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Voices of the lived experiences of alumni who completed an undergraduate leadership program in a small liberal arts college

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**Voices of the lived experiences of alumni who completed an undergraduate
leadership program in a small liberal arts college**

by

William Joseph Soesbe III

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Education (Educational Leadership)

Program of Study Committee:
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Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2012

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my three children,

Will, Kenna, and Ava

Who inspire and love me for who I am

My parents,

William J. Soesbe Jr. and Pam K. Paumen

Who instilled in me the value of a hard day's work and the confidence to dream big

My friends and family,

Who have supported and sacrificed along with me during this journey

My students,

Who challenge me to the best teacher and person that I can be

I owe my success to all of you.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of alumni who completed an undergraduate leadership program. Specifically, graduates from a private liberal arts institution located in the Midwest who completed a leadership education program are highlighted and served as the focus for the study. The institution involved, its leadership program, other programs affiliated with it, and the participants were all provided pseudonyms. The institution is referred to as Midwest College and the leadership program was provided the pseudonym Certificate of Leadership Program (CLP). The emphasis on leadership education in higher education is a relatively recent phenomenon and little has been published about the lived experiences of those completing leadership programs.

The main purpose of the qualitative study was to learn about the lived experiences of alumni who participated in and graduated from a leadership program. A phenomenological case study approach framed the study and semi-structured interviews were predominately used to collect data. The overarching research question was, “What are the lived experiences of alumni who participated in an undergraduate leadership program?” There were a total of 11 participants and each participated in a series of one-on-one interviews. Seidman’s three interview series (1991) was used as a framework to situate the interviews and Colaizzi’s phenomenology data analysis model (1978) was applied in order to analyze data. Following the data analysis process, 12 themes emerged. The themes that revealed themselves included *ownership of learning, awareness of self, traditional learning, collaborative learning, experiential learning, getting out of the comfort zone, participation in deep and intentional reflection, cultivation of dispositions, gained knowledge, acquisition of skills, servant leadership, and applications of leadership.*

This study contributes to understanding the meaning alumni constructed as part of their involvement in a leadership program. A figure as part of a conceptual framework was developed and is illustrated to provide a visual representation of the findings. The findings and conclusions added to the leadership literature base. Moreover, the findings serve as a resource for the development of future leadership programs and can help administrators, faculty, and staff refine current ones. The dissertation concludes with recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The desire to understand, define, and explain the essence of leadership has interested researchers and scholars for most of the twentieth century.

C. L. Brungardt

Background

Leadership programs as part of undergraduate institutions have enjoyed vast growth over the past two decades (Riggio, Ciulla, & Sorenson, 2003; Schwartz, Axman, & Freeman, 1998). Within higher education and over the past 30 years, leadership programs have grown from a few to over a thousand (Brungardt, Greenleaf, Brungardt, & Arensdorf, 2006). The growth in leadership programs and leadership experiences is reflective of the need for more and better leaders (Kan & Reichard, 2009) and what many leadership scholars have perceived as a leadership crisis (Wren, 1995). This crisis has remained a focus of higher education for the past 20 years. There are many approaches and practices to leadership development such as servant leadership (Greenleaf, 2002), transformational leadership (Burns 1978; Dantley, 2003), leading with soul (Bolman & Deal, 1995), leadership behavior (Kouzes & Posner, 2002) and moral leadership (Fullan, 2001), yet it appears the dilemmas facing the development of leaders has not been resolved. Parks (2005) attributes the inability to solve the predicament to our world becoming “more complex, diverse, and morally ambiguous” (p. 2).

Midwest College initiated a curricular leadership program, identified as the Certificate of Leadership Program (CLP) nearly 12 years ago, and designated it as an academic minor. Its primary function is to help prepare the institution’s students to live lives of leadership. The college has four pillars as part of its mission including leadership, service,

faith and learning; the CLP program directly supports the college's mission statement through its leadership initiatives.

Since the CLP's inception, the program has grown exponentially and played vital roles on campus and within the community (F. A. Stone, personal communication, May 21, 2011). In 2001, one student graduated with a minor in leadership education and in 2011, 82 students successfully completed the program (K. Johnson, personal communication, September 21, 2011). The CLP has become one of the flagship programs on Midwest College's campus and has received local, state, and national acclaim. The college was honored with a place on the 2011 President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll in part because of the role of the Leadership Education Institute (LEI) (D. R. Jones, personal communication, May 12, 2011), and was awarded with a 2010 MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship for its Building Communities Project (MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship, 2011). The leadership program, although relatively young, has been an integral part of educating the institution's students as part of its liberal arts underpinnings and helping to prepare students for lives of leadership.

Statement of the Problem

The need and desire to develop leaders has resulted in a growing body of literature about leadership development (Dugan & Komives, 2007); however, many questions pertaining to leadership development, program effectiveness, and student outcomes remain unanswered. Leadership scholars have identified a variety of areas that require additional research including: determining what leadership program factors lead to leadership development in underrepresented populations, the relationship of curricular and co-curricular experiences and how the two collectively influence the development of leadership outcomes,

and the need for research which develops taxonomies of program elements such as budget and staffing (Fincher & Komives, 2009). However, these suggestions often do not focus on collecting qualitative data from those who actually participated in the programs. These voices, and specifically the voices of alumni, have largely remained unheard.

Most leadership programs have prescribed criteria and expectations of what students are expected to gain and be able to do as a result of their participation. Specifically, outcomes focusing on attainment of knowledge, skills, and dispositions have been attributed to involvement in leadership experiences. However, what are students really gaining? Likewise, what meaning do students attach to these acquisitions and the processes experienced? Lastly, how are leadership outcomes being implemented and applied upon graduation? These questions have not been adequately addressed within the literature, and specifically through qualitative inquiry. Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) pointed out the “picture one gains from the qualitative evidence for the impact of leadership is very different from that gained from quantitative” (p. 636); this demonstrates a need for additional insight into leadership development through qualitative inquiry.

Scant research exists concerning the lived experiences of students as part of leadership experiences. The voices of students need to be heard and reflected in the literature. Paying closer attention to these voices can add to the research base and provide a more holistic understanding of leadership’s role and its impact on developing leaders. Additional scholarship is needed to ensure programs are meeting the needs of all students and are serving their intended purpose. Research of this nature would help create better leadership programs that effectively meet the needs of students, and highly effective leadership programs benefit broader society (Fincher & Komives, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological case study is to make meaning of the lived leadership experiences experienced by alumni who completed a leadership program as undergraduates while enrolled at Midwest College; a private liberal arts college in the Midwest. Individual experiences of leadership were reduced to a description of the universal essence. This description involves “what” was experienced and “how” it was experienced. This essence of the leadership experience provides insight into how leadership experiences shaped the lives of students and how these lived experiences have been implemented personally and professionally.

Rationale of Study

Literature concerning leadership programs within higher education is growing; specifically information about the history of programs (CAS, 2009); development of programs (Eich, 2003, 2005; Zimmermann-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999a; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999b); assessment and evaluation of leadership programs (Eich, 2008; Owen, 2008); and program outcomes (Bialek & Lloyd, 1998; Black & Earnest, 2009; Dugan, Komives, & Associates, 2006; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Eich 2008). DiPaolo (2002) also studied the impact of leadership education on undergraduate students and described their lived experiences. Nonetheless, there is still a dearth of information which intentionally focuses on the lived experiences of undergraduates who participated in a leadership program. Research about the perceptions and meaning constructed by alumni is even more scarce. Although there is some literature available addressing the impact of undergraduate leadership experiences from the perspectives of alumni (Bialek & Lloyd, 1998; Eich, 2009; Haber, 2009), there is an evident void in the research base. Slack (2009) noted, “We have a critical

mass of alumni whom have experience with formal leadership education programs and are waiting to be engaged to provide information about the meaning of their leadership education in their current life” (p. 2). Hence, research focusing on the voices of alumni would provide valuable data.

Research Questions

Leadership education and development has shown to have significant impact on students in higher education. Eich (2009) reported students referred to their participation in a leadership program as one of the most influential experiences in college. Even though leadership programs are becoming more intricate and complex (Haber, 2009) and are in better alignment with the needs of students, institutions, and society, there is an increasing demand for more and better leaders. Haber (2009) posits that if an objective of higher education is to prepare and equip students to be leaders then “we should concern ourselves with what alumni...are saying” (p. 10).

For these reasons, I want to understand the perspectives of Midwest College alumni and help their voices be heard. This study attempts to fill a void in the research. The overarching research question is, “What are the lived experiences of alumni who participated in an undergraduate leadership program?” and the following research questions will assist in addressing that question:

1. How did alumni construct the meaning of leadership?
2. What meaning did alumni construct?
3. In what ways have alumni applied what was gained within their personal and professional lives?

The research questions were addressed through data collected from alumni following an extensive qualitative process. The findings were based on the following assumptions and expectations:

1. Participants were truthful in sharing their lived experiences when answering interview questions.
2. Participants were complete and detailed when responding to interview questions.

Significance of the Study

A study of the meaning constructed by undergraduate leadership students is important for several reasons. A study of this context provides an opportunity for unheard voices to be recognized and acknowledged. By identifying students' perspectives based on their lived experiences a more substantial understanding of leadership experiences can be attained. In addition, by identifying the meaning of leadership from the perspective of alumni, and understanding how these meanings shape their lives, staff and faculty associated with leadership programs will be better equipped to work with and teach students.

The findings of this study could potentially lead to changes in the design of leadership programs and modifications in policies and practices. This would help to ensure leadership programs are meeting the needs of students, and preparing them for the challenges faced within their personal and professional lives.

Lastly, the findings should contribute to the literature of leadership development, purposely focusing on the lived experiences of alumni. Studying the lived experiences of alumni should provide valuable insight into leadership development; leadership attainment; definitions of leadership; and knowledge, skill, and disposition acquisition. This insight would develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

Research Design and Strategy

The study is framed within qualitative research. Qualitative methodology allows participants to express their stories and can provide a rich and detailed description of actual program outcomes, content, and processes (Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999a). Qualitative researchers seek to determine the meaning of a phenomenon from the perspective of participants (Creswell, 2009).

The epistemology of the study was constructionist and it followed a basic interpretivist theoretical perspective. The methodology used was phenomenological case study and the methods to collect data included semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Moustakas' (1994) recommendations for phenomenological research framed the study, Seidman's (1991) three-interview series guided the interview process, and data analysis was constructed with the aid of Colaizzi's phenomenology data analysis model (1978).

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective is an individual's analysis of the human world and the social dimensions within that world (Crotty, 1998) and can serve as an overall orienting lens (Creswell, 2009). Crotty (1998) posited the theoretical perspective is the philosophical position behind the methodology and it helps to ground one's assumptions. In addition, the theoretical perspective helps the researcher focus the study and determines how to collect and ultimately analyze data.

This qualitative study is guided by the basic interpretive approach. Interpretivism is inductive and produces research which is largely laden with descriptive text (Merriam, 2002). At the heart of interpretivism is *verstehen* which means "understanding" (Prasad, 2005, p.

14). Merriam (2002) indicated that in this type of study the researcher is interested in understanding what meaning a phenomenon has on those involved. The overall interpretation will be the researcher's understanding, which is influenced by discipline, theories, or models of participants' constructed meanings, of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2002). Merriam (2002) explained the objective of the approach is then to "uncover and interpret these meanings" (p. 39) which are based on the participants' views of the situation (Creswell, 2007). As part of this process interpretivists are subjective (Prasad, 2005). Creswell (2007) noted the approach is broad, and the more open-ended the questioning the better, as this helps participants construct meaning of the situation.

Definition of Terms

Following are operational definition of terms central to the study:

Community Engagement Center: The CEC is an institutional center which supports and encourages students, staff, and faculty in the development, coordination, and evaluation of external relationships that are effective for student learning and vocational development, advance public scholarship, and benefit community partners.

Building Communities Program: The BCP is associated with the course ID 351 and is an intergenerational service-learning partnership with schools and adults from the local community. It provides an opportunity for students to integrate theory and practice.

ELCA: The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is a community of faith of which Midwest College is a member and serves as the religious affiliation for the institution.

High School Leadership Program: The HSLP is a hands-on learning experience that includes training in team-building skills and leadership development. The week is highlighted by a service trip to Chicago. The HSLP provides an opportunity for juniors in high school to participate in a summer institute where they study and practice leadership skills and service as a form of community and civic engagement. Students work under the direction of faculty and staff affiliated with the Leadership Education Institute.

Individualized Projects of Service: The IPS is a customized leadership laboratory that is designed based on a community need in which students can have a measurable impact. The IPS is associated with ID 351 and is an alternative to the Building Communities Project. It can be completed in teams or individually and requires three to four hours per week over the course of the 14 week term.

ID 351: This one credit course is titled *Leadership Theories and Practices*, and is taken by third year or fourth year students. The class provides a critical reflection on theories of leadership and civic responsibility within the context of different disciplinary backgrounds and their application to community service projects.

Leadership Certificate: Upon completion of the Certificate in Leadership Program, students receive a certificate for successfully meeting the criteria established by the program.

Leadership Advisors: Advisors are faculty and staff who have been appointed to serve the Leadership Education Institute in its various endeavors such as advising students and serving as a resource for internal and external needs.

LS 151: This one credit class titled *Exploring Elements of Leadership* provides an introduction to the study of leadership as an academic discipline. It is the first required class for the CLP and is typically completed in a student's second year of study.

LS 450: This half credit class is called *Leadership Certificate Summary Seminar*, and is the culminating class as part of the CLP. It is typically taken in a student's final year. The objectives of the class are to provide students with time and assistance to complete their leadership portfolio.

MBTI: The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment is a psychometric survey designed to measure psychological preferences in how people make decisions and perceive the world.

Service, Education, and Leadership Committee: SELC is a standing committee of the faculty as part of the college's faculty governance structure and serves in an advisory role to the Leadership Education Institute. It is comprised of faculty members, the Director of the Leadership Education Institute, Leadership Advisors, and students.

StrengthsFinder: Created by the Gallup organization and based on the research of Dr. Donald Clifton, StrengthsFinder is an online assessment of normal personality which provides the user with his or her top five personality strengths. Additional resources are available to interpret the strengths and their meanings.

Volunteer Center: The VC is a student-run organization on Midwest College's campus committed to inspiring students to form a lasting bond with the communities in their lives, while learning and living out the value and importance of serving others.

Summary of Study

Leadership development and educational programs are relatively recent trends in higher education. Although the research concerning leadership programs is growing, many gaps currently exist. The purpose of this study is to make meaning of the lived experiences experienced by alumni who completed a leadership program. Research questions focus on determining the meaning of leadership constructed by alumni, and how participation in the program contributed to personal and professional leadership development. The dissertation is organized into six chapters.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction and overview of the research study.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature concerning leadership education and leadership education programs within higher education. The relevant literature reviewed and described is divided into numerous sections including an overview of leadership, leadership theories, a synopsis of leadership education, history of leadership education, goals and outcomes of leadership programs, and effective leadership program design. This section assists the reader in understanding the history, composition, and intended outcomes of leadership programs affiliated with higher education. The paucity of information from the perspectives of alumni concerning their leadership experiences demonstrates the need for increased attention to this significant area in higher education.

Chapter 3 delineates the methodology used to ground and outline the qualitative inquiry. This chapter further introduces and provides a rationale for the research design and situates the work within the researcher's ontological beliefs. In addition, the nature and essence of the phenomenological case study is framed through its constructionist and basic interpretivist underpinnings. The methods utilized, including semi-structured interviews and

document analysis, are described and positioned within the epistemology and theoretical perspectives. Moreover, the use of Colaizzi's phenomenology data analysis model (1978) is described. Chapter 3 also includes discussions of confidentiality and trustworthiness with particular attention given to the credibility, transferability, dependability, and the confirmability of the study.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the case studied specifically addressing Midwest College and its characteristics. It also serves to describe the Leadership Education Institute and specifically the Certificate of Leadership Program. Finally, this chapter provides descriptive data of Midwest College's leadership program graduates in order to provide an overview of the program's alumni.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the study as related to the experiences and meanings gained from the perspectives of alumni who completed Midwest College's leadership program as part of their undergraduate studies. In order to accomplish this, the participants were exhaustively described. This was necessary to provide context as the findings were based upon the data collected and analyzed from these participants. In this chapter, the research questions were answered and themes and evidence were described. The themes were used to initiate discussions concerning the findings and the existing foundational literature.

Chapter 6 discusses conclusions including applications to practice; a conceptual framework is provided and explained; recommendations for institutions, faculty, and staff are given; and suggestions for further research are outlined. At the conclusion of the chapter a reflexivity statement is provided which reflects on the research process.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of the literature provides a basic overview of leadership, leadership theories, leadership education, and leadership programs in order to establish an understanding of what has been researched and published relevant to this particular study. Chapter 2 organizes the literature into key components which provides grounding, insight, and context for the study. The sections include: (a) overview of leadership, (b) leadership theories, (c) overview of leadership education, (d) history of leadership education, (e) overview of leadership programs, (f) effective leadership program design, and (g) goals and outcomes of leadership programs.

The literature was located by first identifying a list of key terms and phrases such as leadership, leadership programs, undergraduate leadership experiences, history of leadership programs, goals of leadership programs, leadership theories, outcomes of leadership programs, and effective leadership program design. These terms were searched within ERIC, Dissertation and Thesis, Professional Development Collections, and various leadership databases. In addition, secondary sources were used to locate primary sources. Lastly, sources were retrieved after reviewing what other researchers and scholars referenced and cited. The references used spanned from 1888-2011.

Introduction to Leadership

“Leadership is one of the world’s oldest preoccupations” (Bass, 1990, p. 49). Bass’ statement indicates leadership is one of the foundational components of society; yet, it is still “one of the most observed and least understood phenomena” (Burns, 1978, p. 2). Cronin (1984) concurred and expressed, “Leadership is one of the most widely talked about subjects and at the same time one of the most elusive and puzzling” (p. 22). Leadership is usually

recognizable, but at times difficult to articulate. It can be exercised to liberate people and provide services; and it can be used to exploit, manipulate, and minoritize. Frank (1993) stated, “Since the first two people came together for the purpose of completing a task, the subject of leadership has been debated” (p. 381). These debates often center on conversations such as who can be a leader, how leadership is defined, the role of leadership theory, and the differences between leadership and management. For instance, some view leadership through the lens of inherited or acquired characteristics and others see it as something that can be taught and acquired. It appears to be collectively desired, but difficult to define as leadership has different meanings and connotations. Hence, leadership is often nebulous.

As society has evolved so have the views of leadership. Stogdill (1974) stated “there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept” (p. 259). Russell (2008) indicated leadership can refer to actions and words; it can mean the process of guiding and coordinating; and it can be formal or casual, beneficial or destructive, implicit or explicit. Yukl (2009) posited leadership generally pertains to a group process that involves two or more people attempting to reach a common goal. Colvin (2003) suggested leadership is a reciprocal process in which followers are inspired and stimulated by someone in a leadership role and all work towards an “authentically shared goal, vision, or mission” (p. 29) or more comprehensively expressed, “the capacity and passion to engage others in making a positive difference in society” (p. 30).

Rost and Barker (2000) suggested most educators still view leadership as a result of an individual’s characteristics, abilities, or actions. Day (2001) complimented Ross and Barker and indicated leadership has typically been considered an individual-level

competency. However, more contemporary stances on leadership view it as a social process which energizes everyone (Drath & Palus, 1994). In this situation, every person can be a leader and leadership serves as a cause rather than an effect (Drath, 1998). It is apparent that leadership is not an easily contextualized and described phenomenon; yet exceedingly sought after.

Demands for more and better leaders in the public and private sector, within education and business, and among for-profits and not-for-profits are often expressed. This is partly due to how perceived leaders in society are acting and the characteristics associated with them. It is a common occurrence to observe and read stories disseminated by the media which focus on a politician's unethical behaviors, a business person's rise to power through unscrupulous actions, a religious figure's downfall due to immoral dealings, or the celebration of a high profile athlete's disdainful character. Additionally, stressors facing society such as terrorism, civil unrest, and health epidemics present new challenges never before encountered in size and scope (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Nevertheless, society expects and deserves better leadership (Kan & Reichard, 2009).

The attention on leadership is not a new phenomenon, but only within the last century has it made its way into general literature. The publishing of Burns' book *Leadership* (1978) generated renewed enthusiasm and created greater interest in leadership (CAS, 2009). People have access to a variety of leadership opportunities such as books, seminars, and workshops as part of higher education. Moreover, there has been a steady increase in the number of publications written and the variety of courses and workshops offered which focus on becoming a leader and on leadership development. Riggio (2008) reported many of the best-selling books are about developing leadership skills. Murphy and Riggio (2003) shared

that in 2003 75% of large scale companies spent approximately \$8,000 per person on leadership development opportunities and focused on task-oriented skills such as mentoring, goal setting, and 360 feedback. Additionally, in the United States, 12 billion dollars was spent in 2007 on leadership development programs (Avolio & Hannah, 2008).

Only within the past few decades has leadership become emphasized within higher education. This attention can be attributed to an increased demand and need for more and better leaders, and changes in philosophical beliefs. Colleges and universities are aware that corporations and businesses emphasize leadership skills. Thus, in order to serve both graduates and employers, more focus has been placed on leadership development (Kan & Reichard, 2009).

There is an assortment of theories that frame and guide leadership. Belief systems have shifted along the continuum from leadership being viewed as something with which one is born to the idea that it can be acquired, from being focused on individuals to collaborative groups, and an ever increasing distinction between leadership and management has been made. The pendulum continues to swing as older theories are resurfacing with modifications and a new name. Moreover, new ideas and perspectives are gaining popularity and additional leadership theories are gaining footholds within the literature.

Leadership Theories

Theory has been defined in a variety of ways by scientists, sociologists, and philosophers. Its function and use varies depending on the academic field and the purpose and application of the theory. Many have defined and redefined theory overtime. Kerlinger (as cited in Anfara & Mertz, 2006) defined theory as, “a set of interrelated constructs, definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying

relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting phenomenon” (p. 9). Esterberg (2000) indicated theories are stories about how the world works. She argued that theories are always in a state of revision and are susceptible to change as perspectives are modified and advanced.

In order to understand theory, Anfara and Mertz (2006) suggested researchers must remove themselves from the process and discover a different way to think; they must look through different lenses, and must stretch the mind to see things never before uncovered. The result is an ability to make sense of complex phenomena. This process is not so straightforward and involves moving from concrete to the abstract (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). Theories, although at times complex and abstract, help to explain the world and phenomenon.

Overview.

Various foundational leadership theories have been developed and used over time to guide leadership. Approaches to leadership include such perspectives as “Great Man,” “trait,” “contingency,” “influence,” “exchange,” “situational,” “transactional,” “transformational,” “participative,” and “behavioral.” Often times it is assumed each of these approaches is new and original; instead, it has been determined that similar ideas and concepts as part of these theories have been expressed and discussed throughout history. In recent years leadership has developed into its own field of study. Chemers (1984) noted the scientific study of leadership can be divided into three periods: the trait period from 1910 to World War II; the behavioral period, from the beginning of World War II to the late 1960s; and the contingency period, which started in the late 1960s.

Great man theories.

Dominant theories on leadership from the 1800s to the 1930s focused on the centralization of power and were referred to as Great Man theories (Klingborg, Moore, and Varea-Hammod, 2006). These theories were popularized by Carlyle (1888) and later by Woods (1913) and are said to be grounded in inheritable traits. Great Man theories were popular in the early 1900s and focused on leaders, specifically great men like Mahatma Gandhi and Abraham Lincoln, who made significant contributions to society and history (Northouse, 2007). In addition, leaders were perceived as being heroic and rose to a leadership role as needed. Part of the theories' premise is that great men are born, not made. This thought presumes that leadership is inherent. In addition, it maintained the gender balance in who could be perceived as a leader. Bass (1985) indicated high ranking religious figures, kings, and chiefs served as symbols in the Old and New Testaments and in Greek and Latin classics. Furthermore, he noted myths and legends described great leaders and these stories were critical in the establishment and growth of civilized societies.

Trait theories.

Great Man theories were challenged by theorists and began to diminish in the 1930s and were replaced with trait theories which identified and described required traits necessary to be a leader (Klingborg, Moore, & Varea-Hammod, 2006). Stogdill (1948) identified six trait types associated with leadership, including: participation, status, capacity, achievement, responsibility, and situation. Trait theories precipitated from research on leadership emergence and leadership effectiveness and indicated those who led were different from those who followed (Chemers, 1984).

The work of Greek philosopher, Aristotle, can be linked to concepts now formalized as trait theory (Chemers, 1984). Trait theory also supported the idea that leadership was inherited, and certain inherited traits and qualities made people better leaders. In alignment with this perspective, Chemers (1984) suggested that all one would need to do is locate a person who possessed the desirable traits and appoint them leader. However, this theory meant that institutions, businesses, and organizations were at the mercy of the gene pool with regard to whether or not leadership traits could be acquired (Frank, 1993). Leadership depended on the “luck” of which genes were obtained and ultimately expressed.

Two arguments against this approach involved people who had desirable traits, but did not become leaders; and those who had desirable traits, but were ineffective leaders. For instance, it was observed that some people exhibited the desired and “necessary” traits, assumed leadership positions and responsibilities, but ended up being poor leaders. Stogdill completed two different reviews of an assortment of studies and specifically attempted to discern patterns of leadership (Chemers, 1984).

In one review (Stogdill, 1948), Stogdill examined 124 cases between 1904 and 1947, and in another (Stogdill, 1974) he explored 163 studies conducted between 1949 and 1974. Stogdill identified six traits associated with leadership, but he concluded that traits alone do not identify leadership (Frank, 1993). Stogdill (1948) posited, “A person does not become a leader by virtue of the possession of some combination of traits” (p. 64) and predicted that leadership theorizing would be ineffective until personal and situational characteristics were included (Chemers, 1984). Stogdill purported that traits affiliated with effective leadership varied from situation to situation (Frank, 1993). More recently, scholars have made “efforts

to find a smaller number of broadly defined categories that would simplify the development of trait theories” (Komives, 2007, pp. 46-47).

Behavioral theories.

The general rebuking of the trait theory approach and increasing attention to research rooted in behaviorism encouraged leadership scholars to further study leadership behaviors (Chemers, 1984). Behavioral theory contends there is one best way to lead. Beginning in the late 1930s, extensive research was conducted about leadership styles (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). It has been suggested that Lewin, Lippitt, and White’s research was not as important as the definition of leadership they developed in terms of behavioral style (Chemers, 1984). Chemers (1984) noted their work served great importance for later research and theory development.

Behavioral leadership made progress in identifying some patterns and establishing dimensions of leadership behavior, but attempts to relate the behavioral factors to group and organizational outcomes were never realized (Chemers, 1984). Trait and behavioral leadership theories attempted to identify the best style of leadership. However, these approaches failed to understand that no one style of leadership was effective across all disciplines, circumstances, and social contexts (Chemers, 1984). Although other leadership theories have since emerged, behavior theories are still relevant and researchers such as Kouzes and Posner (2002) continue to add to this theory base.

Contingency theories.

The 1940s experienced an increase in psychoanalytical theories, later labeled as contingency theories (Chemers, 1984). These theories focused on context; and attempted to determine why people are motivated to lead or to follow a particular leader and placed more

attention on groups and organizations (Klingborg, Moore, & Varea-Hammod, 2006). These theories focused on the idea that diverse situations require different aspects of leadership (Northouse, 2007). Leaders adapted their behaviors based on the context of the situation.

Contingency theories address how leadership style affects organizational outcomes and are centered on the leader; minimal attention is given to the characteristics of subordinates (Chemers, 1984). Fred Fielder is credited with developing the first of these models (Northouse, 2007).

Fiedler's work suggested people could be labeled as "task motivated" or "relationship motivated" (Fiedler & Chemers, 1974). After a decade of research, Fielder determined leadership style alone was not sufficient to explain the value of a leader and started to research situational parameters (Fielder, 1967). Fiedler's research and ongoing work focused more intentionally on situations in leadership. His work caused situational leadership theories to become more prevalent. These theories posited that followers and social situations influenced the leader characteristics needed to successfully lead (Klingborg, Moore, & Varea-Hammod, 2006). Likewise, these theories assume that there is not one best way to make decisions, and the most effective decision depends on the assortment of characteristics associated with the situation (Chemers, 1984). Thus, a leader has to evaluate the situation and then determine which actions would be the best response to that particular situation.

The Normative Decision Theory developed by Vroom and Yetton (1973) is a contingency orientated theory and identified decision-making styles such as consultative, autocratic, and group. This theory addressed leadership styles with group performance and

morale, and specified which leadership style is most likely to yield effective results within an assortment of different situations (Chemers, 1984).

Influence and reciprocal theories.

The influence approach was used until the late 1970s. Its basic premise was that leaders had influence over their followers, but followers did not influence leaders (Komives, 2007). However, developments in leadership research have shown that followers can influence their leaders; the influence approach was subsequently replaced with reciprocal theories which focus on the relational and reciprocal aspects of leadership (Komives, 2007). Reciprocal theories, such as servant leadership, purport leaders and followers can influence each other. Servant leadership was constructed by Robert Greenleaf and he conceived that in order to be an effective leader one must be willing to serve others (Greenleaf, 1977). He explained that a servant leader is selfless and inherently serves others before attending to his or her own personal needs (Greenleaf, 1991). Greenleaf (1977), when defining servant leadership declared, “if one is a servant, either leader or follower, one is always searching, listening, expecting that a better wheel for these times is in the making” (p. 9).

Transactional and transformational theories.

A transition from social psychology toward organizational behavior and management was evident in the late 1970s as transactional and transformational theory persisted (Klingborg, Moore, & Varea-Hammod, 2006). Transactional theory is often associated with management theories and transformational theories are linked with relationship theories (Klingborg, Moore, & Varea-Hammod, 2006). Moreover, transformation has been used to intentionally describe leadership (Burns, 1978).

Transactional theories focus on the role of supervisors, organizations, and group performance, and often involve rewards and punishment based on performance and success (Klingborg, Moore, & Varea-Hammod, 2006). Chemers (1984) indicated these theories have demonstrated that relationships between leaders and followers are dynamic and are expressed and substantiated over time. The divisions between people are then negotiated upon, defined, evaluated, and redefined. These changes in relationships affect motivation and performance (Chemers, 1984). Likewise, the effects on relationships, whether positive or negative, are impacted by judgments and observations. It is important to distinguish that transactional leadership may or may not benefit the follower (Burns, 1978), and the intentions of a leader's actions are to benefit the leader (Tichy & Devanna, 1986).

Transformational theories originated from the work of James Burns (1978). Burns analyzed the ability of leaders to motivate others to heightened levels of energy, commitment, and moral purpose (Burns, 1978). His work argued the energy and commitment devoted to a universal vision transformed the organization's capacity to work collaboratively, and this outcome resulted in the organization being able to overcome challenges and attain lofty objectives (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Rouché, Baker, and Rose advanced the theory in 1989 (Hawkins, 2009) and Bass also expanded upon Burns' work and developed survey instruments which provided the means to assess transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Transformational theories purposely focused on the relationship between leaders and followers, and promoted collaborative endeavors for the benefit of the greater good (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Attention is focused on the collective group, but the leader attempts to ensure that each individual reaches his or her potential (Bass, 1999). Transformational leaders are

change-agents who serve as visionaries, role-models, and facilitators (Rouche, Baker, & Rose, 1989) and are said to participate in behaviors related to the dimensions of charisma, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Bass, 1985). Yukl (2005) professed that according to Burns, leaders need to understand the impact they have on followers and the impact followers have on leaders. Northouse (2007) shared that numerous studies suggest the main components of transformational leadership such as individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and idealized influence are associated with successful leadership.

Participatory and exchange theories.

Klingborg, Moore, and Varea-Hammond (2006) said that since the 1980s, literature about leadership has grown immensely in breadth and depth and concepts are being recycled and reintroduced with slight variations and/or additions. Furthermore, leaders are becoming more responsible to their followers, and are actively engaging them in the decision-making process (Klingborg, Moore, & Varea-Hammond, 2006). The basis of using input from others is in alignment with participative theories. Likewise, exchange theories have shown to have measurable impact addressing the relationship between leaders and followers (Chemers, 1984). Exchange theories focus on how people are influenced by shared goals and theories; moreover, they attempt to understand the social exchanges such as esteem, rewards, and status between the individual and group (Klingborg, Moore, & Varea-Hammod, 2006). George Graen's work has verified that exchanges between leaders and subordinates can have intensive impacts on group performance and morale (Graen & Cashman, 1975).

Summary.

Assorted theories have guided and are used to frame leadership. These theories are rooted deep in history; and although not original pieces of work but rather facets of early works rediscovered and repackaged, they are significant and ground many leadership initiatives. In addition, they continue to spur new ideas. Over time perspectives have changed and major additions and revisions have occurred to leadership theories. A transition was made from celebrating great men and their heroic feats to paying closer attention to specific traits and behaviors of both genders and all ages. The shortcomings of these theories rested on the assumption that there was a single best way to lead.

Over time, greater emphasis was placed on interaction and relationships between leaders and followers. A division was eventually made between managing and leading with the development of transactional and transformational theories. Contemporary theories focus on service and collaboration. In addition, more recent theories incorporate the implications of social structures and integrate spiritual and value-laden perspectives (Klingborg, Moore, & Varea-Hammod, 2006).

Theories continue to ground leadership activities; however, leadership needs to be viewed holistically, and its weight should not solely rest on theories. Instead, the study and application of leadership should involve both theory and practice.

Overview of Leadership Education

Leadership education “sits at the nexus of two disciplines, the art and science of leadership and the art and science of education” (Gallagher, 2002, p. 2). Leadership has become one of the fastest growing disciplines in higher education and both curricular and co-curricular programs have thrived (Riggio, Ciulla, & Sorenson, 2003). In the early 2000s,

Collins (2001) noted that leadership was still a relatively young field in which little was known. Day also noted in 2001, “Interest in leadership development appears to be at its zenith” (p. 581). Although there remains a paucity of information concerning leadership development in higher education, over the past decade, leadership has continued to grow and evolve.

Programs have been developed on community college campuses and universities offer terminal degrees in leadership studies. Many college mission statements contain references to preparing students for lives of professional and community engagement and developing citizen-leaders (CAS, 2009). Specifically, many institutions of higher education have made it a goal to develop leaders from college students (Brungardt, 1996). Even among some of the more established and traditional academic disciplines such as medicine and law, specialization and concentration areas have been cultivated around the study of leadership. A plethora of academic programs focusing on leadership have been constructed to be multidisciplinary in nature and draw upon theories and applications from fields such as philosophy, sociology, and psychology.

History of Leadership Education

For the vast majority of history the role of leadership has “presumed to originate in the leader’s characteristics or abilities, leadership education, then, has been simply a matter of developing an individual’s ‘leadership potential’” (Rost & Barker, 2000). In the past, attention to leadership development was focused on helping those in leadership roles within student government and residence life (CAS, 2009). The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2009) explained a great deal of attention was provided to those in key athletic positions, students in significant roles within the fine arts, and students

who contributed to student government. Consequently, only a select few were provided opportunities to experience a genuine and concentrated experience in leadership development (CAS, 2009).

In the 1970s, numerous colleges refocused their efforts on leadership development due to political, social, and religious occurrences (CAS, 2009). Moreover, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2009) documented that focused initiatives involving specific student populations such as women and minorities generated renewed interest in leadership development. These events, combined with restructured forms of campus governance and attention on outcome-based student development, led to new leadership initiatives. Additionally, in the 1970s, numerous professional organizations became interested in leadership initiatives (CAS, 2009).

In the 1980s and 1990s, leadership expanded to include perspectives such as cultural influences, experiential learning, service-learning, spirituality, and social change (CAS, 2009). These changes resulted in college educators focusing on leadership development models with an increased applicability to the college context (CAS, 2009). For instance, the Social Change Model of Leadership (HERI, 1996) has been widely used in higher education (CAS, 2009). This was also a time where older theories and philosophies were integrated with newer concepts (Klingborg, Moore, & Varea-Hammond, 2006).

More recently, there have been renewed calls for increased undergraduate learner-centered leadership programs (Astin & Astin, 2000). Higher education's focus transitioned from not only developing better leaders, but more leaders. The exposure to leadership education was also introduced earlier within a student's academic progression. In addition, a change in ideology occurred. Instead of working solely with specific types of students in

particular positions, institutions of higher education began to expose the entire student body to leadership development (CAS, 2009). The involvement of student affairs departments helped promote this agenda and change (CAS, 2009). The development of leadership centers, such as the Jepson School of Leadership Studies at the University of Richmond in Virginia and the McDonough Leadership Center at Marietta College in Marietta, Ohio, and the development of programs such as the National LeaderShape Institute, demonstrated higher education's emphasis on leadership development (CAS, 2009). The National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs at the University of Maryland in 1992 and funding from sources such as the Kellogg, Pew, and Lilly Foundations have focused broader attention on leadership development (CAS, 2009).

Initially, leadership education was often addressed individually in elective-based courses, as central themes in retreats and seminars, and through hierarchical structures such as leadership clubs and leadership councils (Rost & Barker, 2000). Even with philosophical transformations in leadership education, many programs continued to focus on positional leadership as opposed to the complex and dynamic process of leadership (Rost & Barker, 2000).

Great Man and trait theories once dominated the leadership education landscape and most leadership education programs were centered on 20th century approaches called the industrial view (Rost & Barker, 2000). The industrial view of leadership incorporates the views and assumptions held by the industrial paradigm. This view has been retained and is still in use today because of its profitability. However, Rost and Barker (2000) argued emerging social paradigms could not be solved by 20th century models. Rost and Barker deemed these approaches inadequate because they did not account for the intricate and

complicated interpersonal social relationships among those who practiced leadership. In addition, the approaches did not consider the purposes, motives, and intentions of leadership (Rost & Barker, 2000). Likewise, the fixation with leadership being vested in positions limited its effectiveness (Klingborg, Moore, & Varea-Hammond, 2006). Rost and Barker (2000) suggested that changes in society, such as less concern about corporate profitability and greater emphasis on challenges such as environmental problems and societal issues, should help instigate the needed changes in order to prepare future leaders. The charismatic leader no longer satisfied the needs of society; instead, leadership ought to be viewed as a role that one constantly transitions into and out of, depending on the context of the situation and its circumstances (Klingborg, Moore, & Varea-Hammond, 2006).

Increased interest in leadership education stimulated a rise in the popularity of leadership development programs on college campuses in the United States. This also led to the creation of new programs within institutions of higher education. Renewed attention, paradigm shifts, and funding allocations allowed leadership programs in existence to broaden their function and scope. Brungardt, Greenleaf, Brungardt, and Arensdorf (2006) indicated leadership programs proliferated to more than 1,000 on college and university campuses across the United States.

The growth and development of leadership and leadership associated programs in higher education has further increased their prominence and significance. Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, and Osteen (2005) identified a Leadership Identity Development model which is used to guide intentional practice. In 2006 the national Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) established normative data (Owen, 2009) using the Social Change Model of Leadership (CAS, 2009).

Currently, students experience leadership and participate in leadership activities within several different settings. Whether entrenched in curricular or co-curricular activities or whether involved in on-campus or off-campus experiences, virtually every student engages in some form of leadership. The attention provided to leadership education has been substantiated as students who participate in leadership programs have identified their experiences as some of the most influential of their college experience (Eich, 2009).

Overview of Leadership Programs

Leadership programs are instituted for a variety of reasons ranging from institutional needs to meeting the needs of students, and are explicitly used as a marketing tool for the recruitment of students (Rost & Barker, 2000). Leadership programs take many forms such as workshops and summer institutes (Micari, Gould, & Lainez, 2010) and can occur as one day events, week-long seminars and even four-year programs.

Rost and Barker (2000) suggested most early leadership programs focused on human development and were delivered in one of three ways: (a) teaching the liberal arts, (b) the use of multidisciplinary leadership programs, and (c) student affairs and noncredit programs that focused on governance. Rost and Barker (2000) also indicated that many early leadership programs were founded on characteristics such as: top down organization; goal oriented, where the goal is based on performance; male dominated; focused on bureaucratic efficiencies; used utilitarian ethics; founded in materialism; and dominated by quantitative methods to solve problems. These leadership education programs were management oriented, framed as individualistic and hierarchical, focused on dominant/subordinate relationships, and trained leaders as a privileged class (Rost & Barker, 2000). Commonly,

these leadership programs were not founded within clearly articulated constructs of leadership and instead were used to recruit students (Rost & Barker, 2000).

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) has an extensive history with supporting and establishing leadership development programs (WKKF, 2001). Its first major project was initiated in the 1930s and it continued to provide resources to people and organizations over the past 80 years (Russon & Claire, 2004). The foundation of leadership programs began with the WKKF in 1983 (Black & Earnest, 2009) with the development of the Kellogg National Leadership Program and the Kellogg International Leadership Program (Russon & Claire, 2004). The development of these programs primarily focused on rural populations (WKKF, 2001). A major WKKF initiative involved the funding of 31 leadership development projects from 1990-1998 and focused on leadership development in college students (Zimmer-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999b). These projects involved a \$14.1 million investment by WKKF in the development of leadership programs and leadership programming (Zimmerman-Oster, 1999b). The WKKF approach to fostering leadership development recently changed and the foundation “moved from investing in leadership as a distinct and separate endeavor” (p. 104) and instead attempts to integrate leadership into its major strategic initiatives (Russon & Reinelt, 2004).

Riggio, Ciulla, and Sorenson (2003) indicated the growth in leadership programs can be attributed to increased opportunities found in academic courses, certificates, and concentrations. The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education promotes standards for state leadership programs (Owen, 2009). A leadership standard has been outlined by CAS (2009) and describes three approaches to leadership programs: leadership training, leadership education, and leadership development. Programs are found

in academic departments that offer full degree-granting programs and others are co-curricular in nature and housed within student affairs departments (Brungardt, Greenleaf, Brungardt, & Arensdorf, 2006). Micari, Gould, and Lainez (2010) identified some leadership programs were designed to train students in a generic sense, whereas others sought to train students to act as leaders in a specific context such as the medical field. A few institutions offer stand-alone undergraduate degrees that provided a major in leadership (Micari, Gould, & Lainez, 2010) including: Bellevue University in Nebraska, Benedictine University in Illinois, Carroll College in Wisconsin, Chapman University in California, and Rockhurst University in Missouri (Brungardt, et. al, 2006). More recently, institutions of higher education have “designated resources to the creation of formal leadership programs based on the fundamental belief that leadership can be learned and refined through education, training, and development” (Owen, 2009, p. 1).

Klingborg, Moore, and Varea-Hammond (2000) suggested that characteristics of contemporary leadership programs include opportunities to practice being a team, infusion of strategic and creative thinking, focus on honesty and integrity, and guidance on how to motivate others into action. The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2009) indicated “most leadership programs seek to empower students to enhance their self efficacy as leaders and understand how they can make a difference” (p. 2). Regardless of the reasons for being implemented and their specific purposes, leadership programs have gained in popularity and are developing a foothold in higher education.

Effective Leadership Program Design

Collins (2001) expressed, “research on the effectiveness of leadership development programs is sparse” (p. 51). Seven years later, Eich (2008) confirmed there has been

minimal empirical research published about leadership program quality and activities that significantly impact learning and leadership development; although he offered that efforts had been initiated. Additionally, Owen (2000) expressed, “most literature that provides prescriptions as to what elements ‘quality’ programs should include...focus primarily on single institutions or small numbers of institutions” (p. 1). Furthermore, efforts often confound leadership experiences with general campus involvement or focus on student outcomes without intentionally ensuring those attributes are explicitly connected to the leadership program experienced (Owen, 2009).

Significant elements of program design identified in the literature and having been grounded with data from the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) and Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership – Institutional Survey (MSL-IS), include: (a) program theoretical orientation; (b) program delivery method, duration, and audience; (c) congruence between institutional and program mission; (d) access to human and fiscal resources; and (e) collaborative partnerships (Owen, 2009). Kolb (1981) has highlighted the role of service and experiential opportunities within leadership programs. Moreover, Haber (2009) identified eight themes associated with effective leadership programs including: (a) reflection matters, (b) real world examples and applications are key, (c) experience makes it real, (d) feedback is valuable, (e) group experiences enhance learning, (f) capstone projects solidify learning, (g) conflict is real, and (h) leadership and organizations are not always neat and pretty.

Eich (2008) implemented a grounded theory research design to construct a model that described what was significant about leadership programs that contributed to student development and learning. The study identified 16 programmatic attributes of high quality leadership programs. These characteristics were grouped into three clusters.

Cluster I was labeled “participants engaged in building and sustaining a learning community” and contained attributes such as diverse and engaged students, experienced and committed practitioners, educators who model leadership and support, participants unite through small groups, participants foster a culture of challenge and support and participants cultivate one-on-one relationships.

Cluster II involved student-centered experiential learning experiences and incorporated characteristics such as students practice leadership individually and collectively, students engage in reflection activities (connecting leadership theory, their experiences, and themselves), students apply leadership concepts to themselves in meetings, students make leadership meaning through dialogue and discussions, and students engage in self-discovery through retreats.

Cluster III highlighted research-grounded continuous program development and included aspects such as flexible program design to accommodate student interests, content anchored in modeled leadership values, and systems thinking applied for constant program improvement.

Eich (2008) suggested effective programs participate in ongoing and deliberate assessment and evaluation. Additionally, programs that model what is being taught are most successful; that is, those institutions and faculty who actively and explicitly “walk the talk” experience the greatest success in achieving their intended outcomes (Eich, 2008).

Moreover, “high-quality programs are spaces that help students do leadership and understand what they are doing along with others” (p. 187). These types of environments provide opportunities for students to understand that leadership can be learned rather than solely gained through chance experiences (Eich, 2008).

Goals and Outcomes of Leadership Programs

There are a variety of goals and outcomes that have been formed for leadership education programs. Many were developed based on the recommendations of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, and in conjunction with institutional needs. An important differentiation is the distinction between perceived goals and outcomes compared to what students actually achieve and acquire. It cannot be assumed that what is expected to be gained is actually gained, and often times a disparity between the two is realized.

