LEADERSHIP IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT
IN TRADITIONAL-AGED FEMALE UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE STUDENTS:
A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY

A dissertation submitted to
Kent State University College
of Education, Health, and Human Services
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Brenda L. McKenzie
May 2015
A dissertation written by

Brenda L. McKenzie

B.S., Oakland University, 1987

M.Ed., Kent State University, 1991

Ph.D., Kent State University, 2015

Approved by

________________________________________, Director, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
Susan V. Iverson

________________________________________, Member, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
Jennifer Kulics

________________________________________, Member, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
Alicia Crowe

Accepted by

________________________________________, Interim Director, School of Foundations,
Mark E. Kretovics Leadership, and Administration

________________________________________, Dean, College of Education, Health, and Human
Daniel F. Mahoney Services
The purpose of this grounded theory study was to understand the process of leadership identity development experienced by traditional-aged female undergraduate college students. The findings led to a model for leadership identity development consisting of four phases. In Phase 1: Awareness and Exploration, students viewed leadership as external to themselves instead of something to which they aspired. In Phase 2: Leader Identified, students equated leadership with a title or position and saw themselves as leaders only when they were elected to a position. In Phase 3: Leadership Differentiated, students understood that leadership could derive from any source regardless of a position, yet they continued to see themselves as leaders because of their positions. In Phase 4: Generativity, students understood their responsibility to develop others as leaders. In this phase some students also realized a need to address change, specifically with regard to societal views of women and people of color. In the early phases of the model, the female students in this study saw gender as irrelevant to them as leaders even though they recognized societal views of female leaders as weaker or less capable. In later phases they understood how being female mattered, and by Phase 4 they recognized a need to take a stand on societal issues related to gender and race. This study
provides valuable insights on the development of female student leadership identity to help leadership educators and student affairs professionals construct intentionally designed programs, yet much remains to be learned.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Undertaking an endeavor such as doctoral studies is impossible without support and encouragement from others. Although many individuals assisted me along the way, I wish to thank a number of them specifically.

Dr. Jen Kulics, thank you for being a source of positive support and motivation. Your excitement about my research topic was infectious and assured me that I was studying a topic of benefit to practitioners.

Dr. Alicia Crowe, thank you for challenging my thinking about research and curriculum from the outset of my doctoral journey. Our all-too-infrequent coffee outings helped me to remain focused and moving forward.

Dr. Susan Iverson, my “boss” and advisor, you have been a constant source of inspiration to me—challenging me to believe in myself and listening when I believed I was at the end of my rope. I value our conversations and your encouragement to attempt new things.

Judy Rittman and Michael Kavulic, thank you for serving as my peer reviewers, providing me with positive and constructive feedback. And Michael, thank you for your willingness to talk me off the ledge on more than one occasion during our doctoral journey and for making me laugh and refocus.

Peter Schiraldi, thank you for being my critical editor and one of my biggest cheerleaders. Your ability to push me when I doubted myself was much needed.
My dad Don McKenzie is no longer with us, but he is with me in my heart. I know how proud he would be of me and that he would have read every word of this dissertation.

And most importantly, thank you to my mom Dorothy McKenzie. Your support and belief in me has been a constant throughout my life. I know you are always proud of me, but I would not be the woman I am today without a lifetime of your love.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................ iv

CHAPTER
I. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................. 1
   Purpose ............................................................................................................................ 7
   Significance ..................................................................................................................... 7
   Theoretical Framework .................................................................................................. 8
   Research Design ............................................................................................................ 9
   Key Definitions .............................................................................................................. 10
   Limitations ................................................................................................................... 11
   Organization of Dissertation ......................................................................................... 12

II. LITERATURE REVIEW ................................................................................................. 13
   Introduction .................................................................................................................. 13
   Student Development .................................................................................................. 16
      Psychosocial Theories of Development ..................................................................... 16
         Erikson’s theory of identity development ............................................................... 17
         Chickering’s seven vectors of identity development .............................................. 18
   Cognitive Theories of Development ............................................................................ 19
      Perry’s model of intellectual and ethical development ............................................. 19
      Self-authorship .......................................................................................................... 21
      Gender and Identity Development ........................................................................... 22
         Josselson’s pathways to women’s identity development ...................................... 22
         Women’s ways of knowing .................................................................................... 24
         Additional studies on women’s identity development ........................................... 24
   Limitations of Student Development Applied to Female Students .......................... 26
   College Student Leadership Development .................................................................. 27
      Theories and Models ................................................................................................ 28
         Astin’s theory of student involvement ................................................................... 28
      Additional studies on leadership models/theories ................................................... 29
      Leadership Traits ...................................................................................................... 31
      Leadership Competencies ......................................................................................... 33
   Impact of Leadership Development Programs .......................................................... 34
   Leadership Development in Female College Students ................................................ 35
   Student Leadership Identity Development .................................................................. 37
      Self-Efficacy ............................................................................................................... 38
      Developmental Readiness ......................................................................................... 39
      Aspiration ................................................................................................................... 40
   Leadership Identity Development Model ................................................................... 40
   Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 42
III. METHODOLOGY ................................................................. 44
Grounded Theory ........................................................................ 45
  Rationale for Use of Constructivist Grounded Theory ................. 46
Researcher as Instrument ............................................................... 48
Participants .................................................................................. 50
  Sample Selection .................................................................. 51
  Sample Description ............................................................... 53
Pilot Study .................................................................................. 54
Data Collection ........................................................................... 55
  Individual Interviews ............................................................. 56
  Focus Group ......................................................................... 59
Data Management ........................................................................ 62
Data Analysis ............................................................................. 63
  Coding Processes .................................................................. 63
    Line-by-line coding ............................................................ 63
    Focused coding .................................................................. 64
    Theoretical coding ............................................................. 64
  Analytic Memos .................................................................... 65
Credibility and Trustworthiness .................................................... 66
Delimitations .............................................................................. 68
Conclusion .................................................................................. 69

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS .................................................. 71
Introduction ................................................................................ 71
Themes That Influenced Leadership Identity Development ......... 71
  Influences ............................................................................ 72
    Adult influences ................................................................. 72
      Mothers ........................................................................ 72
      Other family members .................................................... 74
      Teachers ........................................................................ 76
      Coaches ......................................................................... 77
    Peer influences ................................................................. 78
      Sports involvement .......................................................... 80
      Role of leadership training ............................................. 82
      Understanding leadership styles ..................................... 83
      Leadership training as skill development ......................... 84
      Impact of culture ............................................................ 85
  Meaningful Involvement ........................................................... 87
  Expanding Views of Leadership ............................................... 90
    Leadership as positional authority ..................................... 93
    Evolving definition of leader ............................................. 93
    Nonpositional leadership .................................................. 95
    Focus on others, not self .................................................. 95
V. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS .............................................................................154
(Re)Situating Self as Researcher ..................................................................................155
Discussion .....................................................................................................................156
Identity Development ....................................................................................................157
  Erikson’s identity development process ......................................................................157
  Josselson’s model of female identity development .......................................................158
  Downing and Roush’s feminist identity development model ......................................161
  Multiple identities .......................................................................................................164
Student Development ....................................................................................................165
  Intellectual and ethical development ...........................................................................165
  Women’s ways of knowing ..........................................................................................167
Self-authorship ...............................................................................................................169
College Student Leadership Development ..................................................................171
  Kouzes and Posner’s five practices of exemplary leadership ....................................174
  College women and leadership development ..............................................................177
Leadership Identity Development Model .................................................................180
Implications for Practice ..............................................................................................186
Gender Identity Development .......................................................................................186
Student Development Theory .....................................................................................190
Leadership Identity Development Model ....................................................................192
  Phase 1: Awareness and exploration .........................................................................192
  Phase 2: Leader identified ..........................................................................................193
  Phase 3: Leadership differentiated ............................................................................194
  Phase 4: Generativity ..................................................................................................195
Programming Specifically for Female Students ............................................................196
Limitations and Future Research ..................................................................................198
Conclusions ...................................................................................................................201

