engagement in service organizations.
 - a. As you are approaching the end of your PL experience, please share a few a few final thoughts on how you feel this experience has prepared you to lead in future roles?
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Appendix J – Faculty/Administrator Interview Guide

The purpose of these interviews is to understand the culture and discourse of the community as perceived by the faculty. It will be useful in triangulating data regarding students' experiences, as well as provide insight into the community's leadership and learning context and content.

Note for any of the following questions, these follow up questions may be asked:

- Please tell me more about that.
- Please explain what you mean by (when you say that)
- What does that look like? Or, what does that feel like?

RQ

Review Informed Consent and ask if there are any questions.

1. Please describe your role as it pertains to the RLC. B

2. What do you perceive as the purpose or goal of the RLC? B,
D

3. From your perspective, describe the value of participation in the RLC for students? B,
D

4. What do you see is the role of peer leaders?
a. If instructor: What do you ask your peer leaders to do in the classroom? D
b. If instructor or res life staff: What do you see peer leaders doing out of the classroom?

5. How do you see peer leaders grow during their experience? B,
D

6. What do you think are the greatest challenges for peer leaders? B,
D

7. Describe the curriculum of the RLC. B,
D

8. Describe the community of the RLC. B,
D

9. Describe the role of faculty/administrators in the RLC. B

Thank participant.

Remind them that they will have the opportunity to review the transcript.

Confirm that you will be contacting them in several weeks to review the transcript.

Ask if there are any questions or concerns you can address.

Appendix K – List of Documents Reviewed

Students' Written Works

- First-Year Leadership Philosophy Papers (from Fall 2010)
- Second-Year Leadership Philosophy Revisions (from Fall 2011)
- Peer Leader Event Reflection Papers (from Fall 2011)
- LDRS 2964 (Peer Leader Course) Final Papers (from Fall 2011)

Documents and Web Pages

- DSA. (n.d.a). *Living Learning Communities*. Retrieved from Housing & Residence Life website
- DSA. (n.d.b). *Resident Advisor Duties and Responsibilities*. Retrieved from Housing & Residence Life website
- RLC (n.d.a). *About Us*. Retrieved from RLC web site
- RLC. (n.d.b). *Lesson Plan by Topic Folder* [File Archive]. Retrieved from Online RLC Faculty Resource Site
- RLC (n.d.c). *Residential Leadership Community*. Retrieved from RLC web site
- RLC. (Fall 2010a). *LDRS 1015 Syllabus* [Word Document]. Retrieved from Online RLC Faculty Resource Site
- RLC (Fall 2010b). *Final Leadership Paper Rubric* [Word Document]. Retrieved from Online RLC Faculty Resource Site
- RLC. (Fall 2010c). *Peer Leader Application* [Word Document]. Retrieved from RLC Operations Resource Site
- RLC. (Fall 2011a). *2011 Service Experience Description_Timeline* [Word Document]. Retrieved from Online RLC Faculty Resource Site
- RLC. (Fall 2011b). *LDRS 1015 Syllabus* [PDF Document]. Retrieved from Online RLC Faculty Resource Site
- RLC. (Fall 2011c). *LDRS 2964 Syllabus* [Word Document]. Retrieved from Online RLC Faculty Resource Site
- RLC. (Spring 2011a). *February 19 Goals and Agenda* [Word Document]. Retrieved from RLC Operations Resource Site
- RLC. (Spring 2011b). *February 19 Training* [PowerPoint]. Retrieved from RLC Operations Resource Site
- RLC. (Spring 2011c). *LDRS 1016 Syllabus* [Word Document]. Retrieved from Online RLC Faculty Resource Site
- RLC. (Spring 2011d). *Roles of a PL* [Word Document]. Retrieved from RLC Operations Resource Site
- RLC. (Spring 2012). *LDRS 2964 Syllabus* [Word Document]. Retrieved from Online RLC Faculty Site

Appendix L – Theme and Category Summary

Alignment of emergent themes and categories to research questions.

Themes	Sub-Themes	Categories	Connection to Research Questions
1. Access to varying levels of membership		Joining the RLC Becoming a peer leader Relationship with peer leader Continuing participation in community	A. Access
2. Meanings of the first year experience		Experience of belonging Experience of personal growth Developing relationships and connections	A. Access
3. Influence of Faculty		Role of Faculty in RLC Faculty as professional mentor Faculty as Personal Resources	B. Influence of faculty/admin
4. Beliefs about Leadership	Leadership representations in first year	Early beliefs Changing philosophies Influence of community experiences Meaning applied to future roles	C. Meanings of Leadership D. Social/cultural implications
	Leadership representations in second year	Changing beliefs Beliefs become "real" through practice	
	Influential theories	"Favorite" theories Theories influence beliefs and practice	
5. Peer Leader Roles and Practices	In-class roles	Teaching assistant Student-teacher liaison Peer teacher/facilitator	C. Meanings of Leadership D. Social/cultural implications
	Out-of-class roles	Helper Role model/mentor	
	Connections between in class and out of class	Lead peer events Coach group projects	
	Role negotiation	Not an RA Friend vs. PL Changing student needs	
6. Knowing in Practice		Knowing from training and curriculum Knowing from experience	D. Social/cultural implications
7. Meanings of Multi-Membership		Influence of other involvement on PL role Influence of PL role on other involvement Preparation for future roles	D. Social/cultural implications
7. Embodiment of Program Mission		Perceptions of the program mission Peer leaders embody the program mission	D. Social/cultural implications
Overarching Theme:			
As students move from being first-year members to being second-year peer leaders, their beliefs and practices of leadership embody and reflect the mission-oriented design of the living-learning community.			

Appendix M – Description of “Favorite Theories”

Theory	Description*
Path-Goal	Focuses on how leaders motivate subordinates to accomplish designated goals. Emphasizes the relationship between leader's style and characteristics of the work setting. The leader uses a style that best meets the subordinates' motivational needs.
Servant Leadership	An approach emphasizing how leaders should be attentive to concerns of followers; put followers first, empower them, and help them discover their full potential. Emphasis on ethics and serving the greater good.
Transformational Leadership	A process that changes and transforms people; concerned with emotions, values, ethics, and long-term goals. Involves an exceptional form of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them.
Skills Approach	Suggests certain knowledge and skills are needed for effective leadership.
Trait Approach	One of first attempts of studying leadership; theories focus on identifying innate qualities and characteristics possessed by great leaders. Identifies a list of traits one should cultivate to be perceived as a leader by others.

*Note: All definitions were taken from *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 6th ed. by Peter G. Northouse (2009). This was the text used in the student participants' first year LDRS 1015 course.