The literature concerning the goals and outcomes of leadership programs can be difficult to decipher and synthesize. Specifically, the research by CAS includes data collected from participants who were not undergraduates in an institution of higher education. The data often incorporates information about graduate students, community college students, and even those not enrolled in a postsecondary institution. Furthermore, the data includes information collected from those who participated in a one-time leadership activity, seminar, or event and not necessarily through a formal leadership program. Therefore, it is difficult to attribute information and/or conclusions to one specific population or program. Even when looking solely at undergraduate students, leadership programs are unique to the institution with which it is affiliated. Thus, there are a variety of goals and anticipated outcomes associated with leadership programs.

Two overarching goals of leadership education are improving student learning and improving leadership development (Eich, 2009). Eich (2008) noted, “leadership programs in higher education offer a variety of elements or activities designed for the purpose of enhancing student leadership development and learning” (p. 177). Brungardt et al. (2006)

identified institutions of higher education have developed learning objectives differently. Some programs develop objectives centered on cognitive aspects while others concentrate on the development of dispositions and skills. Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (1998) explained there are three interconnected realms of leadership development: behavioral, affective, and cognitive. Behavioral skills are represented by written and oral communication, team building, motivation, and listening whereas personal responsibility, ethical foundations, value recognition and exhibition, and personal commitment are examples of affective domains (Colvin, 2003). Based on these different realms, leadership programs have documented an assortment of measureable student outcomes which can serve to guide the program's structure, practices, and activities. The overall goal of education programs should be to prepare students to have meaningful experiences as part of the leadership process (Brungardt, Gould, Moore, & Potts, 1997).

Expected student outcomes typically include developing a knowledge base, self awareness of personal leadership styles, scholarly inquiry, practical leadership skills, completion of field experiences, analysis of decision-making abilities, and understanding and developing values (Eich, 2009). Micari, Streitwieser, and Light (2005) identified student outcomes associated with leadership experiences include an increase in cognitive skills, more confidence in working with others, and students perceived the experience as having a concrete impact on their professional futures.

Bialek and Lloyd (1998) examined the impact of student leadership experiences and the resulting outcomes on the personal and professional lives of alumni three to five years after graduation. The qualitative research provided six themes which were expressed by alumni who had participated in leadership experiences as undergraduates. The themes

include: (1) student leadership resulted in meeting and collaborating with a wide range of people; (2) student leadership involvement enhanced leadership, management, and teamwork skills; (3) student leadership increased the sense of pride in and connection to the university; (4) professional leadership, management, and teamwork skills were enhanced by student leadership experiences; (5) personal and professional interpersonal communication skills were improved by student leadership experiences; and (6) self-confidence and professional poise increased by student leadership experience (1998, p. 244).

Zimmerman-Oster and Burkhardt (1999) also determined that many individual outcomes result from involvement in a leadership program. Those identified included: increased sense of social/civic/political awareness, increased commitment to service and volunteerism, improved communication skills, higher sense of personal and social responsibility, increased sense of social/civic/political efficacy, improved self esteem, improved problem solving ability, increased social/civic/political activity, increased sense of being galvanized for action, increased desire for change, improved ability to vision, improved ability to be issue focused, improved conflict resolution skills, improved likelihood of sharing power, and improved sharing with faculty.

In 2006, Dugan, Komives, & Associates (as cited in Owen, 2009) noted the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) established normative data tables related to student leadership outcomes. This particular study involved 52 campuses across the United States and involved over 60,000 students; it was initiated as a way to enhance institutional practice by better aligning the theory-research-practice (Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership, 2011). A companion survey, the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership – Institutional Survey (MSL-IS), collected information about institutional leadership-related practices from

each of the 52 participating campuses (Owen, 2009). The MSL and MSL-IS both provide a prime means to glean information from students and institutions concerning leadership development, but their functionality and uses have been underutilized (Owen, 2009).

Summary

This chapter provided a review of the literature and provided an introduction to leadership; it overviewed a variety of leadership theories, and discussed leadership education at great depth. Within the review of leadership education the historical underpinnings were examined, effective leadership program designs were discussed, and goals and outcomes of leadership programs were situated within the literature.

It was determined the available literature concerning leadership is increasing at a rapid rate. However, the availability of research-based literature is more difficult to locate as the vast majority of resources about leadership can be found in books which are based on anecdotal information. Even though some outcomes have been established in the literature, there was not an extensive amount of information found concerning student outcomes directly attributed to leadership programs. Eich validated this when he indicated as recent as 2008 that the individual element is still widely unknown. Black and Earnest (2009) also noted there is a lack of research which identifies leadership outcomes, and there are not suitable instruments to evaluate leadership programs. Collectively, there is a dearth of qualitative literature concerning the experiences of undergraduates who participated in a leadership program and this is exemplified when alumni are looked at in particular. The unknown impact on individuals who participated in these programs could be due to the unique nature of leadership programs and their fairly recent prominence in higher education.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the methods used as part of the research process. The primary purpose of the study was to develop a better understanding of the lived leadership experiences from graduates of Midwest College's Certificate of Leadership Program. The basic elements of any research process involve four interrelated components: methods, methodology, theoretical perspectives, and epistemology (Crotty, 1998). These components need to be explicitly stated and examined as a measure of goodness (Armino & Hultgren, 2002) and trustworthiness. The epistemology of the proposed study is constructivism and the theoretical perspective is basic interpretivism. The methodology is guided by a phenomenological case study and the methods include intensive semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research is a “complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts, ideas, and assumptions” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 2). Oldfather and West (1994) identified “qualitative inquiry is guided by epistemological principles, socially constructed values, inquiry focuses, and finding emerging data through analytic methodologies” (p. 22). This type of research design provides a structure to explore and understand the meaning people attribute to a social or human phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative researchers have the inherent goal of understanding differing points of view and tend to view their research as an interpretation of reality that is rooted in interacting with the senses and not a “transcendent truth” (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003, p. 24). Thus qualitative research “distorts the informants’ experience the least” (p. 23). The end result is an inductive construction of experience and meaning, aimed at understanding the essence of the phenomenon. Qualitative research

attempts to make meaning and understand the phenomenon from the perspective of the participant (Merriam, 2002). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) explained qualitative research has no theory distinctly its own, it does not favor one methodology over another; nor does it have a discrete set of methods.

The first responsibility of a qualitative researcher is to investigate (Shank & Vilella, 2004). The qualitative researcher may take on an assortment of roles and can be involved in a myriad of methodological practices. The researcher is often seen as a bricoleur. Crotty's (1998) understanding and interpretation of Levi-Strauss' work is that a bricoleur is someone who makes something new out of materials that at one time had been something different. Crotty (1998) extended this idea, "True *bricoleurs* are people constantly musing over objects, engaged precisely with what is *not* themselves, in order to see what possibilities the objects have to offer" (p. 50).

There are many types of bricoleurs, and the qualitative researcher-as-bricoleur uses the "aesthetic and material tools of his or her craft, deploying whatever strategies, methods, or empirical materials are at hand" (Becker, 1998, p. 2). The researcher-as-bricoleur needs to concentrate on the objects of research and must not be constrained by conventional meanings; instead, he or she needs to approach objects with openness so a new and richer meaning can be constructed (Crotty, 1998). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) explained that an interpretive bricoleur produces a bricolage, which is a "pieced together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation" (p. 4). Qualitative researchers blend, overlap, and construct which helps to form a new creation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This is referred to as a "montage" (p. 4), and as part of an interpretive experience it can provide psychological and emotional unity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Creswell (2009) identified key aspects of the qualitative process such as: researchers need to identify promising questions and emerging procedures; data collection typically occurs in the participant's setting; the building of data occurs from particulars to general themes, and the researcher makes interpretations of collected data. It is also important for researchers to depict the intricacy of the phenomena (Creswell, 2007).

Moreover, Merriam (2002) identified four fundamental characteristics of interpretive qualitative research. First, qualitative researchers attempt to determine the meaning participants have created about their world and experiences, more particularly how they make sense of their lived experiences. As the researcher, I conducted interviews and attempted to discern the participant's meanings of leadership and understand their involvement as part of a leadership program.

Second, the qualitative researcher is the principal instrument for data collection and analysis. I conducted in-depth interviews and carried out document analysis. I also interpreted the data collected. These processes involved verbal and nonverbal communication. I was also aware of my impact on the research and the participants. This was addressed by identifying positionality, being reflexive, recording catch voice inflection, and taking notes on nonverbal body language.

Third, the qualitative research needs to be inductive – that is, a general conclusion is drawn from particular cases. As a researcher, I gathered data to develop an understanding of the leadership phenomenon from alumni who completed an undergraduate leadership program. Specifically, I wanted to understand the experiences and meanings developed by these alumni as part of their undergraduate leadership experiences. Data was ultimately

shaped into significant statements, interpretive statements, themes, and ultimately the essence of the experience.

Fourth, in qualitative research, the product is richly descriptive. I used words instead of numbers to describe the participants and their experiences. Additionally, through text, I attempted to capture the participant's thoughts, feelings, and attitudes. Rich and thick quotes from interviews were used to support the findings.

Due to my personal research interests and the context of what was desired to be gained, I felt qualitative inquiry provided the best opportunity to answer this study's overall research question, "What are the lived experiences of alumni who participated in an undergraduate leadership program?" The epistemology of the study was constructionism, and basic interpretivism served as the theoretical perspective. The methodology incorporated a phenomenological case study approach and the methods centered on semi-structured interviews. Document analysis was used when appropriate.

Ontology

Ontology is the "study of being" (Crotty, 1998, p. 10) or as Creswell (2007) defined it, a "stance toward the nature of reality" (p. 16). Ontology is associated with what one qualifies as important knowledge and one's perspective on the nature of reality (Glesne, 1999). The ontological viewpoint for qualitative researchers should be that reality is not a fixed, single, agreed upon, or distinctly measurable phenomenon (Merriam, 2002), but rather complex and ever-changing (Glesne, 1999).

The ontological viewpoint of this research mandates that social realities are determined by participants through their experiences and within their social settings.

Furthermore, in order to understand these realities, a researcher must interact via a mix of

communication methods with participants and talk about their perceptions. A variety of perspectives was sought as part of this research process, and interpretations were not completely condensed in order to avoid composing a single standard voice.

Research Site

Midwest College initiated the Certificate of Leadership Program (CLP), during the 1998-99 academic year. This program is housed in the Leadership Education Institute (LEI) and Dr. Forest Stone serves as the program's director. The program was developed to help students live lives of leadership and service as an expression of their faith and learning.

The program has been in existence for 13 years and has expanded every year since its inception. The number of students participating in the program continues to grow and the alumni base increases annually. An in-depth overview of Midwest College and the leadership program is provided in chapter 4.

Epistemology

Constructionism served as the epistemology and framed the study. Constructionists view that, *“all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interactions between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within essentially social context”* (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Crotty (1998) emphasized meaning is not discovered or created, but instead constructed. Armino and Hultgren (2002) indicated constructionism occurs through engagement with the world. However, actual meaning materializes only when the consciousness engages with it; likewise, without consciousness there is no meaning (Crotty, 1998). Noteworthy characteristics of constructionism include the following:

- the researcher-respondent relationship is subjective, interactive, and interdependent;
- reality is multiple, complex, and not easily quantifiable;
- the values of the researcher, respondents, research site, and underlying theory undergird all aspects of the research; and
- the research product is context specific (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 83).

Constructionism can be characterized by understanding multiple participant meanings (Creswell, 2009). The intent of constructionism is to embrace and depict the diversity and depth of participants (Briodo & Manning, 2002). Constructionists must be flexible, open minded, highly adaptable, and responsive to the research situation. They should not be confined to traditional meanings of objects and ought to approach objects with openness and flexibility in order to construct new meaning; constructionists need to be able to reinterpret (Crotty, 1998). Crotty (1998) declared constructionism is about being curious; it is “not conceit” (p. 52).

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective for this study was basic interpretivism. Interpretivism can be traced back to the thinking of Immanuel Kant and later Edmund Husserl (Prasad, 2005) and Max Weber (Crotty, 1998). Prasad (2005) remarked that for Husserl, reality does not exist in the outside world, but instead within the human consciousness; thus, reality is socially constructed through acts of interpretation. Interpretive traditions take the stance that human interpretation of the world is the beginning point for developing knowledge about the social world (Prasad, 2005). Interpretivism identifies that reality is constructed socially, while meaning and understanding are historically and culturally situated (Crotty, 1998).

Crotty exuded, “interpretivism is overwhelmingly oriented towards an uncritical exploration of cultural meaning” (1998, p. 60).

Openness, self disclosure, and self reflection are key aspects of the interpretivist approach (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002). The open, emergent nature of interpretivist approaches causes a lack of standardization with no specific steps or processes to conduct research (Glesne, 1999). There is no “one size fits all” approach or a script to follow. Instead, the practice is complex, comprised of discovery, and can be ambiguous. The openness of interpretive approaches “allows the researcher to approach the inherent complexity of social interaction and to honor that complexity, to respect it in its own right” (Glesne, 1999, p. 6).

Even though interpretive approaches vary greatly, there are fundamental traits which permeate across approaches. Glesne (1999) provided lists of predispositions for the interpretive approach which described central assumptions, research purposes, research approaches, and the role of the researchers. She described two assumptions of the interpretive perspective: reality is socially constructed; and variables are multifaceted, interact with each other, and at times are difficult to measure. The purposes of this type of research are to contextualize, understand, and interpret phenomenon (Glesne, 1999). Additionally, Glesne (1999) identified that it is expected the researcher will be personally involved and will have an empathic understanding.

Methodology

The methodology was based on a phenomenological case study approach. I chose to use a phenomenological case study approach because it allowed me to study the phenomenon

of leadership within a specific program, and this specific lens allowed me to determine the essence of the leadership experience from the perspectives of the participants.

Case Study Approach

The case study approach allows a researcher to understand a complex social phenomenon (Yin, 1994). Case studies have been used in a variety of disciplines such as sociology, political science, medicine, and education (Creswell, 2007). Due to the variety of ways and areas in which case studies have been applied and used, ambiguity has been created about its definition, construction, and applicability. I chose to use research from methodologists such as Creswell (2007), Merriam (2002), Stake (1995), and Yin (1994) to orient the use of a case study approach within my research.

A case study is an in-depth study of a single unit (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002) and involves an “intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon...such as an individual, group, institution, or community” (Merriam, 2002, p. 8). According to Merriam (1998) anything that can be considered an entity such as a person, program, organization or phenomenon can be considered for a case study. Creswell (2007) explained case studies, “involve the study of an issue...within a bounded system” (p. 73). Stake (1995) explained that case studies are bounded by time and activity, and are integrated systems. They concentrate on a single phenomenon and this allows for the phenomenon to be studied in depth (Merriam, 2002), and are conducted by collecting detailed, in-depth data from multiple sources (Creswell, 2007). The ultimate goal of a case study is to arrive at a thorough description and comprehensive understanding of the bounded case (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002). It is important to identify that case studies are not viewed in the same manner by researchers (Creswell, 2007). For instance, Stake (1995) posited case studies are

not a methodology, but instead a choice of what can be studied. However, Denzin and Lincoln (2005), Merriam (1998), and Yin (2003) presented the case study approach as a methodology or research strategy.

Case studies are valuable tools for understanding human behavior (Stake, 1995). Merriam (2002) noted that the unit of analysis, and not the topic, determines if the study can be characterized as a case study. This specific study concentrated on one particular unique leadership program and Creswell (2007) indicates this is a within-site study. The experience of alumni who participated in Midwest College's leadership program serves as the bounded system (Merriam, 1998) for this dissertation. Case studies are characterized by the size of the bounded case (Creswell, 2007). This can be an individual, several individuals, a group, or an entire program. My research involved 11 individuals who participated in and graduated from Midwest College's Certificate of Leadership Program. Case studies can also be distinguished by the purpose for analysis and are one of three types: single instrumental, collective, and intrinsic (Creswell, 2007). Due to my interest in the phenomenon being researched and the focus on the case itself, this case study is considered to be intrinsic (Stake, 1995). Creswell (2007) noted intrinsic cases focus on cases that are unusual or unique. Stake (1995) indicated that researchers completing intrinsic case studies gain satisfaction from the research.

This study and its resulting research were not only influenced by the case study approach as it was also grounded within phenomenology. Merriam (2002) explained, "since it is the unit of analysis that defines the case, other types of studies can be and sometimes are combined with case study" (p. 8). Transcendental phenomenology was specifically used in conjunction with the case study approach.

Phenomenological Approach

Phenomenological research identifies the meaning of the human experience about a phenomenon from the perspective of the participant (Creswell, 2009) and how these findings present themselves through experiences (Sokolowski, 2000). Moustakas (1994) noted, “the word *phenomenon* comes from the Greek *phaenesthai*, to flare up, to show itself, to appear” (p. 26). Heidegger (as cited in Moustakas, 1994) indicated phenomenon originated from “*phanio*” and means to bring to light or to show itself in itself (1977, pp. 74-75). Thus, phenomenology describes how one interacts with the phenomenon and the objective is to uncover how people make sense of their interactions with the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990).

The phenomenological process as a whole “aims at attaining a profound understanding of the nature or meaning of our daily experiences.” (p. 25). Crotty (1998) identified the goal is to construct meaning from the data collected. My aim was to determine the essence of the leadership experience as experienced by alumni of an undergraduate leadership program. The generation of meaning is a creative process and not a mechanical one (Crotty, 1998). Arminio and Hultgren (2002) suggested the meaning making process is often accomplished with language that is pretheoretical.

Merriam (2002) posited:

a phenomenological study focuses on the essence or structure of an experience. Phenomenologists are interested in showing how complex meanings are built out of simple units of direct experience. This form of inquiry is an attempt to deal with inner experiences unprobed in everyday life.

(p. 7)

The following sections include: an explanation of phenomenology's historical roots and an explanation of a variety of terms associated with phenomenology. In addition, transcendental phenomenology and its core processes are examined and connected to the research.

Historical roots. Phenomenology fits into the twentieth century and Edmund Husserl is often credited as the founding father (Crotty, 1998). Moustakas (1994), in describing Husserl's impact on transcendental phenomenology, indicated that he "stood alone, a determined self-presence" (p. 25). Husserl's work *Logical Investigations* (1970) is considered the essential statement of the movement. In addition, along with fellow German Martin Heidegger, they initiated and pushed the movement forward (Crotty, 1998). Husserl and Heidegger drew from the work of Franz Brentano and Carl Strumpf; it has been said that Heidegger's work can only be understood through the tradition opened by Husserl (Sokolowski, 2000). Others such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Paul Ricoeur, and Jean-Paul Satre furthered the phenomenological movement. Phenomenology is associated with terms such as appearance, intentionality, perception, and involves three formal structures which are described as parts and wholes, identity in manifolds, and presence and absence (Sokolowski, 2000). The next section describes the aforementioned terms and provides a distinction between natural and phenomenological attitudes.

Intentionality. As cited in Moustakas (1994), intentionality refers to the internal experience of being conscious of something (Husserl, 1931, pp. 243-244). Intentionality is closely associated with phenomenology (Sokolowski, 2000). Moustakas (1994) stated, "Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is intimately bound up in the concept of intentionality" (p. 28). Intentionality implies the human being and world are inseparable

(van Manen, 1990). The “core doctrine in phenomenology is the teaching that every act of consciousness we perform, every experience that we have, is intentional: it is essentially ‘consciousness of’ or an ‘experience of’ something or other” (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 8). Sokolowski (2000) noted intentionality applies to the theory of knowledge and not the theory of human action and as a function of that relates to a cognitive function and not practical intentions. This terminology can be difficult to understand as it is counterintuitive to how the word is used in modern language usage. Thus, every act of consciousness is directed towards an object and the human mind is not confined to its own space, but instead is public (Sokolowski, 2000). What appears in this consciousness is the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Sokolowski (2000) added this allows intentionality to be highly differentiated and complex.

Parts and wholes. Sokolowski (2000) explained parts and wholes are expressed any time something is thought about; it is the content when one goes beyond simplicity and mere perception. Wholes can be separated into two kinds of parts identified as moments and pieces; pieces can exist from the whole whereas moments cannot be isolated (Sokolowski, 2000). Moments are nonindependent parts (Sokolowski, 2000). Sokolowski stated, “a particular object can be a piece in one respect while being a moment in another” (2000, p. 23-24). An understanding of the parts and wholes as a function of phenomenological research is important as it helps to makes things less complicated, and as part of a philosophical analysis it involves laying out the moments that make up a whole (Sokolowski, 2000). Doing this constructs understanding.

Identity in manifolds. Identity in manifolds is a structure which functions in perception of all objects and anything that can be presented (Sokolowski, 2000). A

fundamental way to further make sense of this structure is to think about how leadership is viewed by an assortment of people. Leadership is experienced in vastly different ways by people based on their involvement, vantage points, and intimacy with it. Those who are involved in leadership as compared to those who observe leadership experience the phenomenon differently, yet Sokolowski (2000) indicated that the identity of the event is sustained through all of them.

Presence and absence. Presence and absence can be distinguished as filled and empty intentions. Presence, or filled intention, is something that is physically present; absence, or empty intention, is an intention that is not present (Sokolowski, 2000). Presence and absence can be demonstrated as a result of a group of people preparing to lead. The members of the group talk about what they expect and what the leadership might look like, but leading is absent, an empty intention. However, upon participating in leadership and experiencing it, the intention now becomes filled and is present. The empty intentions are filled as the leadership experience progresses. Completing the leadership experience, the group discusses the act of leading and again experiences absence. Sokolowski (2000) would propose that the act of leading is the intuition of the experience. Moustakas (1994) explained, “Intuition is the beginning place in deriving knowledge of human experience, free of everyday sense of impressions” (p. 32). Intuition is not “mystical or magical; it is simply having a thing present to us as opposed to having it intended in the absence” (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 34). Intuition is essential in what presents itself and whatever is given (Moustakas, 1994). As part of experiencing a phenomenological issue, researchers should pay particular attention to how the blends of absences and presences are at work.

Perception and appearances. Perception and appearances are important aspects of phenomenology and need to be understood as part of the interpretive approach. Perception is a blending of what is present and what is absent; it is a dynamic process (Sokolowski, 2000). It incorporates empty intentions becoming filled; and filled intentions becoming empty while encompassing layers of manifold (Sokolowski, 2000). However, it is more than just observation as it involves the other senses such as touch, smell, taste, and sound. Sokolowski (2000) posited phenomenology remains a significant movement because it addresses the issue of appearances. Sokolowski (2000) expressed there are no mere appearances and nothing is just an appearance; phenomenology allows the researcher to restore what was lost or what is not yet found. To put it succinctly, “phenomenology is reason’s self-discovery in the presence of intelligible objects” (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 4)

Natural and phenomenological attitudes. In order to truly understand phenomenology, a researcher needs to make the distinction between the two perspectives that humans hold: natural and phenomenological (Sokolowski, 2000). The natural attitude is said to be the default perspective, a person’s original stance (Sokolowski, 2000). The phenomenological attitude or sometimes referred to as the transcendental attitude is when researchers can reflect on the natural attitude and all of the intentionalities that occur with it (Sokolowski, 2000). Sokolowski (2000) reputed it is only within the phenomenological attitude that a researcher can carry out philosophical analyses.

Transcendental phenomenology. Moustakas (1994) indicated transcendental means, “in which everything is perceived freshly” (p. 34) although he admitted this is a state which is virtually impossible to achieve. Transcendental phenomenology focuses less on the researcher’s interpretations of the experiences and more on the descriptions of the

participants' experiences (Creswell, 2007). Moustakas (1994) stressed the methodology of transcendental phenomenology involves three core processes: Epoche, Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction, and Imaginative Variation.

Epoche. Transcendental phenomenology initially involves identifying a phenomenon to be studied. Once that occurs a researcher must practice epoche. Epoche is a Greek word meaning to refrain from judgment (Moustakas, 1994). It is the neutralizing of natural intentions that occur in order to contemplate those intentions (Sokolowski, 2000). It requires the researcher to refrain from using the ordinary way to perceive things and instead requires a new and different way to observe. Moustakas (1994) explains, epoche is a way “that requires that we learn *to see* what stands before our eyes” (p. 33). The everyday understandings and judgments are then put aside and the phenomenon is revisited in a naïve way (Moustakas, 1994).

Transcendental-phenomenological reduction. In this process the phenomenon is viewed freshly, as if for the first time and the intention is to move back to the source of the meaning (Moustakas, 1994). This “signifies the ‘leading away’ from the natural targets of our concern, ‘back’ to what seems to be a more restricted viewpoint, one that simply targets the intentionalities themselves” (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 49). The phenomenon is given a complete description and each of its essential constituents are reexamined from a variety of perspectives and incorporating a range of thoughts and feelings (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) indicated each experience is viewed on its own, “in and for itself” (p. 34). During the process of transcendental-phenomenological reduction textual descriptions of the meanings and essences of the phenomenon are derived (Moustakas, 1994). Creswell (2007)

noted the textual description of the experiences is essentially, “what participants experienced” (p. 60).

Imaginative variation. The purpose of imaginative variation is to “grasp the structural essences of the experiences” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 35) from the textual descriptions. In order to do this the “world disappears, existence is no longer central” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). In this phase, the structural description of the essence is determined and this creates a picture of the conditions that form the experience. The structural description represents how people experienced the phenomena “in terms of the conditions, situations, or context” (Moustakas, p. 60).

Moustakas’ phenomenological research model. Moustakas’ (1994) approach to phenomenological research was specifically used to aid the research process. The epoche, transcendental-phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation processes are all incorporated and apparent in Moustakas’ approach and Creswell (2007) noted the approach is good to use because it has systematic steps and guidelines for combining textual and structural descriptions.

Moustakas’ approach mandates that the first step is to ensure the research problem is best addressed using a phenomenological approach. This study’s identified problem is that there is a paucity of qualitative research concerning the lived experiences from the perspectives of alumni who as undergraduates graduated from a leadership program; thus due to the limited amount of research available the leadership phenomenon is not understood to the degree that it could be. A phenomenological approach is effective in addressing this study’s problem. Phenomenology is appropriate for this study because the topic of leadership lends itself to phenomenological procedures and the nature of the study required a variety of

individuals to learn about a shared phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Specifically, the approach involved researching 11 participants and as part of this interaction the researcher developed patterns of meaning (Moustakas, 1994). Creswell (2007) indicated it is fundamentally necessary to understand the participants' perspectives and experiences so a deeper understanding of leadership is gained which can lead to new and refined leadership policies and practices.

The next step is to identify the phenomenon to be studied (Creswell, 2007). As part of this research, the essence of a lived leadership experience as part of an undergraduate leadership program was identified as the phenomenon.

Once a phenomenon of interest is identified the researcher needs to understand the overarching philosophical assumptions of the phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Creswell (2007) noted that as part of phenomenological research, the researcher must completely bracket his or her own experiences in order to fully comprehend and understand the experiences of participants. Putting aside and suspending one's beliefs allows the researcher to understand the essence of the participant's experience (Merriam, 2002), and it also retains the object's essence within the natural attitude (Sokolowski, 2000). To achieve a fresh state, researchers can initially explain their positionality, express their prior experiences, and divulge their thoughts and attitudes about the experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This can also be identified through reflexivity or as Creswell (2007) describes it "self awareness" (p. 11).

Data is then collected from multiple participants who experienced the phenomenon. (Moustakas, 1994). This typically consists of multiple in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2007). Data can also be gathered through taped conversations and written explanations (van Manen, 1990).

The next phase, as detailed by Moustakas (1994), involves asking participants two expansive questions: What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? and What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon? Additional questions can be asked, but the two aforementioned questions are intended to focus on gathering data which leads to identifying textual and structural descriptions (Creswell, 2007). The textual description is described from many angles and views until a “sense of fulfillment is reached” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 78). Then from the textual description of “what” appears one can then describe “how” the phenomenon was experienced (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) noted, “texture and structure are in continual relationship” (p. 79). These descriptions are blended together to generate the essence of the mutual experience.

The next few steps of Moustakas’ approach involve analyzing data collected. Transcendental phenomenology is associated with Colaizzi’s data analysis model (1978) and Colaizzi’s model was primarily used to analyze data. This process involved identifying significant statements and combining the quotes and phrases to develop themes. Ultimately, the goal was to integrate the textual and structural descriptions together in order to “convey an overall **essence** of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 60). These steps are furthered highlighted in chapter 5.

Methods

Methods refer to the techniques and procedures used for data collection and analysis (Patton, 1990; Prasad, 2005) and must be situated within the theoretical perspectives and methodology (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002). The specific methods used as part of the research included interviews and document analysis. Seidman’s (1991) interview methodology fit this

study better than other strategies. Additionally, Colaizzi's phenomenology data analysis model (1978) was used as a framework to further guide the analysis of data.

Participant pool. In qualitative research, researchers are interested in understanding a particular case or phenomenon. Qualitative researchers often choose participants for the particular qualities they bring to the study and thus select those who could give the greatest insight into the topic of study (Esterberg, 2002). It is vital to choose a participant pool from which the most can be learned (Merriam, 2002). In a phenomenological study, it is imperative that the participants selected have all experienced the phenomenon which then allows a researcher to determine a universal understanding (Creswell, 2007).

The participants for this study were determined purposefully. Purposeful sampling is a process where persons are intentionally selected because the information gathered cannot be obtained from other selections (Maxwell, 2005). Patton (1990) stated that, "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich* cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (p. 169). Purposeful sampling involves intentionally selecting participants who have experienced the phenomenon and this ultimately helps the researcher understand the problem and answer the research question(s) (Creswell, 2009). The intentional selection of participants corresponds with theoretical sampling in that the researcher chooses participants who express the phenomenon being examined (Creswell, 1998). Purposeful sampling was conducted to most effectively understand the lived leadership experiences of alumni.

When discussing the ideal number of participants for a study, Munhall (1994) explained there is no magic number. Patton (1990) indicated, "sample size depends on what

you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources" (p. 184). Patton (1990) further suggested that a researcher needs to determine a minimum sample size that provides a "reasonable coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study" (p. 186). Sampling occurs until "a sample is expanded until redundancy with respect to information is reached" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 233) at which point the sampling has reached its saturation point.

Creswell (1998) suggested as part of a phenomenological study up to 10 participants should be selected; Dukes (1984) recommended a range of three to 10 and Polkinghorne (as cited in Creswell, 2007) recommended interviewing between five to 25 individuals. It is essential, however, that all participants have experienced the phenomenon. The proper sample size has less to do with the number of participants and more with the quality and depth of information gathered from the participants (Jones, 2002). The number of participants for this study was initially expected to range from six to eight participants. The number of participants which contributed to the study ended up being 11 and was determined by participant interest, needs for a diverse population, and the need to reach data saturation.

Criteria were also established to guide who was selected as participants. Jones (2002) noted criteria for sampling needs to consider factors such as diversity and life experiences. The main criteria used to select participants involved identifying Midwest College alumni who successfully achieved the leadership certificate. In addition, a diverse group of participants was needed. Factors used to determine the participant pool involved gender, undergraduate major, graduation date, racial identity, grade point average (GPA) and the degree of success within the CLP program.

The initial access to the list of CLP graduates was acquired by contacting the Vice President of Enrollment Management at Midwest College through an email (Appendix B) and requesting a spreadsheet of graduates with names, email addresses, phone numbers, and graduation dates. This provided a pool of 352 possible participants. This list was then forwarded to Midwest College's Director of the Leadership Education Institute, Dr. Forest Stone. Dr. Stone had worked with virtually every alumni on the list in some capacity and could provide a point of reference for the success of the participants and their involvement in the program. He was asked to identify approximately 40 alumni who would provide a diverse representation of the program and could articulate their lived leadership experience. A condensed list of 39 alumni from the initial list of 352 graduates was generated. I reviewed the list and refined it to 16 based on the aforementioned criteria. I also used criteria such as current occupation and participant location to differentiate the participant pool.

The 16 alumni were sent an email (Appendix C) or called (Appendix D): an overview of the research project was provided and the role of the participants was explained. Ultimately, the potential participants were asked about their interest in participating in the research project. Sixteen responses were received back from the participants and each one indicated interest in participating. After further communication, two potential participants decided they were not able to participate and three were interested if the process could be delayed. In the end, 11 participants were selected to serve as the participant pool. These participants were sent a confirmation email of their participation (Appendix E or F) and were thanked for their interest. In addition, the timing and date for the first interview was confirmed. The participant pool represented diversity in major, minors and/or endorsements, GPA, and year of CLP completion (see Table 1).

Table 1
Program Demographics of Participants

Name	CLP Completion	GPA	Major	Minor/Endorsement
O'Brien	December 2003	3.85	Political science	Economics
Kampman	December 2003	3.85	Business	Political Science
Joseph	December 2004	3.60	Physical Education	Health
Holt	May 2006	3.98	History	Social Science Education
Davis	May 2007	3.30	Communication Arts	Public Relations
Smith	May 2007	3.80	Communication Arts and History	N/A
Jorgen	May 2009	3.70	English	English Education
Bollman	May 2009	3.70	Business	Economics
Caroline	May 2009	3.96	Business	Spanish
Berlyn	May 2011	3.80	Social work	N/A
Matthew	May 2011	3.93	Computer Information Systems	Business

The alumni who participated in the study represented diversity in majors and minors/endorsements. In addition, they represented the breadth of the leadership program as the first student graduated in 2001, and although she was not represented in this study, two alumni of the five who graduated from the CLP in 2003 were. In addition, two participants from the 2011 graduating class were represented and care was taken to ensure there was balance in between these bookend years. This scope was necessary to provide a comprehensive representation of the leadership program. The one area that did not provide much diversity was in respect to grade point average (GPA) as the majority of the participants had a high GPA. Furthermore, the participants were also intentionally chosen due to their diversity in professional occupations and places of employment (see Table 2).

Table 2
Occupation and Place of Employment for Participants

Name	Occupation	Place of employment
O'Brien	Attorney	Private law firm
Kampman	Attorney	Private law firm
Joseph	Administrator	Non-profit organization
Holt	Social science teacher	Public 5-8 middle school
Davis	Marketing director	Technology firm
Smith	Director for student engagement	Private university
Jorgen	Technology coordinator/English teacher	Private K-12 magnet school
Bollman	Assistant director of development	Private college
Caroline	Financial analyst	Agriculture based company
Berlyn	Development manager	Non-profit organization
Matthew	Computer information system analyst	Bank

The purpose of the study was not to generalize the findings to other leadership programs or to a larger population. Instead, the intent was to develop a deep and integrated understanding of the phenomenon as experienced by alumni who participated in Midwest College's CLP. Initially, it was expected that six to eight participants would be interviewed; however, in the end 11 participants completed the series of interviews. A maximum total of 10 participants had been identified as the ideal participant pool, but more participated due to the need to reach saturation and participant interest. Eleven alumni of Midwest College had identified extreme interest in participating and this created greater diversity as part of the participant pool. Finally, too many participants were deemed to be better than not enough.

Data collection. Data was collected through qualitative research methods. Comprehensive data about the leadership program, and its alumni was collected via institutional data. The Leadership Education Institute had collected data about its alumni via an online survey which was sent to all graduates of Midwest College's leadership program. The intent of the survey was to collect descriptive data from alumni, to collect information about their leadership experiences, to gauge how the program met their needs, and to inquire about future leadership interests.

The majority of data for this research project was collected through qualitative practices. Jones (2002) identified there are three major sources of data for qualitative research: interviewing, participant observations, and document analysis. Often times there will be a primary method for collecting data and a secondary source will be used to support the primary method (Creswell, 2009). The specific source is determined by the study's research question (Creswell, 2009), the phenomenon being investigated, and the theoretical perspective (Jones, 2002). It is suggested that researchers use more than one method of data collection as it augments the trustworthiness and goodness of the research (Creswell, 2009).

The way data are collected influences what can be known, experienced, and described by the researcher (Jones, 2002). It is essential that a researcher elaborates and provides explicit details on the data collection methods used, the setting for interviews, length of interviews, the degree of intrusiveness of the researcher, and the criteria upon which the documents for review and analysis were selected (Crotty, 1998). Jones (2002) also suggested a well designed study provides a rationale for each of the aforementioned areas. The primary method of data collection was in-depth, semi-structured interviews as these are best suited for

phenomenological research (Creswell, 2007). The secondary method was document analysis and included viewing participant leadership portfolios and institutional data.

Interviews. Esterberg (2002) stated interviews are “at the heart of social research” (p. 83). I conducted semi-structured interviews with 11 participants, and each audio-taped interview lasted approximately 60-90 minutes. Semi-structured interviews were used in order to explore the topic “more openly and to allow interviewees to express their opinions and ideas in their own words” (Esterberg, 2002, p. 87). Interviewing was the primary source of data collection as it allowed the investigation of participants’ lived experiences from their point of view (Seidman, 1991). Specifically, a variation of Seidman’s (1991) interview methodology was used.

According to Seidman (1991), “The method of in-depth phenomenological interviewing applied to a sample of participants who all experience similar structural and social conditions gives enormous power to the stories of a relatively few participants” (p. 48). The most significant feature of Seidman’s interview methodology is that it allows participants to articulate meaning of their experiences. The approach typically involves a series of three interviews: the first interview establishes participants’ life histories and context for the phenomenon; the second allows participants to form and share the details of their experience; and the third interview encourages participants to reflect on the meaning of the constructed experience (Seidman, 1991). Seidman’s interview format was important because it allowed alumni to explain their life history and it guided me from their childhood through present day. Throughout the process they explained their lives through the context of leadership. Seidman’s approach was valuable as I gained an understanding of the participants’ backgrounds and this helped when formulating and interpreting the meaning of

their experiences. It would have been extremely difficult to explore the meaning of leadership without having a firm understanding of whom the participants were, from where they came, and what they had experienced. Throughout the process, participants had difficulties remembering the explicit tangibles associated with their experiences although it was easy to speak in generalities. In addition, participants often needed to be probed for deeper and more reflective responses.

An interview guide (Appendix H) was used to brainstorm potential questions, which then were used to develop additional questions. The interview guide approach allows a researcher to determine a list of topics without formalizing the specific order of questioning (Esterberg, 2002). Each in-depth interview included standard questions, but was tailored to the research participant, and follow-up questions relating to participants' answers were utilized. The exact order of the questions was dependent on the flow of the interviews, and as suggested by Esterberg (2002), the researcher followed the lead of the interviewees.

Research questions were divided into categories guided by the research questions. The first interview focused on participants' life histories. For instance, examples of questions were: "Did you consider yourself a leader growing up?" or "How did adults perceive you as a leader?" The second session focused on the participant's leadership experiences. During this interview a question asked was, "Describe your leadership experiences as part of the Certificate of Leadership Program." The final session focused on participants making meaning of their lived leadership experiences as part of the CLP. For example participants were asked to respond to questions such as: "Define leadership." "How significant is leading to you?" "What is the meaning of your leadership experiences?"

Seidman (1991) indicated, “In-depth interviewing is not designed to test hypotheses...but instead is designed to ask participants to reconstruct their experiences and to explore their meaning” (p. 77). The questions which framed these series of interviews were developed based on a variety of articles and books read as part of the exhaustive literature review completed. In addition, I gathered questions from other dissertations, and research associated with phenomenology. Lastly, because there is a limited amount of research within this particular context and leadership education, many of the questions were developed based on my personal interest in the phenomenon and my knowledge about and experiences within leadership education.

At times, it was a challenge to stay within the structure of the interview guidelines. It was not until the third interview as part of the first series of interviews that I had a structured interview guide. Throughout the first two interviews I moved questions around based on the lead of the participants and refined questions during the interviews. After the first two interviews, the questions and their order were fairly solidified, but I was cognizant of not being too rigid and forcing questions on participants. In addition, initially I had intended to complete three separate interviews with each participant; however, it became apparent after the first two life history interviews that it was not possible to stay within this intended structure. Seidman (1991) identified that alternatives to the series are appropriate, “As long as structure is maintained that allows participants to reconstruct and reflect upon their experience within the context of their lives” (pp. 21-22). The three interviews were still completed but done so in only two meetings. This was very natural and the lead of the participants dictated this change. Essentially, the first two interviews were completed during the first meeting as the questions and interviews naturally were integrated into each other. In

addition, some questions from the second interview were asked as part of the third interview. This was not expected but was necessary based on the flow and direction of the interviewees. Seidman contends, “alterations to the three-interview structure and duration and spacing of the interviews can certainly be explored” (p. 22).

At the conclusion of the second interview I asked participants to think about what was discussed during the interview and to make notes of anything they wished would have been discussed. It was indicated to the participants that these ideas and reflections would be used to start the third interview. Before the third interview started; for example, I asked, “Is there anything that came up since we last spoke? Additional memories, reflections, things that you wanted to discuss in regards to our previous interview that you didn’t have the chance to talk about, that you would want to share now?” Many participants started off the third interview by sharing something they missed or thought about after completing the first and second interview. For those who did not have anything to share, I started the third interview by summarizing the first and second interviews and introduced participants to the next series of questions. In both situations, participants were able to easily transition between interviews. Moreover, I asked similar questions which further helped participants to start where we had left off during the previous interview.

The logistics of the interviews were dependent on participant availability, the location of participants, and research constraints. Ideally I would have conducted all of the interviews face-to-face as it would have made the process more personal. Furthermore, nonverbal behaviors, and tone and inflection of the participant’s voices could have provided additional insight to their responses. However, I felt limiting the interviews to only those who lived in the immediate area would have required sacrificing the potential diversity of the participants.

I felt the diversity of the pool was more important so decisions were made to ensure diversity at the cost of conducting all interviews face-to-face.

The length of the interviews varied, but the majority of them lasted from 65-75 minutes with the shortest one lasting 54 minutes and the longest being 86 minutes. I had indicated to the participants that each set of interviews would likely last between 60-90 minutes, and time was allocated for each interview to make that possible. The participants each answered questions differently; some participants were very concise and others used a variety of stories and examples to support their statements and positions. Quite frequently, participants would answer questions I had intended to ask later or would address my follow up questions before I had asked them. Therefore, I did not re-ask these questions unless I needed additional clarification. In addition, I asked participants to substantiate responses with specific examples to ensure the leadership experiences were explicitly attributed to Midwest College's Certificate of Leadership Program and not another leadership event.

The first series of interviews were conducted in mid December 2011 and virtually all were completed before any of the second series were conducted. The second series of interviews which concerned the meaning made as part of alumni's leadership experience occurred a week to three weeks after the first one. All interviews were completed before the end of December 2011.

The specific timing of interviews was dependent on the researcher and participants' schedules. Due to the locations of some of the interviewees interviews were conducted over the telephone, but participants who were located within reasonable driving distance to the researcher participated in face-to face interviews. Table 3 outlines how the interviews were conducted with participants.

Table 3

Type and Number of Interviews

Participant	Number of Interviews		State of Residence
	Face-to-face	Over the Phone	
O'Brien	0	3	Iowa
Kampman	3	0	Iowa
Joesph	3	0	Iowa
Holt	3	0	Iowa
Davis	3	0	Iowa
Smith	0	3	Minnesota
Jorgen	0	3	Minnesota
Bollman	3	0	Iowa
Caroline	0	3	Illinois
Berlyn	0	3	Iowa
Matthew	0	3	New York

The interviews went relatively smoothly and a vast amount of data was collected. In addition to in-depth interviews, data was also collected through document analysis.

Document analysis. Document analysis was also used as a data collection method. Creswell (2009) explained analysis can occur through viewing public documents such as newspapers, websites, and minutes of meetings or by examining private documents such as personal emails, letters, or diaries. Document analysis involves unobtrusive measures which take the form of any research that does not involve interviewing or participant observations (Esterberg, 2000). My analysis of documents involved reading institutional information as part of brochures and viewing a variety of institutional websites. Moreover, the leadership portfolios of participants were retrieved and viewed. Each student completing the CLP is required to maintain and turn in a leadership portfolio which demonstrates the participant's

competency of the program requirements. The portfolios require students to reflect on their involvement in the program and their attainment of the program's goals. The portfolios provided a wealth of rich data and helped to further understand the meaning and context of the leadership phenomenon. In addition, the institutional data was extremely beneficial in understanding the history and structure of the leadership program.

Data analysis. A goal of qualitative analysis is to take a considerable amount of text, which may seem ambiguous and overwhelming, and ultimately make sense of it (Lichtman, 2006). Sharing the stories which emerge from a research project is an intimate responsibility carried by a researcher and requires honest, ethical, and rigorous procedures (Jones, 2002). Jones (2002) further noted the appropriate system of analysis is one that produces themes and findings that convey a deeper and richer understanding of the phenomenon. Esterberg (2002) indicated analyzing data involves several stages such as physically managing the data; becoming immersed in the data; identifying themes, categories, or determining patterns in the data; and finally, finding ways to present the analysis to others.

Data management. Esterberg (2002) recommended that as a researcher begins to analyze qualitative data, the first task is to arrange and organize data in order to make sense of it. This can be a mechanical process as a researcher needs to ensure a comprehensive list of data collected is generated, all tapes are transcribed, and disks and files are properly labeled (Esterberg, 2002). Early in the process, I used a three ring binder as the physical tool for organizing the various documents associated with the research, and designated a file cabinet that could be locked and accessed only by me to store research materials. Additionally, I created a password protected folder on my personal computer to store data and documents. Data was stored electronically, but was also printed off in hardcopy form to

serve as a back-up. I separated data by sources and function and maintained it in chronological order. I developed a system to organize data that worked well for me and ensured it was kept current. Furthermore, this system helped to maintain control of data.

Immersion into the data. During the collection process I reviewed data collected and kept it current. Once everything was collected, I reviewed data by listening to tapes, reading transcripts, and looking back at the assortment of information collected. This helped to comprehend the breadth and depth of data and allowed me to “visualize” the end process.

Determining patterns in the data. There are a variety of ways to identify and analyze data throughout the research process, some of which are specific to the methodology. Colaizzi’s phenomenology data analysis model (1978) was used in order to specifically analyze data, and as previously indicated, Moustakas’ phenomenological approach (1994) also informed this process. Colaizzi’s model (1978, pp. 48-71) includes the following steps:

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

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

Confidentiality

Confidentiality was ensured to protect the integrity of the research process and those who participated in it. Therefore, the names represented within the study are fictitious in order to protect the identity of the institution, its staff and faculty, and those who participated in the study. Esterberg (2002) noted that if research is going to yield anything of value the researcher must ensure to the participants that their identities will remain confidential. Hence the institution, including its programs and faculty/staff, and the study's participants were provided pseudonyms. The participants who provided interviews were allowed to choose their own pseudonyms if they wished.