APPENDICES ...............................................................................................................203
APPENDIX A: RECOMMENDATION REQUEST EMAIL ..............................................204
APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT EMAIL ...........................................................................206
APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE .......................................................208
APPENDIX D: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS WITH SELECT DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ..........211
APPENDIX E: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL ..................................................215
APPENDIX F: SAMPLE RESEARCH JOURNAL ENTRIES ............................................221
APPENDIX G: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL .................................................................228
APPENDIX H: FOCUS GROUP NONATTENDEES EMAIL AND QUESTIONS ...............234
APPENDIX I: CONSENT FORM ......................................................................................238
APPENDIX J: LIST OF EMERGING CATEGORIES ..........................................................241
APPENDIX K: LIST OF THEORETICAL CODING THEMES ........................................245
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

For many colleges and universities the goal of developing students into citizen leaders is a clear priority reflected in their mission statements, which can include wording such as “attaining the knowledge and skills necessary for responsible citizenship” (Kent State University, 2014), or “a strong foundation for a lifetime of leadership” (Marietta College, 2010). One way many campus administrators attempt to address this mission is through the creation of leadership development programs that “offer a variety of elements or activities designed for the purpose of enhancing student leadership development and learning” (Eich, 2008, p. 177). These programs include one-day leadership conferences, semester-long experiences or workshop series, and multiyear initiatives. Programs and initiatives such as these, aimed at providing opportunities for students to develop skills, including solving problems and developing teams, build upon their existing traits and illuminate leadership styles. Eich (2008) found that high-quality leadership programs affect students’ ability to develop relationships within a group, broaden their leadership thinking, establish trust in themselves and others, gain self-efficacy, and learn more about themselves, among other outcomes. These types of initiatives serve a valuable purpose in educating the next generation of leaders.

Given the focus of many collegiate leadership development programs described above, much of the research in this area has focused on leadership traits, qualities, and styles as well as on the effectiveness of leadership development programs (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, & Burkhardt, 2001; Patterson, 2012; Reichard & Paik, 2011).
Students reported growth in areas such as conflict resolution, ability to plan and implement programs, and willingness to take risks (Cress et al., 2001). Researchers also examined differences in leadership by gender (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Gage, Mumma, & Fritz, 2004; Rosener, 1990), feminine and masculine characteristics of leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Pittinsky, Bacon, & Welle, 2007; Valian, 1998), and perceptions of women’s ability to lead (Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). Few of the studies examining gender and leadership, however, included college students. Whitt (1994) studied the leadership experiences of students at women’s colleges and identified implications for coeducational institutions. Haber (2011) and Haber-Curran (2013) added to the understanding of factors that influence how female students lead as well as the successes and challenges experienced by female student leaders. Although research on leadership development, traits, and styles has been conducted, few researchers have examined leadership identity development (Day & Harrison, 2007; Lord & Hall, 2005). They focused on adults, addressed leadership skill development and task expertise in relation to identity, and viewed leadership and leader development through the lens of self-concept or identity. What is missing from the research is an understanding of “the process a person experiences in developing a leadership identity” (Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006, p. 403), in particular how college students develop a leadership identity. To understand how student leaders evolve and what aspects of being themselves contribute to their leadership identity, I needed to understand how they came to identify themselves as leaders. The college years are a time when students explore who they are, experimenting with different roles and deciding what to incorporate into
their persona. Taking on leadership roles is one way students explore aspects of who they are and want to become. Understanding how students identify themselves as leaders can be beneficial to the work of leadership educators and student affairs professionals, fostering the design of initiatives that can contribute to a student’s developmental process.

To understand why studying leadership identity development in female college students is important, I examined literature on identity development, student development, and student leadership identity development. Erikson (1968), whose work on identity development is foundational, described an individual’s physical, emotional, and psychological stages of development across the lifespan. He related specific developmental tasks to each stage of development and stated that progression to the next stage occurred when the individual faced a developmental crisis (Erikson, 1990). Although this work provided insight into the development of identity—in short, how people answer the question “Who am I?”—much of this initial research was conducted on males. Females were incorporated into Erikson’s work as an afterthought, and their development was perceived as “abnormal” when it did not reflect what was consistent with their male counterparts (Maier, 1998).

To counter Erikson, Josselson (1987), whose work has been instrumental in the area of women’s identity development, focused her research on women. Her identification of four pathways to women’s identity development showed that for women, identity was based on a sense of self and a vision of their individual lives. Josselson viewed women in a holistic manner, recognized that identity formation was a process,
and wrote that “identity, as a concept, is greater than the sum of its parts” (p. 28). She also recognized the role socialization plays in female identity development.

In addition to understanding identity development, college student cognitive and psychosocial development required consideration. The assumption underlying student development theory is a developmental trajectory of increasing complexity concerned with change over time in college (Jones & Abes, 2013). Dugan (2011) stated that leadership capacity is reciprocally influenced by the manner in which an individual makes meaning of training and experience (p. 81). This meaning-making process thus has an impact on a student’s leadership identity. Among the cognitive development theorists who have examined students’ intellectual growth during college, Baxter Magolda (1998) defined self-authorship as “the ability to collect, interpret, and analyze information and reflect on one’s own beliefs in order to form judgments” (p. 143). Students must learn to figure out answers for themselves and be responsible for their own decisions. Baxter Magolda found that self-authorship is possible during the college years if the appropriate challenge and support are available, but few students actually achieve this outcome. In college, students’ sense of self (identity) is influenced by the expectations of others. In an extension of this idea, students’ leadership identity would also be impacted by the way others viewed them, knowledge of which is limited.

Psychosocial theorists examine “the important issues people face as their lives progress” (N. J. Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, p. 42). As in Erikson’s theory, each state of psychosocial development is marked by compelling questions that must be answered before a student progresses to the next stage. In work on psychosocial
development, Chickering and Reisser (1993) defined identity as “that solid sense of self, that inner feeling of mastery and ownership that . . . provides a framework for purpose and integrity” (p. 181). The differing perspectives in cognitive and psychosocial student development theory provided a link to understanding how students develop their sense of self. Knowing how students make meaning of their experiences and who they are in relation to others is important for understanding the developmental process involved in leadership identity.

In addition to individual theories of identity development and college student development, few researchers have examined leadership identity development. Day and Harrison (2007) examined the role of individual, relational, and collective identities at various levels of a leader’s experiences. Lord and Hall (2005) proposed that identity is a critical factor in developing the deeper cognitive structures needed for effective leadership. Others connected identity to insights on leadership processes, such as motivation, authenticity, and power (Lurhmann, & Eberl, 2007); knowing oneself (Ruderman & Munusamy, 2007); and the mediation effect of leadership identity on “followers’ attitudes, behavior, and performance” (van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, Cremer, & Hogg, 2005, p. 456).

Until the work of Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, and Osteen (2005), however, an understanding of the developmental processes by which college students come to identify as leaders was lacking. Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, and Osteen (2006) identified how students situate themselves in the construction of leadership over time. They found that students move from a more leadercentric view of leadership
to a more relational view. Students are impacted by experience and individuals, which then contribute to shaping their leadership identity. Students’ views of themselves as leaders engender new views of leadership, signaling their transition to the next stage (Komives et al., 2005, p. 608). Having knowledge about the way students develop a leadership identity can assist leadership educators and student affairs professionals in designing initiatives that provide students opportunities to learn and grow as leaders.