Participants were also required to sign an informed consent form (Appendix G). Before participants were interviewed they were provided with the informed consent forms and were asked to read and sign the form if they agreed with it. These who participated in interviews over the phone were asked to either fax or email the executed form before the

interview was conducted. Those who participated in face-to-face interviews signed the form on site before the first interview started. In addition, I went over the informed consent forms to ensure the participants understood the agreement.

To further ensure confidentiality, all data collected were housed in a locked file cabinet and in password protected electronic files. These files were only accessible to me. Lastly, on October 14, 2011, I attained approval from the Iowa State University Institutional Review Board (Appendix A) to conduct the research project. My application addressed the objectives of the study, how data was to be collected and analyzed, how the findings and conclusions were to be reported, and addressed the ethics of the project.

Goodness and Trustworthiness

Merriam (2002) stated, “systematically evaluating or critiquing a qualitative study involves considering the overall design of the study, as well as rigor with which the study was conducted” (p. 19). There are a variety of terms used in conjunction with judging qualitative studies and checking for accuracy, such as goodness, trustworthiness, validity, reliability, and authenticity among others. There is great ambiguity in the use of the aforementioned terms, and often times they are used interchangeably. I, specifically, focused on defining goodness and trustworthiness and described the multiple measures and various tools which were used in order to enhance the goodness and trustworthiness of the study. Lastly, great lengths were taken to ensure the research was conducted in an ethical manner.

Ethical Issues

Merriam (2002) expressed, “To a large extent, the validity and reliability of a study depend upon the ethics of the researcher” (p. 29). The topic being studied was not controversial, but there were ethical considerations which were addressed. For instance, I

ensured that the identities of the participants were protected; I divulged a sufficient amount of information to the participants about the research process, and I engaged in questioning that was appropriate. In one instance, during the questioning of a participant, I asked a question of her that related to her family history, and she indicated that she did not want to answer the question. I respected her request and proceeded to the next question realizing the topic was uncomfortable for her.

Goodness

Goodness is an ambiguous word that can mean something different to each researcher, but Merriam (2002) indicated it represents, “whether the study was conducted in a rigorous, systematic, and ethical manner, such that the results can be trusted” (p. 24). Goodness can be achieved in a variety of ways such as identifying the elements of the meaning making process, integrating the epistemological and theoretical framework with the methodology, ensuring the data collection and analysis processes are transparent, and identifying ones assumptions and biases.

Jones (2002) noted, “a carefully considered design must be situated in an epistemological framework as well as in methodological strategies” (p. 462). The study’s epistemology and theoretical perspectives have been noted and explained. However, goodness requires more than just identifying the overarching philosophical perspectives and frameworks. Goodness, as explained by Arminio and Hultgren (2002), requires that the “epistemological and theoretical foundations are linked to the selected methodology; and that the method of data collection and its analysis are clear” (p. 446). I am confident that I satisfied this aspect of goodness for a variety of reasons. I outlined and vividly described the epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods of the approach, and

explained how data was collected and analyzed. Specifically, I described and grounded the epistemology and theoretical frameworks of the study. In addition, I directly connected each aspect to the methodology. I also immersed the methods used to collect and analyze data in research based best practices, such as Seidman's three interview series (1991) and Colaizzi's data analysis model (1978), both of which have a firm place in qualitative inquiry and are frequently cited and used. I also used Moustakas' (1994) process for conducting phenomenological research as a guide for the research process.

Merriam (2000) expressed that critical self reflection from the researcher is needed and as part of qualitative research this can be identified through a researcher's positionality and reflexivity statement. This is important to determine in qualitative research because the researcher is the instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Arminio and Hultgren (2002) explained one measure of goodness requires researchers to reveal their biases, assumptions, and experiences. R. M. Cooper (personal communication, June 18, 2010) identified a researcher can identify his or her position through a positionality statement and this typically occurs at the beginning as biases, assumptions, and perspectives are expressed. Reflexivity, or "self awareness" (Creswell, 2007, p. 11), occurs at the end when a researcher discusses how he or she was potentially changed as a result of the experience or how he or she thinks about something in light of the experience (Cooper, personal communication, June 18, 2010). It is the use of self reflection that helps one to recognize his or her own biases or to seek them out (Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh, 2002). I note my bias and assumptions as part of my positionality statement later in this chapter and included a reflexivity statement at the end of this dissertation. Both of these statements demonstrated critical self reflection as part of the research process.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is also an integral aspect of qualitative research, and it should be noted that those immersed in the field cannot agree on its use and meaning. Trustworthiness is often used interchangeably with goodness, but for the sake of this study, trustworthiness is viewed as the validity of the research. Qualitative validity “means the researcher checks for accuracy of the findings” (Creswell, 2009, p. 190). Merriam (2002) identifies two types of validity: internal and external. Internal validity addresses the question, “How congruent are one’s findings with reality?” (p. 25). External validity or generalizability is the degree to which the research of one qualitative study can be applied to other circumstances (Merriam, 2003). Validity can be achieved through a variety of procedures. There are numerous ways to ensure trustworthiness, including member checks, peer reviews, audit trails, and using thick and rich text (Anfara, Brown, & Magione, 2002). Creswell (2009) notes additional procedures such as triangulation, peer debriefing, and using an external auditor can increase the trustworthiness of the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) also identify negative case analysis in which cases are intentionally sought that might challenge the expectations or findings.

Some techniques are better suited for specific methodologies, and it is not expected that all approaches and strategies are used and expressed within a study; however, one should observe at least a few of them. In this study, I incorporated a multitude of these strategies, including clarifying researcher bias, use of triangulation, thick and rich descriptions, peer reviews, member checks, peer debriefing and creating an extensive audit trail. Collectively, these strategies and techniques were used to ensure quality. Lincoln and Guba (1985)

identify four constructs that are assumed in qualitative research and these constructs are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility. Credibility “concerns the accuracy or truthfulness of the findings” (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002, p. 451). The goal of credibility is to ensure that participants are accurately identified, described, and portrayed (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002) expressed credibility can be gained through methods such as structural corroboration, evidence based on consensus, and evidence based on referential evidence. These methods can be achieved through measures including the use of prolonged engagement, member checks, peer debriefing, low-inference descriptors and triangulation (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002).

Referential evidence. I accounted for the referential evidence of validity through prolonged engagement, member checks, and low-inference descriptors. The referential evidence of validity refers to accurately portraying the meaning participants attach to the phenomenon being studied and the extent to which participants’ thoughts, feelings, and perspectives are understood and represented (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002).

I had prolonged engagement with the 11 participants of this study. Initially, I accessed and viewed their undergraduate leadership portfolio that each participant had created as the culminating artifact for the Certificate of Leadership Program. This introduced me to the participants, what they had experienced in the leadership program, and what they believed they gained from their involvement in the CLP. I then met or called each participant on two separate occasions and conducted a total of three interviews with them over the course of a month. Each interview lasted between approximately 60-90 minutes. In addition, I also dialogued with participants though email throughout the research process.

This prolonged engagement provided the opportunity to build trust between myself and participants. It also allowed me to reach data saturation. Merriam (2002) identifies saturation as beginning to “see or hear the same things over and over again, and no new information surfaces as you collect more data” (p. 26). In addition to the researcher being deeply engaged in the phenomenon, he or she should periodically check the participants concerning the research and its findings. Throughout the process I communicated with participants.

Member checking helps researchers, “check their own subjectivity and ensure the trustworthiness of their findings” (Jones, 2002, p. 469) and is the “single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 111). Member checking involves more than just asking participants to read the transcripts. I used member checking throughout the research process. For instance, I provided participants with their transcripts to check for errors or inconsistencies. Furthermore, I provided participants with the interpreted formulated meanings and asked them to check for accuracy. Lastly, participants were provided with the statement of identification and feedback was requested concerning the statement. Upon completion of the process I will provide participants with copies of the study.

I also used an abundance of direct quotes, which are low-inference descriptors, to help readers “experience” the world of the participants. Moreover, thick and rich text helped to convey meaning and context.

Structural corroboration. The credibility of the study was also addressed through structural corroboration. Structural corroboration uses different sources of data in comparison to each other to support or contradict the interpretation of the data, and

triangulation is an effective means to address it (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002).

Triangulation is the “process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection” (Creswell, 2002, p. 280) and can be used to confirm emerging findings (Merriam, 2002). In-depth interviews served as the primary way to collect data, but document analysis was also incorporated. In addition to using a variety of data collection methods to demonstrate triangulation, one can use multiple methods to confirm emerging findings. I accomplished this through actively using peer reviewers throughout the research and writing processes.

Consensus. I was also able to ensure validity based on achieving consensus. Consensus is the agreement of competent others regarding description and interpretation of data (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002). Peer review, otherwise expressed as debriefing, is an effective method to attain consensus. Peer review involves, “discussions with colleagues regarding the process of study, the congruency of merging findings with the raw data, and tentative interpretation” (Merriam, 2002, p. 31). Peer reviews were conducted and used throughout the research process. I had access to a variety of people whom served as editors and peer reviewers. I involved colleagues who are familiar with my work and those who are not. Those who served as peer reviewers included a college administrator who acquired a Ph.D. from Michigan State University, a former college professor who was serving as a superintendent of school district and received an Ed.D. in K-12 administration from the University of Northern Iowa, and a woman who is the owner/president of a leadership consulting firm and had earned a master’s degree in strategic communication and leadership from Seton Hall University. The peer reviewers were chosen based on their life experiences, knowledge of leadership, and their familiarity with the research and methodological

frameworks. In addition, I had others who served as editors of my work. My interactions with peers and their feedback were instrumental in helping to formalize the research and further extrapolate and contextualize themes. Additionally, their input helped to identify areas which needed revisiting and ways to strengthen and enhance the overall structure of the research.

Transferability. Transferability “is the degree to which the findings....can be applied or generalized to other contexts or groups (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002, p. 454). Transferability can be accomplished through thick and rich text and reaching maximum variation.

It is possible to transfer qualitative findings to the extent that they are similar to the parameters of the original study. Merriam (2002) noted the most common way generalizability has been viewed in qualitative research “is as reader or user generalizability” (p. 28). In this approach the potential users determine to what degree the findings from a study can be applied to their situation (Merriam, 2002). The transfer is made by the user of the findings, and although the researcher does not specify transferability, he or she must ensure that thick and rich text is provided so the user can compare the situations in order to make a judgment (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002).

Thick and rich description can be used as “a major strategy to ensure for external validity or generalizability in the qualitative sense” (Merriam, 2000, p. 29). This means enough description, information, and detailed stories are provided to ensure the information is trustworthy and appropriate. It was of extreme importance to ensure the voices of alumni were prominent and clearly articulated; specifically concerning their leadership experiences and the meaning developed from those experiences. Seidman’s (1991) three interview

protocol requires intensive interviews and afforded me the opportunity to collect rich data that served as a detailed foundation for the findings and conclusions. I collected data until I reached the saturation point, and I began to hear repeated information (Merriam, 2002). In the end, I was able to formulate the essence of participants' experiences. It was a goal to provide vivid descriptions and thick and rich text so a reader can determine to what extent the study matches his or her own situation and to what degree the results can be transferred (Merriam, 2002).

Maximizing variation can help to ensure transferability. Maximizing variation is ensuring that there is some diversity in the sample (Merriam, 2002). Merriam (2002) suggests if maximizing variation is used as part of purposeful sampling the results can be applied by readers or users to a broader range of situations. As part of purposefully selecting the participants for this study, I ensured the participants were diverse. I specifically looked at year of graduation, gender, majors, occupations, where students were from, and where they were geographically located at the time of the study. I attempted to use race as a factor, but the participant pool was too homogenous to allow this as a possibility.

Dependability. Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Merriam, 2002) were the first ones to conceptualize reliability in qualitative research as “dependability” (1985, p. 288).

Dependability is the notion concerning the extent to which variation can be applied (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002). Dependability is generated when “the researcher attempts to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study as well as any in the design” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 145). Dependability can be addressed through triangulation and peer review (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). Audit trails can be used

to assist in creating dependability (Merriam, 2002). Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (2002) noted that coding-recoding can also be used.

The “transparency of method” (Merriam, 2002, p. 21) and to what degree the audit trail is transparent can help determine the study’s value. Audit trails explain the methods of the study, how participants were selected, describe how data were collected and analyzed, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry (Merriam, 2002). I kept a research journal throughout the study to record reflections, questions, decisions made, new ideas, and problems or issues encountered. This journal also served to maintain documentation of how often and when I interacted with participants, and identified how I engaged with the analysis of data and how interpretations were constructed (Merriam, 2002). I have included a brief summary in the form of an audit trail (Appendix I) to identify decisions made and to provide evidence for what actions were taken.

Merriam (2002) noted triangulation can be used to ensure dependability is achieved. Triangulation was previously discussed as part of credibility, but it can also be used to demonstrate dependability. Triangulation involves using multiple methods. The primary method used to collect data involved in-depth interviews, but document analysis was also used. Seidman’s (1991) three interview approach and protocols helped to construct the parameters in which to guide participants back to experiences which some had experienced nearly ten years ago. This helped situate the experience so participants could effectively reflect upon them and make meaning of the situations. Document analysis of student leadership portfolios was conducted to collect data about the student’s leadership perspectives during their last year as undergraduates and as part of their culminating leadership experience.

The final method attempted which was used to ensure reliability was coding-recoding. Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (2002) explained this method requires the researcher to code the data and then leave it alone for some time. The researcher then comes back and recodes the data. The two sets of data are then compared to each other. I attempted this method with a few of the participant's transcripts and discovered the data was being coded very similarly. I did not use this method extensively, but enough to find its usefulness.

Confirmability. Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (2002) identify confirmability as being the neutrality or to what extent the researcher was impartial as part of the collection and subsequent interpretation of data. It is virtually impossible to achieve the levels of objectivity that quantitative researchers are able to accomplish so qualitative researchers are more concerned with whether their findings can be confirmed by other researchers. Confirmability can be attained through measures already discussed such as triangulation and audit trails. Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (2002) offered that the audit trail is the main strategy used to demonstrate confirmability. In addition, confirmability can be addressed through peer review and the identification of a researcher's positionality and/or reflexivity (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002).

Merriam (2002) explained, "Researchers should explain their position vis-à-vis the topic being studied, the basis for selecting participants, the context of the study, and what values or assumptions might affect data collection and analysis" (p. 26). This is referred to as the "researcher's position" (Merriam, 2002, p. 26), otherwise described as positionality. R. M. Cooper (personal communication, June 18, 2010) identified positionality as typically expressed at the beginning of a study as biases, assumptions, and perspectives are articulated. The identification of a researcher's positionality helps the reader or user better understand

how the individual researcher may have identified the interpretations expressed and conclusions reached (Merriam, 2002). In an effort to address confirmability, I have devoted a section to my positionality.

Researcher Positionality

Researchers engage in their work with assumptions, experiences, and worldviews (Merriam, 2002). Creswell (2003) noted the qualitative researcher should reflect on his or her involvement in the research and ought to be sensitive to it and identify how it may potentially shape the study. In order to exemplify goodness and trustworthiness as part of this research process, I needed to deeply reflect on my own experiences, assumptions, and personal history. I realized that I possessed experiences, assumptions, and biases which potentially shaped this study.

I am a 35-year-old Caucasian middle class male. I was born in Minot, North Dakota and grew up in Galt, Iowa. Galt is a very small community in north central Iowa. I had the opportunity to be the first person in my family to attend college and initially attended a community college.

After completing my Associate in Arts degree I transferred to a state school. It was not until the end of my sophomore year that I knew what I wanted to do. I was fortunate to have instrumental people who guided me along the way and suggested that I explore the field of education. I also had the opportunity to coach football, wrestling, and track at local high schools while I was in college and these opportunities were very influential in helping to realize my calling as an educator. I earned a Bachelor's of Arts degree in science education from a state university renowned for their ability to produce teachers.

Upon graduation, I was immediately hired into the Watertown Community School District in Watertown, Iowa to teach science in the middle school. Through my advanced studies in middle school education, I gained an appreciation for middle school based philosophies. I earned my Master's of Arts degree in middle school education at the end of my first year of teaching. During my employment, I helped change the ethos of the school district and guided them from a junior high mentality to a more middle school philosophy.

I am a restless person and after five years of teaching, I started to look for the next right answer: personally and professionally. I observed Midwest College had posted a position that was responsible for working with student teachers and field experience students in an administrative capacity. The position and its possibilities intrigued me.

The instant I stepped on campus I experienced this feeling that I could not explain and still cannot to this day. The best way it can be described was a feeling of acceptance, community, and possibilities. I was offered the position and transitioned to Midwest College six years ago. I was hired as the Director of the Office of Student Placements and the School Partnerships Coordinator and these positions involved placing and evaluating all education majors at Midwest College, coordinating the Building Communities Program, and developing and maintaining partnerships with local school districts. After three years in the position, I felt I had things where I wanted them and started to think about my next professional step. I knew I wanted to complete a terminal degree and started to look at different institutions. I received an email about a cohort program that Iowa State University offered which resulted in a doctorate in philosophy with an emphasis in educational leadership. The next week I was attending classes at Iowa State University.

In 2010, a faculty member in the Education Department at Midwest College, whom had mentored me, left his faculty position to take the superintendent position of a school district. I was appointed to this faculty position in March 2011 and my responsibilities started in September 2011. I have worked in this position for the past six months.

While employed at Midwest College, I have worked directly with the Leadership Education Institute and its director, Dr. Forest Stone. Specifically, as part of the LEI, I facilitated a program called Building Communities Program. This program is a fundamental service component of the leadership course, *Leadership Theories and Practices* (ID 351). ID 351 is a service-learning course and is one of three required classes needed to attain the Certificate of Leadership. Because I facilitated Building Communities and taught over a fourth of the class as part of my responsibilities, I interacted with virtually every student who has been involved in the Certificate of Leadership Program since 2006. During the Fall 2011 semester, I was asked to team-teach a section of ID 351 because another section was needed. This provided me with the opportunity to instruct the theoretical portion of the class in addition to the practical component. When I was initially hired, I was appointed a Leadership Advisor because of my ties to the leadership program. This appointment includes a variety of responsibilities and one expectation is to participate on the Education, Service and Leadership Committee. Leadership Advisors also serve as a resource for students interested in the program and help make the program visible on and off campus. I have appreciated the opportunity to work with the faculty, staff, and students associated with the LEI, and have grown personally and professionally as a result of my experiences.

In my six years at Midwest College, I have witnessed the evolution of students from the beginning to the end of the leadership program and through the first years of their

professional careers. My experiences, observations, and involvement with the CLP, combined with my graduate work, stimulated an intense interest in the concept of leadership and the structure and function of leadership programs.

During the summer of 2010, I completed an extensive qualitative study which addressed perceived outcomes of the CLP from the perspectives of alumni who had graduated in 2009 and 2010. The intent of the study was to identify outcomes such as knowledge, skills, and dispositions that students directly attributed to have been gained from their involvement in the CLP. In addition, during the winter of 2011, I completed a capstone project with the Leadership Education Institute. This project involved completing a qualitative study which gathered feedback from students about suggested changes to Midwest College's Certificate of Leadership Program. This endeavor resulted in a variety of recommendations which were then grounded in the literature and through comparisons of other leadership programs from institutions across the country, recommendations for changes to the CLP were provided to the college. These experiences and an innate interest in learning more about leadership programs combined with the paucity of information about leadership programs from the perspectives of alumni created an ideal opportunity to complete a dissertation about leadership programs.

I began this phenomenological case study with assumptions and bias based on prior knowledge of Midwest College's leadership program as I worked with the program as a facilitator, an instructor, a member of leadership committees and as a Leadership Advisor. In addition, I was familiar with a few of the participants before the study began because of my direct and indirect involvement with the leadership program.

I believe the leadership program is a great asset to the college. I believe students graduate from the program with knowledge, skills, and dispositions about leadership that add value to their liberal arts education. I believe alumni can articulate the tangibles and beliefs gained from the program and are better leaders because of their involvement.

I view of leadership as being attainable to anyone who desires it. It is not necessarily something you are born into, but some people possess certain characteristics that enable them to lead better than others. Leadership is also about the desire and willingness to serve.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study include:

The breadth and depth of this study is limited to research of one leadership education program at a private liberal arts undergraduate institution located in the Midwest and therefore results can be appropriated to similar situations.

The participants of the research primarily identified as being Caucasian; therefore, the experience of participants of a different racial identification is not extensively represented.

The participants of the study were purposefully selected and this decreases the generalizability of the findings, except in ways that people can identify with the stories and experiences expressed by participants.

In order to create a diverse participant pool, people were selected to participate who lived far enough away that it was not feasible to conduct interviews face-to-face. This required the interviews to be conducted over the phone. A concern with this medium is that some phone interviews were interrupted by other phone calls, visitors, etc. so at times it was difficult to retain the attention of the participants, and I had to help them refocus on the interview. Nonetheless, I am confident that I was able to gather the needed data.

Delimitations of the Study

This research study is delimited to alumni who graduated from Midwest College's CLP program from 2003-2011. However, the study could be beneficial to other institutions who have similarly constructed leadership programs.

The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of students. It was not the intention to collect information in order to evaluate or assess the program. Nevertheless, the findings should provide valuable information for the Leadership Education Institute, Certificate of Leadership Program, and associated faculty and staff. The project aimed to increase awareness of alumni perceptions concerning the leadership program and the meaning constructed from their leadership experiences as part of the program. However, the purposeful sampling method used limits the transferability of the study's findings.

Summary

This chapter presented the study's methodology. This qualitative study was situated in constructionism and used basic interpretivism as its theoretical perspective. The study was grounded as a case study with major emphasis placed on phenomenology. This resulted in the study being viewed as a phenomenological case study. The bounded system as part of the case study was Midwest College's Certificate of Leadership Program and the phenomenon studied was the leadership experience as part of participating in the CLP. The methods used to collect data included in-depth interviews and document analysis. Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological approach was used to guide the overall research process and Colaizzi's (1978) data analysis model was used to determine themes and develop the essence of alumni's leadership experiences.

CHAPTER 4: DESCRIPTION OF CASE

Taking responsibility for our communities, and making them better through public action.

Midwest College's Leadership Education Institute mission statement

This chapter vividly describes the case studied. Thick and rich text was used to provide insight and establish foundational information that is valuable in order to further understand the context of the case study and the emergent themes. This chapter offers a description of Midwest College, an overview of the college's Leadership Education Institute and specific program that is affiliated with the institute called the Certificate of Leadership Program. This description provides insight into the leadership program including its history, its characteristics, and the people involved with the program. The description of the case was generated from document analysis of institutional materials such as brochures and web sites and through personal conversation and email correspondence with those affiliated with the institution. The college, the leadership program, and those affiliated with the institution were provided pseudonyms in order to protect their confidentiality.

Research Site

Midwest College is a four-year private liberal arts college located in the Midwest and is associated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It has educated undergraduate students for the past 150 years. The institution had been classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a BA (Liberal Arts) I, but its classification was changed to a BA-General when requirements were revised and implemented by the Carnegie Foundation. When the Carnegie Foundation altered its classification system in 2005, the institution chose to participate in an elective category and was recognized for its community engagement

initiatives. The college's Leadership Education Institute was a main impetus for this recognition.

Overview of Case

Midwest College initiated a leadership program, identified as the Certificate of Leadership Program, during the 1998-99 academic year. The leadership program is housed structurally within the Leadership Education Institute and Dr. Forest Stone serves as the program's director. The program also has an assistant director and Dr. Nate Williams serves in that capacity. The program was developed to help students live lives of leadership and service as an expression of their faith and learning and to help promote Midwest College's mission statement and strategic initiatives.

Leadership Education

Leadership education at Midwest College was formalized in 1989 when the LEI was created through the generosity of former member and chair of the Midwest College Board of Regents, Burling Irving, his family, Millennial Companies of America, and the Exclusive Insurance Group. Stone (2002) indicated:

Midwest College has accepted the mission of educating its students to appreciate the leadership roles they must assume in addressing those issues which face the world into which they will graduate. This is predicated on a sense of civic responsibility which holds that everyone can and ought to contribute to society. Indeed the quality of life under a democratic government is dependent upon the existence of an informed, responsible citizenry. The goal of leadership education at Midwest College is to help students explore and appreciate the potential contributions they can make toward this end (p. 1).

Midwest College's formal definition of leadership is "Taking responsibility for our communities, and making them better through public action" (Midwest College, n.d.). The basis of this definition is that leadership bonds students to a particular community for purposes of achieving a common goal, and this can contribute to personal, academic, civic, and social development. "The presumption is that students who leave Midwest College with this sense of understanding and experience will enter their new communities with the confidence and skills to play meaningful roles in all aspects of community" (F. A. Stone, personal communication, March 25, 2011). Communities are places and organizations where people interact with one another and meet their needs. They also share a sense of identity and vision for the future (Midwest College, n.d.).

There are several underlying assumptions which situate leadership education at Midwest College including: (a) the formal academic environment is an appropriate forum to investigate questions about leadership; (b) leadership education must be voluntary; (c) leadership education must be ethical; (d) everyone can contribute to leadership education, and (e) it should not be segregated into a separate program or discipline controlled by self defined leadership experts (Stone, 2002). F. A. Stone indicated:

Leadership education at Midwest College is very intentional in providing students with specific opportunities such as the opportunity to intentionally explore and test their leadership skills and strengths and the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of leadership as defined by Midwest within the context of their individual personal academic and vocational interests (personal communication, March 25, 2011).

The definition of leadership connects directly to the overall mission of the college: Midwest College “is dedicated to challenging and nurturing students for lives of leadership and service as a spirited expression of their faith and learning” (Midwest College, n.d.).

Leadership Education Institute

The CLP falls under the auspices of the Leadership Education Institute. F. A. Stone (personal communication, May 21, 2011) explained, “Technically, the LEI is co-located with the Community Engagement Center, but it has no office space in that location. Faculty and staff associated with the program are distributed throughout the college in various academic departments.” The lack of a physical presence was in part intentional as the LEI program was intended to be “virtual” and was expected to permeate throughout every department and organization. It was also the result of resource constraints. The LEI is composed of a director, an assistant director, and various faculty and staff from across campus who help to facilitate and carry out the needs and functions of the leadership program.

Director of the leadership education institute. Dr. Stone was instrumental in the development of the LEI and served as the driving force for the creation and implementation of the CLP. Dr. Stone has served as the director of the LEI since its inception and is a Professor of Political Science and holds the Burling R. Irving endowed leadership chair. In May 2011, Dr. Stone was honored as a finalist for the National Thomas Ehrlich Civically Engaged Faculty Award. He was recognized for exemplary engaged scholarship, including leadership in advancing students’ civic learning, fostering institutional commitments to civic engagement and service-learning, performing community-based research, nurturing and facilitating reciprocal community partnerships, and for enhancing higher education’s contributions to the public good. Dr. Stone has been intimately involved in scholarly

research; engagement in local, state, national, and global communities; grant writing; and is well known for program development.

Education, service and leadership committee. The ESLC serves in an advisory role to the LEI and is a standing committee of the faculty as part of the college's faculty governance structure. It is comprised of three faculty members, the director of the Leadership Education Institute, two students, and two members of the student life staff. In addition, staff and faculty identified as Leadership Advisors are asked to attend the monthly meetings, but are not considered voting members. The ESLC advises the Leadership Education Institute and other leadership, education, and service oriented components and activities on campus.

Certificate of leadership program. The Certificate of Leadership Program was initiated to help meet the goals and mission of the Leadership Education Institute. The CLP provides formal opportunities and acknowledges efforts by its students to demonstrate and reflect upon the college's definition of leadership and the college's mission statement. The CLP assists students in their personal development of leadership; in addition, to making their communities better. Midwest College's CLP was approved by the faculty in 1996 and was implemented in 1998.

Midwest College's CLP is more applied than theoretical and is unapologetically normative (F. A. Stone, personal communication, March 25, 2011). The CLP focuses on theoretical frameworks, such as servant leadership which align with its mission and definition of leadership. Students who complete the CLP graduate with a minor in Leadership Education, are provided a certificate of completion called the Leadership Certificate, and a formal listing is designated on their college transcript. The basic benefits

of completing the CLP include: (a) learning what constitutes leadership, civic engagement, and translating leadership into action; (b) assisting students in making vital connections from the theoretical world to reality; and (c) serves as an entry into a career (Certificate of Leadership Program, 2011a). Moreover, additional individual benefits vary as the program is tailored to each participant.

Coursework associated with CLP. The Certificate of Leadership Program is a designated academic minor and requires students to complete six classes. These classes count for 5.5 credits which equates to 8.25 semester hours. There is a core group of classes students must complete, but they have the flexibility to determine which additional classes to complete as long as they are affiliated with leadership in some capacity. The core classes are *Exploring Elements of Leadership (LS151)*, *Leadership Theories and Practices (ID351)*, and *Leadership Certificate Summary Seminar (LS450)*. Students must also complete one class inside their major, one class outside of their major, and one additional class inside or outside of their major.

LS 151 is a one credit class and provides an introduction to the study of leadership as an academic discipline. It is typically the first class taken as part of the CLP and is often completed during a student's second year of study. Students pursuing the Leadership Certificate initially develop an individual leadership plan. The individual leadership plan is a guide for meeting the requirements of the program, although the plan is tailored to each student's interests. To meet the requirements of the program, students must express their understanding of specific components and how their experiences in these areas have contributed to leadership development. Often times, in LS 151 students are allowed to

complete this task as the culminating project. Otherwise, students complete this with assistance from their academic advisor and/or representatives of the LEI.

ID 351 is a one credit course and is taken by third year or fourth year students. Students must have third year status to enroll in this course because it is identified as a 300 level class. The class provides a critical reflection on civic responsibility and theories of leadership as part of an interdisciplinary format and extends across disciplines. As part of ID 351, students participate in one of two service-learning programs which are an integral part of the class and are intentionally integrated into the class. One experiential program is the Building Communities Program and the other is an Individualized Project. Students have some choice in which program they participate, but the Building Communities Program must have 40 students in order to efficiently operate. The enrollment of the class determines the number of Individualized Projects needed. Once the Building Communities Program identifies the 40 leaders needed for the execution of the program the rest of the students are placed in Individualized Programs of Service.

Building Communities is facilitated by a Midwest College administrative staff member who serves as the School Partnerships Coordinator. The School Partnerships Coordinator actively works with the college and local school districts to meet the needs of both entities. The Building Communities Program is a service-learning project which brings together people from different generations to share and discuss what it takes to build community and the value and implications of doing so. Each participant is placed in a “neighborhood” which is comprised of seven to 12 people. There are 20 total neighborhoods and each one typically contains two Midwest College leadership students who are designated as the neighborhood leaders, one adult volunteer from the local area, one teacher, and six to

eight sixth grade students from the local Watertown Community School District and the Lutheran based parochial school which is also located in Watertown. The Building Communities neighborhood meetings occur five times over the course of Midwest's College academic semester. The goal of the Building Communities Program is to help participants be better members of society by sharing the importance of community and practicing the skills and dispositions needed to help improve communities. Neighborhoods discuss the definitions of service, community, service-learning, and leadership. Additionally, participants learn about sites and organizations in their community which provide a service to its citizens. Moreover, they learn how engagement in their communities and the ability to respond to authentic needs enhance the community and improve the quality of life. This is expected to lead to increased civic participation and an ethic of service. This program has been extremely successful and in existence since the CLP program was initiated. In 2010, the Building Communities Program was awarded a coveted MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship which recognizes exceptional student community engagement and community service. The program continues to grow and evolve as a response to the leadership needs of its members.

Originally, ID 351 was able to meet the needs of the Building Communities Program. However, as the leadership program flourished more students enrolled than were needed for ID 351. Therefore, another program was initiated to provide an alternative service-learning option. This opportunity became known as an Individualized Project of Service. Individualized projects can be completed with other members of class or individually. These projects are individually constructed and implemented, but a faculty member teaching one of the sections of ID 351 serves as a mentor and evaluator of the specific projects completed.

Both the Building Communities Program and Individualized Projects of Service serve a vital purpose as part of ID 351 and provide the opportunity and context for Midwest College's students to put theory into practice. They also allow students to participate in experiential learning and to serve as leaders in their communities.

The last required class as part of the CLP is the *Leadership Certificate Summary Seminar* (LS450). This class is the culminating course and is typically taken in a student's final year or after he or she has completed all other facets of the certificate program. The intention of the class is to provide students with time and assistance to complete their leadership portfolio which demonstrates competence in seven required areas.

Leadership portfolio. The portfolio is a culminating artifact of the program and is organized into reflective essays that demonstrate student understanding and meaning. These essays are intended to express the skills of critical inquiry, and deep and integrative learning. The first reflective essay is an executive summary which provides an overview of the student's leadership experience as part of the certificate of leadership program. The next four essays require students to speak to elements such as initiative, group work, service, and diversity. These components of the program may be completed within or outside the college or through an assortment of curricular and co-curricular activities. Students are also required to write about the three elective classes they chose and how they attributed to leadership development. The final artifact required as part of the portfolio is a resume which demonstrates and highlights leadership as part of a student's body of work. The portfolio is ultimately presented to the director of the LEI and CLP faculty for evaluation and approval.

F. A. Stone stated:

No two student leadership portfolios are identical; just as no two students have shared the exact same journey in their leadership development. This helps attest to the authenticity of the program design – to meet the individual student where he or she may be in his or her journey toward leadership education and help him or her maximize his or her leadership growth and potential (personal communication, March 25, 2011).

The outcomes associated with the program are unique to each student as well. The ultimate result may not be evident for decades as graduates of the program continue to reflect upon what they accomplished and how they were able to accomplish it as part of their personal and professional lives.

Characteristics and demographics of CLP. F. A. Stone (personal communication, March 25, 2010) indicated the leadership program has enjoyed significant success and the leadership minor was thriving. He anticipated having approximately 250 students out of a fall enrollment of 1,805 students matriculated into the minor during the 2011-2012 academic year (personal communication, October 27, 2011). These matriculates represented more than 30 academic majors. L. L. Miller (personal communication, January 12, 2012), who was serving as the chair of the ESLC, identified that as of January 2012 the majors with the greatest number of students with identified leadership minors included: business administration (48), communication arts (37), biology (24) and education (22). Other majors with more than 10 students in the program during the 2011-2012 academic year included community sociology and fitness management. The college offered 14 sections of leadership courses throughout the year which was identified as a significant increase in capacity which demonstrates the resources the institution has committed to the program (F. A. Stone,

personal communication, October 27, 2011). K. Anderson, an administrative assistant to Dr. Stone, said that during the academic year 2009-2010 nearly 14% of the student body was enrolled in the program (personal communication, April 6, 2010).

The 2010-2011 academic year experienced the greatest number of students, a total of 82, who graduated with the leadership minor. Collectively, over 350 students have graduated from Midwest College with a minor in leadership (F. A. Stone, personal communication, March 25, 2010). The CLP has met institutional needs and the needs of students; however, “there is always room for improvement and the program refuses to rest on its current level of success” (F. A. Stone, personal communication, May 21, 2011).

Description of Alumni

The alumni of the CLP represent a variety of majors, backgrounds, and interests. The first student enrolled in the leadership program in 2001. Since then the matriculation and graduation rates have grown every year (F. A. Stone, personal communication, March 25, 2011). The program has graduated 357 students since its inception in 1989-1990 and the number of graduates have grown substantially over the past few years.

The majority of CLP alumni are female and represent 63% of the total graduates. In comparison, 53% of Midwest College’s undergraduate population during the 2011-2012 academic year were female. Thirty two percent of alumni are originally from a state other than Iowa representing 21 states and the District of Columbia. Aside from Iowa, Minnesota had the largest percentage of alumni followed by Illinois and Wisconsin.

Business administration, communication arts, biology, and education constitute the largest majors among CLP alumni. Within recent history, these majors are also the largest programs on Midwest College’s campus. However, these majors are not the only ones

which represent alumni as music, psychology, fitness management, math, computer science, history, political science and a vast array of others are represented. Additionally, the current occupations of alumni are across the spectrum.

Summary

Midwest College is a private liberal arts college in the Midwest that nearly 20 years ago created a Leadership Education Institute to further prepare students to be able to participate in the institution's mission of living a life of leadership. Seven years later the institution unveiled a specific program called the Certificate of Leadership Program which allowed students to learn and participate in leadership. The successful completion of this program provided students with a Certificate of Leadership, an academic minor, and a notation on their transcripts identifying the achievement. The program has grown from one graduate in 2003 to over 80 in 2011 and alumni now number over 350. The specific experiences of 11 alumni and their association with the program are presented and discussed in chapter 5. In addition, through an analysis of the data collected, research themes are identified and explained as part of chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5. FINDINGS

This chapter presents results from document analysis and intensive interviews which were conducted with alumni from Midwest College regarding their lived experiences as part of their involvement in the leadership program. The purpose of this study was to determine the essence of the lived experiences as experienced by undergraduates who participated in the Certificate of Leadership Program. The detailed findings and supportive evidence which emerged through data analysis are represented in this chapter.

This chapter begins by providing an introduction to the participants, highlights their demographic information, and provides a personal profile for each participant. In addition, their stories and histories are shared. The inclusion of the stories in this chapter was necessary because they served as the means to further discover the essence of participants' leadership experiences. In addition, this chapter provides the interpretations and meanings gathered from participants through the various ways in which data was collected such as interviews and document analysis. The findings are presented in conjunction with the research questions.

The results derived from the research process were guided by Moustakas (1994) phenomenological approach and the data analysis was explicitly influenced by Colaizzi's (1978) data analysis model. These processes aided in identifying significant statements, interpretive meanings and emergent themes. The participants and their stories, integrated with the data collected and analyzed, ultimately determined the essence of the leadership experience as experienced by alumni of Midwest College's Certificate of Leadership Program.

Participants

The participants for this study were purposefully selected based on the criteria outlined in Chapter 3. To overview, participants were selected who could provide thick and rich descriptions of their experiences as part of Midwest College's Certificate of Leadership Program. A diverse group of alumni were selected. The diversity of the participants was based on gender, major, year of graduation, GPA, occupation, and geographic location.

Table 4 provides profiles of the participants.

Table 4

Profiles of Participants

Name	Sex	Age	Race	Religious Affiliation	Relationship Status	Highest Degree Earned
O'Brien	M	30	Caucasian	Catholic	Married	Juris Doctor (Law)
Kampman	F	28	Caucasian	Baptist	Married	Juris Doctor (Law)
Joseph	M	30	Caucasian	Catholic	Married	Bachelors
Holt	F	28	Caucasian	Reformed Church	Married	Masters (Education)
Davis	M	27	Caucasian	Episcopalian	Married	Bachelors
Smith	M	27	Caucasian	Spiritual	Single	Masters (Higher Edu.)
Jorgen	M	25	Caucasian	Faithful Follower of Jesus	Married	Bachelors
Bollman	M	25	Caucasian	Christian	Married	Bachelors
Caroline	F	24	Caucasian	Lutheran	Married	Bachelors
Berlyn	F	23	Caucasian	Lutheran	Single	Bachelors
Matthew	F	22	African	Roman Catholic	Single	Bachelors

The participants all graduated from Midwest College with a Certificate of Leadership and a minor in leadership. They graduated between the years of 2003 and 2011. Participants self identified their race and most identified as Caucasian. One participant identified as being African and indicated she was from Nigeria. There were six male participants and five females. Eight of the 11 participants were married and of the eight participants who were married, two participants had children; although of those two only one had biological children. Participants identified their religious affiliation or spirituality and an assortment of answers were provided. Since all participants had graduated from Midwest College, they all possessed Bachelor of Arts degrees. In addition, four had attained advance degrees; two had received master's degrees and two had earned their Doctor of Jurisprudence. The participants work in a variety of professions such as law, K-12 education, higher education, banking, and the not-for-profit sector. The following provides a further introduction to the participants and highlights their stories.

Mr. Kevin O'Brien

Kevin is a 30-year-old attorney who currently lives in a large urban community in eastern Iowa and was born and raised in the north-northeast portion of Iowa in a community of 30,000 as an only child. His father was an insurance agent who completed a Bachelor of Arts degree, and although his mother held a variety of jobs, she spent most of her time as a stay-at-home mom. Kevin indicated that his parents stressed education to him from day one and he was assured that he would not follow his father's path into the insurance field. He was encouraged to find something that he was passionate about and his parents always supported his endeavors.

Kevin was a very active child and was a competitive swimmer and participated in an assortment of academic related activities through the talented and gifted program. Due to his parent's involvement in the community, Kevin was also extremely involved. He shared a story, that as a second or third grader, instead of going out trick or treating during Halloween he went to area nursing homes and helped pass out candy to other children. His desire and need to serve has stayed with him through his college years and into adulthood.

Kevin looked at a variety of post secondary institutions and although Midwest College felt like home he could not envision himself attending. However, once he visited campus, it was a completely different experience and something with which he was very comfortable. He enrolled at Midwest College because of the proximity to his family; the cost was reasonable; the institution was highly regarded, and the interactions with people on campus really sold him on the environment and the ethos of the institution. Kevin knew that he wanted to be an attorney, and he enrolled at Midwest College with the intent of preparing himself for law school. He majored in political science and added a minor in economics and leadership. He was active on campus and helped revive the Young Republicans Association. In addition to his class load at Midwest College, he also completed classes at State University because they offered classes that were not available at Midwest College. Due to his diligence he graduated in three-and-half years and then enrolled in law school at a highly regarded state university. He commented that he was very busy while at Midwest College and did not have a lot of spare time; although, he did meet his future wife during one of his initial orientation meetings.

Kevin is very active in leadership both personally and professionally. He serves on numerous local boards, is active politically, and often speaks to schools and other

organizations about the law profession. His involvement in the community is attributed to the foundational components that were put in place while he attended Midwest College. He noted, “Most of my coursework had some sort of community service work component incorporated into that class.” The appeal of being able to participate in a leadership program while at Midwest College was enticing. During the process of looking for a college, he noted that Midwest College was the only one which, at the time, had a recognizable leadership program although it was in its infancy. Kevin said, “In my mind, you can go anywhere and pick up a history major, but only at Midwest College could you get a minor in leadership.” He added, “It seemed to me that if I can get a jump on leadership and get experiences not only with the literature, but with the practical applications early on, that I would be much better down the road.” Kevin was one of the first graduates from the Certificate of Leadership Program in 2003 and helped to establish the foundation on which the program was built.

Mrs. Diane Kampman

Diane is a married 28-year-old Caucasian female who practices law in Cedar City. Cedar City is located 30 miles to the southeast of Watertown and is a large and diverse community. This drastically contrasts the type of environment that Diane grew up in as a child and young adolescent. Diane was raised in a very small community that is located five minutes to the south of Watertown. Wettville is a tight knit community that prides itself in its school and people. The experiences Diane had in her community, and school and the relationships resulting from those interactions, helped to shape Diane’s leadership abilities. However, she expressed that her initial view of leadership was an “ego issue rather than a

desire to lead or a desire to care about people.” Since then her leadership perspectives have radically changed.

Diane discussed in great detail the importance of relationships that she built while living in a small community. An intimate community offers unique advantages that a large city cannot replicate. For instance, she remains close with many of her childhood friends, something her husband cannot say because she believes it has to do with the fact that he was raised in Water Falls. Diane’s graduating class was 30 in comparison to her husband’s which was over 400. However, her small group of peers required her to participate in a variety of activities like speech, theatre, musicals, cheerleading, National Honor Society, and student government. She noted that if she and her friends did not participate then there would not have been a program or organization. She explained, “I think it was more of an issue, not in a prideful way, but the community needs me or the community expects that people would step into these roles so all of us did.”

Diane grew up as an only child and was raised solely by her mother and grandparents. She spoke highly of her mother who was a professor at State University, served many roles in the community such as school board president, and was an active volunteer. Diane’s mother was very supportive of her and provided her opportunities such as participating in national talented and gifted programs, which exposed Diane to a wide variety of peers from around the nation. Over time her mother experienced medical issues which forced her to step down from her position at State University. This was described as a trying time for the family. Compounding the medical issues, during Diane’s senior year in high school her mother was involved in serious accident in which a semi-truck trailer’s load fell on top of her mother’s car and she was severely injured. This accident was life changing for Diane, and as

a result of the accident, she limited her postsecondary choices to those institutions that were located close to her hometown and mother.

Diane had already been attending a class at State University, and her grandparents suggested she then take a class during the spring semester of her senior year of high school at Midwest College. Diane did not know a lot about Midwest College, although she felt it was too close to home. Nevertheless, she enrolled in a class at the institution during her senior year. Diane was able to compare the class she completed at State University and the one she took at Midwest College and preferred the environment of Midwest College. Midwest was friendly, people knew her name and seemed to care that she was there, but at State University she felt like she was just another student. Ultimately, Diane shared that it came down to the financial aid package. She prayed one day and thought, “All right, God. You’ll make it clear financially. Where should I go?” The two institutions were very similar in tuition and Diane decided to attend State University and submitted her materials and housing deposit. At very nearly the last minute, Midwest College informed her that she had been awarded a Lutheran scholarship for \$2,000, thus causing Diane to change her mind. Diane enrolled at Midwest College as a political science major with the intention of going to law school. Her mother encouraged her to major in business which would offer her a greater variety of options. After her first year of classes, Diane understood her mother’s reasoning and switched to business with an emphasis in finance and chose political science as her minor. Her interest in law school stemmed from a rather unpleasant custody battle she experienced as a child, so she decided she wanted to help children, although her specific legal interests changed over time. Wanting to position herself for her next “right answer” after graduating from Midwest College, Diane added the leadership minor to her program of study.

Diane noted that the leadership program was new, and she was one of the first to complete the minor and awarded the Certificate of Leadership in December of 2003. During her first year she took her first leadership class and explained, “I was interested from the get-go.” She was drawn to the program because it would better position her for acceptance into law school, but more importantly, “I was hoping to have the raw skills to learn how to deal with difficult decisions, to learn how to identify where I was being a leader, and to learn what my shortcomings were.” Diane identified that her leadership needs were met, and she thinks she came out a better leader than she would have if she had not participated in the program.

Mr. Will Joseph

Will is a 30-year-old Caucasian male, who grew up in eastern Iowa near the Mississippi River. He currently resides in Watertown as his wife was hired in 2011 to serve as the women’s soccer coach at Midwest College. Will pieced together a few part-time positions to make a full work week. He is working with a local hospital, a nonprofit organization, and serves as the strength and conditioning coach for Midwest College’s athletic teams. He works on a variety of projects and with numerous programs that fit nicely with his educational background and skill set. Long term he would like to consolidate the part-time positions and have one full-time position potentially in the health industry as part of the personal wellness movement.

Will grew up in a two-parent home and described his family as middle class who had experienced some upward social mobility due to his parent’s work ethic and perseverance. Will is the oldest of three children and has two younger sisters. He described his childhood as “pretty easy” and his parents were very disciplined. His father grew up on the family farm and has worked at a power company his entire life. Will’s mother worked her way up in the

banking profession, but they both “hit ceilings” due to their lack of a postsecondary degree. His parent’s experiences and the restrictions placed on them by not having a college degree meant that it was an expectation that Will would attend college. In addition, they instilled in him many values and virtues. Will explained, “I can go back and know the reason, why I act or do the things I do, is from them. When it comes to service, or doing different leadership projects... getting into a project, hard work ethic stemmed from them.” Will was highly active in athletics, particularly baseball, and Catholicism was important to his family. Will was initially involved in a variety of sports, but as he got older, his father was more controlling about his involvement in baseball, it became something that he had to participate in, and this involvement restricted other activities that he could do. He continued to play baseball throughout college and was a starter on Midwest College’s baseball team.

The search for a post secondary institution was not easy. He indicated that his high school counselors were “terrible.” They told him to look in the file cabinet for information about colleges. The one advantage that Will had was that he was being recruited to play baseball by numerous smaller private colleges and had established contacts with coaches and players through baseball camps. These people influenced his decision. In the end, Will and a close friend were looking at the same institutions, and since they were leaning towards Midwest College, they agreed to enroll together. Initially, Will enrolled as an exploring major with an interest in social work. During his first semester on campus, he really struggled and started seeking guidance from others about what to do. Eventually, he found the Health, Physical Education and Athletics Department and decided to pursue a degree in physical education. Will later added a health endorsement and a leadership minor. He was

also two credits away from a French minor and a minor in social work. Will's participation in the leadership program took an unconventional path.

Will knew about the leadership program, but did not start to participate in the program until he was a fifth-year senior. He shared that once he heard about the program, he felt it was too late to start, so he did not think about it much more. He explained, "My roommate was big into the program....this guy wanted to do the leadership program from the beginning. It was one of the reasons he chose Midwest College." Since it took longer for Will to decide on a major, he had to enroll in an additional semester of classes to complete his major. He was trying to fill his schedule, and a friend convinced him to take a leadership class during the May term before his last semester. This class also counted as a general education class. His experience in the leadership class (ID 351) and his need to come back an additional semester, motivated him to add the leadership minor. Although completing the program was accomplished in a different manner than most, Will expressed his satisfaction with the takeaways and impact that the program had on him personally and professionally.

Mrs. Kathy Holt

Kathy is a 28-year-old Caucasian female who spent most of her life in southern Minnesota before attending Midwest College. She grew up in small rural community and was the valedictorian of her high school class. She married during her junior year of college and recently gave birth to her first child. Kathy is a middle school social science and language arts teacher in the Watertown Community School District. She was hired into the district right after she graduated from Midwest College in 2006. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, she also serves as the mock trial coach for the school. Kathy holds a master's degree in teaching from Excel University and is interested in working in higher

education. She currently resides on a small acreage near a rural community 35 minutes away from the district in which she is a teacher. Watertown Community School District is located in the same community as Midwest College.

Kathy grew up in a middle class rural community with one sibling and both parents. Her father retired after 33 years as a state trooper and her mother was a stay-at-home mom up until Kathy transitioned to college. Kathy was a very active young girl and participated in a variety of activities ranging from president of her high school student council to volleyball. She described herself as a “nerd” and “geek.” Kathy indicated that she was not provided with a lot of choices growing up and the attitude from her dad was, “this is how it was going to be, so do it this way because I said so.” Her parents had high hopes for her, and college was an expectation. She enrolled at Midwest College after narrowing her choices down to another ELCA affiliated institution in Nebraska. The factors affecting her enrollment at Midwest College included her ability to participate in music and play in the band, proximity to her hometown, the financial aid package offered, and the ability to study abroad. Interestingly, during one of her visits to campus, Kathy shared that a professor told her and her mother that, “he was going to be pissed off if I didn’t come....and my mom about fell over that a professor was talking to her that way. It was pretty funny. I liked it. I liked it a lot.” Lastly, she indicated, “atmosphere – that tangible that you can’t ever put your finger on” as a reason why she opted to attend Midwest College. She further described the college “as a community...It had just had the right vibe.”

Throughout her life Kathy has been active in a variety of organizations and activities. She confessed that she has a habit of spreading herself thin and still has not learned her lesson. Many of her activities either directly or indirectly involved leadership, and she

perceived that others thought of her as a leader. However, in her current position she is struggling to gain back credibility with a group of fifth and sixth grade teachers because of an incident that occurred, which taken out of context and without the necessary background information, she agreed looked bad. She shared a story about being in a staff meeting and in jest she flipped off the principal. The administrator did not take offense to the action, but the teachers with whom she had never worked with before were horrified. She confessed, “I have been in snarky teacher purgatory since then with some of them.”

Kathy became interested in the leadership program at Midwest College through an influential professor, Dr. Nate Williams. She realized, through further investigation, that she would only need three additional classes to attain the leadership minor. Leadership had always been important to her during her formative years and throughout high school. She professed the leadership minor, “already fit into what I was doing....so it seemed like a pretty natural fit. I was just intrigued by getting a minor for something as abstract as leadership.”

Mr. Jonathon Davis

Jonathon is 27-year-old Caucasian male who graduated from Midwest College in 2007. He met his wife at Midwest College and after both had graduated, they got married and moved to Colorado to explore employment opportunities. They have recently moved back to Water Falls, Iowa, where Jonathon grew up, in pursuit of new job opportunities.

Jonathon was born into a family of educators – his mother was an elementary teacher and administrator before becoming a Professor of Education at Midwest College. Jonathon’s dad was a trained music teacher and initially served as a band teacher before becoming a self-employed entrepreneur. Jonathon was one of two children and was the youngest in the

family. His parents served as role models, and he often talked about their influence on his choices and decisions.

Jonathon was a very business-oriented adolescent and attributed that to his dad's entrepreneurial spirit and business endeavors. He indicated he always had a business whether it was mowing lawns or "hustling" t-shirts or CD's. Jonathon explained, "I liked the idea of being my own boss, and it's very tangible when it's you, your time, your product or something you've developed." He also played basketball and baseball and enjoyed running, an activity that he continues to do; however, instead of running around golf courses as part of cross country, he is running marathons. He was a Boy Scout and was active in church. Jonathon shared that as a student he was very average and was a horrible test taker, but if he was given a project, he would excel at it. Jonathon also participated in the music scene, an interest he developed from his father. He participated in jazz band, but also got involved in punk rock bands and led an "alternative" lifestyle. He became heavily involved in a counter culture called "Straightedge" which grew out of the punk rock culture. This way of life was a dramatic shift as those involved in Straightedge were into the punk rock scene, but were adamantly against drug use and alcohol consumption. Jonathon participated in this "underground culture" as a way to say we are who we are, but we do not use drugs.

This lifestyle was influential to Jonathon and he continued his involvement into college, and remains a part of the movement, although he may not appear to participate in the scene. It was assumed that Jonathon would go to college, and it was expected that he would go to State University, which was located in his hometown of Water Falls. However, when his mother accepted a teaching position at Midwest College and tuition remission for immediate family members was a part of the package, it changed his options. Tuition

remission opened up an assortment of private institutions across the nation that Jonathon had access to, and the tuition would be at a reduced rate. Jonathon ultimately settled on Midwest College, after looking at a similar private institution, because close friends were also interested in attending. Together the three of them enrolled.

Jonathon decided to major in communication arts with an emphasis in public relations and marketing. He also added a leadership minor to his program. Midwest College's broad scope and application of the communication field interested him because he did not really know what he wanted to do, but it was under the communication "umbrella." Jonathon continued to be active in a variety of organizations and events; at times he overextended himself through participation in student senate, the student organization responsible for campus programming and entertainment, the Black Student Union, and by completing an internship in Denver, Colorado, for a semester. The internship in Denver was during his senior year, and he completed it with his close friends – those same friends who collectively decided to attend Midwest College together. Jonathon also spoke about his experiences in the leadership program as being meaningful.

Jonathon was influenced by Dr. Nate Williams to think about adding the leadership minor to his program of study. He was convinced that it was a "no-brainer," and it would provide another opportunity to be part of a group and to explore something new and different. The program paid the dividends that he expected as his first job interview focused on the leadership minor and what he gained from his involvement. Initially, Jonathon suggested the program did not have much value saying, "I viewed it as something I could slap on my resume," and at one point, "I remember vividly that I was going to quit the leadership program," because the program format did not fit his learning style. Jonathon

went to Dr. Williams' office and got push back from him, and the issue was placed back into Jonathon's court. Jonathon admitted this fit his style and took the program down a completely different path. Rather than confining himself to the existing expectations of the program, he challenged them, and instead of creating a written portfolio he developed an interactive website to demonstrate his success as part of the program. The program went from a resume builder to being a way to truly demonstrate leadership as he challenged the process. His overall experience at Midwest College echoes his experience in the leadership program. Jonathon offered that he was totally satisfied with his choice to attend Midwest College. He shared, "I don't think anyone would guess at that time because I was pretty, like, bitter...but totally loved it."

Mr. Henry Smith

Henry is 27-year-old Caucasian single male who grew up in a small homogeneous community of about 500 people located in northeast Iowa. He graduated from Midwest College in 2006 with two degrees, a degree in communication arts with an emphasis in public relations and a major in history. He also earned a minor in leadership. Since then he has attained a Master of Arts degree in Postsecondary Student Affairs and is working in the Twin Cities at a private university serving as the institution's Director of Student Engagement. He has recently been accepted into a Doctor of Philosophy program and intends to major in Educational Leadership.

Henry enjoyed his time growing up in a small community, which had its benefits such as everyone knew everyone, but it had its drawbacks as everyone knew everyone and everything about them. Henry was raised by both of his parents and has an older sister. His family is very close and both of his parent's roots run deep in the community. Henry's father

owned a local grocery store that had been in the family for 97 years until it was forced to close a few years ago due to the shrinking of the community. His mother worked with individuals with disabilities for over 25 years doing vocational rehabilitation. She recently went back to school for nursing and now works as a nurse. Henry's older sister is employed in Rochester, Minnesota, as a nurse.

Henry had fond memories of his childhood and described himself as an active and rambunctious young man. He enjoyed football and often would play with other neighborhood children. Over time, he became involved in organized sports including football and basketball. He was involved in Boy Scouts and was very active in choir. Henry also dabbled in drama and musicals. He was perceived as hardworking and a good kid as a young adolescent, which he admits was different than the reports his parents received in elementary school. He attributed this change to transitions in schools as he moved from an elementary building with a class of 20 students to a junior high setting and a class that was over 100. He was friendly and an extrovert with his core group of friends, but found himself more reserved in large groups with whom he was not familiar. He explained himself as being a sort of chameleon depending on the situation and its context. During this time he did not perceive himself to be a leader because he did not understand leadership. It was not something that was talked about at home, and he assumed his father was the leader of the household because of his masculine role and how that intersected with the family dynamic in a traditional family model. Attending college he believed was an expectation and was required to "acquire meaningful employment."

Henry did not spend a great deal of time looking at postsecondary institutions as he was pretty convinced he was going to attend State University which was only a few hours

away from his hometown. Henry and his sister, who was on spring break at the time, decided to tour State University and they planned a short trip. On the drive down they stopped in Watertown and decided to take a quick tour of Midwest College. Henry explained that he had been on campus numerous times for music camps, but had no intention of attending the college. Henry offered, “So we made a pit stop and went on the tour. And I was sold. I was so impressed with the sense of community at Midwest College.” Henry and his sister completed the tour, and he indicated that they could go home. There was no longer any reason to drive an additional 20 minutes to see State University because his mind was made up. Henry indicated the reasons Midwest College appealed to him included the friendly community, the music programs, the financial aid package, and lastly, he could really see himself fitting in at the institution.

Henry entered Midwest College not really knowing what he wanted to major in as he was interested in history education, but also enjoyed business. He ended up becoming a communication arts major, and added an additional major in history. Henry added a leadership minor to his double major and came about the program haphazardly. He was suppose to take a business class during the May term of his first year and decided against it, so he was looking for a class to take. He had heard about Dr. Nate Williams’ leadership class during May term and because he had already had Dr. Williams for a class, he decided to enroll. That class provoked him into thinking more intentionally about leadership, and he later added the leadership minor to his course of study.

Henry was very active in the leadership program and on campus. He was a residence assistant and served as a student adviser to first and second year students. He also worked in the college’s academic assistance center and served as a resource for his peers; eventually,

becoming the student manager. Henry also traveled to Europe and South Africa as part of choir and studied in Ghana. He shared, “All of those things were life-changing.” His overall experience at Midwest College was great, and he boasted, “I am grateful for the experience that I had at Midwest College. I don’t think it is something you can quantify in terms of dollars and cents either. I am very satisfied with my experience.”

Mr. Lincoln Bollman

Lincoln is a 25-year-old Caucasian male who grew up in eastern Iowa and currently is employed in his hometown at a private college and serves an Assistant Director of Development. He is the oldest child in the family and has three siblings. He spoke fondly of his childhood and indicated he grew up in the church and stated, “it’s been a major part of my life.” Lincoln is married and in January 2011 completed the legal adoption of his wife’s daughter.

Lincoln’s active lifestyle started early on as he was involved in numerous academic and athletic activities. He is a self professed “athletic junkie” and participated in basketball, baseball, and track and was involved in student government, band, and the academic decathlon. Lincoln indicated his parents were very supportive of his interests; they challenged him, but also allowed him to “grow in my own way.” His parents promoted being involved in the community and serving others and this was evident as part of his Catholic faith. Lincoln stated, “I knew being involved was important to them, and I think that translated to what I wanted to do.”

Lincoln reflected that he had always thought of himself as a leader. He followed in his parents footsteps as they led by example and served in this capacity for their extended families and for their employers. Lincoln expressed that he was intentional about his

leadership and due to his involvement in a variety of programs he felt like a connector because he was involved in so many different social circles. He offered that sports served as the “epitome” of how he led. He not only led from a position, as he was the captain of his athletic teams as a sophomore, but he also served others and helped his teammates learn and grow. A story was shared about how his track coach, who was also the football coach, was really coaching track to prepare athletes for football season. This situation led Lincoln to serving as a student-coach, and he helped to plan and conduct workouts. He noted, “Assuming that role pretty much defined, I think, what made my leadership philosophy.” The efforts of his coach and team led them to a state championship in track his junior year. Lincoln believed that peers and teachers alike had good perceptions of him and these relationships have continued to this day. His busy lifestyle and desire to lead spilled over to his experiences in college.

Lincoln visited more than a dozen colleges and universities as he was preparing to determine where to continue his education. After getting onto Midwest College’s campus he never visited another institution. He was sold on the Certificate of Leadership Program and the ability to study abroad. The track coach also marketed the institution well and motivated Lincoln to want to enroll. He enrolled at Midwest College and was a business major with concentrations in finance and marketing and had a minor in leadership and economics. Lincoln enjoyed his four years at Midwest College and said proudly, “For me it was perfect.”

Mr. Hugh Jorgen

Hugh is a 25-year-old Caucasian male who was recently married and has settled in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Hugh is the technology director for a K-12 magnet school located

in Minneapolis and also teaches a few secondary English classes. In addition, he periodically teaches at a nearby university.

Hugh grew up in a very loving supportive Christian family and his parents were around all of the time. He is the oldest of three children, and his mother stayed home with his siblings until they all reached middle school. Hugh and his siblings were all born within three years of each other and are close in many ways. Hugh revealed, “We had a great house growing up. We didn’t have everything, but we always had love, and we always had each other.” His father earned a degree in electrical engineering and then felt called to be an ordained minister within the Methodist Church. This was a difficult adjustment for his father as he did not have the support from his own parents. Hugh believes this is partially why his family was always so supportive of him because they did not want him to experience what they had. His family served as catalysts for his development as a person and professional.

Hugh experienced a very stable and loving family which aided in his abilities to be involved in many different activities. He was very studious in the classroom and athletic on the field, especially in soccer. Hugh described himself as a “reader,” a “studier,” and a “learner.” It would likely be easier to describe what Hugh did not do than list what he did. He played the cello, was a captain of the soccer team, participated in Bible study, and served as president of various school organizations. Hugh shared his involvement in activities stemmed from watching his parents and participating in activities with them. He explained that once he stayed in a homeless shelter overnight with his family and they helped serve the people who used the facilities. Hugh expressed that his involvement became very self motivated. Leadership became very important to him.

Although leadership was not explicitly discussed in his family on a consistent basis, Hugh remembered his father giving him leadership books to read once he was done with them. At age 14, Hugh was completing leadership inventories about himself and learning more about who he was. Mostly, he learned about leadership by watching how his parents led their lives. His interest in leadership was one of the reasons which convinced him to attend Midwest College.

Hugh explored a lot of different colleges and universities and had many different options, but chose Midwest College because of athletics, the connection the institution had to faith, the financial aid package, and the opportunity to study leadership. Midwest College, he suggested, “felt like home.” Hugh enrolled and identified English education as a major with a minor in leadership. Hugh had always loved English, and he loved reading, but did not think it would turn into a career. He shared a story about his high school English teacher’s comments that served as a challenge instead of a deterrent. Hugh indicated to this teacher that he wanted to teach English and the teacher responded that he would never be an English teacher because he was not good enough. Hugh confided, “that quote...has been motivation.” English education was a route to get into technology and to further explore how to integrate technology into education. Being an English teacher for Hugh was not the end goal, “An English teacher was a way to get to the end goal.” Midwest College, and its leadership program, provided a means to help Hugh attain his goals.

Mrs. Ava Caroline

Ava is a 2009 graduate of Midwest College and graduated with a degree in Business and was hired right out of college by a large agricultural company to work in their finance department. She is currently being fast-tracked within the company and recently transferred

to Moline, Illinois to work in the treasury department as part of international finance. She is once again in a familiar place as she grew up in the Quad Cities, although she was born in Arizona.

Ava is a 22-year-old Caucasian female who married the man she fell in love with while both were attending Midwest College. Ava has one younger brother and described her family as being very strong and close. Her mother is a kindergarten teacher in Illinois, and her dad works for a large financial company as a financial adviser. Ava's parents were high school sweethearts from the Moline area and settled there after moving around for a while. They are both well educated and earned advanced degrees and certifications. Ava spoke fondly of her family and shared numerous stories about growing up as a child. Her parents instilled in her the family Christian values and she highlighted the family's ability to openly communicate with each other as an asset. Ava was initially a very shy student, but as part of her involvement in theatre, she developed a more extroverted personality.

Ava was very active in her academics and enjoyed participating in drama, jazz choir, and student government. She was never very interested in sports and believes her initial shyness subsided because of her involvement in drama and the success she experienced. She shared that, "I liked the attention once I was on stage....There is something magical about theatre when a show comes together." Ava was also involved in volunteer activities and service. Leadership was not explicitly taught in the home, but they would talk about major elements of leadership. The core Christian values that were instilled in them is what Ava felt were key to her leadership development. Ava placed pressure on herself to succeed and offered that she did not perceive herself as a leader while growing up, not until high school, and it was not until college that she started to really feel like a leader. She explained that due

to her shyness and lack of confidence as a young child she did not perceive herself to be a leader. Adults viewed her as an overachiever who was focused on her academics, and her friends found her approachable and very positive. She noticed a change in herself when she started to care less about perceptions and social circles, and more about academics. This change was partially due to the intrinsic rewards from being successful, and she wanted to build on that. This continued beyond high school and into college.

Ava wanted to pursue her mother's profession and started to look for postsecondary institutions that excelled in preparing people to be teachers. She wanted to stay in the Midwest and visited a variety of small and large institutions. She eventually narrowed her search to three institutions and participated in overnights at all three. Midwest College "was kind of an afterthought" and she only stopped there because it was on her way to another institution. However, Midwest College captured her. She explained, "Everyone was super friendly, and I could tell that was going to be a really good fit for my personality." She shared a story that she told her mom about her decision. She indicated that she really enjoyed the other institutions; their campuses were pretty, and they had good programs, "but when I was at those two schools, it felt like I was getting a really nice handshake, and when I was at Midwest College, it felt like I was getting a hug."

Ava enrolled at Midwest College and had a great first year. She had registered for classes for her second year, but over the summer she worked in a law firm and discovered she liked the atmosphere and professionalism. This experience began to change her perspective as she started to think about other possibilities. Ava came back to campus and decided to change majors and pursue a degree in business finance. Initially, she decided to explore a few business classes, and after taking an accounting class she was convinced of the

need to officially change. Ava remained active on campus and worked as a peer mentor and supplemental instruction leader. She filled in gaps in her schedule by serving as a campus ambassador and participated in student organizations that focused on Spanish and those affiliated with business. Ava reminisced about her fondest memory when she had the opportunity to study abroad in Germany for a month.

Ava's involvement in the leadership program was not something she started right away, and it was not until her third year that she became actively involved in the program. She became interested because, "I was already going to be doing a lot of the different things that the program involved. I was volunteering and doing group work and taking initiative already, so I knew it would be rewarding to get involved." She was excited to be able to gain self awareness and have the opportunity to self reflect. Ava was pleased with her involvement in the leadership program and indicated her complete satisfaction with her choice to attend Midwest College. She glowed, "I had a very good experience. It was a very good fit for me."

Miss Kennedy Berlyn

Kennedy is a 23-year-old Caucasian female who graduated from Midwest College in 2011 with a degree in social work and a minor in leadership. Within a month of graduation she found herself employed as a development manager for an emergency youth shelter in Des Moines, Iowa. She is mainly responsible for fundraising and grant writing for the organization to ensure a steady flow of resources into the organization.

Kennedy grew up in north central Iowa in a small community of 3,000 residents. She is one of four girls in the family and has one older sister, one younger sister, and has a fraternal twin sister. Kennedy grew up in a two-parent household and considered her

childhood to be “pretty ideal.” She had a wealth of family and friends around her and a good support system. Her father is a certified public accountant who received his Bachelor of Arts degree from a state institution in Iowa and has worked at the same firm for over 20 years. This arrangement allowed Kennedy’s mother to stay at home with her daughters. Kennedy attributed the ability of her mom to raise the girls as being extremely significant in their developments. Kennedy’s family is devout Lutherans, and she indicated the church shaped her tremendously.

Sports also played a significant role in her life. She identified that her sisters, including herself, were not “girly” girls growing up, and were very active. They participated in volleyball, basketball, softball, and golf, in addition to church activities. Kennedy was active in band and student council and participated in some volunteering activities, but she did not really start those types of activities until college. Kennedy offered a story that her mother told her in which, on a report card, it was noted that she was a natural leader in the classroom. Leadership was not specifically addressed in her family, but it was an expectation. She remembers “commitment” and “follow through” being very important to her parents and all took great pride in each other’s accomplishments. The worst thing the girls could have ever done would have been to disappoint her parents. The desire to not disappoint, coupled with her own personal need to do the right thing, were driving forces in Kennedy’s life.

Kennedy feels that she has to be a leader. She is not one to sit around and wait for someone to do something. She believes it is her duty if new direction or assistance is needed she should step in and help lead. Kennedy believes others see her as being confident and probably viewed her as a “teacher’s pet.” She has always felt very comfortable conversing

with adults and suggested that some of the most intriguing and engaging conversations she had as an adolescent were with adults. She was not worried about getting hung up in the bureaucracy of leadership and freely expressed herself. Kennedy has never been one to conform or to follow the crowd and that was true as well when she considered which postsecondary institution to attend.

Kennedy had narrowed her choices to either Midwest College or the state institution her father had attended. Her sister and numerous other family members were alumni of the state school, but Kennedy felt herself being pulled in a different direction. She shared that, “there was something about Midwest College that intrigued me, and I’m not sure when it really hit me. It wasn’t an epiphany, but it was something about knowing that I was going to be able to get involved in activities.” The tangible factors that influenced Kennedy’s decision to attend included proximity to her hometown and the financial aid package offered.

Upon enrolling at Midwest College, Kennedy identified herself as a biochemistry major and was interested in research. Her first year went well, but during May term something just did not feel right, and the idea of being in a lab with minimal contact with people did not seem appealing. Her adviser suggested that she take a class the next Fall semester that did not have anything to do with the “hard sciences” so she enrolled in a social work course. Kennedy was instantly hooked, “It was just the whole idea of helping others, using my strengths to better someone’s life that really appealed to me.” Those same reasons are what drew Kennedy to the leadership program.

Kennedy took her first leadership course during her first year as part of May term and did not want to waste any time starting her leadership classes. The biggest draw for her was being able to have the experience of learning, to be able to have those leadership experiences,

and it was not only about going out to serve, but also about being able to synthesize and reflect on what was learned. She was able to serve and reflect throughout her time at Midwest College and participated in an assortment of activities such as service trips and assumed various leadership roles on campus. When reflecting on her experiences at Midwest College, she exuded, “I wouldn’t change it for the world because of the experiences I had. The job I have now, I most likely probably wouldn’t have got if I didn’t have that Midwest College degree and if I didn’t have the experiences Midwest College gave me.”

Miss Tracy Matthew

Tracy came to the United States from Nigeria in 2007 to attend Midwest College. Tracy is 22 and in May 2011, she graduated with a degree in computer information systems and minors in business and leadership. Within two months she was employed as a technology analyst with a high profile bank in New York City.

Tracy indicated that she was privileged to have a family that respected and valued education. Tracy is one of six children in her family and she has three older siblings. Her two older sisters and older brother, in addition to her parents, all have master’s degrees in various fields. Tracy’s mother is a civil servant for the Nigerian government and works as an environmentalist. Her father is an electrical engineer and is self employed and serves as a contractor. She acknowledged, “It’s the norm to always excel individually and to excel academically.” Tracy attended boarding school and this experience made her self-reliant and self-dependent. In addition, Nigeria is a very diverse country, and she had the opportunity to work with a variety of tribes and groups of people, and together those experiences shaped her into the individual that she is today.

Tracy had a privileged, but demanding childhood. She was required to go to school all day and would come home and participate in additional lessons. She had an assortment of specialty teachers: one to teach her piano, one to teach her how to swim, and another to teach her how to play tennis. In addition, she was expected to participate in her family's Roman Catholic faith. In accordance with this, she was active in the choir and the reading of the Bible.

Leadership was not directly discussed or taught by her parents, but because Tracy was the fourth of six children, she had the opportunity to watch her brother and sisters lead. In primary school, the equivalent of sixth grade in the United States, she was selected as the head girl for her school. This major honor made her the representative for the entire school. It required her to arrive at school early and be responsible for ringing the bell during breaks. If the bell was not rung students were not provided breaks, so students depended on her. She was also responsible for ensuring that her classmates were clean and indicated that students had to respect her position. In boarding school she was also provided leadership positions such as being responsible for the dormitories, and she was given the task of making sure that students were completing their studies at night. Tracy stated, "As a child I understood the importance of leadership and the roles that came with it and the capability to execute them."

Tracy kept developing as a leader during college. She attended Midwest College because her sister had attended, but the financial aid package proved to be the driving factor. Tracy enrolled as a computer information systems major and shared a very interesting story about how she decided on computer information systems:

I needed to discern why I wanted to go to study in the United States as part of my visa interview, and I was looking for the major that would provide a better standing for

me. I chose engineering science. My dad asked, “Can you explain what engineering and science is, because I can’t go and sell my land or sell my property to pay for your college if you don’t know what that is. I’m an electrical engineer, I can tell you what an electrical engineer does, but I’ve never heard of engineering science. What is it?”

I realized that I couldn’t answer the question, so how could I answer the US consular officer and go get my visa. Then I started looking for majors in the workbook catalogue, and I thought about computers. Everyone does computers and that’s the next generation, that’s what everything is going to, that’s the trend. So I decided on computer information systems. I didn’t really ever have anything to do with computers, but I was just looking at the career opportunities with it, and I thought I could answer questions they asked at the US Embassy. I didn’t know how to save a file and I didn’t know how to type. I practiced typing at home, but I didn’t really know anything about computers before coming to the United States, but I graduated and learned that. Now, I’m working as a technology analyst for an influential bank.

This story exemplifies the person and student that Tracy is and demonstrates her perseverance and ability. At one point, she was considering transferring out of Midwest College because she did not feel the institution could meet her educational needs. She looked and applied at other institutions of higher education, and looked for other educational opportunities. During this time she became involved in a project in which she was competing for a \$10,000 grant that she wanted to use to impact her home country of Nigeria. In the end, she was awarded the competitive grant, and explained, “So I stayed...because of the opportunities, the leadership opportunity that I was going to have.”

Tracy initially added the leadership minor because her dad told her to enroll as her sister had completed the program, and he observed its usefulness. However, because her dad suggested she participate Tracy did not want to. She wanted to do it because she wanted to, and not because of her dad. She informed her dad that she was not going to do it because he had told her too. She explained, “I was going to do it, he didn’t have to tell me to do it...it was in my plan...I could see the benefits from being in the program.”

Overview of Participants

The 11 participants involved in this study were purposefully sampled in order to create a diverse group of alumni who could speak to the phenomenon of leadership as experienced through an undergraduate leadership development program. The participants were involved in a series of interviews over the course of two meetings and a wealth of information was collected.

After all data was collected, the next phase began and it involved analyzing data in order to make meaning of it. Throughout the collection phase, data was analyzed in order to create and refine interview questions and to gradually uncover themes. Once all data had been transcribed into text, Colaizzi’s data analysis model (1978) was implemented to make meaning of it. The next section describes Colaizzi’s model in a step-by-step process as data was transformed from raw information into significant statements, interpretive meanings, exhaustive descriptions, and a statement of identification. Lastly, the participants were asked to provide feedback about the statement of identification and their responses are identified and explored.

Colaizzi's Model of Data Analysis

Transcripts

The first step of Colaizzi's method of data analysis required the interviews to be transcribed verbatim. This required listening to the audio tapes, and ensuring within all means available, that every word was captured and reflected in the typed document. The initial transcription of the audio tapes was completed by me with assistance from outside sources. Due to the sheer number of interviews and time constraints, some of the transcription was outsourced. This made the process more efficient and freed up needed time and resources. However, I did listen to all audio tapes while reading through the transcripts as a means of quality assurance and to further immerse myself in data. I noted mistakes and added clarifications to the transcripts; in addition, I attempted to capture the tone and inflection of the respondents as it pertained to the text. I read the transcripts multiple times in order to truly understand the meaning participants constructed about their leadership experiences.

This process allowed me to be involved in the participant's stories and better enabled me to understand their lived experiences while making meaning of their statements and experiences. I listened to the tapes so frequently that I could quote the participants and at times I felt as if I had personally experienced the situation. I could "feel" the emotions of the participants even though I personally did not experience them. I could visualize the experiences and was able to identify with the participants. I also found myself reading statements, and based on what was said or how it was said, I could identify who made the statement. However, I remained conscientious of my own biases and bracketed my

experiences, philosophies, and expectations. This required me to remain focused on the significance of the participants' experiences and their meaning.

I noted and sensed differences in the experiences, why participants enrolled in the leadership program, their seriousness while in the program, and what tangibles were taken away from it; yet I was able to make meaning of the experiences and identify similarities between them. The significant amount of time spent carrying out these processes aided in identifying statements and ultimately identifying themes.

Extraction of Significant Statements

The second step involved the extraction of statements or quotes which Moustakas (1994) refers to as horizontalization. Horizontalizing as defined by Moustakas (1994) means that “every statement initially is treated as having equal value” (p. 97). Although I encountered numerous significant statements, I did not include them unless I felt they pertained to leadership. Moustakas (1994) described this as leaving the “*Horizons*” (p. 97). I continuously needed to bracket my experiences and identify only those statements which pertained to the study and not those that I was personally interested in or caught my attention. This reflective process helped the phenomenon become clearer and expand in meaning (Moustakas, 1994). I identified significant phrases and statements from the transcripts which pertained to the phenomenon of leadership. Examples of significant statements included:

- “It’s definitely a fabric of who I am.”
- “And so the understanding that leadership is definitely a flexible, ever-changing, I guess monster, is something I’ve realized.”

- “I thought leadership was like the coach yelling and screaming or like the big dominant male, maybe that’s what I thought ahead of time and I guess philosophically it changed...It is not just that.”
- “So it really drove home the fact to me, like doing anything can be considered leadership. And it’s not always this huge, big event.”
- “I learned how to connect with people from different backgrounds and people who were different than me.”
- “I learned to think critically, I mean, I started to learn this idea of critical reflection.”
- “I think the biggest thing I learned is just the idea of acknowledging others’ belief systems and opinions and how that relates to being a good leader.”

I extracted 303 significant statements from the 33 transcripts and recorded these statements in a spreadsheet on my computer. This step was important as it was used as a foundational component for the other steps of the data analysis model. By identifying the statements and key phrases, it helped to establish how the participants experienced the phenomenon of leadership. The products of this process were used for the third step of Colaizzi’s model (1978) which involved making meaning of the significant statements.

Formulating Meaning Through the Development of Structural Statements

The third step involved reducing the significant statements. Merriam defined phenomenological reduction as “the process of continually returning to the essence of the experience to derive the inner structure or meaning” (p. 94). This involved making meaning of each identified substantial statement. Moustakas (1994) pointed out this process involves the development of the structural description which attempts to explain “how” the

participants experienced the phenomena of leadership. Colaizzi (1978) indicated this can be the most difficult step because the researcher needs to ensure that the meaning developed is representative of the statement, yet does not misrepresent the original description. This process is said to be challenging because it requires the researcher to substantiate the meaning attributed to the significant statements, and ensure it is reflective of participant responses. The method utilized as part of this third step involved reading and rereading the significant statements and then identifying the meaning. I read the significant statements within the spreadsheet and then next to the statement typed its meaning. Examples of significant statements and their interpretive meanings include:

- Statement: “Having really reflected on what I do well and what I don’t do well as a leader was a great foundation. And so I am still very conscious of whenever I take action and take on leadership roles, what could I have done differently to be more influential.”

Interpretive meaning: I continuously assess and evaluate how I lead so that I can be better next time.

- Statement: “To get around like-minded people that wanted to not just be professionals when they were done with school, but they wanted to go on and make an impact, make a difference in other people’s lives as well.”

Interpretive meaning: I enjoyed being around people who personally and professionally wanted to reach out to others.

- Statement: “I love connecting with students. And that was totally the need to give back.”

Interpretive meaning: Building relationships provides opportunities to serve.

Once this process was completed, the constructed meanings were inserted into the transcripts next to the original text. The processes associated with this step helped to ensure the intent of the statement was not altered and validated the meaning of the initial statement. I was extremely cognizant of making sure this occurred, and it was not an easy process as Colaizzi (1978) had expressed. I found myself scrutinizing the meanings and rereading the statements to ensure that I was staying true to the participant's comments. I likely overanalyzed during this step, and in hindsight should not have constrained myself to the degree that I had. I believe my concern for representing the participants' meanings at times hindered this process. However, I needed to be confident in how this process was conducted in order to demonstrate my abilities and knowledge as a researcher. The significant statements and their associated meanings were then combined into themes (Creswell, 2007) as part of Colaizzi's (1978) next phase.

Developing Clusters of Meaning through Textual Description

Colaizzi's fourth step required the formulated meanings to be grouped into clusters which represented similar themes. Moustakas (1994) refers to this as clusters of meaning. Creswell (2007) indicated the researcher uses the clusters of meaning to develop a textual description which describes "what" the participants experienced. This textual description includes the thoughts, feelings, and situations that make up the experience (Moustakas, 1994). During this phase I looked at the significant statements in the spreadsheet, reread the meaning statements, and then categorized them based on similar meanings. These categorizations were then labeled with a phrase to represent a theme, which explained the similarities of the statements. It was important during this step to ensure that themes were not repeated and that the original protocol was followed. I emphatically checked and

rechecked for discrepancies during this process. This process was a challenge due to the sheer number of significant statements and the complexities of some statements. In addition, a few statements seemed to contain components of multiple themes which made it difficult to determine with which theme to place the statement. A couple of the themes, such as servant leadership and cultivating dispositions, had been emerging from the onset of the interviews and were easy to distinguish. They showed themselves early and often as participants shared similar stories and experiences. This process was not about making themes, but instead uncovering them. Themes were always there, but needed to be teased out a little. The overarching themes were apparent from the onset of the process. I also created subthemes because some of the themes contained numerous significant statements. The most difficult step was finding a theme for the significant statements and to decide what to do with those unique statements. The 12 themes that emerged from this process were: (a) *ownership of learning*, (b) *awareness of self*, (c) *traditional learning*, (d) *collaborative learning*, (e) *experiential learning*, (f) *getting out of the comfort zone*, (g) *participation in deep and intentional reflection*, (h) *cultivation of dispositions*, (i) *gained knowledge*, (j) *acquisition of skills*, (k) *servant leadership*, and (l) *applications of leadership*. These themes were then used to answer the individual research questions.

Exhaustive Description

The fifth step required the researcher to write exhaustively. The stories shared by participants about their leadership experience were condensed into significant statements, meanings were then interpreted, and these interpreted meanings were ultimately clustered into themes. Appendix J represents the significant statements, their meanings, and the resulting themes.

I composed an exhaustive description of the experiences in order to begin constructing the essence of the leadership experience. This involved describing the themes and then pulling them together to provide an exhaustive statement. The following introduces and discusses the themes in context of each of the research questions.

The data collected and its analysis produced valuable results based on the study's three research questions:

1. How did alumni construct the meaning of leadership?
2. What meaning did alumni construct?
3. In what ways have alumni applied what was gained within their personal and professional lives?

Construction of meaning. The overall intent of this study was to determine the lived experiences of alumni who participated in Midwest College's Certificate of Leadership Program. In order to address the overarching goal of this study, the research questions needed to be answered on an individual basis. The first research question focused on determining how alumni constructed meaning of leadership. After viewing an assortment of institutional documents and student leadership portfolios, in combination with completing three interviews with each of the 11 participants, the findings suggested 12 total themes. Seven of those themes specifically examined the process by which alumni constructed meaning. Those seven themes included: (a) *ownership of learning*, (b) *awareness of self*, (c) *traditional learning*, (d) *collaborative learning*, (e) *experiential learning*, (f) *getting out of the comfort zone*, and (g) *participation in deep intentional reflection*. Each one of these seven themes is discussed in the following passages.

Ownership of learning. Kennedy commented, “I just kind of made leadership into my own.” This statement was representative of how the alumni felt about the CLP. The vast majority of the participants indicated that a significant aspect of the CLP, which encouraged them to become engaged with the program, surrounded the fact that they had ownership of how they learned, how they became a leader, and what type of leader they were. Words and phrases such as “ownership,” “open,” “in charge of your education,” “flexible,” and the “ability to design my own program” were pervasive throughout the interviews.

Kevin explained how the process and program was student driven and provided participants the ability to take ownership of their learning process:

The process was really student driven. Let's say you are doing the political science regimen which is one regimen that I certainly did while at Midwest College. You sign up and they tell you, ‘You got to take this course here. You got to take one of these two courses, three of these, two of these,’ that sort of thing. I think that is true of just about every other major on most college campuses, but the leadership program was surprisingly much different than that. It is really student driven in that you get to pick what components you want to form as part of your experience, part of your program...I think it was a comforting experience, quite honestly, because you truly were in charge of your own education.

Henry also expressed his satisfaction in being able to design what his leadership experience looked and felt like:

I liked the fact that I had ownership in designing my own education, which I really appreciate because it made it more exciting for me. It was more tailored to me and my experience. So the ownership that I had in the program was very

meaningful....And it was the opportunity to take ownership and design what that looked like.

The CLP, and its associated courses, are intentionally loosely constructed and allow students to create their own experiences and make their own meaning. Lincoln commented, “The CLP is open. It is kind of open-ended a little bit for a reason.” The experience and how students made meaning of it was truly their own experience.

Not only was the program open-ended on a holistic scale, but the individual courses provided freedom and flexibility as well. Kathy shared a unique situation she encountered as part of scheduling her leadership classes in that LS 151 conflicted with another class so she was not going to be able to take LS 151. Instead, Dr. Williams, the professor for the class, made accommodations for her and arranged a schedule specific to her. Kathy explained, “He just said come on these days, and I will fill you in on the rest of the days.” She was able to complete the class and the requirements on her own schedule and expressed, “I couldn’t believe anybody would do that, that he was able to do that...that was awesome.”

Kevin indicated, “It was up to you to determine, for example, how you were putting together your portfolio from the various course experiences you had.” Hugh, however, shared that he felt at times the program was “restrictive” especially with the construction of the leadership portfolio. He acknowledged that what was specifically used was up to the individual person, but the leadership portfolio was prescriptive. Hugh explained, “They need to have...black and white, these are the things I need to check from your list. But don’t say this is the end and be all. Don’t say this is the only way you have to do it.” Jonathon commented that he also experienced this, but instead of complying he decided to push back, “I had the opportunity to challenge the system and really kind of take it to my own level.”

Jonathon mentioned that he faced the situation when he was preparing his leadership portfolio as part of his LS 450, but instead of being complacent he opted to do his own thing. Rather than putting together a written portfolio he wanted to construct an interactive website which represented his journey through the program. This had not been done before and Jonathon pioneered the way for others. So what was perceived as being restrictive was actually a prime opportunity to put his leadership skills and knowledge on the line, and he shared, “I felt challenged, and I liked that. . . .Great leaders create their own ways.”

Providing students with the opportunity to create their own program and allowing the degree of flexibility that was offered did have its drawbacks. Kennedy commented, “I think the leadership program is as challenging as you make it,” and that created the opportunity for students to put forth minimal effort. Alumni commented they felt some of their peers felt they did not really gain much from the experience. Jonathon indicates why he believes this might have happened:

Like I totally think it was designed in this kind of loose way...just like we're going to teach you some things and some ideas and plant some things, but this whole idea of leadership is kind of up to you what you are going to do with this knowledge and this opportunity and this experience. And I think that is what the program did for me. If you didn't get anything out of it, or you think it didn't do what it was supposed to do, then I think you clearly missed the whole point.

In Jonathon's opinion, students who did not feel they gained very much from the program missed the opportunity to make it their own. Kevin took this a step further and posited that students who took the path of least resistance cheated themselves:

I think there are a number of students that obviously could go through the process and you could take the required classes. You could do the minimal amount of work, but really in the end, in that particular program, I think you are cheating yourself.

The opportunity to participate in the leadership program is up to each individual student and Kennedy recognized, “I learned it is your decision to try leadership.” For those students who decided to immerse themselves in leadership they were provided a menu of options surrounding a few core classes. What was done and what was gained was really up to each individual student. The intent of the program was not to create “canned” leaders, but instead people who take ownership of their learning; the design of the program aided that opportunity. Kevin described his thought process:

It really interested me because it seemed like that was something that in keeping with leadership it allowed me to take charge of my own education and design a leadership program that I thought at the time would fit and serve me the best.

The structure of the program and their ability to personalize it encouraged students to become engaged in the material and experiences. It also allowed them to construct their own meaning of leadership as opposed to being forced to assimilate to one style or philosophy of leadership. The way the program was tailored allowed students to develop an awareness of self.

Awareness of self. Every alumni interviewed spoke about how, as part of the program, they became more aware of who they were as a person and leader; this helped many gain confidence. This awareness resulted from class lessons, experiences in the community, and opportunities to interact with others. Students in the CLP participated in personality and behavior assessments such as Myers Briggs Type Indicator and

StrengthsFinder. These assessments helped students learn about their personalities, their behavioral characteristics, and their leadership tendencies. The overarching process which really helped participants in the CLP develop self awareness was reflection. Statements made by alumni concerning their development of self awareness included:

- “I got to learn about myself - what makes me tick, what my leadership style is and how others perceive me.” - Ava
- “I gained a deeper understanding what type of a leader I am.” - Hugh
- “The leadership certificate caused me to reframe, I mean, to really think about who I am and the best use of my skills and abilities.” - Henry
- “An awareness of personal strengths.” - Kathy
- “It also made me realize that I had to realize my strengths.” - Tracy

The significance of developing an awareness of self is that it helped alumni understand who they were, their needs, and how they worked. This understanding enabled CLP participants to gain a deeper insight into their leadership knowledge and skills. For some, it actually opened them to the possibilities. Henry indicated, “The leadership program caused me to learn how who I am plays a role in my ability to do leadership.” Jonathon also commented:

Learning about my personality assessment was intellectually very powerful because it was putting self awareness on paper and seeing where some of those things work. I think that helped me identify some leadership skills.

The main activities that students completed which made them more aware of themselves were personality assessments. Tracy shared the impact of these self assessments, “It helped me understand my various strengths, and it helped me understand who I really was

as a person and who I would like to be. I think StrengthsFinder was a good way to start that.” Kathy added:

To study leaders and to study leadership styles we took the StrengthsFinder assessment, and I had never done anything like that. To take the book and the quiz and then to read about who you are and some of your strengths was valuable....I now know who I am and how I can use it to my benefit.

In addition to StrengthsFinder, other personality profiles such as the MBTI assessment were conducted. Ava offered, “I always really enjoyed those because I like to understand what my strengths are – what my potential is.” The value of these tests helped participants learn about themselves, and it aided in developing personal confidence and confidence to lead.