Limited research has been conducted since the initial work of Komives et al. (2005), and the more recent studies have involved both male and female participants (Lawhead, 2013; Shehane, Sturtevant, Moore, & Dooley, 2012; Wagner, 2011). Although it is important to understand how leadership identity development occurs in college students in general, understanding how this process differs for female undergraduate students is necessary, given that women and men tend to view their efficacy of leadership differently (Boatwright & Egidio, 2003). In Boatwright and Egidio’s (2003) research, women feared a negative evaluation of their ability as leaders and had strong connectedness needs. This need for connection is counter to societal views of leadership as achievement-oriented, not relationship-oriented, which could undermine a woman’s view of her ability to succeed as a leader. In addition, given that women continue to be underrepresented in leadership roles in the workforce (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Valian, 1998), understanding leadership identity development processes for female college students provides knowledge that leadership educators and student affairs professionals can use to intentionally design initiatives to help these students in coming to see themselves as leaders.
Purpose

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to understand how traditional-aged (18–22 year old) female undergraduate college students develop a leadership identity. For this study, leadership identity development was defined as the developmental processes or stages experienced by individuals that lead to self-conceptualization as a leader. The specific research question for this study was as follows: What is the process traditional-aged female undergraduate college students experience in the development of a leadership identity? Additional subquestions were used to examine how the participants’ experiences impacted their leadership identity development, how influences (people or events) in high school and college impacted their leadership identity development, how their view of leadership evolved from high school to college, and how this leadership view influenced self-identification as a leader.

Significance

Given what little is known about the leadership identity development process of college students in general and of female students in particular, my study has significance for advancing an understanding of this developmental process. Enhancing knowledge about female college students’ leadership development has implications for the work of leadership educators and student affairs professionals. Because women are underrepresented in positions of leadership in the workforce, as demonstrated by the 27% of chief executive officers who are women and the disproportionate number of female administrative leaders in fields such as human resources (72%) and educational administration (64%) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013), and because higher education
institutions aim to develop students as leaders, assisting female students in their understanding of the leadership challenges they may face after graduation is the responsibility of these institutions. Instilling a sense of self-efficacy and identity as a leader in female students while in college could motivate them to seek leadership roles in the workplace and the larger community, potentially resulting in a ripple effect of changing not only views about the capability of female leaders but also the statistics associated with women leaders in the workplace. To study gender specifically to unmask aspects of identity development that may be hidden in studies incorporating both males and females is important. Gender-specific studies are needed in order to design effective initiatives, provide appropriate developmental support for students, and address the way students come to understand socially constructed views of both leadership and gender.

Providing opportunities for female students to develop and learn how to navigate what it means to be a female leader in today’s society (or even recognizing oneself as a female leader) will help prepare them for the experiences that lie ahead.

**Theoretical Framework**

I approached this study with a constructivist worldview, seeking to make sense of the experiences of these students. This worldview allowed me to understand that people construct their own social realities and that reality is subjective. Although I may view reality in one way, others could view it differently. For example, historical events such as September 11, 2001, impacted students in my study and the way they incorporated that experience into their identities differently from my experience. In addition, the college experience for students in 2015 is much different from my experience as a college
student; thus, the way the students made sense of their experiences likely differed from
the way I would have made sense of similar experiences. Understanding that
construction of one’s social realities is subjective and differs for everyone facilitated my
making sense of the meanings the participants attached to their experiences as they
developed a leadership identity, particularly given the fact that defining leadership can be
an individual endeavor. As with constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014), my
goal was to understand the reality of the participants, and my approach involved relying
on the participants’ views and working with them to construct an emerging understanding
of the leadership identity development process. My interest in women and leadership has
been informed by my own experiences as a female leader as well as initial research
forays into feminist leadership. Acknowledgement of this mindset was critical to my
grounded theory study. I brought preconceived views and perceptions to the design, and
I needed to build pieces into the analysis process to ensure credibility and trustworthiness
in my study (see Chapter 3 for further detail).

**Research Design**

I used a grounded theory research design in this study, which allowed me to make
meaning of the participants’ experiences and to develop a model of leadership identity
development. In this methodology data collection is intentionally linked with emerging
theory development. Using a constructivist grounded theory approach, I began the study
with several specific questions but also retained the flexibility to respond to the data and
make changes to my questions throughout the process as well as to involve the
participants in contributing components of the leadership identity development model.
Key Definitions

To aid in understanding my approach in this study, definitions of two key terms are helpful. I defined *leadership identity* as the developmental processes or stages that lead to evolving views of leadership and incorporation of self as leader into an individual’s identity. *Student leader*, for the purpose of this study, was defined as an undergraduate student who had served in a role with positional authority and the ability to influence others. Roles to be considered in this definition included but were not limited to student organization officers, student positions in orientation programs, student staff in residence halls, service leaders for community service projects, or tutors. In addition, students identified as having leadership potential were individuals perceived by peers and advisors or supervisors as having the ability to fit the definition of a student leader outlined above.

Acknowledging the differences between the terms *sex* and *gender* and how I have approached them in my study is also important. Sex is biological, whereas gender refers to culturally or socially shaped views of sexual differences—in others words the masculine way a male should behave and the feminine way a female should behave (N. J. Evans et al., 2010). My own definition of *female* included individuals who were cisgender (students for whom gender identity aligns with biological sex) as well as students who were transgender (students for whom gender identity or roles do not align with biological sex) (N. J. Evans et al., 2010), thus allowing students who by sex or gender identified as female to participate in my study. I did not define *female* for the individuals who recommended students, thus leaving up to them how they chose to
identify students to recommend for participation. Although my study did not specifically address the intersection of gender and leadership identities, ignoring the influence of socially constructed views of (a) both sex and gender and (b) leadership roles in the leadership identity development of these students would have been difficult.

**Limitations**

The limitations of my study include the following: First, this study described the experiences of only female student leaders (or students with leadership potential) at a large, public institution in the Midwest. Although focused on one institution, the variety of opportunities available to these female students offered me a breadth of student experiences from which to draw. Given the aim of the study to contribute to the body of knowledge related to college student leadership identity development to aid the work of leadership educators and student affairs professionals, this breadth of opportunity could be beneficial even from just one institution.

Second, given that the participants were selected through recommendations from advisors/supervisors, the findings may not be applicable to uninvolved or less involved students. The leadership identity development process for uninvolved or less involved students is a topic for additional study but did not fit the focus of my study on the developmental process specifically for student leaders. This study was not meant to compare the leadership identity developmental process of involved as opposed to uninvolved or less involved students. In addition, I did not assume that the leadership identity development process for all female undergraduate students across other aspects
of identity (i.e., race or ethnicity, ability) would look the same. Examination of the intersection of multiple identities is also a topic for additional study.

**Organization of Dissertation**

Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature on identity development, student development theory, college student leadership development, and student leadership identity development. Chapter 3 includes a description of the methodology used to gather and analyze the data for this study. Chapter 4 provides a description of the themes that emerged from the data and an explanation of the emerging leadership identity development model. Chapter 5 concludes the paper with a discussion of my findings in relation to existing scholarship, implications for practice, limitations, and suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is divided into five sections. The introduction provides the context for this study, in particular the conceptualization of leadership over time and the lack of a single comprehensive definition of *leadership*. The second section covers psychosocial, cognitive, and female-specific aspects of student development as well as the impact that they have on developing a sense of self or identity. In the third section, an exploration of college student leadership development provides context for my study. Research on students’ leadership identity development is the focus of the fourth section with the fifth section providing an overview of one existing leadership identity development model specific to college students.

Introduction

The conceptualization of leadership has evolved over time, beginning with the suppositions underlying the great man theory of the 1800s and early 1900s: (a) that leaders were born, not made and (b) that leadership was associated with power and status (Northouse, 2010). Trait theorists (early to mid-1900s) identified specific traits necessary to be a leader and assumed leadership characteristics were inherent, not learned. The behavioral theorists of the 1950s and 1960s identified one best way to lead. Situational and contingency theorists stated that successful leaders adapted their style as appropriate for the present situation or context. Contemporary theorists working in the 1990s moved from a focus on the individual to viewing leadership as a relational and shared process. Authentic leadership “focuses on whether leadership is genuine and ‘real’” (Northouse,
A move toward transformational leadership accompanied attention “to the individual needs of the followers and offer[ed] inspiration and motivation . . . by providing meaning to their work rather than just rewards” (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006, p. 34). By the time of this writing, the conceptualization of leadership had evolved to include concepts such as ethics and spirituality, social change, globalization, and entrepreneurialism.

The lack of a set, formal, agreed-upon definition of leadership created difficulty in researching this abstract concept. With regard to exploring the definition of leadership, Northouse (2010) stated, “Although each of us intuitively knows what we mean by such words, the words have different meanings for different people” (p. 2). Dugan (2011) identified four categorical definitions of leadership: no definition, positional definition, capacity, and efficacy. The lack of a definition of leadership in the literature has obscured the theoretical framework used in those studies. Positional definitions place leadership in a positional role, reflecting a leadercentric perspective. Capacity reflects “enacted leadership beliefs, style, and approach” (Dugan, 2011, p. 61). Efficacy is associated with an internal belief in one’s capabilities to be successful at certain tasks. The following notions complicate matters: (a) power, (b) leadership and management as same or different, and (c) the masculine and feminine characteristics of leadership connecting the idea of leadership to the socialization process (Valian, 1998). Basing practice on research and theory to understand how leadership identity development occurs is difficult for leadership educators because of these confusing and conflicting positions.
Despite the confusion, the commitment at higher education institutions to develop “citizen leaders” has been ongoing (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education [CAS], 2009, p. 2) as demonstrated by the many campus leadership education programs designed to help students become leaders. To understand the impact and effectiveness of these initiatives, research regarding leaders and leadership development has been conducted in a number of fields, including business, psychology, health, and education. Much of what was learned from this research and what is mirrored in leadership education programs reflects a focus on traits and styles (Bass, 1990; Stogdill, 1974; Zaccaro, 2007). Zaccaro (2007) defined leader traits as “relatively coherent and integrated patterns of personal characteristics, reflecting a range of individual differences that foster consistent leadership effectiveness across a variety of groups and organizational situations” (p. 7). Unlike other researchers, Zaccaro argued that traits should not be considered in isolation from other aspects that influence leadership. He also examined traits in relation to situation, citing numerous studies in which researchers have examined situational and context-based leadership and positing that leadership skills are gained through experience and training in an on-going process. Although Zaccaro’s work facilitates looking at traits and leadership effectiveness from a broader perspective, it did not clarify “the process a person experiences in creating a leadership identity” (Komives et al., 2006, p. 403). Thus, the purpose of this grounded theory study was to understand how traditional-aged female undergraduate students develop a leadership identity.
Student Development

According to student development theory, which includes a description of what happens and also explains the causes of behavior (N. J. Evans et al., 2010), development is known to occur as movement through a series of sequential stages based on the resolution of trigger events, which often create dissonance, causing students to “recognize [that] old ways of interpreting and making meaning of the world are no longer adequate” (Owen, 2012, p. 18). As students resolve these trigger events, they adopt more complex ways of knowing and being, thus moving along the developmental trajectory. The use of theory in student affairs work can guide “practice in teaching and programming and [facilitate] student learning both in and out of the classroom” (N. J. Evans et al., 2010, p. 26). Knowledge of student development theory provides a foundation upon which to work as leadership educators and student affairs professionals, but they must remember that (a) each student is unique and (b) the application of theory to all students without consideration of their differences is inappropriate.

Psychosocial Theories of Development

Psychosocial theorists deal with the way students “define themselves, their relationships with others, and what to do with their lives” (N. J. Evans et al., 2010, p. 42). Development occurs in age-linked sequential stages with developmental tasks that must be resolved before moving to the next stage. Task resolution is dependent on the individual’s successful development of appropriate coping skills. Erikson (1968) observed that individuals could regress to earlier stages when placed in new and stressful situations. Thus, knowledge of psychosocial theories provides student affairs
professionals with an understanding of how students come to know themselves and issues they may face.

**Erikson’s theory of identity development.** As compelling today as it was in 1968 when Erikson published *Identity: Youth and Crisis* is the central identity question “Who am I?” (Jones & Abes, 2013). This question along with “What will I do?” serves as the starting point for understanding identity development. According to Jones and Abes (2013) “An understanding of identity is necessary if one is to understand college students and their experiences in higher education contexts” (p. 19). Adolescence, a time when young people are “primarily concerned with attempts at consolidating their social roles” (Erikson, 1980, p. 94), is an important period in the identity development process. Erikson’s Stage 5: Identity Versus Identity Diffusion is often associated with the college years, when students develop their “core sense of self, values, beliefs, and goals” (N. J. Evans et al., 2010, p. 50). Erikson (1980) claimed that ego identity occurs when adolescents successfully align their basic drives with the inner capital accrued from their experiences in each previous stage. “The sense of ego identity, then, is the accrued confidence that one’s ability to maintain inner sameness and continuity . . . [and] is matched by the sameness and continuity of one’s meaning for others” (Erikson, 1980, p. 94). The ego identity development process for adolescents leads to a “more final self-definition [and] commitments for life” (Erikson, 1980, p. 119). Notably, identity formation “neither begins nor ends with adolescence. It is a lifelong development largely unconscious to the individual and to his society” (Erikson, 1980, p. 122). Erikson also understood that development is influenced by the external environment as well as internal
dynamics. A major drawback to Erikson’s work, however, is that his focus on male development resulted in its acceptance as the “norm” against which women’s identity development was evaluated. Despite this drawback, Erikson’s theory provided a starting point for a number of psychosocial theorists who followed.

Chickering’s seven vectors of identity development. In 1969 Chickering was one of the first theorists to explain college student development specifically (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). He identified seven vectors of development that contribute to the formation of identity. Chickering used the term vector as opposed to stage because (a) developmental progression is not linear, (b) students might deal with issues from more than one vector at a time, and (c) they may reexamine issues they had previously worked through (N. J. Evans et al., 2010). Chickering’s work on development took into account its emotional, interpersonal, ethical, and intellectual aspects. Development along the vectors involved seeing parts of a whole (differentiation) and then putting the parts back together into a whole (integration) (Jones & Abes, 2013). The interpersonal competencies and intellectual, physical, and manual skills that make up the vector he called developing competence reflect the focus on traits and competencies found in much of the leadership research. With the vector they called establishing identity in the revised theory (1993), Chickering and Reisser acknowledged differences in identity development based on gender, ethnic background, and sexual orientation. In his theory, identity includes a clear self-concept, self-acceptance, and comfort with one’s role and lifestyle. This vector provides insight into the leadership identity development process that students experience.
Research on the applicability of Chickering’s theory to women has shown that “women’s development differs from men’s development, particularly regarding the importance of interpersonal relationships in fostering other aspects of development” (N. J. Evans et al., 2010, p. 73). Many women were found to develop mature interpersonal relationships prior to developing autonomy. Differences between male and female development have made theorists cautious about applying Chickering and Reisser’s theory to all students without consideration of the unique aspects of who they are.