Will shared the assessments helped him “to get out of his own head.” He realized the strengths he possessed were valuable traits and what he perceived as weaknesses did not make him a weak leader, but instead a different type of leader. He identified when he entered the program he was not a leader because he never played “the captain role.” After going through the personality assessments and focusing on himself Will recognized, “I *can* be a leader with my personality. I learned that I do lead, and it doesn’t matter that I don’t want to be up in front of people the whole time.” Henry also went through a similar transformation, “I had the opportunity to be able to gain confidence in leading...I think lots of people have leadership skills, but they don’t have the confidence to actually step up.”

The development of greater self awareness aided by increased confidence helped students develop their own leadership identity. Tracy commented:

I developed my personal view of leadership. It was about learning what your personal style of leadership is and using your strengths as a part of it....I think I am

just more aware of my style of leadership. I was putting into practice what I was learning...I was in the moment and so those leadership traits and qualities were developed over time and with experience.

The awareness of self created a foundation to build knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Not only were students able to personalize their leadership as a function of learning more about themselves, but they were also able to use their assessment results, and the results of peers, to better understand how to work together. Diane indicated that in a leadership class she took the MBTI results and then charted the data to better understand herself and others. Ava purported that learning about herself and her strengths allowed her to best leverage her strengths and then determine how she could leverage the strengths of others and empower them to be leaders. Gaining an understanding of self, and the processes associated with that evolution were fundamental to Ava developing an understanding of leadership and her growth as a leader. She indicated, “Definitely the focus on learning about your own strengths and preferences was fundamentally beneficial, so then you can kind of have that in the back of your mind as you are doing different activities and then reflecting on those.”

The development of self awareness was vital to CLP students, but this self awareness was only the foundational piece. The processes of traditional, collaborative and experiential learning coupled with this self awareness provided the means for students to construct their own meaning of leadership. Furthermore, it was determined that the lynchpin in this process was the ability to participate in deep and intentional reflection. These themes will be addressed and discussed in the next section.

Traditional learning. Alumni described traditional learning as learning that occurs in more conventional settings and in “established” ways. Examples of traditional learning

would entail reading books, completing worksheets, and taking tests and quizzes. Teaching methods used as part of traditional learning would incorporate such things as lecture, discussion, taking notes, and direct instruction. These methods typically focus on rote learning and memorization.

As part of their involvement in the CLP, alumni constructed meaning of leadership as part of the traditional learning process. The CLP requires three core classes including LS 151, ID 351, and LS 450. These classes met on a regular basis throughout the semester and outside of LS 450, which is the final seminar course, the other two courses were made up of identified leadership minors and students who needed the class as part of their essential education requirements. This created an interesting dynamic as some students were required to take the course and others chose to take the classes as electives.

LS 151 took a more traditional approach to teaching and ID 351 balanced traditional teaching with experiential opportunities. LS 450 was a class seminar in which students worked with their peers to complete their leadership portfolios. As part of these classes alumni were introduced to various resources including books such as Heifetz and Linsky's *Leadership on the Line* (2002), Collins' *Good to Great* (2001), Greenleaf's *The Servant Leader* (1977), Longworth's *Caught in the Middle* (2007), Kouzes and Posner's *The Leadership Challenge* (2002), and Burling's *Winning Without Greed* (2006).

Alumni indicated they were exposed to a variety of concepts and were provided the opportunity to learn content knowledge concerning leadership. Lincoln shared, "We looked at the literature such as leadership theories." Kennedy commented, "That whole experience of learning for me was key, and so learning about what my leadership style is broadened my horizons." She continued and indicated she was able to learn the basics of leadership

including its history, leadership theories, and strategies and approaches concerning how to lead. Kennedy shared a concept that she learned from *Leadership on the Line* (2002) concerning the balcony and dance floor analogy. Kennedy explained the idea involved, “taking yourself away from the dance floor and seeing from the outside-in.” This idea was valuable because as a leader it allowed her to see what was going on at the ground level, but she looked at the situation from a variety of angles and from above. Concepts such as the dance floor and balcony approach were accessed through reading course materials and periodically CLP participants were required to complete worksheets over the material. Hugh explained the impact of the coursework:

It helped me learn and understand some concepts and ideas like servant leadership for instance...and I was able to put together terms and pieces with what had been going on. And I think it gave me more of the book smarts per se of putting names and faces and ideas around leadership.

Servant learning and an understanding of service-learning was the concept most often referred to as having been gained as part of traditional coursework.

Participants did not speak in depth about the process of traditional learning and its value in helping them make meaning of leadership. Instead, they spoke in generalities and preferred to share what skills were gained and the dispositions acquired as part of their knowledge development or as an extension of it. For instance, Lincoln shared “I gained the ability to transfer leadership and utilize a leadership principle, style, or theory and was able to put it into practice.” Jonathon added, “it was very interesting to read about leadership theories, but then when you go...and see how they are making a difference in their community. That is what a servant leader does.”

Traditional learning rarely occurred on its own and was not the primary basis for how participants were expected to make meaning of leadership. Traditional learning was often coupled with other forms of learning such as collaborative learning. Henry demonstrated an example of this when he shared:

The relationship piece and the group work component really helped me to realize how important relationships are in leadership. And I know that was present in readings, in course material such as Heifetz's *Leadership on the Line* book from ID 351. I know it talked about relationships and contacts and those kinds of things and looking at leadership in context.

Collaborative learning. The ability to collaborate with others was integral in helping alumni learn about leadership and construct meaning of it. Collaboration involves influencing and being influenced by a sphere of people while working toward a common goal. Collaborating with others should be a reciprocal endeavor and all involved need to contribute to accomplish the objectives. Alumni indicated that as part of leadership, people need to ensure that not only are they contributing to their development, but that they are helping their group members with leadership development. Tracy shared the significance of working with and listening to her peers, "In class we shared our experiences and the words just pierced me and I began to really understand what leadership is all about."

In the CLP, collaboration occurred in many ways such as discussion, group work, team building activities; and with a variety of different people including faculty and staff, peers, adults and children from the local community, and alumni of Midwest College. In addition, the size and dynamics of these groups varied. Alumni worked in pairs, small groups, with their classes; and on occasion were allowed to pick their groups and at other

times were placed in groups based on factors such as interest, ability, or topic. Regardless of the arrangement, the ability to work with others was instrumental in helping alumni construct their own meaning of leadership. Tracy explained her thoughts and emotions as part of her involvement in ID 351:

The discussions that we had...were powerful. It was just some of the conversations that I had with this group of students, most of them were typical and were my friends. They were people I knew on campus and just some of the intellect in that room just kind of blew me away....I didn't realize how passionate they were about leadership or that they could speak so eloquently. I learned a lot about my fellow classmates and some of my friends as well. It was just that sharing of learning in some of those class periods that I think were really helpful.

Alumni indicated they learned from peers and were challenged in their thinking through the process of collaborating with others. Opportunities for discussion were extremely important as part of Lincoln's leadership journey. He commented:

Discussion was vital. I mean, when we concluded a certain exercise or whether it was in a class or one of the leadership components or whatever the case was, I sat down with either my class or my professor, mentor, and just said, 'OK, this is what happened, this is how I handled it, and what could we have done right, or different. What did we do right? What did we do wrong?'

This ability and time to collaborate with others was significant for alumni. This caused their understanding of leadership to evolve. Kevin indicated that he had not experienced a lot of exposure to this form of learning. He explained, "Prior to [the CLP] it seemed like so much of my educational experience had been individual work. I opened up the text book, studied

this particular principle, and took the exam. I read the book; you wrote the essay, and then I moved on.” Thus, Kevin appreciated the opportunity to work in groups and mentioned he collaborated with people in the CLP that he would have otherwise not had the opportunity with whom to associate. This collaboration led to an increased understanding of others, creation of key relationships, and he was introduced to an assortment of leadership perspectives. This helped to transform his understanding of leadership.

Tracy also found great value in working with others through the interactions with peers. She offered a story as an example of how working with others as part of her leadership seminar class broadened her understanding of leadership. Tracy explained:

Peer learning required us to give our essay to a classmate and each week we were grouped differently. Giving your essay to different groups and having them correct it was very valuable to me because I was able to learn from them, and by reading the essays I was able to understand what a class did for a certain person within their major or out of their major. I was able to see how a biology major related leadership. If not for the peer learning, we would have written all our essays, but I wouldn't have understood what leadership is in biology or what leadership is in economics. So, I was able to get the perspective in that sense.

Many of the participants shared that they appreciated and valued collaborating with like-minded people as part of their leadership classes. It was indicated this type of setting pushed them in their thinking and provided additional resources not available to them on an individual basis. Kathy offered her take in being part of such an atmosphere:

I was always interested in having classes with a bunch of type ‘A’ perfectionists. So, it was kind of cool. When I am around people that are similar or have similar goals –

I push myself higher, push myself harder, push myself to the top of that pack, and not just the general pack.

Kevin shared that he enjoyed being around people in his leadership classes who personally and professionally wanted to reach out to others. In Tracy's experiences she noted:

It seemed like all the people that I enrolled with for the program were already born to be leaders, and they had done leadership stuff, and I could see that they were leaders. So just to be in that caliber of people made me realize that sometimes when you are used to being the leader, you are used to being the one who makes the decisions, and you have other people who were like you – that it is best to listen.

Part of this listening process involved being receptive to feedback from peers and those associated with the program. Ava explained that as part of the program and the relationships she built, she was comfortable asking others for feedback. She understood the value of solicited and unsolicited feedback and used it to grow as a leader. She argued that it was necessary to grow as a leader.

Alumni also found it beneficial and meaningful as part of their leadership development to work with people other than their peers. Tracy indicated that she realized she could learn from people who are younger or older. As part of her involvement in the Building Communities Project, Tracy shared, "Teaching and understanding how others think, and seeing people that are aspiring to be like you was a very, very important realization in my leadership journey." Ava also shared the impact that working with children as part of the Building Communities Project had on her leadership growth:

I thought that it was fun to be working with kids again because that's always something that I enjoyed. It was another venue that I would be able to think about my

strengths and think about other people and their strengths, and how we could leverage those to make it a good experience...I think that was a really unique involvement that I might not have otherwise had. I had already been involved in doing a lot of things with kids more on an individual basis, but that was so rewarding just to have a group that we were going out into the communities to work with. We had some really good relationships with some of our kids, and I think that was very rewarding and just to see how we were being such good role models and leaders for the kids. I got to know them really well and enjoyed that level of collaboration.

When collaborating, people do not always get along. Kennedy revealed her approach to working collaboratively:

It's about serving others and being their friend first and then you gain that trust and you gain that respect. To me it means working with others and using my strengths to pull out the strengths of others and to develop their own traits and their own strengths. Again, it instills that camaraderie which makes leadership that much easier.

Jonathon shared a memorable opportunity he had to build camaraderie with faculty and staff associated with the CLP during participation in the High School Leadership Program. As a mentor in the program, he had the opportunity to “hang” out with Dr. Stone for a week in Chicago to lead a variety of leadership activities with high school students. Moreover, Lincoln expressed the relationships he developed with the high school students were essential because, “if you didn't invest in the lives of the high school students...they wouldn't have gotten anything out of it...A leader has to invest in people to be successful.” The investment in these students opened doors and opportunities to further expose and teach them about

leadership. The net effect of this investment amounted to personal growth in the high school students and an evolution of Lincoln's leadership.

Collaboration as part of working in teams or group work was effective in helping alumni develop meaning as part of their leadership experience. Developing relationships with others created opportunities to serve and enhanced their own leadership experiences. Interacting with others helped alumni better visualize and make sense of their own experience.

Experiential learning. Alumni expressed the experiential learning opportunities afforded to them as part of the CLP were some of the most meaningful and significant experiences as undergraduates. The experiential events provided to students included service trips, service-learning opportunities such as the Building Communities Project, externships, and the High School Leadership Program. These experiences had profound impacts on alumni and contributed to their development as leaders and furthered their understanding of leadership. Furthermore, the experiential opportunities contributed to the personal and professional growth of alumni and were some of the most influential components of the CLP.

Kennedy noted that the best way to learn leadership was, "through experience. It is through putting myself out there and assuming roles of leadership; whether I am asked to or not." Hugh supports Kennedy's view and shared, "Leadership is all about experiences. It is about having those experiences and it is all about being able to learn from other people's experiences." Hugh expanded on this:

I realized that leadership isn't specifically something that you learn in the class or something that you learn from something you studied or read out of a book. It is also experiential based. You could read 500 books and never ever get the experience that

I did when I went to Biloxi...I don't think you can truly get good at something until you go out into the 'wild' and actually experience it on your own. I think until people are actually put out into the wild, lots of those characteristics and traits that they learned don't truly come out. It might have been something they learned, it might have been something they practiced, but unless they are given that big, real life experience outside of their comfort zone...those attributes might not come to light. These experiences, Hugh suggested, helped him to put into practice what he was learning as part of his leadership coursework. Henry supported Hugh's thought process, "The program was not about sitting there with a text outlining different theories. It was much more practical than that." Kathy agreed and validated the "exposure to different leaders and leadership theories is important, but practice is more important than theory" and the CLP provided numerous opportunities for program participants to "play the game."

Kevin contended the CLP allowed you to go out and to explore various areas of interest in the community, and he felt these experiences were extremely important for him and others. Those who did not take the opportunity to participate missed out on significant opportunities to learn about themselves and others. He explained:

Many students come on campus, and they are so concerned with just campus life, the classes that they have to take, the social things going on campus, and the campus organizations. They fail to look beyond the campus, to the community, to the residents of that community, to the various populations in that community and start to look just beyond college...to how am I going to apply my skills afterwards. I think sometimes students who don't have the leadership program...are the ones you see get out and they are working, probably in their minds, a menial job living in a new

community. Not a lot of social experience and they really struggle with how to get active and how to get involved. Instead, they just wake up in the morning, go to work, come home, sit on the couch, watch TV, and go to bed. The leadership program I think, particularly for kids in smaller communities, is outstanding because it exposes them to different types of things, different types of populations, experiences where otherwise they wouldn't have had.

Kevin exerted the emphasis on community was placed upon him through course readings, through the Building Communities Project and other various projects. Tracy expressed, “I learned how to connect service to community and how that has great impact [on] you as a person.” One of the most profound experiences Kevin had in the local community was working with young adolescents as part of Building Communities. He shared his experiences with the program:

Building Communities was the creation of a program, an intermixing of different generations and it provided all different types of people with different levels of benefits. When you think about it, everyone is probably walking away with something different and I recall from the young population; for example, for many of them it was an opportunity to be around college age students, educated students, when maybe they didn't have that opportunity in their own family. For the elderly people, it was a chance to be around young, vibrant children when they maybe didn't have those opportunities anymore. For college students it was certainly the challenge of being around both populations and having to work with both populations at the same time and to accomplish some sort of common goal....With the Building Communities Program I learned to control chaos, in the sense that you threw these

rambunctious kids from all different backgrounds in with the elderly population. You can do all the planning that you wanted to and you can certainly think that things were going down a certain way, but it always happened a little bit different and no matter the activity that we did and no matter what we were working on for that particular day. Certainly that mentality, that skill, was something that was born there and I was someone that wanted to plan everything and have it go down a certain way....So that social responsibility of giving back on a larger level, the desire not just to participate in something, but hopefully to go out and try to create something that wasn't there. That is something that I gained from the entire experience. It is something that stuck with me far greater than anything I would have read in any textbooks along the way.

The Building Communities Program was also a central component of the CLP experience for other alumni such as Tracy and Diane. Tracy explained the connections and the importance that Building Communities had for her:

Building Communities is one of the main components of the CLP program that I kind of became attached to. I really liked the program and working with the students. I like the whole idea of pairing two college students and then expecting them to lead a group of middle school [students]. It was a very simple program that honestly, I mean, I didn't feel like it took a lot of my time to do. It was still something that I saw a huge benefit from as far as me personally, but then also the students that we worked with to see the effect that it had on them and on us as college students as well....Now that I look back, it seems kind of daunting and I am really proud to say we were able to do that because that was no small order to give college students that responsibility.

So Building Communities I think was a great program and a great learning experience as far as working with kids, but then also working in a smaller team. I think it was really important....Just to involve myself with this specific concept as strongly as I did regarding servant leadership was key for me.

Henry, as part of his CLP program, was able to use a trip to South Africa to satisfy his diversity component. “That trip was huge, just learning about my experience and learning about how my experiences were different than other people, and how their leadership was different from mine.”

Kevin shared an experiential learning opportunity that he was able to participate in as part of a May term leadership class. Kevin was provided the chance to spend an entire month job shadowing a local judge. He spent his time with a sitting judge doing legal research and working at the courthouse. He commented:

To have that opportunity to participate in an externship, for me it was a tremendous growth opportunity. I came from a family where no one was an attorney; there were no judges; there was no one that worked in the legal profession at all....It gave me an experience that I otherwise would have never had.

Jonathon had the opportunity, as part of the CLP, to participate in service trips. He participated in a service trip to Seattle, Oregon, one to Savanna, Georgia, and on two different occasions participated in trips to New Orleans, Louisiana. He suggested the greatest value of the trips was "being exposed to different settings.” Jonathon expanded his thoughts and explained:

Service trips really drove home to me and reinforced what I learned about leadership.

Serving down in New Orleans firsthand when Hurricane Katrina happened, I heard a

lot of things, I saw a lot of things on TV and to really go and experience it firsthand was unreal. I began to understand what was going on in the community and not just through the TV or the media....In Seattle, we worked with an AIDS prevention organization. I had never worked with an AIDS organization before, prior to that experience, and I was very naïve about a lot of things about AIDS. So there was a huge education with that. Literally, we spent a whole day like stuffing condom kits together. And when you first sit down to do that task, you were probably like, ‘What the heck? We came all the way to Seattle just to put together the condom kits and pass them out. Like why do we do it?’ But when you really think about it, that was huge and the organization explained how many utilized them and how that will help prevent AIDS and all that stuff.

Not only did the trips shape his perspective about leadership, but he was able to transfer his experiences and what was learned to his personal and professional life. The trips were “huge experiences” for Jonathon and allowed him to live out his desire and need to be a servant leader.

It is apparent that experiential learning opportunities played an instrumental role in the lives of alumni as part of their involvement in the CLP. Experiential learning in conjunction with a development of self awareness, traditional learning opportunities and collaborative learning experiences helped students construct their own meanings of leadership. Yet, something was still needed to really open one up to the possibilities.

Getting out of the comfort zone. Alumni reflected on and shared that they found an effective way which helped them to better understand leadership; it involved being forced out of their comfort zones. These situations transpired throughout traditional, collaborative, and

experiential learning opportunities. Forcing students out of their comfort zones was done intentionally, and sometimes the situations naturally surfaced. Hugh offered that until people are actually put into real life experiences outside of their comfort zone their leadership characteristics and traits do not truly come out.

Diane indicated she was put out of her comfort zone as part of Building Communities. Tracy also said, “It [the CLP] helped challenge me into doing things beyond my comfort zone, and I carry that along with me.” Tracy shared her experience with Building Communities:

Building Communities pulled me out of my comfort zone. I’m used to working with my peers. So, when I was head girl, I was 10 years old, all my peers were 10 years old. But now, even if I’m in college, even if I was supplemental instructor, I was the senior, but I taught freshman. But these are the people that are done with high school, and you know we are able to communicate. But the sixth graders, I realized I have to become a child to understand them, understand and relate with them at that level. So, it was just a back and forth transition of, you know, being child-like with them. At that time I’m trying to think like them and after that getting back to who I was as a college person.

The experience was valuable for Tracy, and she suggested it was probably the most challenging aspect of her involvement in the CLP. Hugh confirmed he too was forced out of his comfort zone as part of his CLP experiences and “what I was comfortable with as an individual.” Kevin appreciated the uncomfortable push and offered:

It meant putting myself in opportunities where maybe I wasn’t the most comfortable, but I knew it was going to be a growing experience....I think it means taking

advantage of every opportunity out there and not becoming complacent in my life and with my daily routine.

As a result of Kevin's experiences he appreciates the opportunities to push himself into unfamiliar situations because he realizes the potential benefits as a result of the effort.

Jonathon's experience as part of the CLP also put him in numerous situations that forced him out of his comfort zone whether it was the service component or the analysis of a leader. He acquired the understanding of contributing to a discussion even when it was not comfortable. He indicated that he is not an introvert, but describes himself more as an assessor. In this capacity, he often stayed in the shadows during leadership discussions and often waited to add value to the conversations. He attributed the CLP in helping him get out of his comfort zone and it provided him confidence. In addition, he came to appreciate the need and value of making contributions to the class. Jonathon offered the program required him to get out of his comfort zone, "in a way I never had to do before." The program did not allow him to be complacent and forced him to think about how he could apply the program beyond his undergraduate experiences. Jonathon purported:

Everyone has a comfort zone, especially in leadership. I think a big part of it...is forcing your followers or the folks on your team to realize their potential. A lot of times that is making them get out of their comfort zone, sometimes it takes you to do that and make that happen.

Being put in uncomfortable situations helped alumni develop self awareness, expand their horizons, realize their potential, and afforded them experiences they would not likely have had. These all contribute to development of leaders and increased understanding of leadership's meaning.

Participation in deep intentional reflection. Reflection is the lynchpin which brought together the various ways students were engaged in leadership and how they learned about it. Henry revealed, “I really appreciate the CLP as it challenged me to reflect and think a lot...I think that, that being a core part of it was really important for me.” Alumni commented that they did a lot of reflecting and Lincoln suggested it was important to be cognizant of the need to balance reflection and action.

The reflective process often occurred through writing; whether it was a journal entry, a class paper, or an essay in the leadership portfolio. In addition, reflection occurred verbally through classroom discussions and private conversations. Lastly, reflection was not necessarily verbally expressed as leadership participants continuously reflected by thinking about and through an experience. The opportunity to reflect was built into many of the leadership classes. Will described the general process as thinking about what happened, what worked, what did not work, and then determining what changes to make. This process helped students to become more aware of themselves, it helped participants evaluate what was done, and it pushed them in their understanding of leadership.

The reflective process was something that many alumni had not conducted before, at least not to the degree they did in the CLP. Will offered, “Being reflective was one of the things I had not really done, and I did it a lot as part of the CLP.” Kevin indicated holistically reflection was something most college students did not do and for him it was of great value:

As a college student so often you are caught up in the current semester or the next exam or the next class, you really don't sit down and spend the time thinking about how do I put these two or three years worth of courses and experiences together and

what do I draw from that. I think, quite honestly, in life something that probably doesn't happen is just trying to collectively put together different experiences, and we don't think about the larger picture. It caused me to do that, which I think again was a great thing.

Tracy shared she did not have much exposure to reflection before participating in the CLP and offered, "I've never really been someone who took the time to reflect on a specific activity." She continued by validating that the CLP had a lot of classes that were based on reflection, and looking back on experiential learning and making those ties is something she did not experience in other classes or completed in her daily life. Diane shared her thoughts about the reflective process:

It took time...it was important to think about what I learned because otherwise I was so busy, and I was just going to finish my volunteer thing, finish my involvement here, finish my classroom activity and then move on to the next thing. So being able to really reflect and think about what I could have done differently and what I [did] well in those circumstances was really important to do and not something that many people put the time to do in college

Will shared, "In this process you had to sit there and analyze yourself to figure out what type of leader you were and wanted to be." Jonathon expanded on Will's comments and stated, "...writing about what you did is a pretty powerful tool to analyze how you are doing."

Lincoln also offered insight into his reflective experiences:

And so I think reflection is a huge area....I think the ability to reflect back on what has happened and to make a solid effort in moving forward has been pretty powerful

because I think you get a lot of appreciation and understanding of where you have been in order to get a better jump at where you are going.

The reflection process helped Diane make meaning of the activities she was involved in, and she substantiated the value of reflection when she expressed, “Reflection was helpful because it helped you become more introspective and really process through what was learned” and as part of that process participants developed self awareness. Tracy expressed the need “to pause once in a while and to see where you are at as a leader and how you are shaping yourself as a leader – it is a personal decision to do so.” Ava shared:

Self reflection is the biggest thing I developed, and I am always very conscious of. I took time to reflect on how I could have done something differently and what might have caused me to behave that way....I just enjoyed the chance to write these reflections to think about the activities I was doing and how they were preparing me to be a good leader.

Henry explained the necessity of personal reflecting, “The key in leadership is a willingness to take a look in the mirror and pointing a finger and stating, ‘This isn’t going well.’ It is looking at how am I contributing to how this is playing out.”

Leadership participants also reflected about those with whom they worked and the situations encountered. Reflection provided students the means to make cross curricular connections and to collectively integrate their experiences. Kevin offered, “It more or less caused me to reflect upon my college experiences and to think outside that particular course and what I learned in that class. We were trying to push it all together and particularly in different disciplines.” This deep and intentional reflection was a fundamental component of the seminar class LS 450.

In LS 450, students reflected a great deal as they put together their leadership portfolios which highlighted their overall leadership experience as part of the CLP. Henry indicated, “The seminar course...sticks out to me because that is when I really, really took the time to sit down and reflect on my experiences.” Kennedy explained the significance of LS 450 which was developed as a result of intensive, integrative reflecting:

Completing the portfolio as part of LS 450 really truly shaped where I am today. It was the opportunity to serve others and so that servant leader aspect is kind of what I really attached to as far as the portfolio. I think it is where I put my most passion into with the whole aspect of servant leadership.

Diane revealed the portfolio was a necessary component in helping her truly understand leadership, and this end could not have been accomplished solely through traditional or collaborative learning. She offered:

I think that the portfolio writing process itself was helpful to take some of the experiences that were required of CLP and put them into words and figure out what that looked like and how that helped you grow as a leader. I would say...that is not something you can learn in the classroom. I actually mean it. It’s more something that you just have to work with and wrestle with as you’re trying to write out a paper of what was learned.

Tracy explained she also internalized the value of leadership as part of her portfolio construction because she was forced to think about her experiences and how they connected to each other although the process by which she did this was very organic and not contrived. This process also required her to think about leadership concepts and ideas that she would not have been engaged in had it not been for the class. As a result, she developed her

meaning of leadership. Ava also disclosed how the reflective process helped her develop meaning of leadership:

So it helped me kind of flush out what those concepts mean to me instead of just idealistically knowing that this concept is something that kind of ties in with leadership. It made it more personal, so I could really fully understand why the leadership components are important.

The reflective process was instrumental in helping alumni make sense of what was learned and experienced. The process was challenging and frustrating at times, but it created a “mean” to the “end” and ultimately resulted in CLP participants developing their own leadership perspectives. In addition, the reflective process aided alumni in understanding and making meaning of what was attained throughout their leadership program. These tangibles and beliefs include gaining knowledge, acquiring skills, and cultivating dispositions.

Meaning constructed. This section addresses the second research question which examined the meaning alumni constructed as part of participating in the leadership program at Midwest College. Participants described a variety of competencies and beliefs which they attributed to having been introduced and/or achieved through participation in the Certificate of Leadership Program. These tangibles and beliefs were categorized into four themes and included: (a) *cultivation of dispositions*, (b) *gained knowledge*, (c) *acquisition of skills*, and (d) *servant leadership*. Collectively, the attributes contributed to an overall development as a leader. The following describes and supports each of these themes in great detail.

Cultivation of dispositions. Alumni shared a variety of beliefs, values, and attitudes they associated with having been introduced or further developed as part of their work with the CLP. These non-tangibles were identified as dispositions. Dispositions can be described

as one's mental outlook. These beliefs ranged from what leadership is to how it can be attained. In addition, participants discussed a variety of other dispositions. For example, participants described the desire to continuously improve, to take risks, and to succeed.

The disposition that will be discussed in great detail as part of this theme is the belief system surrounding leadership. I struggled with whether to include it within the gained knowledge theme or dispositions theme. I opted to place it within the disposition theme because alumni consistently talked about leadership and their ideas concerning the phenomenon as beliefs rather than knowledge.

The most significant idea that alumni discussed involved changing their perception of leadership. Each alumni identified that his or her thoughts on leadership were changed as a result of their experience in the CLP. Hugh offered:

So whether [it] was authentic experiences that were kind of happening naturally or whether that was through reading about a lot of people that were leaders, I think it definitely changed your idea of leadership. I think it definitely changed your idea and broadens your perspective of what leadership looks like and what it is.

Some of these changes were elaborate and complex while others were subtle. The way most alumni looked at and defined leadership was completely different by the time they graduated from Midwest College. For some, this transformation was a challenge as it required a completely new understanding of leadership and it forced alumni to adjust what they had believed for virtually their entire lives. Henry explained the process that he went through as he was confronted with new and different ways to view leadership:

It was a process of *unlearning* my assumptions about what leadership was. This was done through critical reflection, learning through experience, through classroom content, and the integration of those things.

Alumni entered the program with very traditional and narrow views of leadership and many associated leadership with a position, such as the president of a company or the captain of an athletic team. Leaders were also associated positively and negatively with political figures and celebrities. Images such as a man at the head of the table leading a meeting or a boss directing his employees described their initial views. Leadership was thought about in the context of power and authority. Lincoln described he had thought about leadership as being “like a cookie cutter.” He explained that leadership “was in a box and this is how you did it. You applied this method to whatever situation.” Others viewed leadership as a big grand prescribed idea that was reserved for only certain people. However, as part of their involvement in the CLP these ideas were replaced with new perspectives.

The changes in perceptions of leadership were attributed to the content and experiences alumni were engaged in as part of the CLP. Kennedy explained her initial beliefs and how they changed:

I used to think of leadership as a boardroom with a group of individuals in there, someone standing at the head of the table, kind of lecturing. But, through the program and through my experience – I see it a lot more in terms of teamwork and facilitation rather than heading up a group.

Jonathon also shared how his view changed, “I viewed leadership as...CEOs or presidents. This idea of being a servant leader was introduced, and it kind of flipped that on its head. It was kind of like serving others will lead you to be a leader.” Jonathon used to think of

leadership as this “big grand thing.” That perspective changed, and now “I have totally realized like it is the small details in life and the small impacts you make on people, even if that is just one person that you sit next to at work. That is leadership.” Henry offered a similar transition, “I went in thinking that leadership was about position and authority and...I learned that it is not about that. I now view leadership as a process.”

Alumni experienced many changes in how they perceived leadership, and Tracy was no different, but she also revised her understanding and view about the nature versus nurture aspect of leadership. Her views on how one could become a leader were challenged, and she made revisions in her thinking. She offered:

I just didn't realize that you could educate someone to be a leader. I learned that my perception at the beginning, that you have to be born to be a leader, is still a value to me, leaders are born. At the same time you can educate someone and provide them with the right tools on how to be a leader, so it is not one or the other; either one of them can work depending on who the individual is.

Henry agreed and indicated he too discovered that leadership is not inherent at birth; people can learn to lead.

Change was not as simple as one day the CLP participants thought about leadership as power and a position, and the next it was about working with a team and serving others. Most alumni said their beliefs evolved gradually over time and it involved a fundamental philosophical change. However, for Jonathon his story was different:

A light bulb went off that leadership isn't this thing, like you don't have to do this or that, and you become this high up in a company and then you are a leader. It [CLP] totally flipped that for me.

Lincoln described his change in view was attributed to gaining “an appreciation for the art of leadership. And that focus, and passion, has been directly influenced by the CLP.” Lincoln explained that there is not a recipe for leadership. He elaborated further:

The CLP provided me with an understanding and an appreciation for the art of leadership, and knowing that it truly is something you have to work at. You don't just become a leader. I mean, there are certain qualities you have that help you in that direction, but to be an effective leader you need to continue studying, you need to continue working at reflecting, summarizing, and analyzing...It is not just something you can just show up and you know what to do. I mean there is not one thing as the leader that is going to make you successful. It's a whole bunch of things.

Other alumni spoke about leadership being an art. Tracy shared, “I think that leadership is more like an art. It all depends on the person.” Will surmised there is no right way to do leadership. A few of the significant statements that alumni expressed concerning the art of leadership which they credit to having been gained from the CLP include:

- “No matter what your role is, you can be a leader.” - Will
- “Leadership is more like a lifestyle or as a way of living.” - Diane
- “Process is definitely key.” - Henry
- “Anything can be considered leadership.” - Jonathon
- “It's a simple everyday thing you do just by using your strengths.” - Kennedy

Leadership can personify itself in simple everyday tasks, but peel back its layers and it can be complex. Leadership is not a straight line, and for that matter, it is not any type of prescribed line as each individual determines his or her own path. Lincoln validates this thought process:

You will find the cookie approach to leadership is entirely false...it takes a whole lot of work, motivation, and personality to be an effective leader. I mean you have to invest in the overall picture. You have to invest in the small picture. Being a leader isn't just about setting a course and encouraging people to get there. You got to be there every step of the way. I realized just how difficult leadership truly is if you are doing it the right way.

It was mentioned by numerous alumni that the process of leadership is ongoing. Kathy commented, "Leadership is something you have to build gradually over time." Tracy added that you do not even realize it is happening to you. Kennedy agreed, "Leadership happens subtly." Jonathon also commented on the perpetual motion of leadership:

I think leadership is forever an ongoing process. I don't think you wake up one day and say 'I'm a leader now, I got this. Now I'm going to start doing leadership stuff.' Leadership is a process as you are always learning, and learning how you can help others to do this or to help the organization you are working for.

Henry provided a more detailed and comprehensive statement:

You know, it is a process, it requires relationships and working with other people. That is present in how the CLP program defines leadership even in terms of the language and rhetoric. It relies on your work with other people as opposed to looking at leadership as a position of authority. I have a lot of different perspectives on leadership in that sense: viewing it as less of a position and more of a process, less of an authority piece and more of a consensus piece, and working together with people to make them better.

Alumni have shared a variety of ideas and beliefs that they possessed after completing the CLP program. Many of these beliefs are unique to that person, and at times many expressed the same feeling. The one aspect that continues to resonate is that the leadership process of each CLP participant is individual; it is their own and only their own journey. Jonathon shared a story that I think exemplifies the program and the impact that it has on participants.

The story as he told it:

I got to one point where I was going to quit the leadership program, like I wasn't going to complete it. I was going to quit or just, you know, not do it basically. The format at that time, for the culminating project was a lot of writing. Journal entries or reflective writing and all these little mini-papers about your whole leadership experience, and I just hated that idea. Hated it. So I remember going to Dr. Williams' office, and telling him like 'This is dumb, man,' like this whole leadership stuff. I don't want to sit and just write, so he really challenged me. He's like 'Hey, don't give up. Don't quit.' And he really challenged me to think and to push. I mean he put it back in my court like 'What do you want to do then?' And I was like, 'Well, what do you mean?' So like, 'Well, if you don't want to write papers, what do you want to do?' So he totally put it back in my court to basically challenge me, like what 'Jonathon, what do you want to do with it?' So I totally, again, totally fits my personality, I took a completely different path with that. And instead of just doing – so let me back up. So I viewed the culminating project as everyone turned in a one-inch binder with all their papers, and I thought that was bogus. I was like, 'Come on. So that's what we do? We just turn in this one-inch binder?' So I wanted to make it interactive, and I was really into like learning website stuff then and Flash and all

that. So I made this whole interactive website. So again, it was something that would last, something that could be interactive so it was online – the website was horrible but it was, I mean looking back on it I'd say it's horrible. But at that time I thought it was awesome. But I did this whole, I mean, I built a website; all my papers were on there. It was interactive – it had movies; it had pictures, so it became much more than a one-inch binder. Dr. Williams accepted that and Dr. Stone accepted that. So I think I challenged the program to say, 'Hey, I see this is how we – you've been doing it. You turn in a one-inch binder, I kinda think that sucks.' So at that point when I was quitting and Dr. Williams put it back in my court, I felt challenged. And I liked that. Jonathon summed it up well when he said, "And so the understanding that leadership is definitely a flexible, ever-changing, I guess monster, is something I've realized."

Alumni also shared dispositions which were not necessarily leadership related, but were encouraged and refined as part of their involvement in the CLP. Noteworthy statements include:

- "It made me more ready and willing to jump in feet first." - Kevin
- "Need for integrity and respect." - Ava
- "I developed an attitude and desire to change things." - Hugh
- "Constantly pushing for more." - Kathy
- "I gained the understanding for the need to set goals, and once I do that, it's like 'It's on!' I'm going to make it happen. I don't know how sometimes, and I don't know when, but it's going to happen." - Jonathon
- "It just made me acknowledge how important it is for me to be strong in my beliefs and how much strength I draw from it." - Kennedy

These dispositions could all be applied to and used as part of leadership, but the participants discussed them within their own context. An additional disposition that Will gained from the program was the idea of going from “good to great.” This gain resulted from reading the book *Good to Great* (2001) by James Collins. Will read this book multiple times and indicated the concept connected with him. Diane also discussed a disposition that connected with her and it was the need to give back. She elaborated on her beliefs and feelings:

The idea of giving back your time and hopefully instilling that or inspiring that to the youth so then a few years from now they will want to do the same. And it’s just that evolution like giving back and then it’s like, ‘Someone did that for me, so I’m going to do it for them and they’re going to do it for someone.’ [That process] just continues to shape leaders and that type of thinking.

Diane suggested the need to invest in young adolescents, and alumni indicated the idea of “investment” was part of the CLP. As a result, they understood the value of investing in their community, circle of friends, and family. Investment in others was significant for the health of the program and those involved, and more importantly the community. Kevin expressed what many seemed to be thinking and feeling when he said, “I think it always comes back to the word ‘community,’ realizing that the purpose of my life is larger, or any belief in life, really should be larger than just oneself.”

Alumni cultivated a lot of different dispositions as part of their leadership journey. The most significant aspect was the individual nature in which participants internalized the dispositions. In addition, these dispositions would not have come into focus without developing knowledge and skills.

Gained knowledge. Alumni participated in a variety of learning opportunities to gain knowledge. These opportunities involved coursework which was guided by a variety of resources such as books, articles, and notes supplied by faculty and staff. For the purposes of this section, knowledge was viewed as being information that participants learned. Holistically, the participants struggled to recall specific and concrete facts. Instead, they spoke in generalities and reflected on concepts and approaches. Alumni discussed concepts such as leadership characteristics, importance of diversity, the concept of transparency, and learning how to work with others.

Alumni offered they learned about leadership theories such as “Great Man,” “Transformation,” and “Servant Leadership.” Various leaders studied were cited such as Martin Luther King Jr., General Patton, and Jesus Christ. People who authored leadership books were also referenced during the interviews including: Patrick Lencioni, Robert Greenleaf, Herman Hessler, James Collins and Irv Burling. In addition, alumni talked a lot about what they learned about themselves. For instance, Hugh shared that he attained “a deeper understanding of what type of leader I am.” Virtually all of the participants expressed this same sentiment, and the information gleaned from alumni was previously discussed in the theme “self awareness.”

One area that was mentioned frequently was the knowledge and understanding of how to work with diverse groups of people. Hugh shared, “the one or two things that I can pull out would be a greater knowledge and understanding of how to interact with people of various and diverse cultures.” Tracy explained that the CLP shed new light on leadership and specifically knowledge about people:

I think the biggest thing I learned is just the idea of acknowledging others' belief systems and opinions and how that relates to being a good leader...how to deal with people and understanding how people have different strengths. Also, I learned that even if you are in a group you can take a step back and wear the hat of someone who is not in the group, and be truthful to how the group is performing.

Ava also learned about people. The following passage represents some of what she learned:

The CLP just helped me be conscious of the fact that it is an inevitable part of life that you are going to be a part of a lot of different groups at any point in time. And you are going to have a lot of different loyalties as your networks grow. You just need to make sure to balance those loyalties and to be conscious of the fact that people are going to have different views than you. But you need to make sure that all get onboard for a common vision, and make sure that everyone is contributing to the group in a way in which they are comfortable. So it's very important to be conscious of the fact that people are different, but everyone has strengths, and it's good that people are different than me because if it was the 'Ava Show,' then there would be a lot of complacency there....So it is very good to be a part of very diverse groups where people are contributing different types of views.

Ava went into great detail about diversity and its role in leadership. Diversity to her was more than racial diversity as it also encompassed differences in personalities, beliefs systems, characteristics, and attitudes. She gained the value of diversity and believed Midwest College did a great job of maintaining a culture that embraces diversity. She specifically spoke about how the CLP helped her with this understanding. She professed:

The leadership program definitely helped me focus on why it is necessary to work with people with diverse perspectives and points of views and so it helped me think about that, and it also helped me witness the group things that can be avoided and the great innovation and ideas that can come out of working with diverse groups. So that was a big thing that I wouldn't have gotten if I haven't done the program.

Kennedy learned that it is important to take diversity beyond understanding and working with people, and indicated it was important to develop relationships with others. She posited, “Leadership is an aspect of team work, and it is not just someone standing at the front of the room demanding your attention and using almost a fear tactic. It is developing that teamwork within a group setting.” In addition to learning how to work with others, Tracy discovered the type of people she liked to work with and for her that was “important going forward” as part of her leadership development. Kennedy grew up in a very small community in Iowa and the majority of her neighbors looked the same, had the same values, and went to the same church; hence, her experiences and knowledge about people who were different than she was very limited. In the CLP, she learned the importance of accepting others and as part of that learned about diversity. Kathy discovered that this acceptance, awareness and the ability to perceive others helps the leader gain credibility and respect.

One component that Diane learned about leading is that balance is essential. She learned that you can lead people, but if you do not know how to follow people, or when to follow, you will not be an effective leader. Ava shared her own thoughts about followers being leaders:

There are a lot of people who might be in a follower type role, but are actually really good leaders because they are really good at influencing others and making sure that

others are working for a common good. So just kind of that flip-flop of follower-leader dynamic is something that I really grew to understand throughout the program. In reference to working with people and leading, Ava shared that she gained the understanding of the concept of transparency:

I definitely latched on to the concept of transparency and always keep in mind that it is important to be very, very open. So if there is any sort of discrepancy between individuals or difference in personalities or different leaderships styles, it is important to be open about those and really discuss them and make sure that you are all working together and being transparent.

Tracy learned a process that helps with transparency is effectively communicating, and a part of that is listening and providing feedback to others. She explained, “Everybody listens when somebody talks, but not just listening to them because the person is talking. Instead, listening and offering suggestions, and clarifying what the person has said is what you just heard.” Additionally, Lincoln learned that if you are not getting anywhere you need to be a little more upfront and aware that you can make a difference. In those instances, you have to be a little more intentional in your efforts to communicate.

Diane learned about the need to have a clear purpose “or you are leading without direction.” Ava also gained knowledge about the importance of having a clear purpose and to be “able to work toward a common goal and to learn from your failures.” Kathy shared a story about not having a clear vision and learning from her mistakes as part of participating in the Building Communities Project. She explained on one occasion that she and her peers did not adequately prepare for a meeting and were not clear on what was required of them.

They arrived at their Building Communities neighborhood meeting and were to lead a small

group of students. However, due to their lack of preparation and lack of clarification on the vision, the lesson was a disaster. Kathy declared, “It didn’t go well, and we learned from our mistakes.” Hugh and Lincoln supported the notion of learning to be prepared.

In addition to learning about such things as how to work to with others and how to communicate, alumni learned how this knowledge is connected to leadership. Will shared what he learned about leaders:

People lead in all different ways depending on the project. The funny thing is you put these different people, the ones I keep remembering from LS 151 like Gandhi, put him in Martin Luther King’s shoes and he might not be able to do it, and it might not have been successful, or General Patton and Martin Luther King....Just because they are in fact effective leaders it doesn’t mean that you just transplant what they are doing.

Alumni learned vast amounts of information about leadership and leaders. Ava, for instance, came into the program with a constricted view of a leader and left with a much broader understanding. Hugh shared that he learned a plethora of information about leaders, and developed the ability to recognize true servant leadership. Ava learned about stewardship and asserted it was “a big realization of the program because I had never really thought too much about being a servant leader. I thought there were followers and there are real leaders, but this idea of servant leadership was a really unique.” She learned about servant leadership and was able to take the time to study other components of leadership and came to an enhanced understanding of the role of leadership and its impact.

Alumni shared a tremendous amount of knowledge that was gained as part of their involvement in the CLP. Not all of the knowledge gained was new to alumni. Some was

reintroduced and taught from a different perspective; hence, it afforded participants the opportunity to modify their existing knowledge base. Other concepts were brand new and students encountered the ideas for the very first time. At times it was difficult to determine what was learned because the knowledge and skills attained were so intertwined with each other. In one capacity, students learned how to effectively communicate, but that does not mean they can actually communicate. The ability to effectively communicate is then considered a skill. The next section explains what skills were acquired as part of alumni's leadership experience in the CLP.

Acquisition of skills. Alumni articulated they gained an assortment of skills as part of their involvement in the CLP. For the sake of this study, skills were viewed as the ability to do something. Alumni learned about skills through traditional learning, but they acquired the ability to perform them through their involvement in activities and experiential learning opportunities. Tracy conveyed that the CLP “took my small set of leadership skills and allowed me to develop them into a larger skill set.” Skills that were developed included such abilities as: capacity to work with others, ability to effectively communicate, and the ability to think critically. In addition, all alumni indicated that they developed the ability to reflect.

Although Diane did not mention the specific skills she learned, she expressed that as part of the Building Communities Program she worked on skill development. She shared:

I was challenged with the intergenerational part of Building Communities. I'm not working with kids all the time in my law practice, but you work with people of all different ages all the time and it translates. If I can go back in time and tell my 19-year-old self something about CLP, I'd be like, 'Okay, look at the big picture. You

are not doing Building Communities...in order to talk about books with people of different generations. You are learning more life-long bigger picture skills.’

The ability to work with others was of great value to Diane and something that she carried with her into her profession and personal life. Ava expanded on the abilities to work with others and talked about it holistically. Ava gained the ability to connect and “work with individuals from diverse backgrounds and diverse perspectives and points of view.” Will expressed that he gained the ability to work with others because he put himself in their situations and in “their shoes.” Hugh shared he often worked with people who were struggling. Lincoln developed the skill of management, and as part of that, he developed “the ability to transfer and utilize a leadership principle, style or theory and to put it into practice.”

The ability to perceive the situation in different ways also enabled Ava to work with others more efficiently. As a result of the program, “I am more conscious of watching as I go through life for who I see as good leaders and who I see as poor leaders. So I just kind of always have that in the back of my mind.” As part of this process, Ava explained that her ability to think about and critically reflect on what was observed and experienced was valuable in assisting her make sense of it all. Ava shared, “The program provided the mental framework of how I needed to think through problems and provided the opportunities to refine these skills.” Henry also shared the merit of further developing the ability to think critically. This cognitive process facilitated his ability to problem solve.