**Cognitive Theories of Development**

Although psychosocial theories have provided an understanding of the way students develop a sense of self or identity, cognitive theorists have provided insight into the way students make meaning of their experiences. Kohlberg, Sanford, and Perry, who have influenced what is known about students’ cognitive development, rooted their theories in the work of Piaget and illuminated intellectual development during college. According to N. J. Evans et al. (2010) “these theories focus on how people think, reason, and make meaning of their experiences” (p. 43). Stages of development occur in a specific order, but the amount of time a student spends in each stage depends upon the individual. The reasoning processes students develop help to clarify the way they make decisions concerning their lives and their interactions with others. Knowledge of cognitive theories can help leadership educators and student affairs professionals design program initiatives that guide students in their meaning-making process.

**Perry’s model of intellectual and ethical development.** One of the primary cognitive structural theorists consulted by student affairs professionals, Perry (1968)
examined how students interpret and make meaning of their experiences. His theory initially places individuals at a place where they simplistically interpret the world in terms of right or wrong and ends with individuals seeking to affirm personal commitments “in a world of contingent knowledge and relative values” (p. 3). Outlining nine positions on a continuum of development, Perry used the word position instead of stage because he made no assumptions about duration in a position and proposed that a person may demonstrate a range of structures at any point in time (N. J. Evans et al., 2010, p. 85). Perry identified four fundamental points in the meaning-making process: dualism, multiplicity, relativism, and commitment. Dualism represented meaning-making viewed dichotomously (i.e., right–wrong, good–bad). In multiplicity, diverse views were honored and all opinions viewed as equally valid. Recognition that not all opinions were valid indicated a transition to relativism, in which knowledge could be contextually defined. In commitment to relativism, a shift away from cognitive development to ethical development occurred. At this position “one finds at last the elusive sense of ‘identity’ one has searched for elsewhere” (Perry as cited in N. J. Evans et al., 2010, p. 87). This cognitive developmental process has implications for understanding the process of students’ leadership identity development. Given both the lack of inclusion of women in his work and the limitation of comparing students from the 1950s and 1960s to the students of today, using Perry’s theory as the only way to understand cognitive development, would be inappropriate; however, Perry has provided student affairs professionals with a basic understanding of how students make meaning that could then inform their work (N. J. Evans et al., 2010).
**Self-authorship.** The work of Kegan (1994) and Baxter Magolda (1998) moved understanding of cognitive development into a contemporary timeframe. When individuals understand the world around them and organize their experiences, meaning making shifts from outside to inside the self (Kegan, 1994). The source of knowledge is the self, not the society surrounding the individual. Kegan (1994) defined *self-authorship* as the ability to “coordinate, integrate, act upon, or invent values, beliefs, convictions, . . . interpersonal loyalties, and intrapersonal states” (p. 185). By achieving self-authorship (or Kegan’s [1994] fourth order of consciousness), individuals define their own lives instead of being defined by their experiences and surroundings.

Baxter Magolda (1998) built upon Kegan’s work and identified developmental experiences that guide students toward self-authorship. “In essence, adult life requires the capacity for self-authorship—the ability to collect, interpret, and analyze information and reflect on one’s own beliefs in order to form judgments” (Baxter Magolda, 1998, p. 143). Her work examined development along cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal dimensions. The developmental challenge here was to “author one’s views and to act in ways congruent with those views” (p. 144). Baxter Magolda (1998) identified four dimensions of self-authorship: trusting oneself, confidence to direct one’s own life, acting on one’s own environment effectively, and maintaining one’s own identity. Baxter Magolda’s (2008) work was based on Kegan’s (1994) view that “the developmental concept of self-authorship [is] a necessary foundation for adults to meet typical expectations they face at work, home, and school” (p. 269). Her research brought an understanding of cognitive development specifically to college students. In her initial
work, however, she did not explore differences in the way males and females develop, thus perpetuating the gap in understanding cognitive development needs and processes specific to gender.

**Gender and Identity Development**

This section focuses on aspects of the development of females and addresses the limitations of applying broader theories of student development across the dimension of gender identity. Limited research has been conducted to facilitate a specific understanding of the development of women in general or of female college students in particular. Josselson (1987) was instrumental in bringing to light differences in women’s identity development, and Belenky et al., (1986) provided insight on how women made sense of their experiences.

**Josselson’s pathways to women’s identity development.** Identity formation is a process by which different life experiences and pathways lead to different identities. In contrast with Erikson’s male-oriented identity development process, Josselson (1987) conducted research to understand the identity development of females. Different from Erikson’s findings, for women “the most important developmental task . . . is the formation of identity, for it is in the realm of identity that a woman bases her sense of herself as well as her vision of the structure of her life” (Josselson, 1987, p. 3). In Josselson’s groundbreaking work, she sought to answer questions about the way a woman came to form an identity and how she determined what she most deeply wanted (p. 3). Josselson initially conducted interviews with 60 college women between the ages of 20 and 22 in the early 1970s. She then conducted follow-up interviews with 36 of the
original 60 participants 10 to 12 years later. From these studies, she identified four pathways to women’s identity development: foreclosures, identity diffusions, moratoriums, and identity achievements. Foreclosures result in identity commitments without a period of crisis, often perpetuating childhood beliefs gained without question. In identity diffusions women treat themselves as “lumps of clay available to be shaped by whatever or whoever is willing to mold them” (Josselson, 1987, p. 7) and are often adrift or lost without a clear sense of self or direction. In moratoriums women actively test their options to discover who they want to be, struggling to choose between alternatives at times. In identity achievements women forged their identity on their own terms, making their identity choice after sifting through their options. Josselson’s pathways differed from Erikson’s stage model of identity development in that women did not progress through the various pathways. Some women could stay on one pathway their entire lives, counter to Erikson’s finding that identity development occurs along a trajectory over one’s lifetime.

Josselson’s work (1987) is critical for a broader understanding of identity development because it focused on women and the way women’s identity development differed from that of the men studied by Erikson. She showed that navigating identity development differently did not make women deviant. Although this work provided a foundation for understanding women’s identity development, little research has been conducted since Josselson published in 1987. The turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s that helped shape the women in Josselson’s study—despite their apparent lack of engagement in activism during that time—provides a backdrop different from that of the twenty-first
century and raises the question of whether Josselson’s pathways still accurately reflect identity development in the women of today.

**Women’s ways of knowing.** Examining female students’ cognitive development requires studying the research conducted by Belenky et al., (1986), who aimed to understand women’s ways of knowing and found that “the development of a sense of voice, mind, and self were intricately intertwined” (p. 18). These researchers also found that the perspectives they identified may function in ways different from more traditionally perceived developmental stages. They identified five “epistemological perspectives from which women know and view the world” (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 15): silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge. Little additional research has been conducted to understand the relationship between female college students and these identified perspectives. A study by Weinstock and Bond (2000) showed a relationship between female students’ perspectives and conceptions of conflict in close friendships. Another study by Sax, Bryant, and Harper (2005) showed that women’s intellectual and personal development was facilitated by validation, support, and sense of connectedness, aspects of various perspectives identified by Belenky et al. The lack of empirical studies on the way these perspectives are relevant to female college students makes for difficult translation to practice for student affairs professionals.

**Additional studies on women’s identity development.** Additional studies on women and identity development have focused on treasured possessions (Cairns, 2001), aspects of multiple identities (Jones, 1997; Jones & Abes, 2013; Petersen, 2000), and
identity development in female adolescents (Lytle, Bakken, & Romig, 1997). “The groundbreaking work of Gilligan (1982) . . . demonstrated that female development occurs in relationships to others” (Petersen, 2000, p. 63). Petersen (2000) aimed to examine the process African American women experienced to define themselves successfully. She did so through a comparison with Caucasian women, using grounded theory methods that combined both discovery and hypothesis. This study revealed differences in the way conflict and challenges impacted identity development or maintenance. African American women maintained their identity even during times of struggle. Petersen connected this to these women’s experiences growing up and the support of their families. By contrast, Caucasian women struggled when confronted with challenges to their identity and often had to separate from their families to resolve conflicts. Although this study provided useful information on identity development across difference, it focused on women between the ages of 40 and 80, thus generally deficient in insights into identity development during the college years despite the brief discussion of aspects of higher education in the findings.

Lytle, Bakken, and Romig (1997) studied identity development in adolescence, examining for differences between males and females. They used the measure of psychosocial development based on Erikson’s eight stages, which measured the extent of resolution for each stage. Lytle et al. chose this instrument because it addressed “identity as a developmental process rather than a developmental status” (p. 177). The study showed that males continued to develop identity in an intrapersonal pattern, but females included both intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions, thus deviating from Erikson’s
(1968) original findings. The researchers acknowledged that the results may have been influenced by the socialization process boys and girls experience, placing them in gender-role stereotypes. The findings of this study, although providing some useful insights, were also skewed because of the use of an instrument based on Erikson’s theory, which placed male behavior as the norm. Aspects of the Lytle et al. and Peterson studies provided useful insight on identity development, yet a lack of knowledge regarding identity development in female college students was still problematic.

**Limitations of Student Development Applied to Female Students**

When discussing student development theories, considering whether certain theories are relevant to college women is important. Maier (1998) argued that theorists such as Erikson and Chickering conducted research focused primarily on men. Although several of these individuals went on to include women or add them to their original work at a later time, doing so tended to label women’s development as abnormal or different from the norm established by these studies initially. Chickering and Reisser (1993) reexamined Chickering’s (1969) initial work, studying the differences between males and females. The vector called *freeing interpersonal relationships* highlighted differences with regard to gender and was renamed *developing mature interpersonal relationships* and moved to a position earlier in the developmental sequence to reflect better what was learned about a female college student’s development.

Female identity development was explored by Josselson (1987) and Gilligan (1982), who incorporated “the female voice in their work by allowing women to speak for themselves” (Maier, 1998, p. 30). More recently, theorists such as Belenky et al.
(1986) and King and Kitchener (1994) examined gender differences in cognitive development (Owen, 2012). In King and Kitchener’s (1994) reflective judgment model (RJM), reflective judgments “are made to bring closure to situations that can be characterized as uncertain” (N. J. Evans et al., 2010, p. 130). The seven stages of RJM reflect a set of assumptions about knowledge that results in different strategies for solving ill-structured problems (N. J. Evans et al., 2010). Research has shown some developmental differences between men and women, but more information is needed for complete understanding of whether or not differences exist in problem-solving based on gender.

Leadership educators can use student development theories from Chickering and Reisser (1993), Gilligan (1982), or Perry (1968) as a foundation for helping students make meaning of their experiences. “Theories of student learning and development are particularly important in leadership education because they make prescriptions about how people can adopt increasingly complex ways of being, knowing, and doing—essential forms of development for leadership learning” (Owen, 2013, p. 17). Student development theory can lead to the creation of programs and initiatives that prompt student growth and development and open students to new experiences that further enhance their sense of self; however, remembering that each student is an individual is important, and a blanket application of theory to all students is inappropriate.

**College Student Leadership Development**

The challenge of identifying a common definition of leadership has sent researchers on college student leadership development in many directions. Day (2001)
stated that research has focused on leaders and leadership development. Defining these two constructs and addressing the potential confusion regarding the distinction between leader development and leadership development is important. Given that leadership can often be conceptualized as individual-focused, the traditional aspects of leader development have focused on training individuals to acquire particular skills and abilities (Day, 2001). With a shift toward viewing leadership more as a social process, leadership development consists of building and using interpersonal competence and using social systems to build commitment among members (Day, 2001; Wenger, 1988). To understand this shift, an exploration of leadership theories and models, traits and competencies, and the impact of leadership development programs is necessary.

**Theories and Models**

A number of quantitative studies included an emphasis on specific models of leadership (e.g., Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013; Komives, Wagner, & Associates, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2008; Shankman & Allen, 2008); traits (Bass, 1990; Zaccaro, 2007); styles, behaviors, or approaches (Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Posner, 2009; Thompson, 2006); and the impact of specific initiatives or experiences (Cress et al., 2001; DiPaulo, 2008; Shertzer & Schuh, 2004).

**Astin’s theory of student involvement.** Student development does not occur in isolation; thus, conditions found (or not found) in the college environment could impact student growth. According to N. J. Evans et al. (2010), intentionally designed experiences contribute to student development. An example of environmental factors came from Astin (1999), who emphasized the role of student involvement in
development and defined student involvement as “the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (p. 518). Astin proposed that the amount of learning and development that occurs for a student is proportional to the quality and quantity of the student’s involvement in the program.

Focus on achieving maximum student involvement and learning is a beneficial outcome of this theory. Involvement, which could occur in many different ways on a college campus, “implies a behavioral component” (Astin, 1999, p. 519), indicating action on the part of the student—what he or she does or how he or she behaves as opposed to what he or she thinks, a shift from cognitive theories of student development. Astin explained that involvement could take the form of fraternity or sorority membership or participation on an intercollegiate athletic team or work on a research project with a faculty member. Although not specifically addressed in Astin’s work, leadership roles are an avenue for involvement that students may pursue. Astin focused on factors that facilitate development, not the developmental processes themselves. Students needed to engage actively in their environments for growth to occur, and student affairs professionals have the responsibility to provide such opportunities.

Additional studies on leadership models and theories. In an effort to improve understanding of the influence of involvement in leadership development programs on leadership behaviors, Posner (2009) conducted a study of business students involved in a specific leadership development initiative. Students were surveyed in their first year in college and again in their senior year with the Student-Leadership Practices Inventory (S-LPI), designed to “identify specific behaviors and actions that students report using when
they are at their personal best as leaders” (Posner, 2009, p. 554). Results indicated (a) that significant increase occurred from freshman to senior year in students’ frequency of leadership behaviors, such as modeling the way and enabling others to act and (b) that both males and females engaged in these behaviors more frequently in their senior year. Although this study provided a starting point for understanding the relationship between leadership programs and behavior, it was open to criticism. One key criticism was the students’ self-reporting of their scores, potentially leading to an overestimation of behavior by participants. Although Posner found that both males and females engaged in modeling the way to act and enabling others to act, he provided no clear understanding of how this behavior may or may not have differed as a result of gender.

Shertzer and Schuh (2004) conducted a qualitative study of student perceptions of leadership and found that the industrial model of leadership as position and leadership as individual were dominant views among their participants. They also found that participants perceived leaders as possessing particular qualities and skills, such as charisma and extroversion, communication ability, and organizational skills. One unique aspect of this study—incorporating disengaged students—also emerged as a limitation in interpreting the insights of these students. Disengaged students constituted a small percentage of the sample and tended to be less motivated to participate. The findings of Posner (2009) and Shertzer and Schuh provided insights into how students perceive leadership and “best” leadership behaviors, yet neither study has improved understanding of the impact of these features in a student’s leadership identity development.
Recent student leadership models, such as the social change model of leadership (Komives et al., 2009) and the relational leadership model (Komives et al., 2013), emphasized relationships and collaboration to bring about positive social change. Components of these models reflect characteristics often associated with feminine leadership traits, such as collaboration, congruence, and common purpose (Chin, 2004). Limited empirical research has been conducted on these models, but findings from the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership have provided some support for students’ ability to develop socially conscious leadership capacities (Dugan, Bohle, Woelker, & Cooney, 2014). Because the design of numerous campus leadership programs is based on these models, further research is needed to improve understanding of what impact leadership models such as these, developed with college students in mind, could have on a student’s leadership identity development process. Theories and models of leadership provide a foundation for the development of leadership education, yet little is understood about the impact of the use of specific models on leadership identity development.