The last major skill alumni verbalized to have been acquired was the ability to effectively communicate: both orally and in written form. Ava articulated the “biggest actual skill set I would have gotten would be communication. I developed a really good

communication skill set during my time in the program.” Tracy articulated that she gained the ability to listen better and this skill allowed her to communicate at an advanced level.

The ability to successfully communicate was made possible with knowledge about communication, and participants were provided opportunities to practice their communication skills. In the core classes of the CLP, students were required to regularly communicate with their peers through discussions and as part of exchanging papers. CLP participants served as peer reviewers as a way to exchange information and to support each other in the writing process. Participants provided feedback to each other concerning the grammar, usage, and mechanics of the papers. They were also encouraged to provide stylistic recommendations. Participants appreciated the feedback received from peers and professors. In addition, students were provided opportunities to informally and formally present to peers and community members. These experiences were beneficial and helped students increase their confidence and ultimately their ability to effectively communicate.

Alumni acquired a variety of skills and abilities as part of their involvement in the program. It was noted they possessed many of these skills before their participation, and the CLP served as way to further develop and refine skills such as the ability to communicate and work with others. The obtainment of dispositions, knowledge, and skills was explicitly responsible for the development and understanding of servant leadership. All three areas were evident in how students explained their internalization of servant leadership. In effect, the mixing and integration of knowledge, skills, and dispositions resulted in servant leadership.

Servant leadership. The majority of alumni explicitly mentioned servant leadership and all referred to it in some capacity throughout our conversations. Servant leadership

meant something slightly different to each alumni, but all associated with a few fundamental tenets. Alumni considered servant leadership to be a theory, an idea, a concept, a belief, and a philosophy. General statements about servant leadership included:

- “Servant leadership is traditional leadership upside down.” - Diane
- “It was all about servant leadership.” - Jonathon
- “The concept of servant leadership was something that I learned about for the first time in the program.” - Ava
- “I learned about concepts and ideas like servant leadership.” - Hugh
- “I immediately think of formal servant leadership through leadership classes and the CLP classes.” - Will
- “Servant leadership is a huge part of the program.” - Henry
- “Servant leadership...was key for me.” - Kennedy

Jonathon expressed, “the idea of servant leadership, in general, is like an overarching philosophy” of the CLP program. Servant leadership serves as the keystone for the program.

Not every alumni specifically referred to servant leadership, but all articulated the value of service as part of leadership. A few of the alumni were familiar with servant leadership before participating in the CLP, but for most this was the first time they were exposed to the approach. For Ava, the concept was new to her and Henry attributed the CLP to his introduction to the concept, “The idea of servant leadership was something that I had never heard of...so that was a new way to think about leadership...and that exposure was important to me because I had never thought about leadership in that way.” Ava contended:

The approach pushed me to move away from the horrid mentality of the ‘it’s all about me’ mentality, and showed me that being a leader is actually being a servant and

wanting to help others, and better others, and better the community. It's not just being the person in charge. It's really, really being a servant.

Jonathon also went through a comparable transition and shared that by being a servant leader he could help people out and assist them with bettering themselves. His profound realization was that, “It’s really not about me; it’s really about them, and I like that focus of shifting it on to some other people and to other things to get them going.”

Hugh articulated servant leadership informs his overall perspective of leadership because that is who he is, a person who serves. Service is a large factor of who leaders are and this service occurs within one’s personal and professional life. It involves serving family, friends, strangers, the local community, the global community – it is simply about service.

Henry shared his view of servant leadership:

I view the idea of servant leadership as a process as it is selfless because you are looking to improve an organization or a community, a group, and specific things within those. It is not about your ego. It is not about your advancement in your career, and doing these things for you. It is not about what you get out of the experience, but instead what you give. It is about how you can contribute towards making your community or sphere of influence better...It is about what you are putting in to it to make things better for the common good for everyone involved in your group. And I think those are foundational in the world now and how I choose to operate in it.

Kennedy viewed servant leadership as the aspect of being an everyday leader and providing simple acts of kindness. Kevin exerted it is about looking beyond himself and attempting to

serve various segments of the population, particularly groups that have been underserved. Kennedy added it also involves having a respect for your peers.

Hugh and Lincoln connected servant leadership to Jesus Christ. Lincoln described Jesus as part of his servant leadership views, “Christ is the ultimate servant leader, and we talked about that in the CLP, and it is something that has really influenced my life. ‘If you want to epitomize a leader why not utilize him?’” Lincoln asserted the realization was made during LS 151, and it had not occurred to him before that Jesus was a leader because of his service to others. Lincoln stated, “I mean, it all comes back to Jesus...And so I think that is a big one that I hadn’t necessarily thought about that before the CLP.” Since that experience he shifted his attention and follows “that philosophy” and follows Jesus as a religious figure and as a leader.

Servant leadership was mentioned in some degree by every participant interviewed and it influences all alumni in their view of leadership. For some, it was their philosophy of leadership and for others it is a part of their overall leadership perspective. The basic element of servant leadership is the need to serve. It is not about what can be gained, but instead what can be given. It is about being unselfish and thinking about the needs of others before oneself.

Application of meaning. Alumni developed knowledge, a variety of skills, and dispositions throughout their participation in the leadership program. These outcomes had meaning in the context of leadership and were also holistically beneficial. The lasting value, however, is the usefulness and applicability of what was achieved.

The final theme that emerged as part of the data analysis process, *application to leadership*, is explained in the next sections. Specifically, these sections discuss the overall

worth that alumni placed on their experience as part of the program, how alumni defined leadership, and to what degree alumni have applied what was gained to their personal and professional lives.

Value of program. Alumni had very good things to say about their development as leaders as part of the CLP. Many admitted the program was not perfect and there are things that could be changed or implemented that would enhance the CLP, but overall they had positive experiences. It was expressed that you got out of the program what you put in. This was a result of the individual being able to determine what the program looked like for him or her.

Kathy had few complimentary things to say about the CLP, but she confessed that she did the bare minimum. She credited this to getting married and her fiancé was being redeployed overseas as part of his responsibilities to his country. She admitted that she did not invest much into the program. If she had the opportunity to do it differently she would. By and large the overall experiences for alumni were positive because the responsibility for program success rested on their shoulders. The following phrases represent significant statements that were pulled from the transcripts concerning the value of the CLP:

- “I think it was very crucial to my development as a leader.” - Ava
- “Could I have gotten to the same point I am through other means, maybe, but it probably would've taken me longer.” - Diane
- “The CLP had a tremendous factor in my development as a leader.” - Kevin
- “It’s definitely a fabric of who I am....The CLP has successfully made me who I am today and I consistently look back on that.” - Hugh

- “I think I would have gotten there, but it might have just taken longer or I might not have believed in myself because I wasn’t reflective.” - Will
- “I wouldn’t be who I am today without the program, and I feel absolutely comfortable saying that if I had not of had that experience I wouldn’t be who I am, where I am, doing what I’m doing.” - Henry

It is evident that the program was valuable to the alumni. They found great meaning in the opportunities encountered, and the time and effort put into the program provided dividends. Four suggested that the leadership program helped them to secure their very first jobs. Jonathon, Kennedy, Will, and Henry all shared stories about the CLP’s impact in attaining employment after graduation from Midwest College.

As part of Kennedy, Jonathon and Will’s job interviews they were asked to discuss their involvement in the program. In Henry’s case, he brought his leadership portfolio to the interview to highlight his knowledge and ability and what he could offer to the employer.

Jonathon explained his experience:

The program helped me get my first job. I remember in the interview they were like ‘Tell me about this leadership certificate. What is that?’ I remember it made a huge deal. And I don’t know if it sealed the deal or not, but just to be able to have that stand out and to be able to give the whole spiel on it and why I did it and what it’s all about. I mean that was huge, I think. Especially if they were interviewing a bunch of people and you know, it comes down to a couple of people, this kid has got this whole leadership stuff. I think it totally helped out.

Kennedy also indicated that the leadership certificate came up in her first job interview and she got the job. Will was adamant that he would not have been hired for his first position

because, “basically my whole interview was all about leadership. I know I wouldn’t have gotten hired there and there are lots of other things that would not have happened then.”

Henry interviewed for a position in higher education and he brought his leadership portfolio with him to refer to his leadership abilities. He offered, “part of the reason I got hired was because I had a kind of vision and knowledge and could bring some things to developing their program.”

The CLP has had a great impact over the short term, but what has been its value over the long term? The next section addresses this and discusses how alumni have applied the outcomes of the program to their personal and professional lives. For instance, Henry mentioned that he actively uses resources and books from the leadership program as part of his job responsibilities. He explained, “The Greenleaf text is huge. I still have it on my shelf and I still look at it. If I am working [on] a presentation for students, I use it.”

Application of outcomes. Alumni discussed how they used what was gained, acquired, and cultivated as part of the CLP. They shared a variety of ways in how they continue to use tangibles and beliefs gleaned from the leadership program. The following provides examples and stories about how outcomes have been applied since graduation.

When Kevin was asked if he applies what was gained from the CLP he immediately stated, “Quite honestly all of the time...It has worked for me in real life.” He confessed that in law school he did not serve others as much as he would have liked, but recently he has been more active. He indicated that he has been very intentional about using what was gained from the CLP and noted that he would not be “pursuing activities or interests in the area of leadership” that he is without the influence of the CLP. Kevin shared that one of the skills he actively uses is the ability to work simultaneously with people from varying cultures

and groups. Kevin is a labor and employment lawyer by training, so one of the areas he practices in, almost exclusively, is discrimination cases in the workplace. These cases often involve conflicts. He noted that he is often brought in when workplace issues break down, or understanding breaks down, or when people are inexperienced at working with each. These conflicts often result from people not being accepting of others with different backgrounds. Kevin acknowledged, “The experiences that the leadership process gave me, have allowed me to better appreciate, perhaps, where some of the conflicts occur, and the motivation for the behaviors” which caused the initial conflict. Based on his experiences, the opportunities to work with diverse people in diverse settings, and his educational background, Kevin admitted he has been very successful in resolving these cases.

Lincoln was concise when responding to the question and said bluntly, “If I wrote out the list of the things I am involved in now, the leadership roles or the service roles - the CLP is responsible for that.” He also highlighted the importance of reflection:

Just analyzing how I handle a situation where leadership was required and sitting down and kind of taking my thoughts and looking at what I did right and what I did wrong. I thought that was a real strength of the program that has definitely translated and carried over in my life and the leadership goals I have.

Ava pointed out that having a great reflective foundation has helped her on a daily basis. She shared, “I am still very conscious of whenever I take action and take on leadership roles about what I could have done differently.” Tracy remarked:

The CLP was able to help me to see so many things, because without it I would just be going about my day-to-day activities, not stopping to reflect, not stopping to think about my next step, not stopping to congratulate myself on how far I have come.

Hugh made connections between the CLP and his personal and professional life. He expressed, “The CLP forced me to reflect on getting out of my comfort zone and forced me to become a great reflective learner.” He commented the ability to reflect, and the ability to be a reflective learner, was definitely something that he took into his profession and it made him comfortable teaching in a downtown inner city school. He offered that his reflective nature was attractive to the school district, and it plays over to what he does every day when he is reflecting on his teaching, practice, and relationships with African-American students. Hugh also integrates his CLP experiences into his personal life as he utilizes servant leadership in his own home.

Kathy indicated that the leadership program provided her opportunities to work with young adolescents. When she was a first year teacher, she reflected back on her experiences as part of the Building Communities Program and that helped her work with and teach middle school students. Kathy stated, “Relationship building is something that I have carried with me as a teacher. The importance of a positive relationship is so important with kids.” Kennedy also made connections to the Building Communities Program that she found were relevant to her profession. She shared, “I just go back to doing Building Communities and what kind of experience that was.” The non-profit organization she works for has issues with tutoring and mentoring and she has used her interactions with children as part of Building Communities to help with her professional responsibilities. She indicated what helped was understating the “importance of treating them as equals and not belittling or judging them.” Jonathon also commented that Building Communities “was a blast and it is similar to some of the stuff I’m doing now such as bringing people together.”

Ava noted that she would not have developed nearly as much had she not had the focus on diversity as part of the CLP. She indicated:

That's really, really important, especially in my current job working with people from different cultures and all sorts of different countries. I have different communication styles...I think if you work with individuals from all sorts of different majors and who wanted to lead sessions differently than I did, you learn about diversity.

Ava made it apparent that the knowledge gained, in addition to her experiences as part of the CLP, has helped her within her profession. Ava felt she would have likely become the leader she is, but was able to get to that point more quickly because of the CLP. She reasoned that her leadership abilities caused her to become “fast tracked” in her profession. Ava also said, “I think I am going to move through my career much more quickly.”

Alumni have actively used what was gained from the CLP to serve those around them. Reflection, serving others, getting out of their comfort zone, and interacting with diverse people are examples of what alumni highlighted. Not only have others benefited, but it is apparent that alumni have reaped benefits from the time and energy devoted to studying and practicing leadership.

Definition of leadership. Alumni were asked to provide their definition of leadership in order to better understand how they perceive leadership. The following definitions were provided:

- “Leadership is a risky process that involves influencing and inspiring others.”
- Jonathon
- “Leadership is about bringing out the best in people – helping them discover that they have the ability and power to affect change. It’s leading by example, sharing

your passions, living with integrity, and taking responsibility. Leadership is teamwork, collaboration, and commitment to a shared vision. Above all, leadership is serving others in a way that benefits the greater good.” - Kennedy

- “Individual or collective action directed towards a common goal of improving individual lives and the communities in which we live, work, and play.” - Kevin
- “Leadership is the process of influencing, directing, and visualizing a future for a group of people by first listening and understanding such group of people, and ultimately working together to achieve a common goal.” - Tracy
- “Being someone for others to look up to, follow and emulate.” - Kathy
- “Leadership is taking responsibility of the whole to push forward on a common goal that is helpful to and for the greater good.” - Hugh
- “Working with a group of people to achieve goals and to make positive change in a responsible and ethical way.” - Henry
- “The ability to mobilize people for a common cause and vision.” - Will
- “My definition would be inspiring and engaging other individuals to take action and giving them the tools that they would need to take action in order to better themselves and better the broader community.” - Ava
- “Helping others realize their potential while guiding them towards an identified direction.” - Lincoln
- “Making decisions that you hope others would follow.” - Diane

The definitions are unique to each alumni and they provide insight into how they view and perceive leadership. It demonstrates the CLP has had lasting and permanent effects on alumni as many pieces of the program are evident in the definitions.

Statement of Identification

The sixth step required the researcher to develop a statement of identification which is based on the exhaustive description. The textual and structural descriptions were combined to generate an overall essence of the phenomenon. This is referred to as essential, invariant structure and its purpose is to give others an idea of what it feels like to experience the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). This long paragraph or two focuses on the common experience of the participants (Creswell, 2007).

This statement represents and embodies the essence of the leadership experience studied. A paragraph-long statement, which drew on the textual and structural descriptions, was written to serve as the overall essence of participating in Midwest College's Certificate of Leadership Program:

The leadership journey of Midwest College alumni who graduated from the Certificate of Leadership Program was purposeful, challenging, and meaningful. The process was individual and produced rich and powerful results. The outcomes which comprised gained knowledge, acquisition of skills, and cultivation of dispositions were developed as part of being engaged in traditional, collaborative, and experiential learning opportunities, and through enhanced self awareness. Critical reflection served as the central focus of this meaning making process, and because alumni were afforded the ability to have ownership of their leadership development the process was unique to them. The myriad of knowledge, skills, and dispositions secured were synthesized into a personal leadership philosophy heavily influenced by servant leadership. This personal perspective guides alumni in their personal and professional lives.

Participant Verification

The final step of Colaizzi's method of data analysis involved presenting the statement of identification to the study's participants for verification and feedback. I presented the findings and conclusions to the participants as a means to ensure that I had represented their lived experiences accurately. I asked participants to provide feedback and asked if I had left anything out. The responses received back from participants included:

- "I think your 'Statement of Identification' is right on the money. It is definitely reflective of my personal experience in the program." - Kennedy
- "I feel like this is just a well put together summary of how I felt. It is nice to see that many other Midwest College alums felt the same way." - Will
- "I believe the statement provides an accurate representation! Well said, and nicely done. I could not have summed it up better, even if I tried." - Jonathon
- "I agree with your highlighted statements. 😊" - Diane
- "That statement really resonated with me - definitely reflects my experience." - Henry
- "I think that your statement summarizes the leadership experience of alumni very well. Great job on it!" - Tracy
- "I really like that statement." - Lincoln
- "Everything else resonates with me, but the statement about purpose and meaningful doesn't represent my experience. Everything else fits with my perspective and experience." - Hugh
- "I think you synthesized the major leadership concepts nicely!....This is how I would describe my CLP and beyond experience to date." - Ava

- “The statement accurately reflects my beliefs with regard to the Leadership Program and I fully concur with your observations as to the program's impact on alumni.” - Kevin
- “I really like your summary...I think it's accurate. Well done.” - Kathy

Some alumni elaborated on their statements. Lincoln provided additional feedback and indicated that he thought the statement did not reflect the challenging nature of the program and supported his perspective when he explained, “The fact that being engaged in the experiences was truly challenging.” I reviewed the interviews and noted similar statements from participants and this resulted in the word “challenging” being added to the statement in order to make it more comprehensive. In addition, Hugh’s overall response was positive, but he wanted it to be clear that he disagreed with the use of “purposeful” and “meaningful” to describe his leadership journey. He commented, “I don't feel that mine [his CLP experience] was always meaningful and that it had a complete purpose throughout, except to get another notation on the resume and transcript.” I used this feedback as an opportunity to look back through the transcripts to see if I had missed a larger concern or if I had misinterpreted statements. Upon rereading the transcripts, I became confident that Hugh’s concern was unique to him. In addition, his feedback was the last to be received and the other ten responses did not mention his concern, so this added confidence that holistically the statement of identification was representative of alumni.

Participants also expanded on their feedback in support of specific aspects from the statement that connected with them. For instance, Kathy mentioned, “I particularly agree with the part about servant leadership.” Kennedy agreed with Kathy about servant leadership

and highlighted the conclusions about servant leadership and personal development resonated with her the most. Ava elaborated on her reaction to the statement:

I agree with the term ‘journey’ - implies leadership learning is an ever evolving process, not a single epiphany moment. I do think the process is an individual one in the sense that people do their own self reflection and think about their own unique strengths, but my initial reaction to this piece of the statement was that the process of developing leadership perspective is very impacted by collaboration as well. I know I gained a lot of understanding of leadership by conversations with peers, observing influential colleagues, etc. You do point out collaboration and experiential learning opportunities in the next statement – agreed. I also like that you included servant leadership in the statement. I strongly agree with your overall proposition that individual reflections on skills/knowledge cultivate leadership perspectives, which in turn shape personal/professional lives.

Henry also provided additional insight to the value of the statement of identification:

A few things that jumped out to me as especially salient to my experience: enhanced self awareness, critical reflection served as the lynchpin of this meaning making process, and because alumni were afforded the ability to have ownership of their leadership development the process was unique to them, and heavily influenced by servant leadership.

The statement of identification was well received by participants. The statement represented the themes generated from the collected data and its subsequent interpretation.

The positive feedback made it evident I had fashioned a statement which adequately

addressed and honored the essence of a leadership experience as experienced by eleven alumni who participated in Midwest College's Certificate of Leadership Program.

Summary

This chapter determined the essence of the lived leadership experiences of alumni who participated in Midwest College's Certificate of Leadership Program. The essence was determined using Colaizzi's (1978) data analysis method and was guided by Moustakas' (1994) process to complete phenomenological research. I conducted 33 intensive in-depth interviews with 11 participants and recorded their responses to my questions. I then transcribed data verbatim and started to identify significant statements. The next step involved writing interpretive meanings for each statement. These meanings were eventually grouped into themes. The themes that resulted from this process were: *ownership of learning, awareness of self, traditional learning, collaborative learning, experiential learning, getting out of the comfort zone, deep and intentional reflection, cultivation of dispositions, gained knowledge, acquisition of skills, servant leadership, and applications to leadership*. The exhaustive description described these themes in great detail using data from the interviews to make meaning of the themes. The statement of identification was then generated from the themes and was provided to alumni to determine if it was reflective of their experience and the meaning gained. Participants verified and confirmed the statement of identification.

Chapter 6 provides a discussion and summary of the themes developed and provides a conceptual framework representing the conclusions. In addition, implications and recommendations for practice and future research are provided. The chapter concludes with my reflection of the research process through a reflexivity statement.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS

In chapter 5, the results of the study were outlined and described in thick and rich text. Themes were identified and explained in context of the research questions. In addition, the statement of identification was shared and validated by the study's participants.

This chapter presents the conclusions of the study in context of the themes that emerged and which were used to address the research questions. The section also provides recommendations for further research based on the findings.

Conclusions

The literature related to undergraduate leadership programs in higher education is scarce. When refining the focus to address the perspectives of alumni who participated in leadership programs, the dearth of information became more apparent. Gaps in the literature are evident, and considering the increase in number of leadership programs within institutions of higher education, it is vitally important to research these programs thoroughly to better understand their impact and to ensure they are effectively meeting the needs of students. This creates a unique opportunity to study leadership and its role and impact on alumni who, as undergraduate students, participated in a leadership program. This study attempted to address the gaps in the literature and strived to provide voices to alumni concerning their experiences as part of a leadership program. The findings of the study will add to the existing literature and provide a foundation for additional research.

The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to make meaning of the lived leadership experiences of alumni who graduated from Midwest College's Certificate of Leadership Program. The epistemology was constructionism and was viewed through a interpretive theoretical lens. The methodology combined a case study approach with

phenomenology to create a phenomenological case study. Midwest College's leadership program is the bounded case and the phenomenon studied was leadership. Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological approach helped to situate the research process. The study was framed by three research questions and they informed the research process. The questions included:

1. How did alumni construct the meaning of leadership?
2. What meaning did alumni construct?
3. In what ways have alumni applied what was gained within their personal and professional lives?

These three research questions were answered using themes that emerged as part of an exhaustive data collection and data analysis process.

Eleven alumni from Midwest College served as the participants for the study and each participated in three interviews based on Seidman's (1991) interview methodology. These extensive interviews were conducted over the course of a month and required participants to meet with me on two different occasions for 60-90 minutes. Data was collected and Colaizzi's (1978) data analysis model was used to make meaning of it. The resulting process generated a variety of themes which helped to answer the research questions. Answering the research questions and collectively integrating the findings provided the support and confidence to determine the meaning of the leadership experience for Midwest College's alumni.

The data analysis process yielded a variety of themes and included: *ownership of learning, awareness of self, traditional learning, collaborative learning, experiential learning, getting out of the comfort zone, participation in deep intentional reflection,*

cultivation of dispositions, gained knowledge, acquisition of skills, servant leadership, and applications of leadership.

The themes of *ownership of learning, awareness of self, traditional learning, collaborative learning, experiential learning, getting out of the comfort zone, and participation in deep intentional reflection* were used to answer the study's first research question: How did alumni construct the meaning of leadership? This question essentially determined how students were exposed to the phenomenon of leadership and what constructs were provided to aid participants in the meaning making process. The following provides an overview of these themes in respect to the first research question.

The *ownership of learning* theme was significant because it demonstrated that participants of the CLP were provided the opportunity to develop their own program, within certain confines, which resulted in an experience that was distinctly their own. The ability to own their program created opportunities for increased and sustained engagement and situations where students could pursue classes and activities that truly interested them. In addition, it provided opportunities for participants to take responsibility for their own actions.

The *awareness of self* theme was significant to participants because many had never been provided the opportunity to truly learn about themselves. Participants learned about their strengths, personalities, behaviors, and preferences. Not only did participants learn about their behavioral characteristics and personality traits through assessments like StrengthsFinder and the MBTI, but they also learned how to apply these self discoveries. This personal knowledge informed participants and assisted them in uncovering how they were leaders. It helped the participants ascertain that who they are shapes what they do as leaders. For many, the development of self awareness provided them with confidence that

they were leaders. Moreover, it was important for participants to learn about themselves so that they could better understand others.

One way students learned about leadership was through *traditional learning*. These are occasions where the dissemination of information occurred through traditional methods such as lecture, notes, discussions, reading books, and involved activities including worksheets, quizzes, and tests. These modes of learning were present and alumni experienced them as part of their leadership program, but traditional learning was not the major approach used to transfer knowledge. It served a vital role to exchange ideas and information, but was not the only way.

Through conversations with Midwest College alumni, it was noted they had numerous opportunities to learn from an assortment of people such as peers, faculty and staff, community members and guest speakers. The theme that emerged was *collaborative learning*. These experiences provided participants with the opportunity to learn collaboratively and in a way that was mutually beneficial for all involved. Situations were created where participants had to work together in order to succeed. It was more than an intersection of common goals and instead was a deep, collective, and vested process in which participants needed each other to achieve a common goal. This was often evidenced through the Building Communities Project. Participants collaborated with their peers most frequently, and the most significant outcome was learning from each other and about each other. They also learned how to leverage their own knowledge and abilities for the benefit of the collaborative endeavor.

Experiential learning was identified as another theme and was extremely valuable for participants in the leadership program. They mentioned often how they appreciated the

ability to “play the game” and be “hands-on” and to put theory into practice. Alumni were provided situations where they could use knowledge, skills, and dispositions and this helped them attain new and different outcomes. Participants were involved in experiential learning through such opportunities as service trips, the Building Communities Project, Individualized Projects of Service, and serving-learning activities. An important aspect of these experiential opportunities was they often engaged the students with the local community. This was significant for the participant’s leadership development and provided benefits for the community. It was noted that leadership cannot be learned or developed in a vacuum and one needs to experience the phenomenon first hand, and experiential opportunities provided the means.

Another theme that emerged concerned *getting out of the comfort zone*. Many alumni shared that being forced, or encountering situations they were not familiar with or were new to them were valuable experiences. The path of least resistance would have been easier to follow, but participants realized the “rewards” were not as great. It was indicated that alumni learned more and had greater growth from the experiences where they were not necessarily in their element and were forced to take calculated risks. This process helped participants learn about themselves, and they gained knowledge and experiences they likely would not have. Lastly, getting pushed to the edge and challenged ultimately resulted in participants gaining greater confidence.

Participation in deep intentional reflection was an integral part of Midwest College’s leadership program and alumni referred to the process and expounded on its value. Reflection was often associated with deep thinking and they linked recent experiences to background schema in order to promote a more complex and interrelated mental

arrangement. The process involved looking for parallels, disparities, and interrelations beyond the superficial meaning. Reflection emerged very quickly in the data collection process and was prevalent throughout all interviews. In addition to the number of times it was mentioned, participants spoke in great depth about it. Reflection was not discussed in isolation and was often intertwined with other themes such as experiential learning, collaborative learning, and awareness of self. For instance, participants explained through collaborative learning they were provided opportunities to reflect with peers. This took the form of verbal communication and the exchanging of papers. Participants also spoke comprehensively about the experiential activities and how reflection was actively used as part of those experiences to further understand and make meaning of them. Service trips required students to keep a reflective journal and the Building Communities Project provided opportunities for participants to reflect. Reflection occurred in the form of a leadership journal and was exhibited through reflective and integrative papers associated with the core leadership classes. In addition, the final leadership class LS 450 relied heavily on reflection as part of its methods. Reflection served as a lynchpin for themes and helped them inform each other.

The themes *cultivation of dispositions*, *gained knowledge*, *acquisition of skills*, and *servant leadership* were used to answer the study's second question: What meaning did alumni construct? This question sought to answer what outcomes were obtained as a result of participation in leadership.

The *cultivation of dispositions* theme also emerged early in the process as all participants shared how they attained and grew in their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.

Alumni shared a variety of perspectives such as leadership was an art, process is important to

leadership, relationships were essential in the leadership process, and leadership can be taught. Moreover, every participant discussed how they viewed leadership over time, and many evolved from a very traditional perception that leadership was about a position and power, to one that involved leadership was about collaborating and serving others to accomplish a common goal. This evolution was not an easy process and required students to redefine what they thought of as leadership. Participants were forced to make fundamental changes to their own philosophy of leadership. However, these changes opened participants up to new meanings.

Gained knowledge was a theme that played a role in helping students build a foundational base that informed the other themes, such as cultivating dispositions, and aided with the acquisition of skills. These three themes provided reciprocity to each other and changes in knowledge often impacted a disposition or skill. The knowledge gained included concepts such as communication, understanding others, teamwork, and diversity. It was also articulated that specific concepts relating to leadership such as transparency, servant leadership, and mentoring were realized.

Participants spoke about a variety of skills that were procured as part of the Certificate of Leadership Program. The *acquisition of skills* theme was essential to the growth of alumni as leaders. Participants learned a variety of skills such as the ability to work with diverse people and in diverse situations, the ability to communicate effectively, and the ability to reflect. The interplay between knowledge, skills, and dispositions was evident as the development of skills served as an extension of knowledge gained. In addition, increased skills served as a platform to add new knowledge. The interplay of this relationship was evident between all three classes of outcomes.

The final outcome that emerged as a theme was *servant leadership*. Servant leadership was discussed explicitly and implicitly and all participants spoke about the value, desire, and need to serve others. The degree to which participants understood and practiced servant leadership varied, but nevertheless it was conveyed in each interview. It was difficult to discern at times from other themes as it acted as a keystone for what was obtained as part of leading. Participants learned about servant leadership, they experienced it, and ultimately developed a belief system which incorporated it. Thus, servant leadership was a crucial cohesive source of support and stability and was pivotal in the journey of leadership development for alumni.

The final theme, *application to leadership*, addressed the third research question: In what ways have alumni applied what was gained within their personal and professional lives? Within the application to leadership theme three different strands were identified and discussed. Initially, the value of the leadership program as experienced by participants was addressed holistically. Alumni offered their big picture evaluation of the program and its impact. Alumni identified they would not be where they are today without the program, others suggested they would have achieved the same degree of “success,” but it would have taken longer. Others acknowledged the leadership program served a role and provided them the liberty to continue their trajectory of growth as a leader. Four alumni shared stories about how their experience in the leadership program provided them with leverage as part of their first job interview, and they believe they were able to distance themselves from other candidates because of their involvement in the leadership program. In addition, alumni shared a variety of ways they applied the knowledge, skills, and dispositions gleaned from the leadership program to their personal and professional lives. It was stressed that although

they do not practice it as much as they would like; alumni continue to reflect on leadership. This process relates to self awareness, and alumni continue to learn about themselves and how this learning enlightens their leadership knowledge and ability to lead. The last aspect of this theme involved participants providing a definition of leadership. Alumni provided a variety of definitions and each was uniquely their own. This complimented what emerged about the program in that the leadership program and process was an individual journey. Although the definitions were unique to the participants, commonalities manifested themselves in the definitions. Concepts and terms such as serving, collaboration, and common goals were pervasive in the definitions. It was observable at least on the surface these ideas, understandings, and desires could be attributable to the leadership program. The analysis of the interviews also suggested this to be authentic, and the program was influential on alumni over the short and long term.

Collectively, these themes were integrated to create a statement of identification which provided an overall essence of the experience:

The leadership journey of Midwest College alumni who graduated from the Certificate of Leadership Program was purposeful, challenging, and meaningful. The process was an individual one and produced rich and powerful results. The outcomes which comprised gained knowledge, acquisition of skills, and cultivation of dispositions were developed as part of being engaged in traditional, collaborative, and experiential learning opportunities, and through enhanced self awareness. Critical reflection served as the central focus of this meaning making process, and because alumni were afforded the ability to have ownership of their leadership development the process was unique to them. The myriad of knowledge, skills, and dispositions

secured were synthesized into a personal leadership philosophy heavily influenced by servant leadership. This personal perspective guides alumni in their personal and professional lives.

In addition, a conceptual framework was developed to visually represent the statement of identification.

Figure 1. Soesbe's Conceptual Framework of Alumni's Lived Leadership Experience

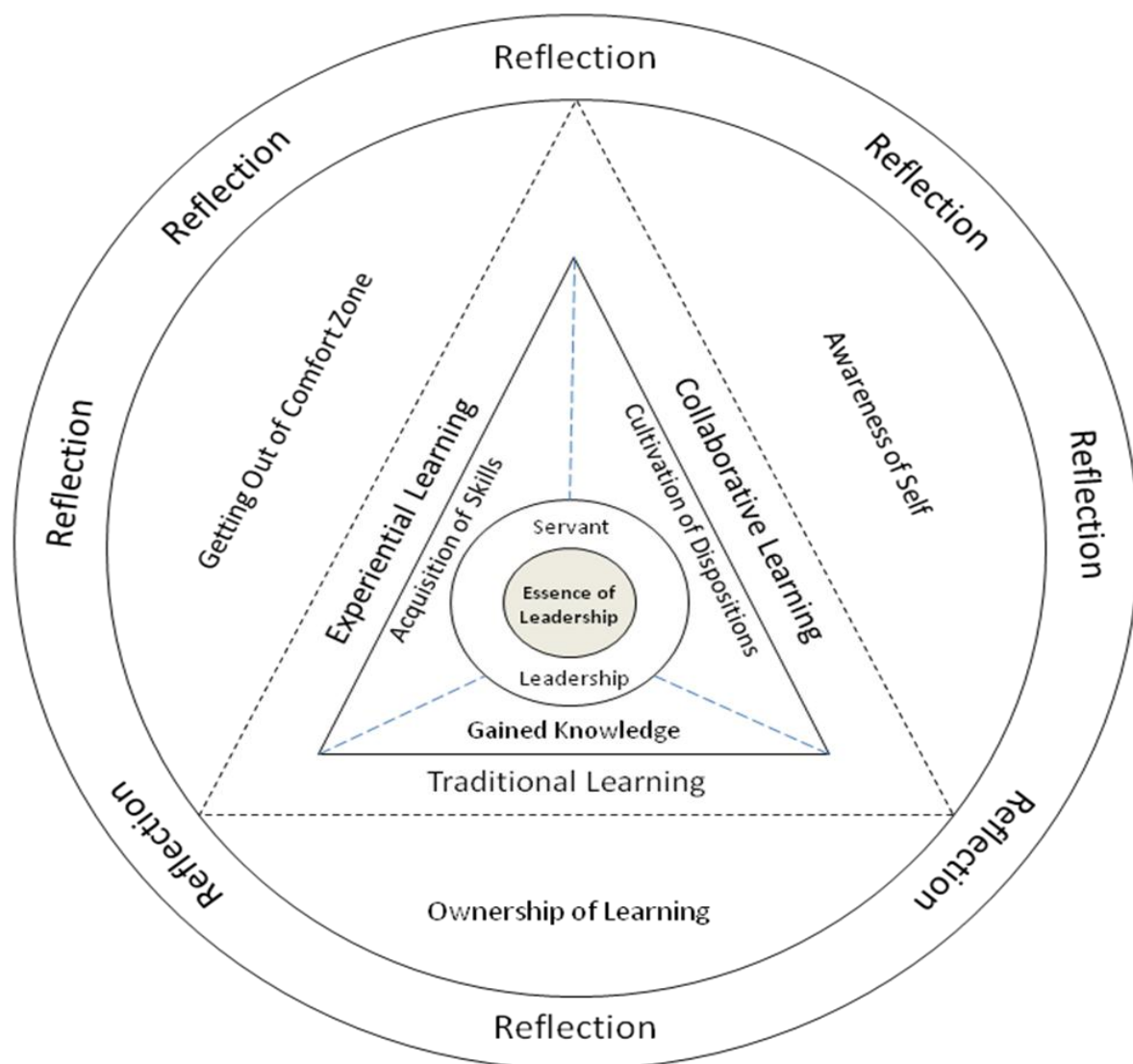


Figure 1 is a conceptual framework and a visual representation of the study's findings. The visual represents the themes which emerged from the phenomenological case study and demonstrates how their interactions with each other help participants develop their own personal lived leadership experience.

The middle sphere labeled "essence of leadership" is the culminating result of all of the factors associated with Midwest College's leadership program. The middle triangle represents the three main ways that leadership is learned: traditional, experiential, and collaborative. These three approaches are all influenced by the phrases which are outside of the triangle and include: awareness of self, getting out of comfort zone, and ownership of learning. The outside triangle's lines are dashed because the three phrases can all influence the ways leadership is taught or experienced.

Reflection serves as the lynchpin of all interactions. Throughout these processes participants are continuously reflecting on what was learned, thus leading to the development of deeper meaning. Specifically, these interactions result in participants gaining knowledge, acquiring skills, and cultivating dispositions. The dashed lines, which make up the inside triangle, represent the fluidity of influence different types of learning can have. For instance, skills can be developed from experiential learning, but can also be acquired through collaborative learning.

Finally, what develops is filtered through servant leadership which is formally and informally taught throughout the program. All of the influences, pressures, and learning as part of Midwest College's Certificate of Leadership Program culminate in the essence of the lived leadership experience. This meaning is unique to each individual participant and no two essences are alike.

Recommendations for Practice

The research conducted as part of this study was conducted at a liberal arts based private college located in the Midwest and looked at the lived leadership experiences of alumni who participated in a leadership program. The findings generated from the data collection and data analysis provided an assortment of themes which were used to address the three research questions. The findings help to provide an understanding about the lived leadership experience from the perspectives of 11 alumni. Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made for Midwest College and the Certificate of Leadership Program. In addition, recommendations are provided for institutions that are looking to refine their current leadership program or are interested in developing a new one. This section concludes with a reflexivity statement which provides insight as to how I was impacted by the study as well as my potential impact on the research process.

Recommendations for Midwest College and its Certificate of Leadership Program

Based on the findings of the phenomenological case study, several recommendations can be made to Midwest College about its Certificate of Leadership Program:

- *Development of Common Leadership Resources* – Participants noted that they were engaged with a variety of resources such as books and articles as part of the content associated with the leadership classes, but it was not apparent that there was a uniform text or articles used as part of knowledge development. Thus it is suggested that a common reader or other resource be developed or used to address the potential differences students gain from faculty and staff teachings. It is not being suggested that programs be prescriptive, but rather purported that a

common base of knowledge would further assist participants in leadership development.

- *Restricting Access to Leadership Classes* – It was noted that ID 351, which is typically the second of the three leadership classes, is comprised of students who are identified leadership minors and student who are taking the class for general education requirements. It is recommended that additional consideration be given to separating these sections or making LS 151 a prerequisite to ID 351. This would help with students having more similar foundations to work from which could enhance leadership development.
- *Engage Alumni and Current Students in an Evaluation of the Program* – A few alumni expressed concerns with the current structure of the program and advocated changes be made. The biggest concern stemmed from the diversity in reasons why students were taking some of the leadership classes. Some alumni expressed interest in looking at a different format; one that was more exclusive and provided opportunities currently not available to those who wanted to go beyond the current structure and expectations of the program. The recommendation would be to engage alumni and current students in dialogue and conversations about how to help the program evolve and ensure that it is meeting the needs of the institution and students.

Recommendations for Certificate of Leadership Program Faculty and Staff

Pursuant to the findings of this phenomenological case study, several recommendations can be made to faculty and staff who teach leadership classes:

- *Ensure Students are Supported and Resources are Available* – Participants shared they appreciated the flexibility of the program and the ability to tailor the program to their personal needs. This ownership engaged students and made it meaningful. However, not all students are capable of working independently and may need additional guidance in structuring their program or experiences. In these cases, participants need to be supported and provided with the resources necessary to have a successful experience.
- *Increased Focus on Traditional Learning* – Participants discussed at great length the value of the experiential opportunities and the ability to collaborate with others, but there was less evidence in support of the traditional aspect of how information is disseminated. It was not clear whether this was due to ineffective teaching strategies, the lack of traditional teaching due to the other types of learning approaches taking precedence, or if it was due to the length of time since participants had been engaged in the traditional learning as part of the leadership program. In any case, additional attention needs to be placed on the traditional aspect of teaching leadership. It is recommended that greater emphasis be placed on creating specific and uniform learning outcomes which permeate throughout the classes. This would require an increased focus on the vertical and horizontal articulation of the program.

Recommendations for Institutions Refining/Creating a Leadership Program

Based on the results of this phenomenological case study, several recommendations can be made to institutions wanting to refine a current leadership program or create a new one:

- *Involve Stakeholders in the Learning Process* – Alumni were appreciative and understood the value of being able to contribute to their learning process through the ability to make choices about what classes to take or what project to participate in based on their interest and abilities. Participants developed ownership of the process, were actively engaged, and took responsibility for their own learning. This resulted in a semi-structured program of study that allowed students the freedom to independently learn and grow at their own pace, but within the confines of the program and with additional support as needed. It would be important to involve students in the leadership process and provide them opportunities to own the program. It would also be valuable to involve business and community leaders in the process to provide input on what they seek from students in terms of leadership.
- *Ensure there is an Infrastructure to Support a Leadership Program* – The CLP is successful and able to provide many different types of experiential learning opportunities because the institution has built an infrastructure to administer and facilitate the programs and partnerships. Institutions need to ensure that they have the capacity and resources necessary to develop and sustain opportunities of this nature.
- *Develop and Maintain Partnerships* – The CLP would not be what it is without the significant partnerships that it has developed and maintained. These relationships take time to develop and an institution needs to ensure that it is being a good steward of their partnerships and are providing reciprocity to them.

Recommendations for Further Research

An intention of this qualitative study was to add to the leadership literature base which at this point is scarce. This phenomenological case study focused on the lived leadership experience of alumni who participated in an undergraduate leadership program and provided voices to alumni. Although this research can contribute to the existing base there is much to be learned about leadership education in postsecondary institutions. The recommendations for further research related to leadership education include:

1. This study should be replicated with specific attention focused on increasing the diversity of grade point averages represented and diversifying the participant pool in terms of racial identity.
2. This study should be replicated with alumni from Midwest College who participated in leadership classes, but did not complete the Certificate of Leadership Program, and with alumni who did not take any leadership classes at Midwest College. These results would provide comparisons of different segments of alumni in regard to their lived leadership experiences.
3. A longitudinal study should be conducted with participants of Midwest College's leadership program and students should be interviewed before starting the program, after completing LS 151, after completing ID 351, and after completing LS 450.
4. A similar study should be undertaken with other leadership programs that are affiliated with an institution of higher education, and are similar in structure and size of Midwest College's Certificate of Leadership, to further investigate the meaning of leadership developed by alumni.

5. This study should be conducted with larger and smaller leadership programs that are similar in composition to determine if the size of the program affects the essence of the lived experiences.

Reflexivity Statement

The research associated with this study is the culmination of three years of intensive work as part of my involvement in a Ph.D. program. My interest in leadership and the academic nature of leadership was piqued when I was hired six years ago to serve as Midwest College's Director for the Office of Student Field Experiences and School Partnerships Coordinator. Due to my job responsibilities, I had the opportunity to work with the Building Communities Program which is associated with ID 351. ID 351 is one of the core leadership classes students must take as part of their leadership minor.

I began teaching and facilitating ID 351 and Building Communities in 2005 and used a very traditional approach to leadership. To me, leadership was about leading a group of people toward a goal. It was about position and at times power. This is how I had personally experienced leadership and heard leadership being discussed throughout my life.

I was not personally responsible for teaching the leadership theory or the content of the class; instead, my responsibility was to ensure the service-learning component, the Building Communities Program, was organized and facilitated effectively. This program was extremely important to ID 351 because it offered students the chance to integrate the theory learned into actual practice. The Building Communities Program served as a "leadership lab" for undergraduates. This program was a challenge logistically, but because I had taught for six years in the school district with which the program was partnered, the transition was relatively seamless.

I initially facilitated this program with a very top down approach and it was most likely more aligned with management as opposed to leadership. I soon discovered my errors in this approach, and although I learned a great deal about leadership, my students never really had the opportunity to lead because I was controlling nearly every variable. When students did have the opportunity to practice leadership the situation was contrived. Around this same time, I enrolled in a doctoral program at Iowa State University and started the process of completing a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership. The next few years saw major changes in my approach to leadership and how I led within the leadership program.

I struggled trying to determine the topic of my dissertation and had thought about researching service-learning and the engagement levels of community college transfer students who transferred to four-year private institutions. Although those areas were of interest, I did not have a passion for either of them. As I continued to facilitate the Building Communities Program and progressed in my graduate studies, I became even more interested in leadership education. I completed two small research projects in conjunction with my research classes and I became further engrossed in the topic. It was then an easy decision to complete a dissertation about undergraduate leadership education programs.

Research for this phenomenological case study was completed in the Fall of 2011 and spring of 2012, and I had the unique opportunity to complete the research process using the same leadership program I had the opportunity with which to work. This proved to be a delicate balance between my professional responsibilities and the requirements of the research process. I am confident that the ethical necessities of this process were dutifully carried out and honored.

I was very aware of my insider status as I was studying a program with which I was directly affiliated. I was aware of the potential areas of concern, but also realized that my insider status would be beneficial to the process and I could go places and learn things from participants that an outsider might not have been able to achieve. Throughout the process, I worked diligently to bracket my situation so that my own interests and ideas did not influence those of my participants. Out of the 11 participants who assisted with the study I knew nine of them and had a professional relationship with two participants: Kathy and Will. I actually taught in the same building with Kathy and Will for one year, although I did not establish a personal relationship with either. Two participants, Kevin and Diane attended Midwest College before I was employed. The other participants had participated in the leadership program when I facilitated the Building Communities Program and likely knew me better than I knew them. I was aware of the potential drawbacks to these relationships and its impact on the data collected, but due to my ability to bracket the experiences I was able to distance myself from the process and maintain a level of objectivity.

My insider status was very important and useful in many capacities because I was aware, and knew about the programs being discussed and I did not have to ask for clarification or complete additional research when participants referred to a program or experience. This allowed an insight that someone not affiliated with the program would not have been able to achieve. However, I was cognizant not to make assumptions. In addition, because the majority of the participants knew me in some capacity, I think this enabled me to go deeper with them and probe areas that they might not otherwise have been comfortable discussing. Participants were comfortable with me, as I was with them, and this helped with data collection. I also noticed with the two participants who I had not known before the

process that it was easy to communicate with them. I did not observe any differences in the interviews based on my affiliation with the participants.