**Leadership Traits**

Numerous researchers have sought to determine the traits or competencies necessary to be a successful leader. The skills-based approach to leadership, for example, is focused on competencies such as problem-solving, social judgment, and knowledge (Northouse, 2010). The emphasis of this traditionally quantitative research has continued to be specific knowledge, skills, and the acquired and inherent abilities of an individual necessary to be a leader. Little empirical evidence has actually supported the necessity of
often-cited traits such as charisma, communication skills, and assertiveness for success as a leader.

In addition, much of the leadership literature has been focused on masculine-identified traits and their effectiveness. Fine (2009) stated, “The male ideology of leadership is visible in two crucial ways: (1) the lack of representation of women in leadership positions in the US, and (2) the construction of leadership as comprising masculine characteristics” (p. 181). Consideration of the gender of the leader became a way to assign gender to traits and styles with the implication that women and men lead in different ways, and one gender should not exhibit the leadership characteristics of the other. Lipman-Blumen (1992) provided insight into the way leadership is viewed from a masculine perspective in her work on connective leadership, asserting that the traditional American concept of leadership has been “dominated by behaviors focused on task mastery, competition, and power” (p. 185). This “direct achieving style [devalued the] relational achieving style” (Lipman-Blumen, 1992, p. 185), which focused on collaboration, caring, and working together to accomplish objectives. The relational style has been typically associated with female roles and perceived as weak. This gendering of leadership traits and skills has led to the perception that women cannot be effective leaders—or at the very least cannot be as “good” at leading as men. Findings from studies such as Lipman-Blumen’s have provided insight into the way female students may perceive their abilities to be an effective leader based on socially assigned traits, perhaps directly impacting their leadership identity development.
Leadership Competencies

Leadership education has undergone a recent shift in focus toward leadership competencies, moving beyond an examination of specific traits. Numerous definitions of leadership competencies have been proposed, but a common component (similar to traits) is the identification of the key knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to be a successful leader (Conger & Ready, 2004; Hollenbeck, McCall, & Silzer, 2006; Seemiller & Murray, 2013). Seemiller and Murray (2013) defined leadership competency, specifically related to work with college students, as “knowledge, value, ability (skill or motivation), and behavior that lead to the outcome of effective leadership” (p. 35). They argued that competencies, different from inherent traits, can be learned and developed. Examples of these competencies include oral communication, evaluation, and decision making. Because of the relative newness of student leadership competencies, no current empirical evidence of the influence of these competencies on the efficacy of leadership or on students’ leadership identity development exists. Several limitations of the use of leadership competency models have been identified, however. Competencies can imply a list of traits and abilities to choose from and may disallow the changing needs of situational issues (Bolden & Gosling, 2006). In addition, those who apply or use leadership competencies must consider the challenges women or students of color may face (McKenzie, 2014). Eagly and Carli (2007) stated, “Women are held to a higher standard of leadership competency than men” (p. 110), and competence may not have the same meaning for men and women.
In my study knowledge of research on leadership traits and competencies was crucial for understanding ways in which students developed a leadership identity. Students’ perceptions of traits and competencies necessary to be leaders had a direct bearing on how they viewed themselves as leaders and whether they could even identify themselves as a leader if they did not possess the “right” skills.

**Impact of Leadership Development Programs**

Although people have defined *leadership* in many different ways, the concept still resonates as a desired outcome for students at many institutions of higher education (Astin & Astin, 2000). As noted above, the mission statements of numerous institutions now include developing students as leaders and responsible, civic-minded individuals in their mission statements. Studying the developmental impact of leadership programs has been challenging because of the various influences on students’ definitions of *leadership* and their perceptions of themselves as leaders. Much of what has been studied has focused on the students themselves—what characteristics they need to be successful, how involvement contributes to their moral and cognitive development, and their self-efficacy as it relates to leadership ability (Cress et al., 2001; Denzine, 1999; Shertzer & Schuh, 2004). Cress et al. (2001) found that students involved in leadership training can increase their skills and knowledge. Their results also supported students’ increased confidence, cooperative abilities, and ethical views of leadership (Cress et al., 2001). Few researchers have conducted studies to understand true impact of leadership training in general, and virtually none have examined whether participation in leadership training has an impact on leadership identity development.
Leadership Development in Female College Students

Although the amount of research pertaining to college student leadership development has increased, much of this primarily quantitative work has dealt with males and females in the same study or focused specifically on men (Arminio et al., 2000; DiPaolo, 2008; Harper & Quaye, 2007), and researchers have typically addressed leadership development from a traditional view: white, male, positional leadership. Studies have been conducted with women in business settings, focusing on specific skills (self-reported) or others’ perceptions of women as leaders (Roy, Weibust, & Miller, 2009; Valian, 1998) but not on the process of leadership identity development. Other studies have shown that women’s leadership styles are related to more contemporary leadership principles, such as collaboration, social responsibility, and relationships (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Helgesen, 1990). Little research, however, has been conducted specifically about female college students and their leadership development.

A few significant studies have been conducted specifically on women or girls. Hoyt and Kennedy’s (2008) qualitative study on the leadership identity development of adolescent girls was designed to examine the influence of participation in a particular youth leadership program for females. Research has shown adolescence to be a time when girls’ self-identity is formed by societal constructs, often resulting in the silencing of their voices (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008). Results of this interview-based study showed a positive impact of participation in the program on the girls’ self-identity as leaders and provided an understanding of the diverse ways leadership can be constructed. The importance of seeing diverse models of female leadership and of publicly acknowledging
how some social issues challenge female leaders were key to identifying development in this study. The work of Hoyt and Kennedy has provided an initial understanding of how precollege experiences impact the leadership identity development of female college students.

Whitt (1994) was one of the first to research college women specifically. Her research, which involved individual and group interviews, focused on lessons to be learned from the leadership experiences and opportunities at women’s colleges. Her findings highlighted (a) a consensus-building leadership style in which everyone is valued equally and (b) a realization on the part of students involved in this qualitative study of the need to give back to the institution that provided them with opportunities. These female college students learned to lead from role models and through participation in intentionally designed programs. Whitt identified four environmental factors as key to female college students’ leadership development: (a) high expectations of student achievement, (b) female leader role models, (c) numerous opportunities to develop leadership skills, and (d) institutional missions focused on the education and development of women. This research provided useful information to assist leadership educators in the design of intentional opportunities for female college students. Questions raised by this study for leadership educators to consider include the following: “What opportunities for leadership are available, and to what extent do women avail themselves of these opportunities?” and “If women do not take advantage of the opportunities, why not?” (Whitt, 1994, p. 206). The drawback to this study was that it was conducted at women’s
colleges, where the impact of the mission was more direct than at a coeducational institution, where gender stereotypes tend to be reinforced.

Haber (2011) and Haber-Curran (2013) built upon Whitt’s (1994) findings to enhance understanding of the experiences of female college student leaders. These qualitative studies by Haber and Haber-Curran, using a sample of four student leaders, provided additional insight into the way college women lead as well as the successes and challenges they face as leaders. Themes identified include (a) leadership approaches (e.g., relationship versus task-oriented behavior, organization and environmental context, and messages from the past) and (b) perceptions about gender (Haber, 2011). The female college student leaders’ successes centered on feelings of accomplishment in enhancing the organization and helping develop group members. Challenges related to balancing relationship and task behaviors and balancing the role of leader and friend (Haber-Curran, 2013). These results resembled research findings about women in the workforce, particularly balancing task and relationship behaviors and perceptions regarding gender roles and leadership, reinforcing the need for leadership educators to prepare female students better for their experiences after college. These studies provide useful information on the types of experiences that enhance female students’ success as leaders, but the authors did not link their findings to female students’ leadership identity development.