The entire research process for me was very educational and satisfying. I learned a great deal about myself and leadership. My own leadership philosophy evolved throughout this process and I now more clearly understand what I believe, and what it means. I was blessed to be able to have this experience. I learned a great deal about the participants and their experiences. I even developed significant relationships with a few during the research process; some are personal and others are professional.

The participants also indicated they enjoyed the opportunity to talk about leadership and the overall process was rewarding. Two participants indicated they had taken leadership books off their shelves and started to read them because our conversations re-grounded them in their interest in leadership; something they had not reflected on in some time. Others retrieved their leadership portfolios and looked through them reminiscing about their experiences and how much they have grown since they graduated from Midwest College. A few even indicated their own leadership perspectives had changed; in part, because our conversations had caused them to think more intentionally about leadership.

My interest in leadership and leadership education is a passion and I believe that I will be a much better teacher as a result of this experience. In addition, I am now better equipped to engage in larger questions about leadership and will actively involve myself in committees and strategic planning initiatives concerning leadership education. I look forward to reading leadership articles for “pleasure” and cannot wait to begin structuring a paper to be submitted for publication. This is only the beginning of my leadership journey.

**APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL LETTER**

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board
Office for Responsible Research
Vice President for Research
1138 Pearson Hall
Ames, Iowa 50011-2207
515 294-4566
FAX 515 294-4267

Date: 10/14/2011

To: William J Soesbe III

CC: Dr. Larry Ebbers
N256 Lagomarcino Hall

From: Office for Responsible Research

Title:

IRB ID: 11-450

Study Review Date: 10/12/2011

The project referenced above has been declared exempt from the requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b).

The determination of exemption means that:

- **You do not need to submit an application for annual continuing review.**
- **You must carry out the research as described in the IRB application.** Review by IRB staff is required prior to implementing modifications that may change the exempt status of the research. In general, review is required for any modifications to the research procedures (e.g., method of data collection, nature or scope of information to be collected, changes in confidentiality measures, etc.), modifications that result in the inclusion of participants from vulnerable populations, and/or any change that may increase the risk or discomfort to participants. Changes to key personnel must also be approved. The purpose of review is to determine if the project still meets the federal criteria for exemption.

Non-exempt research is subject to many regulatory requirements that must be addressed prior to implementation of the study. Conducting non-exempt research without IRB review and approval may constitute non-compliance with federal regulations and/or academic misconduct according to ISU policy.

Detailed information about requirements for submission of modifications can be found on the Exempt Study Modification Form. A Personnel Change Form may be submitted when the only modification involves changes in study staff. If it is determined that exemption is no longer warranted, then an Application for Approval of Research Involving Humans Form will need to be submitted and approved before proceeding with data collection.

Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review. **Only the IRB or designees may make the determination of exemption**, even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4566 or IRB@iastate.edu.

APPENDIX B
LETTER TO VP REQUESTING POTENTIAL PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

CURRENT DATE

INSTITUTION NAME

NAME, Vice President of Enrollment Management

ADDRESS

CITY/STATE/ZIP

Dear (NAME):

My name is Bill Soesbe. I am currently a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program at Iowa State University. My dissertation titled *Voices of the lived experiences of alumni who completed an undergraduate leadership program in a small liberal arts college* was approved by Iowa State University's Institutional Review Board on October 14, 2011. The next step in this process is to receive permission for access to potential participants which is why I am contacting you.

The participant information requested would include the names, email addresses, and telephone numbers of alumni who completed the leadership program. Specifically, those eligible for the study include alumni who successfully completed the Certificate of Leadership Program and graduated from (INSTITUTION NAME) between 2003 and 2011. Those willing to take part in the study will be asked to participate in a series of three interviews which will explore their experience as part of an undergraduate leadership program and their perspectives concerning leadership. Each interview will last between 60-90 minutes. The interviews will be scheduled at the convenience of the participant and will occur at a location of the participant's choosing. The participants will remain anonymous, confidentiality will be ensured, and data will be reported in aggregate.

I have attached a letter to be sent to potential participants and an informed consent form for your review. I am asking you if (INSTITUTION NAME) would be willing to release the names, email addresses, and phone numbers of alumni who have graduated from the college's leadership program. If so, potential participants will be sent the attached letter (or called), a consent form, and a self addressed stamped return envelope.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please provide a response to my request at bsoesbe@iastate.edu. Otherwise, you can send a letter response. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me. I can also be reached at (319) 415-9852.

Sincerely,

William J. Soesbe III

APPENDIX C
LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPANTS

2205 Usher Avenue
Sumner, Iowa 50674

CURRENT DATE

NAME
ADDRESS
CITY/STATE/ZIP

Dear (NAME):

My name is Bill Soesbe. I am currently a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program at Iowa State University. My dissertation titled *Voices of the lived experiences of alumni who completed an undergraduate leadership program in a small liberal arts college* was approved by the Iowa State Institutional Review Board on October, 14, 2011. Your name and email address was provided to me by the Dean of Enrollment Management at (INSTITUTION NAME).

Since you are a graduate of (INSTITUTION NAME) leadership program you are initially eligible to participate in the study. The purpose of the study is to determine the essence of the leadership experience. If you are willing to participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in three separate interviews about your experience in (INSTITUTION NAME)'s leadership program. The interviews will each last 60-90 minutes, will be scheduled at your convenience, and will take place at a location of your choosing. The interview data will remain anonymous and will be reported in aggregate.

If you are interested in telling your leadership story and are interested in participating in this important research, please contact me by email at bsoesbe@iastate.edu by DATE. In addition, my telephone number is 319-415-9852 if you questions regarding the study. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

William J. Soesbe III

APPENDIX D
PHONE SCRIPT FOR INVITATION OF PARTICIPANTS

Hello, my name is Bill Soesbe, a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Iowa State University. I am calling you as I am conducting a leadership study as part of my dissertation. The purpose of the study is to determine the essence of the lived leadership experience as experienced by alumni who participated in an undergraduate leadership program.

Your participation in this study is important because you have valuable input as a graduate of (INSTITUTION NAME)'s leadership program. Furthermore, your involvement with this study will help other leaders such as yourself understand the essence of your leadership experience. Participation is completely voluntary and your name and feedback will remain confidential.

I will interview you three times and each session will last no longer than 90 minutes. The interview will occur at a location and time that is convenient to you.

If you agree to participate, I will mail you a consent form which explains the study in more detail and outlines your rights.

Do you have any questions about what I am asking of you?

Would you be interested in participating in this study?

If "No"...

Thank you for your time.

If "Yes"...

Thank you for your willingness to participate and contribute to this research project. Is there a date, time, and location that would be convenient to conduct the initial interview? Can I get your address so I may send you the necessary forms? Thank you.

I will be sending you a letter shortly to confirm the logistics of our meeting. If you need to adjust our meeting time and/or location, or if you need to cancel for any reason, please call me at (319) 415-9852. Thank you for your time and I will look forward to working with you on this project.

APPENDIX E
FOLLOW UP LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS WHO PARTICIPATE
IN FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS

2205 Usher Avenue
 Sumner, Iowa 50674

CURRENT DATE

NAME
 ADDRESS
 CITY/STATE/ZIP

Dear (NAME):

Let me take this opportunity to thank you for your willingness to participate in this study about determining the essence of the leadership experience. This project is a wonderful opportunity for you to express your views and share your leadership experience.

I am attaching a consent form that will give you background information about the study. You will benefit most by reading the consent form before the interview session. The consent form will include your rights as participants and information about the purpose of this study.

We will have three interview sessions. Each interview will last no longer than 90 minutes in length. The time we agreed to meet on was (DATE) at (TIME) at the (LOCATION). Please let me know if you have any schedule changes or if we need to re-schedule. In addition, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. You can reach me by phone at (319) 415-9852 or by email at bsoesbe@iastate.edu. You may also reach my major professor Dr. Larry Ebbers at (515) 290-9854. Dr. Ebbers can also be reached at lebbbers@iastate.edu.

I appreciate your willingness to participate in this study. I am looking forward to meeting you and hearing your story. I am confident that we can work collaboratively and achieve the desired outcomes in an efficient manner. Most importantly, I believe this study will result in a better understanding of leadership and will also provide deeper meaning to the lived experiences of undergraduates who graduated from a leadership education program.

Sincerely,

William J. Soesbe III

APPENDIX F
FOLLOW UP LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS WHO PARTICIPATE
IN PHONE INTERVIEWS

2205 Usher Avenue
Sumner, Iowa 50674

CURRENT DATE

NAME
ADDRESS
CITY/STATE/ZIP

Dear (NAME):

Let me take this opportunity to thank you for your willingness to participate in this study about determining the essence of the leadership experience. This project is a wonderful opportunity for you to express your views and share your leadership experience.

I am attaching a consent form that will give you background information about the study. You will benefit most by reading the consent form before the interview session. The consent form will include your rights as participants and information about the purpose of this study.

We will have three interview sessions. Each interview will last no longer than 90 minutes in length. The time we agreed that I would call you was (DATE) at (TIME). Please let me know if you have any schedule changes or if we need to re-schedule. In addition, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. You can reach me by phone at (319) 415-9852 or by email at bsoesbe@iastate.edu. You may also reach my major professor Dr. Larry Ebbbers at (515) 290-9854. Dr. Ebbbers can also be reached at lebbbers@iastate.edu.

I appreciate your willingness to participate in this study. I am looking forward to hearing your story. I am confident that we can work collaboratively and achieve the desired outcomes in an efficient manner. Most importantly, I believe this study will result in a better understanding of leadership and will also provide deeper meaning to the lived experiences of undergraduates who graduated from a leadership education program.

Sincerely,

William J. Soesbe III

APPENDIX G INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Study: Voices of the lived experiences of alumni who completed an undergraduate leadership program in a small liberal arts college

Investigators: William J. Soesbe III, Ph.D.c

This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

INTRODUCTION

The intent of this study is to learn about and make meaning of the lived experiences experienced by alumni who completed a leadership program. You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a graduate of (INSTITUTION NAME)'s leadership program. This program, including its graduates, are serving as the focus of the research.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate, your participation will last for three months and will involve your participation in three individual interviews with the researcher each lasting between 60-90 minutes. The interviews will be conducted at a site of your choosing or over the phone.

The interviews will consist of a variety of open-ended questions concerning your background, your leadership experiences and perceptions of leadership, leadership views, and your involvement in a leadership program. During the study you may expect the following study procedures to be followed:

1. Sign the informed consent form. **If participating in a phone interview the consent form will be signed and returned before the interview is conducted.
2. Participate in three 60-90 minute interviews with the researcher regarding your experiences as part of a leadership program. The interview will be held at a place of your choosing.
3. The interviews will be audio, and if possible, videotaped.
4. You may skip any interview questions that you do not wish to answer or that makes you feel uncomfortable.
5. Pseudonyms will be used instead of your real name.
6. (INSTITUTION NAME) and its leadership program will be provided pseudonyms.
7. You will be asked to review the transcripts and researcher-designed themes of the content of your interviews as a method of assuring the authenticity of your interview.

8. All electronic interview and survey data will be kept on the researcher's personal computer. Access to the information will be restricted and the computer is password protected.
9. All printed interview and survey data will be kept in a separate locked cabinet in the researcher's office (Old Main 317) at Midwest College in Watertown, Iowa.

RISKS

While participating in the study you may experience the following risks: There are no foreseeable risks at this time from participating in this study.

BENEFITS

If you decide to participate in this study, there may be no direct benefit to you. It is expected the information gained in this study will benefit society by providing valuable information about the essence of leadership from the perspective of alumni who graduated from a leadership program. It is expected that the information gleaned from this study will benefit the institution as it will provide valuable feedback for (INSTITUTION NAME) and its leadership program. In addition, it is hoped the findings will contribute to the growing literature base concerning leadership.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION

You will not incur any monetary costs from participating in this study. Likewise, you will not be financially compensated for participating in this study.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide to not participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. During the interviews you may refrain from any questions that you do not wish to answer.

RESEARCH INJURY

Not applicable for this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies, (INSTITUTION NAME), the Director of the Institute for Leadership Education at (INSTITUTION NAME), auditing departments of Iowa State University, and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken: Your identity will be provided a pseudonym in order to maintain your real identity. Your pseudonym will be a unique code and letter and will be used on all forms instead of your name. Identifiers will be kept separate from data. A key for the pseudonym and your real identity will be stored in the researcher's personal computer in a password protected electronic file. Additionally, any other electronic files containing your data will be stored in a password protected system. Handwritten notes, paper documents, and printed materials will be stored in a locked file cabinet located in the researcher's office (Old Main, 317) at Midwest College. The only person who will have direct access to raw data, information, and the key will be the researcher. The information will be kept indefinitely or until the information is of no additional use. The information will be mechanically destroyed and disposed of as needed. If the results are published, your identity will remain confidential.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study.

- For further information about the study contact William J. Soesbe III at bsoesbe@iastate.edu or by phone at (319) 415-9852. You can also reach his supervising professor, Dr. Larry Ebbers at (515) 290-9854. Dr. Ebbers can also be reached at lebbbers@iastate.edu or E005B Lagomarcino Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.
- If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, IRB@iastate.edu, or Director, (515) 294-3151, Office for Responsible Research, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document, and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Participant's Name (printed) _____

(Participant's Signature)

(Date)

APPENDIX H INTERVIEW GUIDES

Introduction Guide #1 (Focused Life History)

Face sheet (i.e. demographics, name of interviewee, contact information, place and time of interview, information on set-up for interview)

Introductions

Review/Sign Informed Consent Form

General

1. Can you share a little about yourself (background, what currently doing, etc.)?

General Background

1. Tell me what it was like growing up.
2. Where were you raised and by whom?
3. Did your parents attend college? Did they graduate?
4. What do your parents (guardians) do for a living?
5. Can you tell me a little bit about your immediate and extended family?
6. What were you like as a child?
7. What activities and organizations did you participate in as a young adolescent?
8. Did you consider yourself a leader growing up?
9. Was leadership discussed in your family?
10. Can you speak to how you were a leader? Provide specific examples which demonstrate your leadership qualities.
11. How did other students perceive you?
12. How did teachers or other adults perceive you?

Educational Background

1. When did you know that you wanted to pursue a college degree?
2. Can you tell me about your search for a post secondary institution?
3. Was college an expectation for you? Explain.
4. When did you attend Midwest College?
5. How did you come to choose to attend Midwest College?
6. What influenced your attendance?
7. What other institutions did you consider attending?
8. What was/were your major(s) and minor(s)?
9. What influenced your choice of majors/minors?
10. Did you change majors while an undergraduate?
11. What activities did you participate in while at Midwest College?
12. Did you work while enrolled at Midwest? If so, please describe what you did?
13. What are your fondest memories while enrolled at Midwest College?
14. What challenges did you experience at Midwest College?
15. What would you change about your experience at Midwest College?
16. Did you ever consider transferring?

17. Are you satisfied with your choice to attend Midwest College? Elaborate.
18. What additional educational experiences have you completed since graduation?
19. Are you looking towards completing a graduate degree?

Professional Work Experience

1. What do you do professionally?
2. What is your role in your place of employment?
3. What are your responsibilities in this role?
4. How long have you been in this position?
5. Please explain how you attained this position?
6. What do you most enjoy about this position? Least enjoy?
7. Would you consider leaving this position? Explain.
8. What else have you done professionally since graduating from Midwest College?
9. Are you working within the profession that was studied at Midwest College?

Personal Experiences

1. What do you do personally (community, service, religion, etc.)?

Leadership Experience

1. How were you a leader while at Midwest College?
2. Did your opportunity to participate in leadership activities influence your decision to attend or stay at Midwest College?

Certificate of Leadership Program Experience

1. Did you know about the Certificate of Leadership Program before attending Midwest College?
2. When did you hear about the Certificate of Leadership Program?
3. How did you hear about the program and from whom?
4. At what point did you add the leadership minor?
5. Please speak to why you enrolled in the Certificate of Leadership Program?
6. What was the general perception of the Certificate of Leadership Program on campus?

Concluding Question

1. Do you have anything else to share that I have not already asked you about your background?

Introduction Guide #2 (Details of Leadership Experience)

Face sheet (i.e. demographics, name of interviewee, contact information, place and time of interview, information on set-up for interview)

Certificate of Leadership Program experience

1. Describe your overall experience in the Certificate of Leadership Program?
2. Why did you participate in the program?
3. What did you hope or expect to gain from the Certificate of Leadership Program?
4. What value, if any, did the Certificate of Leadership Program have for you?
5. Did you do any activity specifically because of the program? Explain.
6. What was the most memorable experience you had as part of the Certificate of Leadership Program?
7. What activities were completed as part of your involvement with the Certificate of Leadership Program?
8. What classes were you required to complete as part of the program?
9. What do you remember from the classes you were required to complete?
10. What was specifically gained from the Certificate of Leadership Program?
 - What knowledge can you directly attribute to have been gained from your involvement in the Certificate of Leadership Program?
 - What skills can you directly attribute to have been gained from your involvement in the Certificate of Leadership Program?
 - What dispositions can you directly attribute to have been gained from your involvement in the Certificate of Leadership Program?
 - What philosophical can you directly attribute to have been gained from your involvement in the Certificate of Leadership Program?
11. What did your culminating portfolio look like?
 - How was it arranged?
 - What did you include?
 - What did you learn from it?
 - How did you feel about the reflection aspect of this process?
12. What was the greatest challenge as part of the program?
13. In what ways did the Certificate of Leadership Program meet your expectations?
14. Were your leadership needs met as part of the program? Elaborate.
15. What would you change about the program?

General Leadership Questions

1. In what other capacities not affiliated with the Certificate of Leadership Program did you learn about and practice leadership? Explain.
2. How is service affiliated with leadership?
3. What do you still need as part of your growth in leadership?

Concluding Question

1. Do you have anything else to share that I have not already asked you about your professional or personal experiences and the Certificate of Leadership Program?

Introduction Guide #3 (Reflection on the Meaning)

Face sheet (i.e. demographics, name of interviewee, contact information, place and time of interview, information on set-up for interview)

Overview of last interview... follow up questions

1. Now that you have had time to think about our last interview what else would you like to share that you were not able to or had forgotten?

General Leadership Questions

1. What comes to mind when you think about leadership?
2. What does leadership mean to you?
3. Define leadership.
4. Who are people that you would describe as leaders? Why?
5. Are leaders born, made, or both? Expand on your thoughts.
6. What is the best way to learn leadership?
7. Can anyone be a leader? Explain.
8. Are there any people who cannot be leaders? Expand on this
9. Are there traits that leaders must possess? Explain.
10. What is the role of values, morals, and ethics in leadership?
11. Was Adolf Hitler a leader?
12. How does culture play a role in leadership?
13. What is the role of religion and/or spirituality in leadership?
14. How are service and leadership connected?

Personal Leadership Questions

1. How would you describe yourself as a leader?
2. Describe your leadership style?
3. Does this change in different situations?
4. Are you a leader all of the time?
5. What do you believe is your role as a leader?
6. What characteristics do you possess which made you a leader?
7. What do you do well as a leader?
8. What is an example of where you have excelled as a leader?
9. What are areas of concentration that you need to work on as a leader?
10. Can you share an example of when you failed as a leader?
11. What lessons have you learned from leading?
12. Do you intentionally teach leadership? Explain.
13. What happens when your view of leadership differs with someone else's?
14. How transferable is leadership to a variety of situations?
15. How do you think others perceive you as a leader?
16. Do you have to be a leader? Why or why not?
17. Is leadership important to you? If so, why?
18. What challenges you the most concerning leadership?
19. What happens when people see you as being an ineffective leader?

20. How do you exercise leadership in your professional life?
21. How do you exhibit leadership in your personal life?
22. How intentional are you about leading in your personal and professional life?

Certificate of Leadership Program

1. How much of a factor was the CLP program in your development as a leader? Explain.
2. Would you be in the same place as a leader had you not completed the leadership program? Elaborate.
3. What did you learn about yourself per your involvement in the program?
4. What was specifically gained from the Certificate of Leadership Program? (these are repeat questions from Interview #2, but after additional reflection participants might remember more and/or be able to elaborate further on his/her involvement)
 - What knowledge can your directly attribute to have been gained from your involvement in the Certificate of Leadership Program?
 - What skills can your directly attribute to have been gained from your involvement in the Certificate of Leadership Program?
 - What dispositions can your directly attribute to have been gained from your involvement in the Certificate of Leadership Program?
 - What philosophical can your directly attribute to have been gained from your involvement in the Certificate of Leadership Program?
 - What beliefs can your directly attribute to have been gained from your involvement in the Certificate of Leadership Program?

Connection between Certificate of Leadership Program and Professional Experiences

1. What did you learn/gain from the Certificate of Leadership Program which has been used in your professional responsibilities?
2. Identify a specific skill, knowledge, etc. gained from the Certificate of Leadership Program which was applied to your professional life.
3. Have you intentionally tried to implement components of the Certificate of Leadership Program into your professional obligations? If so, please explain

Connection between Certificate of Leadership Program and Personal Life

1. What did you learn/gain from the Certificate of Leadership Program which has been used in your personal life?
2. Identify a specific skill, knowledge, etc. gained from the Certificate of Leadership Program which was applied to your personal life.
3. Have you intentionally tried to implement components of the Certificate of Leadership Program into your personal life? If so, please explain.

General Certificate of Leadership Program Questions

1. Speak specifically to the impact that the Certificate of Leadership Program had on your leadership beliefs?
2. Do you ever think or talk about the CLP program or refer to it or experiences associated with it?
3. How did your beliefs and/or attitude change as you progressed through the program?

4. What role did the Certificate of Leadership Program have on you as a person?
5. In hindsight, what could have been done via the CLP to better prepare you for your leadership needs within your personal and professional life? **This question will be left open ended and specific follow up questions will occur based on participant responses.
 - [Probes: logistical matters, programmatic concerns, and knowledge and skill acquisition]
6. Anything that you learned from the program that once you got into the real world it did not work?
7. What did not the program prepare you for?
8. Is the current program challenging enough?
9. Should requirements be increased? Explain your answer.
10. Should the CLP be exclusive to certain types of students? Elaborate.
11. Should the CLP be required for students?
12. What are your thoughts about a tiered CLP in which there are different tracks and different requirements for those tracks?
13. How can Midwest College help students maximize the potential of the program?

Alumni Feedback

1. What have you heard about the program since you have graduated?
2. What would you add to the program (as you know it exists)?
3. How can/should alums be affiliated with the program?
4. What role would you like to play?

Post graduation Leadership Development Questions

1. How have your ideas about leadership evolved since you graduated?
2. What precipitated any changes in your views about leadership?
3. What is your next right answer as part of leadership?

Concluding Question

1. Do you have anything else to share about leadership?

APPENDIX I
SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS, INTERPRETIVE MEANINGS, AND THEMES

<i>Ownership of Learning</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
<p>“The process was really student driven. Let's say you are doing the political science regimen which is one regimen that I certainly did while at Wartburg. You sign up and they tell you, 'You got to take this course here. You got to take one of these two courses, three of these, two of these,' that sort of thing. I think that is true of just about every other major on most college campuses, but the leadership program was surprisingly much different than that. It is really student driven in that you get to pick what components you want to form as part of your experience, part of your program and I think for a lot of students it almost gave you some opportunity or encouraged you maybe to take a class at Wartburg that you wouldn't have maybe otherwise taken.”</p>	<p>The CLP was student driven and allowed students the ability to construct their own program.</p>
<p>“I think it was a comforting experience, quite honestly, because you truly were in charge of your own education.”</p>	<p>It felt good to be in charge of your own learning.</p>
<p>“I learned it is your decision to try leadership.”</p>	<p>You decide if you want to lead.</p>
<p>“Like I totally think it was designed in this kind of loose way...just like we are going to teach you some things and some ideas and plant some things but this whole idea of leadership is kind of up to you what you are going to do with this knowledge and this opportunity and this experience. And I think that is what the leadership program did for me. If you did not get anything out of it, or you think it did not do what it was supposed to do, then I think you clearly missed the whole point.”</p>	<p>You get out what you put in.</p>
<p>“If you don't like that decision, than no matter what sort of education you have, no matter what sort of learning you receive, you are going to be at that constant place where you have been.”</p>	<p>It's a personal choice to lead and no amount of education will help if you are not passionate about what you do.</p>

<i>Ownership of Learning</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“To have Nate teaching that class was just awesome. It actually conflicted with another class that I was supposed to take and he said just come on these days, and I will fill you in on the rest of the days. I couldn’t believe anybody would do that that he was able to do that, and then to be able to take that class and to have those discussions was awesome.”	The people and the program were flexible and the requirements could be tailored to each individual.
“I liked the fact that I had ownership in designing my own education, which I really appreciate because it made it more exciting for me. It was more tailored to me and my experience. So the ownership that I had in the program was very meaningful....And it was the opportunity to take ownership and design what that looked like.”	The ability to design my own program was significant.
“I kind of made leadership into my own.”	I built my own type of leadership.
“Identifying the CLP as a minor was if not for any other reason than it was a declaration that I am striving to become a leader and the things that come from that. I mean just like I guess you would say totally on the flipside of people who are on diet, you tell everyone you are on a diet so that they don’t try to feed you cookies....It was a declaration that I am striving to be a leader and it makes you rethink what you are doing and how you are doing it and just makes you a little bit more reflective.”	Identifying leadership as a minor created a goal for myself and it let other people know that I desired to be a leader.
“They need to have...black and white, these are the things I need to check from your list. But don’t say this is the end and be all. Don’t say this is the only way you have to so it.”	There are parts that need to be prescribed, but don’t say one way is the only way.
“I felt challenged. And I liked that. It gave me purpose.”	I liked being challenged.
“The CLP is open. It is kind of open-ended a little bit – for a reason.”	The program is very open in its construction in that you can tailor it to you.
“Great leaders create their own ways. I mean I think they take all the things they have learned and people they have looked up to and they create their own leadership philosophies.”	Leaders build their own leadership.

<i>Ownership of Learning</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“I was driven to make the most of it. I think there are a number of students that obviously could go through the process and you could take the required classes. You could do the minimal amount of work, but really in the end, in that particular program, I think you are cheating yourself. For me, it was a challenge because I wanted it to be the most meaningful experience for me that it was and obviously going back on certain things you wished you could do differently.”	You can make the program as meaningful or meaningless as you want.
“I think the leadership program is as challenging as you make it.”	You make the program what it is.
“I had the opportunity to challenge the system and really kind of take it to my own level.”	I had ownership of my program and was given the freedom to push back.
“Like I totally think it was designed in this kind of loose way...just like we’re going to teach you some things and some ideas and plant some things but this whole idea of leadership is kind of up to you what you are going to do with this knowledge and this opportunity and this experience. And I think that is what the program did for me. If you didn’t get anything out of it, or you think it didn’t do what it was supposed to do, then I think you clearly missed the whole point.”	You get out what you put in.

<i>Awareness of Self</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“Well, I think it just spread things out and made me think about what is leadership and how I wanted to lead. It was additional training that lets me continue where I was at.”	Leadership helped me grow personally by the way of additional experiences.
“I remember taking the Myers Briggs test and I remember doing that and then I remember thinking like, 'Okay. Well, this is me and that's like the four traits or whatever you get.' I clearly realized in life and quickly that you change and each job, each experience, and each person you meet impacts those traits. And I mean I'm sure they are drastically different now if I would take that same Myers Briggs Test of whatever.”	My personality traits have changed as a result of new experiences.
“I would say an awareness of personal strengths.”	Awareness of personal strengths.
“We would always talk about personal leadership. I had never really done that until college and I think part of that was in the classes that I took. It was the StrengthsFinder assessment.”	I learned about me.
“It helped me understand my various strengths and it helped me understand who I really was as a person and who I would like to be. I think StrengthsFinder was a good way to start that.”	I discovered who I was, where I wanted to go, and what I wanted to do.
“It also made me realize that I had to realize my strengths.”	Awareness of personal strengths
“I think the biggest thing about doing the CLP that was so critical was just developing that self awareness and that focus on leadership.”	Learning about who I am was critical.
“To study leaders and to study leadership styles we took the StrengthsFinder assessment and I had never done anything like that. To take the book and the quiz and then to read about who you are and some of your strengths was valuable. And that is still something today I know. I know who I am and how I can use StrengthsFinder to my benefit.”	Because we learned about ourselves through personality assessments I now know who I am and that is something I carry with me today.

<i>Awareness of Self</i>	
Significant Statements	Interpretive Meaning
“The leadership certificate caused me to reframe; to really think about who I am and the best use of my skills and abilities.”	The program required me to self assess and to look honestly at how I am using my assets.
“The leadership program caused me to learn how who I am plays a role in my ability to do leadership.”	I discovered how my personality and perspectives shape who I am as a leader.
“Definitely the focus on learning about your own strengths and preferences was beneficial early on. So then you can kind of have that in the back of your mind as you are doing these different activities and then reflecting on those as part of the work you do.”	I become much more self aware of my own strengths and preferences.
“I gained a sense of self awareness and what my strengths are and what my potential is.”	I learned about myself and my strengths.
“I enjoyed being able to focus on learning what my strengths were and learning how I could best leverage my own strengths and then thinking about how I can leverage the strengths of others and empower them to be leaders.”	I learned about myself and how I could help others to become leaders.
“We did personality assessments and then charted people...to come up with grids in terms of personality assessments.”	We learned about ourselves and others.
“Learning about my personality assessment was intellectually, very powerful, because it was putting self awareness on paper and seeing where some of those things work. I think that helped me identify leadership skills.”	I gained self awareness and because of that I was able to identify how to use my personal leadership skills.
“I gained a deeper understanding what type of a leader I am.”	I was able to go deep with who I am as a leader.
“I think a lot about the knowledge I have of myself.”	I think a lot about who I am.
“I developed my personal view of leadership. It was about learning what your personal style of leadership is and using your strengths as a part of it.”	I now know what I personally believe about leadership.
“I got to learn about myself - what makes me tick, what my leadership style is and how others perceive me.”	I learned about who I am.
“I learned that if I want to achieve, if I set on my mind to achieve something that I can achieve it.”	I gained confidence in myself and learned to be goal oriented.

<i>Awareness of Self</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“I learned I can do leadership.”	I gained confidence that I could lead.
“I learned that I do lead because at the time when I was in the program I was like 'I don't ever lead, I'm not the captain.' Going through that and just really focusing on myself and really sitting down and taking a look about what do I do.”	I realized that you lead even when you are not "in the lead."
“And just kind of thinking outside the box and getting outside of my own head. I can be a leader with my personality. I learned that I do lead and it doesn't matter that I don't want to be up in front of people the whole time.”	I gained an understanding and confidence in my own leadership style.
“I had the opportunity to be able to gain confidence in leading...I think lots of people have leadership skills, but they don't have the confidence to actually step up.”	I gained confidence in my ability to lead and others did so as well.
“It broadened my horizons to wanting to be a much more well-rounded individual than just simply do one or two things very well.”	It challenged me to be a more complete person.

<i>Traditional Learning</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
<p>“It helped me learn and understand some concepts and ideas like servant leadership for instance that were part of my past whether it was growing up, and I was able to put together term and pieces with what had been going on. And I think it gave me more of the book smarts per se of putting names and faces and ideas around leadership.”</p>	<p>I came into the CLP as a servant leader, but the program allowed me to ground my ideas in the academic literature.</p>
<p>“The basic knowledge of leadership and how it works and is it is not just this concept in the air was also important.”</p>	<p>Leadership is grounded in academics.</p>
<p>“The whole balcony analogy that was used in Leadership on the Line from ID 351. It involved taking yourself away from the dance floor and seeing from the outside in and that is one of the bigger concepts I learned from the leadership classes as well.”</p>	<p>You need to separate yourself from the situation and look at from different angles.</p>
<p>“The little orange book, ‘The Servant Leader,’ I think that is what it is called. Reading that and then rereading it because it’s a short little read, really stuck with me.”</p>	<p>The books we used in class were useful.</p>
<p>“Because again, it was very interesting to read about leadership theories, but then when you go and you meet that person and you see like what they have given up or what they’re doing in their life or how they’re making a difference in their community. That is what a servant leader does.”</p>	<p>Traditional learning was valuable but seeing and interacting with those who are servant learners is so much more meaningful.</p>
<p>“That whole experience of learning for me was key, and so learning about what my leadership style is broadened my horizons.”</p>	<p>Hands-on learning allowed me to broaden my understanding of leadership.</p>
<p>“So leadership can be anything rather than just an occasional occurrence for instance when it comes up in some random class or whatever. I mean it was that kind of evolving throughout my four years here by reading different books, different discussions, different activities and things. So I think it really aided in just me being more conscious of leadership and thinking about it all the time and in how it applied to all of life rather than just the random one-time class discussion.”</p>	<p>Leadership is intentional and is everywhere.</p>

<i>Traditional Learning</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
<p>“It helped me learn and understand some concepts and ideas like servant leadership for instance that were part of my past whether it was growing up, and I was able to put together term and pieces with what had been going on. And I think it gave me more of the book smarts per se of putting names and faces and ideas around leadership.”</p>	<p>I came into the CLP as a servant leader but the program allowed me to ground my ideas in the academic literature.</p>

<i>Collaborative Learning</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
<p>“It also helped me to understand that you can learn from people who are younger than you, or are older than you, especially working with the 6th graders in the ID 351 class and through Building Communities. Teaching and understanding how they think and seeing people that are aspiring to be like you was a very, very important realization in my leadership journey as part of the Certificate of Leadership Program.”</p>	<p>You can learn from people of all ages if you allow yourself to connect with them and listen.</p>
<p>“I would say I had perhaps access to a few other students on campus that I wouldn’t have had through other education work.”</p>	<p>I had the opportunity to work with some people that I wouldn’t have had access to.</p>
<p>“It seemed like all the people that I enrolled with for the program were already born to be leaders and they had done leadership stuff and you could see that they were leaders. So just to be in that caliber of people made me realize that sometimes when you are used to being the leader, your used to being the one who makes the decisions, and you have other people who were like you - that it is best to listen.”</p>	<p>I discovered there are many qualified leaders out there and sometimes it is best to take a back seat to them.</p>
<p>“Peer learning required us to give the essay to a classmate and each week we were grouped differently. Giving your essay to different groups and having them correct it was very valuable to me because I was able to learn from them and by reading the essays I was able to understand what a class did for a certain person within their major or out of their major. I was able to see how a Biology major related leadership. If not for the peer learning we would have written all our essays, but I wouldn’t have understood what leadership is in Biology or what leadership is in Economics. So, I was able to get the perspective in that sense.”</p>	<p>I worked with my peers and through my interactions with them I learned about them and how leadership differs in various disciplines.</p>
<p>“To get around like minded people that wanted to not just be professionals when they were done with school, but they wanted to go on and a make an impact, make a difference in other people’s lives as well.”</p>	<p>I enjoyed being around people who personally and professionally wanted to reach out to others.</p>

<i>Collaborative Learning</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“In the class we shared our experiences and the words just pierced me and I began to really understand what leadership is all about.”	I learned about leadership through discussions with others.
“As part of the leadership program, I was excited to be with like-minded people and having experiences like that.”	It was beneficial to be around people like me.
“The discussions that we had as part of leadership classes; I think it was in ID 351 when I was a junior, were powerful. It was just some of the conversations that I had with this group of students, most of them were typical and were my friends. They were people I knew on campus and just some of the intellect in that room just kind of blew me away....I didn't realize how passionate they were about leadership or that you could speak so eloquently. I learned a lot about my fellow classmates and some of my friends as well. It was just that sharing of learning in some of those class periods that I think were really helpful.”	I learned a lot from my peers and they challenged my thinking and because of that I grew in my understanding of leadership.
“Talking to other people in the class so you kind of think about what they were reflecting on and then writing our own reflections about our own activity.”	Through my interactions with others I was able to better visualize on my own experiences.
“I can pull out those type of people and be like, ‘I know I'm going to talk to him if I need something done because he'll get it out to so many different people.’ So it is just interesting to see that and have the capacity to build relationships with people.”	I have the ability now to read people and figure out how to best incorporate them.
“I mean hanging out with Forest and Jeff for a week and whoever else, and we went to Chicago and we are basically doing a bunch of leadership activities with a bunch of high school students who were considering coming to Wartburg.”	Working with others was an important part of the process.
“I mean supporting and encouraging those that are following you. And then there's also a respect for the process and the networking capability that is within leadership. I mean leaders had to build a network and they have to be able to understand the greater picture and being able to know who to go to and how to get there.”	Leaders need to develop networks with other leaders and understand how to construct those networks.

<i>Collaborative Learning</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
<p>“The relationship piece and the group work component really helped me to realize how important relationships are in leadership. And I know that was present in readings, in course material such as Heifetz's “Leadership on the Line” book from ID 351. I know it talked about relationships and contacts and those kinds of things and looking at leadership in context and stuff.”</p>	<p>Relationships are fundamental to leadership.</p>
<p>“We did a lot of collaboration, working with other people and designing programs with other people. I guess prior to that it seemed like so much of my educational experience had been individual work. I opened up the text book, I studied this particular principle, then I took the exam, I read the book, I wrote the essay, and then I moved on.”</p>	<p>The collaboration and teamwork was not something that I had experienced in other settings.</p>
<p>“It’s just serving others and being their friend first and then you gain that trust and you gain that respect. Again, it instills that camaraderie which makes leadership that much easier.”</p>	<p>Teamwork is vital to leadership and developing friendships with peers helps this process.</p>
<p>“To me it means working with others and using my strengths to pull out the strengths of others and to develop their own traits and their own strengths.”</p>	<p>Leaders are responsible for bringing out the leader in others.</p>
<p>“Influence your sphere of people, whether that means a co-worker, or people that were involved with in the community, or neighbors, or what not. And to be able to influence those people in our circles towards better things and taking steps of faith and taking those steps in life.”</p>	<p>You can broaden your circle of influence by taking leaps of faith with them.</p>
<p>“I enjoyed networking and the collaboration.”</p>	<p>I liked working with others.</p>
<p>“I was surrounded by a group of upperclassman and I was pretty much the only freshman in the class. So that was a really big learning experience for me as far as working with upperclassmen in that they are really not that big and scary and that they don't see me as someone less intelligent than them.”</p>	<p>People are not as intimidating as they can seem and through collaboration great things can happen.</p>

<i>Collaborative Learning</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“It is also about helping your fellow group members with their development. Taking that step back is huge.”	Leadership is also about helping others develop as leaders.
“I thought that it was fun for me to be working with kids again because that's always something that I enjoyed. It was another venue that I would be able to think about my strengths and think about what other people had for strengths, and how we could leverage those to make it a good experience.”	I interacted with young children and thought about my strengths in a different way.
“I think that was a really unique involvement that I might not have otherwise had. I had already been involved in doing a lot of things with kids more on an individual basis, but that was so rewarding just to have a group that we were going out into the communities to work with. We had some really good relationships with some of our kids and I think that was very rewarding and just to see how we were being such good role models for the kids. I got to know them really well and enjoyed that level of collaboration.”	I enjoyed collaborating with young kids to perform service in the community.
“I remember doing a project during my time in the program where we met with a local individual in the community and interviewed him and did a group project on that.”	I had the ability to work with a variety of people from the local community.
“Asking a lot of people for feedback and through a lot of self reflection and just being really open to feedback not just asking for it, but taking the time to really hear how other people perceive you. And making efforts to act upon that feedback and just being open to those suggestions. And then just really getting involved in a lot of different types of groups and activities to see what you are good at and what you enjoy doing.”	It is necessary to engage in reflection, but also seek feedback from others.

<i>Experiential Learning</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
<p>“Just being exposed to different settings. I’ve never worked with an AIDS organization before; prior to that experience I was very naïve about a lot of things about AIDS. So there was a huge education with that. Serving down in New Orleans firsthand when Hurricane Katrina happened, I heard a lot of things, I saw a lot of things on TV and to really go and experience it firsthand was unreal. I began to understand what was going on in the community and not just through the TV or the media.”</p>	<p>Being directly apart of the process and experiencing it first hand is significant.</p>
<p>“Certainly gave me opportunities to become more involved in the community. The CLP allowed me really to identify not only with the Midwest College campus, but with the city of Watertown and to kind of have a sense of responsibility. So often students become so immersed in the entire college experience that they lose sight of the community identity that they are also part of. All be it for a very short time, those four years and through the leadership program, I was able to identify not only with Midwest College, which I think I would have been able to do anyway, but with the city of Watertown and all that city had to offer at the time.”</p>	<p>I had the opportunity to come out of my shell and work outside the confines of the institution and become immersed within the community.</p>
<p>“I learned how to connect service to community and how that has great impact [on] you as a person.”</p>	<p>Learning the connection between service and community can impact you as a person.</p>
<p>“So many students come on campus and they are so concerned with just campus life, the classes that they have to take, the social things going on campus, and the campus organizations. They fail to look beyond the campus, to the community, to the residents of that community, to the various populations in that community and start to look just beyond Midwest College, or wherever it is you go to school for, to how am I going to apply my skills after I graduate and am out in the real world.”</p>	<p>Students are shortsighted and don’t involve themselves in the local community.</p>

<i>Experiential Learning</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“The CLP allowed you to go out and to explore various areas of interests in the Watertown community and the smaller communities that surrounded Watertown.”	Leadership is community.
“Certainly, the aspect of the emphasis on community was placed upon me at Midwest through program readings that we did, through Building Communities, projects, those types of things, but certainly our tie, our link to our community and those around us.”	I learn to appreciate community through a variety of experiences such as traditional learning and experiential opportunities.
“It has been my experience that Midwest College alums are notoriously very gracious and the fact that Judge Miller agreed to do it and the fact that Dr. Stone had that connection and was able use that connection for a student. What an outstanding leadership opportunity that the program gave me, that quite honestly my political science background or training or even the pre-law program wouldn't have provided me something like that. As I recall, there were other students at the same time that had similar externship experiences and I think they were very moving experiences.”	The CLP had connections that added great value to the program.
“I gained the ability to transfer leadership and utilize a leadership principle, style, or theory and was able to put it into practice.”	I was able to take a concept such as leadership and applied it to a practical situation.
“We looked at the literature such as leadership theories, and intentionally put them into practice in various situations. I think that was huge.”	We learn to lead through becoming entrenched in traditional learning and then by putting what we learned into action.
“I think the diversity factor, sitting down with kids that are all actively involved with gangs and hearing their stories. I mean that really puts a perspective on things. I mean it just really puts life in perspective and that was the biggest thing for those service trips.”	Putting yourself in someone else's shoes puts life into perspective.
“Just getting that hands-on experience was big opportunity.”	Hands-on learning was important.
“It was a good opportunity to empower the kids and helping them to want to serve and be good role models.”	Working with kids I was able to make them feel confident about themselves.

<i>Experiential Learning</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“I think the blend of the theoretical, the intellectual understanding, and the actual experiential piece, and I think the trick is how you facilitate the critical reflection on those experiences, given the theoretical and the practical experiences.”	The integration of the theoretical and intellectual understanding coupled with the experiential side is necessary to facilitate an overall understanding and appreciation of leadership.
“Several of my most profound experiences involved getting out in the community and working with young people. I spent a significant amount of time working with elementary students, middle school students, and high school students in the community.”	Working with young adolescents in the community greatly impacted me personally and professionally.
“Service trips really drove home to me and reinforced what I learned about leadership. I remember my Seattle service trip. We worked with an AIDS prevention organization. Literally, we spent a whole day like stuffing condom kits together. And when you first sit down to do that task, you are probably like, 'What the heck? We came all the way to Seattle just to put together the condom kits and pass them out. Like why do we do it?' But when you really think about it, that was huge and the organization explained that to us how many utilize them, how that will help prevent AIDS and all that stuff.”	Leadership can be anything and even small tasks have great meaning and impact.
“For me personally it was through experience. It is through putting yourself out there and assuming roles of leadership; whether you are asked to or not.”	In order to lead one must participate in experiences.
“And so I think it put me in a place to have experiences to back up what was I was learning.”	I was able to put into practice the theory I had learned.
“I mean leadership is all about experiences. It is about having those experiences and it is all about being able to learn from other people's experiences.”	Leadership is about your experiences and the experiences of others.
“In retrospect, I was lucky with the different opportunities I was given and that faculty and community members recognized my strengths and trusted me to take leadership positions.”	I was provided experiences because the faculty and community members trusted me as a leader.

<i>Experiential Learning</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
<p>“It allowed you to do some of those types of things when it just really wasn’t there before. For example...I think the college’s honoring of Martin Luther King Day didn’t even begin until maybe my second or third year on campus, but I recall we did something for Martin Luther King Day as part of leadership program. We were certainly devoting time and education to that even before the college was recognizing it on a larger whole.”</p>	<p>Leadership is about creating and pushing the envelope.</p>
<p>“I am glad that that was present because it spurred me to really think critically about that and my experience in South Africa. That trip was huge, just learning about my experience and learning about how my experiences were different than other people, and how their leadership was different from mine.”</p>	<p>I was able to learn about and from others and that helped me to think critically about leadership.</p>
<p>“To have that opportunity to participate in an externship, for me it was a tremendous growth opportunity. I came from a family where no one was an attorney; there were no judges; there was no one that worked in the legal profession at all. So to be able to have that opportunity, and spend essentially an entire month job shadowing a sitting judge and actually do some legal research when I never had done any on my own and spending time around the courthouse doing those types of things...it gave me an experience that I otherwise would have never had.”</p>	<p>The ability to participate in opportunities not previously afforded to me was valuable.</p>
<p>“I really liked the BCP program and working with the students. I liked the whole idea of pairing two college students and then expecting them to lead a group of middle school students. Now that I look back, it seems kind of daunting, and I am really proud to say we were able to do that because that was no small order to give college students that responsibility. So BCP I think was a great program and a great learning experience as far as working with kids, but then also working in a smaller team.”</p>	<p>Building Communities afforded me the opportunity to take on a large responsibility and I was able to work with a variety of people in a successful endeavor.</p>

<i>Experiential Learning</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“The program was not about sitting there with a text outlining different theories. It is much more practical than that.”	The program was practical and allowed you to "play the game."
“I realized that leadership isn't specifically something that you learn in the class or something that you learn from something you studied or read out of a book. It is also experiential based. You could write 500 books and never ever get the experience that I did when I went to Biloxi and the people that I got to meet.”	Leadership cannot be learned or developed in a vacuum as one must be able to experience it firsthand.
“Building Communities was an experiment within the leadership environment.”	Building Communities is an experiential learning opportunity.

<i>Getting Out of the Comfort Zone</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
<p>“BCP pulled me out of my comfort zone. I’m used to working with my peers. So, when I was head girl, I was 10 years old, all my peers were 10 years old. But now, even if I’m in college, even if I was supplemental instructor, I was the senior but I taught freshman. But these are the people that are done with high school and you know we’re able to communicate. But the 6th graders, I realized I have to become a child to understand them, understand and relate with them at that level. So, it was just a back and forth transition of you know being child like with them. At that time I’m trying to think like them and after that getting back to who I was as a college person.”</p>	<p>I was forced out of comfort zone and was forced to adapt my leadership style and how to interact with young children in order to lead them.</p>
<p>“Everyone has a comfort zone, especially in leadership. I think a big part of it is getting outside that comfort zone and forcing your followers or the folks on your team to realize their potential. A lot of times that is making them get out of their comfort zone; sometimes it takes you to do that to, to make that happen.”</p>	<p>It is necessary to force leaders out of their comfort zone in order to reach their potential.</p>
<p>“It means putting me in opportunities where maybe I’m not most comfortable because I know it’s going to be a growing experience. I am going to walk away with experiences that I wouldn’t otherwise have. I think it means taking advantage of every opportunity out there and not becoming complacent in my life and with my daily routine.”</p>	<p>The program provides a mean to get to the end.</p>
<p>“It helped challenge me into doing things beyond my comfort zone and I carry that along with me.”</p>	<p>It dared me to go places that I wouldn’t normally go.</p>
<p>“I developed the desire to push myself in unfamiliar or uncomfortable situations, to reach out to do those types of things, and to give back to my community.”</p>	<p>I learned the importance of putting myself in new and different situations.</p>
<p>“I was placed outside of my comfort zone...with Building Communities and the intergenerational part.”</p>	<p>The experiences as part of the CLP made me uncomfortable.</p>

<i>Getting Out of the Comfort Zone</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“And so being able to understand and have different experiences outside of my comfort zone and also outside of what I was comfortable with as an individual.”	I was able to participate in a variety of situations I had never encountered before or made me uncomfortable.
“As far as the CLP...it put you in some fairly unfamiliar situations whether it was the service component or the analysis of a leader you might not have witnessed before. And so I think it put me in an unfamiliar place, Midwest was an unfamiliar place and it wasn't home, and so the ability to invest in something and to make it your own, make a difference and truly have an impact.”	The ability to take ownership of my learning helped me to succeed in uncomfortable situations because I made an investment in the process.
“You gotta get outside of your comfort zone a little bit in making it happen. So just taking the initiative. You get involved in various things and not being afraid to step up.”	You need to expand your horizons even if it is not something you are completely confident about.

<i>Participation in Deep Intentional Reflection</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
<p>“Discussion was vital. I mean, when we concluded a certain exercise or whether it was in a class or one of the leadership components or whatever the case was, you sat down with either your class or your professor, mentor, and just said, ‘OK, this is what happened, this is how I handled it, and what could we have done right, or different, what did we do right, what did we do wrong.’ So I think that the verbal reflection was one piece and then just journaling about different things.”</p>	<p>Class discussions and verbally reflecting was important as part of internalizing and understanding what went well, what didn’t, and ultimately how to fix it.</p>
<p>“The key in leadership is a willingness to take a look in the mirror and pointing a finger and stating ‘This isn’t going well because so and so is not doing this. It is looking at how am I contributing to how this is playing out.’ That was definitely part of the program at Midwest College for sure.”</p>	<p>You need to look at yourself and judge your own contributions and be honest about your impact.</p>
<p>“Self reflection is the biggest thing that I am always very conscious of. I take time to reflect on how I could have done something differently and what might have caused me to behave that way.”</p>	<p>One needs to take time to personally evaluate and assess himself or herself.</p>
<p>“Completing the portfolio as part of LS 450 really truly shaped where I am today. It was the opportunity to serve others and so that servant leader aspect is kind of what I really attached to as far as the portfolio. I think it is where I put my most passion into with the whole aspect of servant leadership.”</p>	<p>My ability to reflect through the portfolio is where I really came to understand the significance of servant leadership.</p>
<p>“I mean writing about what you did is a pretty powerful tool to analyze how you are doing.”</p>	<p>Writing is a powerful way to determine and reflect on how things went.</p>
<p>“I discovered there is a definite balance between reflection and action. You can sit for hours and say you did this wrong, you did that wrong but in the end you just gotta analyze. In a lot of situations it is just what you are equipped with at the particular time. So, I think too much reflection can get a little cumbersome.”</p>	<p>There is such as thing as too much reflection as at some point the reflection needs to turn into action.</p>

<i>Participation in Deep Intentional Reflection</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“It also helped me reflect on the things that I might not have thought of to be in the leadership role that I played, especially in LS 450, where it was expected on our leadership journey.”	I was exposed to things I would have missed if I hadn't reflected the way I did.
“...to pause once in a while to see where you are at as a leader, how you are shaping yourself as a leader - it is a personal decision to do so.”	You need to take time to pause and evaluate what you are doing.
“So just reflecting on the concept of respect and community and collaboration and personally reflecting on how those things are a part of my life and seeing how those things are influential.”	Looking at things such as respect and collaboration and making my own personal meaning of how I interact with those ideas.
“But what the CLP did was it made me think about leadership.”	The CLP made me intentionally think about leadership.
“And so I think reflection is a huge area...I think the ability to reflect back on what has happened and to make a solid effort in moving forward has been pretty powerful because I think you get a lot of appreciation and understanding of where you have been in order to get a better jump at where you are going.”	Through reflection a leader needs to be aware of the past as a way to inform the future.
“Seminar was about writing essays. Writing on what we did for each of the required components in the leadership minor program. Most of those experiences talked about the value of leadership.”	I was able to internalize the value of leadership by writing about it.
“The importance of reflection. I've never really been someone who took the time to reflect on a specific activity or I didn't necessarily do that. The CLP program had a lot of classes that were based on reflection and looking back on experiential learning and making those ties is not something that I have experienced in other classes or really did in just my normal day-today life.”	I had not ever reflected to the degree that I did as part of the CLP.
“I really appreciate the CLP as it challenged me to reflect and think a lot. It is just in my practice and my experience to try to be reflective. And so, I think that that being a core part of it was really important for me.”	The CLP challenged me to think about what I was doing and its meaning.

<i>Participation in Deep Intentional Reflection</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“The seminar course where we really started to reflect on those experiences that we had put together as part of the initial proposal really sticks out to me because that is when I really, really took the time to sit down and reflect on my experiences.”	LS 450 allowed me to think deeply and reflect on my experiences.
“It really forced me to take the time to reflect on what I was doing and think about what I was learning from these activities.”	I had to reflect and learn from those reflections.
“I think reflection was helpful because it helps you become more introspective and really process what was learned.”	Reflection helped me to understand what I really learned.
“It more or less caused me to reflect again upon college experiences and to think outside just that particular course and what I learned in that class. We were trying to push it all together and particularly in different disciplines.”	Reflecting allowed me to make cross-curricular connections and to collectively integrate my experiences.
“... wanting to be reflective about it and thinking about what happened, what to do, what worked, what didn't work, and then being able the next time to remember those and pull those back up and handle the situation differently.”	Reflection provided me with the opportunity to address a situation differently the next time it happened in order to make it better.
“I enjoyed the activity, and I just enjoyed the chance to write these reflections to think about the activities I was doing and how they were preparing me to be a good leader.”	Reflecting helped me become a better leader.
“I think that the portfolio writing itself was helpful to take some of the experiences that were required of CLP and put them into words and figure out what that looked like and how that helped you grow as a leader. I would say...that is not something you can learn in the classroom. I actually mean it. It's more something that you just have to work with and wrestle with as you're trying to write out a paper of what was learned.”	Only through writing your reflections can you really understand who you are as a leader.
“Being reflective was one of the things I had not really done, and I did it a lot as part of the CLP. In this process you had to sit there and analyze yourself to figure out what type of leader you were and wanted to be.”	Reflection allowed me to learn about myself and that was something I had not previously done.

<i>Participation in Deep Intentional Reflection</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“I reflected on some of the classes that I was taking.”	I reflected about what I was doing.
“It took time, which I knew going into it that it would, but it was important to think about what I learned because otherwise I was so busy and I was just going to finish my volunteer thing, finish my involvement here, finish my classroom activity and then move on to the next thing. So being able to really reflect and think about what I could have done differently and what I [did] well in those circumstances was really important to do and not something that many people put the time to do in college, which is I think was the best time to develop that self awareness.”	I took the time to reflect which helped me to understand what went well and what did not.
“So it helped me kind of flush out what those concepts mean to me instead of just idealistically knowing that this concept is something that kind of ties in with leadership. It made it more personal so I could fully understand why the leadership components are important.”	I was able to make leadership personal.

<i>Cultivation of Dispositions</i>	
Significant Statements	Interpretive Meaning
“I love connecting with students. And that was totally the need to give back.”	Building relationships provides opportunities to serve.
“Process is definitely key.”	Process is important in leadership.
“It also the idea that it is kind of both an art and a skill.”	Leadership is an art.
“Leadership happens subtly.”	Leadership isn't loud.
“I think that leadership is more like an art. It all depends on the person. I saw people in the program who went through the program, but it all depended on how they saw themselves as a leader.”	Leadership is a lifelong individual process and is an art.
“Leadership is more like a lifestyle or as a way of living.”	Leadership is a lifestyle.
“The CLP provided me with an understanding and an appreciation for the art of leadership and knowing that it truly is something you have to work at. You don't just become a leader. I mean, there are certain qualities you have that help you in that direction, but to be an effective leader you need to continue studying, you need to continue working at reflecting, summarizing, and analyzing.”	Leadership is a process and an art; it requires one to actively engage in it.
“I think a lot of it was an appreciation for the art of leadership. And that focus, and I think passion, has been directly influenced by the CLP.”	I developed an appreciation for the art of leadership and one's passion plays a role in that.
“It was an appreciation for the art of leadership...To be an effective leader, you have to be educated, you have to know what you are getting yourself into. It is not just something you can just show up and you know what to do.”	Leadership is an art, but it is not something that one can just do as it requires an education and experience.
“I mean there is not one thing as the leader that is going to make you successful. It's a whole bunch of things.”	There is no recipe for leadership.
“Leadership is something you have to build gradually over time.”	Leadership is an ongoing process.
“One of the beliefs that I came in with was that leadership was like a cookie cutter...I mean it was in a box this is how you did it, you applied this method to whatever situation.”	I use to think that leadership was a prescribed event.

<i>Cultivation of Dispositions</i>	
Significant Statements	Interpretive Meaning
“So it really drove home the fact to me, like doing anything can be considered leadership. And it’s not always this huge, big event.”	Anything can be leadership.
“I initially thought leadership was somewhat like a cookie cutter approach, but the CLP is not presented in that way.”	The CLP doesn’t create cookie cutter type leaders.
“And so the understanding that leadership is definitely a flexible, ever-changing, I guess monster, is something I’ve realized.”	Leadership is always evolving and changing.
“I think that I went into Midwest thinking that leadership was about a person and a position and left thinking that it was about a process.”	My perspective about leadership evolved over time.
“It was about working with people and that involves for me a process of unlearning my assumptions about what leadership is. This was done through critical reflection, learning through experience, through classroom content, and the integration of those things.”	Leadership needs to be relearned through critical self reflection and experiential learning and that process will open one up to new paradigms and ideas about leadership.
“I just didn’t realize that you could educate someone to be a leader. I learned that my perception at the beginning, that you have to be born to be a leader is still a value to me, leaders are born. At the same time you can educate someone and provide them with the right tools, on how to be a leader, so it is not one or the other, either one of them can work depending on who the individual is.”	I discovered that leadership can be taught.
“I think that just again it has to do with how much it opened my eyes to leadership as being much more than just authority.”	Leadership is more than just a position or title.
“And I think the biggest piece of my understanding of the concept of leadership that changed was just I had a very traditional view of a leader in my mind going into the program I thought it was just professors or just managers, anyone that has a lot of direct reports or a lot of people listening to them at any time. I thought those activities and responsibilities just effectively made them a leader.”	My idea about who can be a leader has evolved from a very traditional view to a broader perspective.
“No matter where your role is, you can be a leader in what you’re doing.”	Anyone can lead.

<i>Cultivation of Dispositions</i>	
Significant Statements	Interpretive Meaning
<p>“You know, it is a process, it requires relationships, you are working with other people. That is present in how the CLP program defines leadership even in terms of the language and rhetoric. It relies on your work with other people as opposed to looking at leadership as a position of authority. I have a lot of different perspectives on leadership in that sense. And viewing it as less of a position, more of a process; less of an authority piece and more of a consensus piece and working together with people to make them better. That makes it servant leadership.”</p>	<p>Leadership is a process and is not about a role or title; instead it is about working with others.</p>
<p>“This training, if you will, has helped me understand more of what I am doing in different situations. It helps me even if I'm not the project lead, but I'm in a different spot so I can still lead within that area and help everyone else achieve their goals as well. So no matter where I'm at...I can still lead in my own way. I don't have to be just a CEO to be a leader.”</p>	<p>You can lead from anywhere whether it is at the bottom or top, and it's necessary that people are leading regardless of where they are at.</p>
<p>“I was able to really collaborate with others and hear about what they thought made a good leader and think about factors of leadership I might not have otherwise thought about.”</p>	<p>I worked with others to redefine what made a good leader.</p>
<p>“I thought leadership was like the coach yelling and screaming or like the big dominant male, maybe that's what I thought ahead of time and I guess philosophically it changed...It is not just that.”</p>	<p>My view of what leadership is changed as part of the program.</p>
<p>“I viewed leadership as just like people that you know are leaders...CEOs or presidents of this or very public figures. So then this idea of being a servant leader was introduced and it kind of flipped that on its head. It was kind of like serving others will lead you to be a leader through that. So that was really cool, and I mean that has stuck with me today...just the whole idea of servant leadership.”</p>	<p>The program confronted my misconceptions and I moved from thinking about leadership as a position to one of servant leadership.</p>

<i>Cultivation of Dispositions</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“And a light bulb went off that leadership isn’t this thing. You don’t have to do this or that and become this high up in a company, and then you are a leader. It totally flipped that for me. So again, I totally think it ties in with my life. It is saying you can do all these things. And that is what leadership is. Like you can kind of be this behind the scenes serving. That is true leadership, right? And that totally resonates with my life and just kind of behind the scenes taking a different route.”	There is not one path to leadership but the path could be very simple.
“Knowing that even in a situation when you have maybe one person you work with or on your team, and you can be a leader in that situation. I used to think of leadership as this big grand thing and now I have totally realized like it is the small details in life and the small impacts you make on people, even if that is just one person that you sit next to at work. That is leadership.”	Leadership can be about the small details and it doesn’t have to only be about grand ideas and actions.
“You start by unlearning leadership.”	To learn leadership you must erase what you think you already know.
“And in turn there is a lot of people who might be in a follower type role, but are actually really good leaders because they are really good at influencing others and making sure that others are working for a common goods. So just kind of that flip-flop of follower-leader dynamic is something that I really grew to understand throughout the program and I am still coming to understand.”	Those who follow can be really good leaders because they can influence others.
“The biggest thing that I learned through that program was that leadership was not positional.”	Leading doesn’t require a position.
“In the program I discovered that leadership is not inherent at birth and that you can learn to do leadership.”	Leadership can be learned.
“Leadership is gradual and you don’t even realize what is happening until it actually happened.”	I gained new strengths as part of my involvement in the CLP.
“Constantly pushing for more.”	Never being satisfied.

<i>Cultivation of Dispositions</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“A desire for continuous self-improvement.”	A need for ongoing personal growth.
“For me, I have always been a natural leader and so then to see sometimes how difficult it is for people to take a leadership position gave me a whole new respect for those who do take a leadership position and who may not necessarily be comfortable in that role.”	I better understand and appreciate people leading outside of their comfort zone.
“But I do think the leadership program just made me conscious all the time and to be thinking about leadership a lot more.”	I think about leadership all of the time.
“Need for integrity and respect.”	I value the need for integrity and being respected.
“That idea of always going from good to great. I remember reading that book and I remember it. I think I read it a couple times – just that has stuck with me a lot. It’s just that general philosophy of like constantly pushing yourself to go from good to great.”	Taking it to the next level.
“I developed an attitude and a desire to change things to be something that could be better.”	I want to make things better.
“Leadership has no one right way to do it. There are so many different ways.”	No one right answer for leadership.
“I had a very narrow minded way of thinking about what makes a good leader.”	I was very traditional in my thinking about what made a good leader.
“I think when I started college, probably from the outside looking in, I probably would be considered somewhat conservative, just political views and whatnot. And I would say by the time I left, I would be considered very much liberal and open minded. I definitely think that’s attributed to leadership stuff in general.”	Leadership experiences have attributed to personal evolution.
“It’s just this simple everyday thing that you do just by using your strengths.”	Leadership is the culmination of simple acts based on ones strengths.
“Being part of the CLP and something I gained was taking an investment in my community, my circle of friends, and my family.”	I learned about the importance in investing in others and in my community.
“I think it always comes back to the word ‘community,’ realizing that the purpose of my life is larger, or any belief in life, really should be larger than just oneself.”	Leadership is much bigger than any one person or idea.

<i>Cultivation of Dispositions</i>	
Significant Statements	Interpretive Meaning
“It just made me acknowledge how important it is for me to be strong in my beliefs and how much strength I draw from it.”	My personal beliefs inform my leadership.
“The idea of giving back your time and hopefully instilling that or inspiring that to the youth so then a few years from now they will want to do the same. And it’s just that evolution like giving back and then its like, ‘Someone did that for me so I’m going to do it for them and they’re going to do it for someone.’ [That process] just continues to shape leaders and that type of thinking. So HSLP was also an awesome experience and that really stands out in my mind.”	Paying it forward and backward.
“So my perspective about leadership is going to continue to evolve and it definitely evolved as I was in the program.”	Leadership evolves.
“I think it is the idea of not thinking about leadership as such as big grand thing.”	Leadership is not a grand idea.
“I went in thinking that leadership was about position and authority and these things. And I think, in terms of perspective, I learned that it is not about that. I now view leadership as a process, partly due to my experience in the leadership program.”	Leadership is a process and is not about a position.

<i>Gained Knowledge</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“I think probably the one or two things that I can pull out would be a greater knowledge and understanding of how to interact with people of various and diverse cultures.”	I grew to understand the significance and value of working with diverse people.
“I learned profound ideas and different ways of looking at things, and it just kind of gave me an opportunity to continue with leadership.”	Leadership did not start with the CLP but it was taken to a different level.
“I used to think of leadership as a boardroom with a group of individuals in there, someone standing at the head of the table, kind of lecturing but through the program and through my experience – I see it a lot more in terms of teamwork and facilitation rather than heading up a group.”	Leadership is not about the boss but instead it is about the team.
“Leadership is an aspect of team work and it is not just someone standing at the front of her room demanding your attention and using almost a fear tactic. It is developing that teamwork within a group setting. I think that's a big concept I learned about leadership.”	Leadership is not about the 'sage on the stage' but instead the 'guide on the side' and working collaboratively.
“Also I learned that even if you are in a group you can take a step back and wear the hat of someone who is not in the group, and be truthful to how the group is performing, be truthful to what should be done to improve the group.”	Being an effective member of a group requires a leader to look at the situation from a variety of angles and perspectives from the inside and outside.
“The program shed new light on the concept of leadership, how to deal with people, understanding how people have different strengths...to see how you can also stand back and watch other people, and all that adds value.”	The program broadened my understanding of how people work and function.
“I think the biggest thing I learned is just the idea of acknowledging others' belief systems and opinions and how that relates to being a good leader.”	It is important to acknowledge the ideas, opinions, and beliefs of others.
“But with the CLP, the biggest thing was that it just made me kind of more conscious and more alert for what makes influential people influential, and what am I good at, what am I not good at.”	I become more aware of what it takes to lead and how others lead.

<i>Gained Knowledge</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“The CLP really just made me focus more on what a leader is, and should be and could be, and the aspirations of where I could go with that leadership ability. I mean I’ve always been a big proponent of intentional in your face leadership.”	I had to focus on myself and what it meant to me to be a leader and how I could lead.
“Understand the meaning of leadership.”	I figured out leadership.
“The importance of having a clear vision, to be able to work towards a common goal, and learning from your failures.”	I learned about having a clear vision, working towards a common goal, and learning from failures.
“I remember the one time we didn’t do a lot of preparation ahead of time, or we weren’t clear about what we were supposed to do when we were there. It didn’t go well and we learned from our mistake.”	We became aware that mistakes are good opportunities for growth.
“If you are not getting anywhere you need to be a little more upfront and aware that you could make a difference. I mean you have to be a little more intentional in those efforts to communicate.”	Leadership sometimes means being aggressive.
“Everybody listens when somebody talks, but not just listening to them because the person is talking. Instead, listening and offering suggestions and clarifying what the person has said is what you just heard.”	Listening is vital and necessary, but it also important to provide feedback.
“I definitely latched on to the concept of transparency and always keep in mind that it is important to be very, very open. So if there is any sort of discrepancy between individuals or difference in personalities or different leaderships styles, it is important to be open about those and really discuss them and make sure that you are all working together and being transparent.”	Transparency in necessary and leaders should ensure that they keep the lines of communication open.
“Leadership is not easy. I mean if you’re going to be a good leader, you got to work at it.”	Leadership requires hard work.
“Understanding of the importance of preparation.”	Ones needs to be prepared.
“You need to have a purpose or you are leading without direction.”	You need to have focus when leading.
“Better understanding of those around you.”	It involved learning about people around you.

<i>Gained Knowledge</i>	
Significant Statements	Interpretive Meaning
“Balance is key...I learned that you can lead people, but if you don’t also know how to follow people or to know when to follow you will be an ineffective leader.”	A leader needs to be balanced and figure out when to lead and when to lead by following.
“Mentorship was a common theme. In the introduction course and other experiences that I had in the program mentorship was huge.”	The program demonstrated the importance of mentorship.
“So that’s another thing that I’ve taken from leadership, just writing down my goals and once I do that, it’s like 'It’s on!' I’m going to make it happen. I don’t know how sometimes and I don’t know when, but it’s going to happen.”	Goals are important and articulating them makes them real.
“It made me understand the type of people I like to work with, and that is important going forward.”	I gained a better understanding of others and myself.
“It just taught me to be more tolerant and accepting of others.”	The program opened my eyes to being tolerant and accepting of others.
“A leader needs to be perceptive of their audience and if you are not than you are not going to have any credibility or respect.”	Leaders need to be aware of others.
“I learned about the importance of having a clear vision and just being able to work toward a common goal to learn from your failures and then to move on with them and how important it is to have that vision and to be innovative.”	I learned to learn from my mistakes and having a clear vision helps to prevent failure.
“People lead in all different ways depending on the project. The funny thing is you put these different people, the ones I keep remembering from LS 151 like Mahatma Gandhi, put him in Midwest King’s shoes and he might not be able to do it, and it might not have been successful, or General Patton and Midwest King....Just because they are in fact effective leaders it doesn’t mean that you just transplant what they are doing.”	Leadership is so many different things and just because someone is successful in one context doesn’t mean that they will be in another.
“I developed recognition of what true servant leadership looks like....I am constantly serving others and definitely selfless giving every day.”	I learned that I am a servant leader.

<i>Gained Knowledge</i>	
Significant Statements	Interpretive Meaning
<p>“I learned about stewardship. I think that was probably a big realization of the program because I had never really thought too much about being a servant leader. I thought there were followers and there are real leaders, but this idea of servant leadership was a really unique: a new and interesting concept to me.”</p>	<p>I learned about being a servant and followers could be leaders too.</p>
<p>“I think probably the one or two things that I can pull out would be a greater knowledge and understanding of how to interact with people of various and diverse cultures.”</p>	<p>I grew to understand the significance and value of working with diverse people.</p>

<i>Acquisition of Skills</i>	
Significant Statements	Interpretive Meaning
“I think that is what the CLP program did for me. It took my small set of leadership skills and allowed me to develop them into a larger skill set.”	I came in a leader and left a much better leader.
“I learned to think critically I mean I started to learn this idea of critical reflection.”	I learned how to reflect.
“I think that it made me be more reflective on the experiences that I had.”	The CLP made me a reflective person.
“Key skills are working with others and appreciating others for what they have to offer and not undermining people. Gained a really good foundation for working with individuals from diverse backgrounds and diverse perspectives and points of view.”	A better understanding of how to work with people that are different than I and hold different perspectives than I.
“I mean there have been plenty of times that I have been in a group studying with very diverse individuals. So the CLP just helped me be conscious of the fact that it is an inevitable part of life that you are going to be a part of a lot of different groups at any point in time. And you are going to have a lot of different loyalties as your networks grow. You just need to make sure to balance those loyalties and to be conscious of the fact that people are going to have different views than you. But you need to make sure that all get onboard for a common vision and make sure, that everyone is contributing to the group in a way in which they are comfortable. So it's very important to be conscious of the fact that people are different, but everyone has strengths and it's good that people are different than me, because if it was the 'Ava Show' than there would be a lot of complacency there....So it is very good to be a part of very diverse groups where people are contributing different types of views.”	The diversity of a group drastically impacts what can be done and a leader needs to make sure that he or she respects the differences of the group yet works to bring everyone together to accomplish the task at hand.
“We were able to apply our personal definition of leadership to this great project that we were doing with the community.”	I was able to apply who I was as a leader during a community based project.
“Put yourself in other people's situations and in their shoes.”	Looking at leadership through the eyes of someone else helps one gain a different perspective on the situation.

<i>Acquisition of Skills</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“I learned how to connect with people from different backgrounds and people who were different than me.”	I gained the ability to work with others who are different.
“The program provided the mental framework of how I needed to think through problems and provided the opportunities to practice these skills.”	The CLP provided a picture and way to think through problems.
“Management. The ability to transfer and utilize a leadership principle, style or theory and to put it into practice.”	The ability to apply competencies in order to manage people.
“I think the biggest actual skill set I would have gotten would be communication. I developed a really good communication skill set during my time in the program.”	I learned how to effectively communicate.
“I am more conscious of watching as I go through life for who I see as good leaders and who I see as poor leaders. So I just kind of always have that in the back of my mind.”	As a leader I watch to see how others handle leadership and I learn from that.
“I think that is what the CLP program did for me. It took my small set of leadership skills and allowed me to develop them into a larger skill set.”	I came in a leader and left a much better leader.
“I learned to think critically. I mean I started to learn this idea of critical reflection.”	I learned how to reflect.

<i>Servant Leadership</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“I immediately think of formal servant leadership through leadership classes and the CLP classes.”	I learned about servant leadership in the CLP.
“With that trying to help others and getting them to go to the right place. So by being a servant leader...I could help people out; I could help them better themselves. It’s really not about me; it’s really about them and I like that focus of shifting it on to some other people, and to other things to get them going. So it just kind of fits my personality, and it’s intriguing just because of my disposition.”	My personality and dispositions fit well with servant leadership.
“Servant leadership is traditional leadership upside down.”	Turn the traditional idea of leadership upside down and you have servant leadership.
“I view the idea of servant leadership as a process as it is selfless because you are looking to improve an organization or a community, a group, and specific things within those. It is not about your ego. It is not about your advancement in your career, and doing these things for you. It is not about what you get out of the experience, but instead what you give. It is about how you can contribute towards making your community or sphere of influence better.”	Leadership is about putting others before oneself and is done to make things better for others without worrying about one’s own interest and self promotion.
“The idea of servant leadership was something that I had never heard of going into Midwest College so that was a new way to think about leadership.”	I was introduced to the idea of servant leadership and this way of leading was new to me.
“That exposure [to servant leadership] was important to me because I had never thought about leadership in that way.”	I never thought about leadership as serving.
“There are people that serve others by what they do and definitely servant leaders first and they clearly display everything they do, whether it’s putting other people first, it’s going the extra mile, it’s doing a whole variety of different things, but I think the great leaders are servant leaders.”	Servant leaders are exceptional leaders.
“I think service is a huge part of leaders and what they do.”	Leaders must serve.
“Servant leadership...was key for me.”	Servant learning is a keystone.

<i>Servant Leadership</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“There is a huge aspect in my leadership of servant leadership because of the need in my mind that this is what I do.”	Servant leadership guides my view of leadership.
“The style that I lead by is serving others while forward-thinking and reflecting continually.”	I am a progressive and innovative servant leader.
“The concept of servant leadership was something that I learned about for the first time in the program.”	Servant leadership was new to me.
“So studying that concept [servant leadership] and then overall just taking the time to really study the different components of leaderships and understand the impact that those different components have.”	I was able to learn about various aspects of leadership through the lens of servant leadership.
“I just go back to the importance of how many experiences it provided me to participate in leadership and just kind of instilled in me the whole aspect of a certain leadership. I never really had a name for it. I just knew that I like to serve others. And because I like to serve others, I was given a lot of opportunities to be in leadership positions. So just being able to know that I can be leader while serving others.”	The CLP provided me with a wealth of opportunities to be a servant leader.
“True leadership is really selfless because you are talking about working with a group of people to make your situation better. So true leadership is not about what you can get out of it, it is about what you are putting in to it to make things better for the common good for everyone involved in your group. And I think those are foundational in the world now and how I choose to operate in it.”	Leadership is not about what I can get out of it but instead what can I put into it?
“I think it’s the aspect of just being an everyday leader and simple acts of kindness. So again just about being a servant leader and having a respect for your peers.”	Servant leadership is about respecting your peers and small gestures.
“Look beyond just myself and try to serve various segments of the population, particularly segments that have been under served.”	A need to be aware of the needs of others and to put those needs before my own personal needs.
“Servant leadership is a huge part of the program.”	Servant leadership is key.

<i>Servant Leadership</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
<p>“If you talk about leadership and this is something that is going to get back into the religious or spiritual standpoint as a leader. Christ is the ultimate servant leader, and we talked about that in the CLP and it is something that has really influenced my life. 'If you want to epitomize a leader why not utilize him?' That was a point that was made in one of the courses or one of the pieces I had to read. And it's something that didn't necessarily occur to me that he was a leader I should have followed. It is that sort of principle, something that looking back and looking forward is one I've definitely followed and a philosophy I have focused on.”</p>	<p>Jesus Christ is the ultimate servant leader and I have adopted this ideology while involved in the CLP.</p>
<p>“It was all about servant leadership.”</p>	<p>The CLP was servant leadership.</p>
<p>“You see, especially with people I've worked with, you see people making it about them. They are the leader; it is about 'me', it's not about you guys. Especially coaches, young coaches, it is all about 'me.' It should be more about servant leadership and once again, not focusing on yourself, but focusing on others and how they can get better.”</p>	<p>I learned that I am a part of the process and am not the process; leadership is about serving.</p>
<p>“I learned the importance as a leader of working in the community and losing that 'all about me mentality' and really having that desire to serve.”</p>	<p>It is not about me, but instead the community.</p>
<p>“The idea of servant leadership in general is like an over arching philosophy.”</p>	<p>Serving others is the grand idea.</p>
<p>“I mean, it all comes back to Jesus...And so I think that is a big one that I hadn't necessarily thought about that before the CLP.”</p>	<p>It is not about me, but instead the community.</p>
<p>“So this program kind of pushed me to move away from the horrid mentality of the 'it's all about me' mentality, and showed me that being a leader is actually being a servant and wanting to help others, and better others, and better the community. It's not just being the person in charge. It's really being a servant.”</p>	<p>It is not about me, it is larger than me.</p>

<i>Application of Leadership</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“Leadership is about bringing out the best in people – helping them discover that they have the ability and power to affect change. It’s leading by example, sharing your passions, living with integrity, and taking responsibility. Leadership is teamwork, collaboration, and commitment to a shared vision. Above all, leadership is serving others in a way that benefits the greater good.”	Leadership is working together towards a goal.
“Individual or collective action directed towards a common goal of improving individual lives and the communities in which we live, work, and play.”	Actions to accomplish a common goal for the benefit of the community.
“Leadership is the process of influencing, directing, and visualizing a future for a group of people by first listening and understanding such group of people, and ultimately working together to achieve a common goal.”	Determining a future for people based on their input and needs and working together to achieve that common goal.
“Being someone for others to look up to, follow and emulate.”	Leadership is about setting an example.
“Leadership is taking responsibility of the whole to push forward on a common goal that is helpful to and for the greater good.”	Taking responsibility for the whole to reach a goal for the common good.
“Working with a group of people to achieve goals and to make positive change in a responsible and ethical way.”	Working with people in a responsible way to achieve goals.
“The ability to mobilize people for a common cause and vision.”	Trying to accomplish a common goal.
“My definition would be inspiring and engaging other individuals to take action and giving them the tools that they would need to take action in order to better themselves and better the broader community.”	To take action in order to equip people to better their communities.
“Helping others realize their potential while guiding them towards an identified direction.”	Helping people reach their potential while helping them towards an end.
“Making decisions that you hope others would follow.”	Making choices that you hope others follow.
“I use what I gained from the program quite honestly all of the time, particularly later in life.”	I have applied what I gained in my life.
“It has worked for me in real life.”	The CLP has transferred to my personal and professional life.

<i>Application of Leadership</i>	
Significant Statements	Interpretive Meaning
“I want to make sure I highlight the importance of reflection...Just analyzing how you handle a situation where leadership was required and sitting down and kind of taking your thoughts and looking at what you did right and what you did wrong. I thought that was a real strength of the program that has definitely translated and carried over in my life and the leadership goals I have.”	Critical self reflection was important to help you evaluate and assess leadership and I continue to utilize this in my life.
“I can pull a servant leadership into my own home and being newly married...I don't think you can ever stop being a servant leader in your own home.”	I see myself a servant leader in my personal life.
“The program helped me get my first job. I remember in the interview they were like ‘Tell me about this leadership certificate. What is that?’ I remember like made a huge deal. And I don't know if it sealed the deal or not, but just to be able to have that stand out and to be able to give the whole spiel on it and why I did it and what it's all about. I mean that was huge, I think. Especially if they were interviewing a bunch of people and you know, it comes down to a couple of people, this kid has got this whole leadership stuff. I think it totally helped out.”	The CLP was instrumental in helping me acquire my first job out of college.
“I mean the first thing that came up in my interview with the job I have now was about my resume and they just had a question of what it means to have a leadership certificate or leadership minor.”	They asked me in my job interview about the CLP.
“Getting out of my comfort zone is something that I have tried to do in every profession or where I have lived. And you have to invest in where you are at and be involved in what you're doing to have any sort of effective change.”	I have intentionally tried to put myself in unfamiliar situations to grow.
“If I wrote out the list of the things I am involved in now, the leadership roles or the service roles - CLP is responsible for that.”	The CLP played a significant role in what I am doing now and where I am at.
“BC was a blast and it is similar to some of the stuff I'm doing now such as bringing people together.”	I was able to transfer experiences as part of the CLP into my personal and professional life.

<i>Application of Leadership</i>	
Significant Statements	Interpretive Meaning
<p>“I guess the ability to work simultaneously with people from varying cultures and groups. I am a labor and employment lawyer by training so one of the areas I practice on, almost exclusively, is discrimination type cases in a workplace: conflicts. Typically, we are brought in when workplace issues break down and when understanding breaks down and when people are inexperienced at working with each, accepting people from different backgrounds and trying to achieve a common goal....The experiences that the leadership process gave me, have allowed me to better appreciate perhaps where some of the conflicts and some of the motivation I see in everyday life.”</p>	<p>I gained a valuable insight into working with diverse people and groups that has helped me in my professional career.</p>
<p>“It gave me a couple of connections with kids and that was the cool part. As a teacher, my first year, two of the kids that I had interactions with, were either in the At-Risk program or with me in Saturday school and they were in my Building Communities neighborhood.”</p>	<p>I was able to develop connections and build relationships with people that have positively impacted my career path.</p>
<p>“I just go back to doing Building Communities and what kind of experience that was. I mean, we have issues with tutoring and with mentoring, and it’s just kind of going back to that experience and when you work with children, the importance of treating them as equals and not belittling or judging them. I think it’s good with kids so, again, just kind of drawing on those experiences.”</p>	<p>The experiences I had as part of Building Communities have helped me with situations I encounter as part of my profession.</p>
<p>“It makes you realize who you are as a person. So that is something I still carry today. It’s funny because we did that the other day at work and I was a step ahead of my peers because of the CLP.”</p>	<p>I figured out who I was and I use that in my current profession.</p>
<p>“The Greenleaf text is huge. I still have it on my shelf and I still look at it. If I am working at a presentation for students, I use it. I have used quotes out of it and things like that.”</p>	<p>I continue to use resources that I acquired in my leadership classes.</p>

<i>Application of Leadership</i>	
Significant Statements	Interpretive Meaning
<p>“I probably wouldn't have developed nearly as much if I haven't had that focus on diversity and that's crucial. That's really, really important, especially in my current job working with people from different cultures and all sorts of different countries. I have different communication styles. Obviously I didn't get to work with that level of diversity in the program, but I think if you work with individuals from all sorts of different majors and who wanted to lead sessions differently than I did, you learn about diversity.”</p>	<p>Because of the opportunity to work with different people I am better able to do my job.</p>
<p>“The CLP forced me to reflect on getting out of my comfort zone and forced me to become a great reflective learner. And so that ability to reflect and that ability to be a reflective learner was definitely something that I took into my profession and made me be comfortable teaching in a downtown 'inner city school,' that made me attractive to not only them, but also it plays over to what I do every day when I'm reflecting on my teaching, reflecting on my practice, reflecting on my relationships with African-American citizens, with people that do not look like me or act like me in any way.”</p>	<p>My experiences, accentuated by reflection, as part of the CLP prepared me to work in a diverse setting with diverse people.</p>
<p>“Relationship building is something that I have carried with me as a teacher. The importance of a positive relationship is so important with kids.”</p>	<p>Relationships are a fundamental component of leadership.</p>
<p>“Having really reflected on what I do well and what I don't do well as a leader was a great foundation. And so I am still very conscious of whenever I take action and take on leadership roles, what I could have done differently.”</p>	<p>I continuously assess and evaluate how I lead so I can be better next time.</p>
<p>“Leadership is a risky process that involves influencing and inspiring others.”</p>	<p>Leadership is risky and involves guiding others.</p>
<p>“The CLP had a tremendous factor in my development as a leader.”</p>	<p>The CLP was significant in my development as a leader.</p>
<p>“I don't think I would have recognized it [being a leader] if I wouldn't have taken the CLP classes.”</p>	<p>I wouldn't have realized that I was leading.</p>

<i>Application of Leadership</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“I remember being in my first job interview and they were asking me about leadership because it was on my resume. It was a very unique thing to have a minor in leadership or go through this Certificate of Leadership Program. I don’t know if that got me that job, but it definitely was talked about in that interview. I mean I remember vividly talking about it.”	My involvement in CLP was a talking point in my job interview.
“It was a meaningful experience...making me more of a well-rounded individual.”	The program made me more complete.
“I think I would been in the same place without the program; however, what I wouldn’t have would be the education of leadership, the different styles of leadership, the ways to change styles, the understanding of what my strengths are.”	I would have gotten to the same place, but I now have the foundational understanding to understand leadership.
“I think it was very crucial to my development as a leader.”	The CLP was important to my development as a leader.
“I would be in the same place, but I think because of the leadership program I am more on a fast track for my future.”	I have been fast tracked in capacity to lead.
“I think I am going to move through my career much more quickly.”	Because of the program I will progress through my field at a faster rate.
“Crucial. I wouldn’t be who I am today without the program, and I feel absolutely comfortable saying that if I had not of had that experience I wouldn’t be who I am, where I am, doing what I'm doing today....Because it caused me to ask questions that really changed how I framed the world, how I made meaning of the world.”	I would not be doing what I am and believe in what I do had it not been for my involvement in the CLP.
“So I think that it really encouraged me to have cross interdisciplinary studies where...it allowed you to certainly apply leadership on a larger level. Something very unique.”	The program allows for a variety of experiences and opportunities.
“It’s definitely a fabric of who I am. It always will be.”	The CLP is a part of me.
“I think I would have gotten there, but it might have just taken longer or I might not have believed in myself because I wasn’t reflective.”	I would have been a leader, but the CLP allowed me to get there faster and achieve higher levels.

<i>Application of Leadership</i>	
Significant Statement	Interpretive Meaning
“The program is beneficial, because it was beneficial to me.”	The program was constructive.
“Part of the reason I got hired was because I had a kind of vision and knowledge and could bring some things to developing their program.”	I secured a job in higher education because of my experiences as part of the CLP.
“The combination of Midwest's focus on the community engagement and the components of the CLP did lead to some things I might not have been able to participate or experienced if that program wouldn't have been in my life.”	I experienced things I likely would have never had the opportunity to do.
“I certainly wouldn't have been I guess you could say pursuing activities or interests in the area of leadership in the areas that I am.”	I wouldn't be doing the things I am today had it not been for my involvement in the CLP.
“I don't think I'd be there yet. I'd hoped that it would get to there eventually....I wouldn't have gotten my first job because basically my whole interview was all about leadership. I know I wouldn't have gotten hired there and there are lots of other things that would not have happened then.”	I would not be where I am today without the CLP program.
“No, I mean things would be different. Could I have gotten to the same point I am through other means, maybe but it probably would've taken me longer.”	I would have gotten to where I am, but the CLP fast tracked that process.
“The CLP has successfully made me who I am today, and I consistently look back on that.”	The CLP contributed to who I am.
“The Certificate of Leadership Program was able to help me to see so many things, because without it I would just be going about my day-to-day activities, not stopping to reflect, not stopping to think about my next step, not stopping to congratulate myself on how far I have come.”	The program made me intentional in thinking about what I was doing, where I was going, and to take the time to celebrate my successes.

**APPENDIX J
AUDIT TRAIL**

- June 2, 2011 Visited with Midwest College's Director for the Institute of Leadership Education. I expressed interest in working with him, the Institute, and alumni as a potential focus for my dissertation. The intent and parameters of the study were discussed.
- June 7, 2011 Sent Midwest College's Director for the Institute of Leadership Education a follow up email thanking him for conversing with me on June 2, 2011.
- July 11, 2011 Sent an email to Midwest College's Director for the Institute of Leadership Education confirming my interest in conducting research and indicating I was seeking approval from Midwest College's Human and Animal Research Review Committee and Iowa State University's Institutional Review Board to conduct the research.
- September 21, 2011 Emailed Midwest College's Human and Animal Research Review Committee asking if I needed their approval to conduct research with their alumni.
- September 23, 2011 Received an email from Midwest College's Human and Animal Research Review Committee indicating that due to the nature of the study and the subjects proposed I did not need their approval or consent to conduct research with alumni.

- October 7, 2011 Sent an email to Midwest College's Dean of Enrollment introducing myself, explaining my research interests, and overviewed the conversation I had with the Director for the Institute of Leadership Education. I indicated I would be sending a request for alumni information once I received approval from the Iowa State University Institutional Review Board.
- October 14, 2011 Received approval to conduct research at Midwest College from Iowa State University's Institutional Review Board.
- October 14, 2011 Sent an email to Midwest College's Dean of Enrollment Management requesting access to alum information including name, email address, phone number, and graduation year.
- October 18, 2011 Received an email from Midwest College's Dean of Enrollment Management granting my request. In addition, an attachment was provided containing the requested alumni information.
- October 19, 2011 Sent an email to Midwest College's Director for the Institute of Leadership Education asking him to identify potential participants from the list of 352 alumni provided to me by the Dean of Enrollment Management.
- October 20, 2011 Received an email back from Midwest College's Director for the Institute of Leadership Education suggesting 39 potential participants.
- November 2, 2011 Sent a letter of invitation through email to potential study participants at Midwest College.

- November 20, 2011 Identified 11 participants from the email responses and sent those respondents a confirmation email about participating in the study.
- November 22, 2011 Upon confirmation of participation I emailed the 11 participants an informed consent form and started to establish first round interview meetings.
- December 2, 2011 Held first interview with Kathy Holt. This was conducted in person. Conducted first interview with Kevin O'Brien over the phone.
- December 5, 2011 Held first interview with Lincoln Bollman over the phone.
- December 6, 2011 Held first interview with Will Joseph. This was conducted in person. Conducted first interviews with Tracy Matthew and Kennedy Berlyn over the phone.
- December 7, 2011 Held first interview with Diane Kampman. This was conducted in person.
- December 8, 2011 Held first interview with Jonathon Davis. This was conducted in person. Conducted first interview with Hugh Jorgen over the phone.
- December 13, 2011 Held second interview with Kathy Holt. This was conducted in person.
- December 14, 2011 Conducted first interview with Ava Caroline over the phone.
- December 15, 2011 Conducted second interview with Lincoln Bollman over the phone.
- December 20, 2011 Held second interview with Will Joseph. This was conducted in person. Conducted second interview with Ava Caroline over the phone.

- December 21, 2011 Held second interview with Jonathon Davis. This was conducted in person. Conducted second interviews with Kennedy Berlyn and Kevin O'Brien over the phone. Conducted first interview with Henry Smith over the phone.
- December 23, 2011 Conducted second interview with Tracy Matthew over the phone.
- December 27, 2011 Held second interview with Diane Kampman. This was conducted in person.
- December 29, 2011 Conducted second interview with Hugh Jorgen and Henry Smith over the phone.
- January 27, 2012 Sent an email to all 11 participants which included interview transcripts. I requested the transcripts be reviewed and feedback to be forwarded to me.
- February 9, 2012 Sent an email to all participants to thank them for their time, update them on the research process, to request missing demographic information, and to ask for a written response to one additional question.
- March 5, 2012 Sent an email to all participants asking for feedback in reference to the statement of identification. Participants were also informed they could identify a pseudonym to be used for their identity if they wished.

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