**Student Leadership Identity Development**

Although research on college student leadership development provides useful information regarding necessary leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities, only a limited
understanding of the impact of college student leadership identity development has been the result. This section discusses the impact of self-efficacy, developmental readiness, and aspiration on students’ leadership identity development.

Self-Efficacy

Denzine (1999) and Pearlmutter (1999) examined student self-efficacy related to leadership development. Denzine stated, “Efficacy theory focuses on both observable behaviors and underlying cognitive processes” (p. 1). Self-efficacy was defined for the purpose of Denzine’s study as “the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes” (Bandura, 1977, p. 79). Belief in self influenced whether or not an individual would even try to attempt a leadership role, and the level of efficacy determined how much effort a person would expend and how long he or she would persist in the face of obstacles. Helping students become aware of their own levels of efficacy is consistent with Astin’s (1999) theory of involvement described above. The more students believe in themselves, the more likely they are to become involved and engaged. Although Denzine did not make a direct connection, level of self-efficacy could imply an impact on students’ leadership identity development.

Pearlmutter’s work connected Astin’s theory of involvement with Bandura’s (1977) four sources of self-efficacy and identified specific actions leadership educators could take to foster the self-efficacy of students. For example, in order to enhance students’ skills in verbal persuasion, a source of self-efficacy, leadership educators could “give consistent, clear, and specific feedback to students, and encourage systems of peer feedback” (Pearlmutter, 1999, p. 7). In addition, Pearlmutter found that 80% of participants had
developed leadership skills through participation in high school activities. “This finding supports the leadership identity development model [Komives et al., 2006], which suggests that leadership development occurs across a lifetime with early childhood experiences contributing in significant ways to individuals’ understandings of leadership as they enter college” (Pearlmutter, 1999, p. 9). That self-efficacy could play an extensive role in leadership identity development supports the need for further study.

**Developmental Readiness**

Students’ developmental readiness must be considered before leadership educators design experiences that enhance students’ self-efficacy. Avolio and Hannah (2008) defined *developmental readiness* as having a positive ability, orientation, and openness to develop as a leader. The constructs of developmental readiness include learning goal orientation, efficacy, self-concept clarity, metacognitive ability, and self-complexity. Avolio and Hannah stated, “Leaders with higher levels of developmental readiness in the right context will be better able to reflect upon and make meaning out of events, challenges, and/or opportunities that can stimulate and accelerate positive leader development” (p. 332). The way students interpreted their experiences depends on their readiness to be open to and make meaning from these events. Noting that experiences can both contribute to and restrict personal growth is important (Avolio & Hannah, 2008). Trigger events, experiences that create a state of disequilibrium possibly resulting in a change in an individuals’ self-construct, are critical to moving students to the next level of leader development. Developmental readiness can contribute to students’ ability to progress through the levels of leadership identity development.
Limited research has been conducted on developmental readiness in relation to college student leadership development and education. The developmental readiness of a student must be understood in relation to his or her location in a leadership identity development model.

**Aspiration**

Aspiration to leadership must also be considered in relation to developmental readiness and leadership identity development. Boatwright and Egidio (2003) found a positive correlation between connectedness needs and college women’s aspirations to leadership. This finding is consistent with research about the relationship between women and consensus-building as well as relational styles of leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Whitt, 1994). Boatwright and Egidio also found that women who considered themselves fitting into more traditional female gender stereotypes were less likely to report aspirations of leadership. What is unclear from this study is the specific impact of aspiration on leadership identity development. The literature on developmental readiness, self-efficacy, and aspiration has laid a foundation for understanding students’ leadership identity development, but more research is needed. How these aspects impacted, directly or indirectly, a students’ leadership identity development is unclear and requires further exploration.

**Leadership Identity Development Model**

Given what is understood about the constructs of identity development and college student leadership development, the question of what is known about leadership identity development remains. Limited research has been conducted on leadership
identity development (Avolio & Hannah, 2008; Boatwright & Egidio, 2003; Denzine, 1999) and even less on the leadership identity development process of college students. One instrumental grounded theory study, conducted by Komives et al. (2005), resulted in a six-stage leadership identity development (LID) model. This study of 13 diverse students showed that the students moved from a leadercentric view of leadership to one in which leadership was viewed as a relational process. The researchers also explored (a) influences that impact student development, including adults, peers, and meaningful involvement that help clarify personal values and interests and (b) reflective learning, for example, journaling, which helps students uncover their passions, integrity, and commitment to continued learning (Komives et al., 2005). They found that differences in the impact of influences on students varied depending on the students’ stage of leadership identity development.

The six stages identified in the leadership identity development model identified by Komives et al. (2005) were as follows: In Stage 1: Awareness individuals understand that leaders exist “out there.” In Stage 2: Exploration/Engagement they experience initial involvement but typically not in a positional role. In Stage 3: Leader Identified individuals realize that groups are made up of leaders and followers and believe that leaders do leadership. In Stage 4: Leadership Differentiated students realized that anyone in a group could “do leadership” and saw leadership as a process. In Stage 5: Generativity, students committed to groups that sustained them and connected with their values. Students in this stage also accepted responsibility for developing leadership in others, becoming mentors for younger members. In Stage 6: Integration/Synthesis
leadership became a part of students’ everyday processes and a part of their self-identity. Stages 1 and 2 were found typically to occur before college, but Stages 3 through 6 could occur during the college experience and beyond. Stages 5 and 6 were achieved by very few of the study participants during their college years.

Findings from this research by Komives et al. (2005) (a) connected to aspects of students’ psychosocial development and (b) focused on establishing healthy relationships and a confident sense of self. A limitation of their study was that the students selected to participate exhibited a relational approach to leadership. Having this propensity may have influenced their answers to the interview questions and may have placed them in different developmental spaces than students with a more leadercentric approach to leadership. In addition, the small number of participants from one specific campus caused difficulty in applying the LID model to specific populations of students or in applying the results to students at other campuses. Since the initial study, additional LID model research has focused on first-year students (Shehane et al., 2012), on the role of high school experiences (Komives & Johnson, 2009), on students involved in fraternities and sororities (Lawhead, 2013), and on early- to mid-career professional women (Gonda, 2007). What has not been examined is the role of gender in leadership identity development, specifically in female college students.

**Conclusion**

As shown in this literature review, identity development, student development, and leadership development have been extensively explored, but few researchers have investigated the processes by which college students, in particular female students,
develop a leadership identity. The studies discussed here have provided background knowledge on identity development and college student leadership development as well as an identification of gaps in the current understanding of leadership identity development processes. Haber (2011), Haber-Curran (2013), and Whitt (1994) provided concepts related to gender to consider with my participants. The study by Komives et al. (2005) provided an initial view of how students may develop a leadership identity, and their methodology provided a springboard for my study. My research deviates in my desire to understand the leadership identity development process specifically for traditional-aged female undergraduate college students, addressing a gap in the existing literature. Understanding this developmental process provides a foundation for leadership educators and student affairs professionals to design intentional initiatives to facilitate female students’ leadership development. The next chapter contains the methodology used in my study.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Leadership development is an oft-studied topic with much research focused on traits, styles, perceptions, and program effectiveness; however, an understanding of the experiential process of developing a leadership identity is lacking (Komives et al., 2006). In this study I sought to understand the processes by which traditional-aged (18–22 year old) female undergraduate college students develop a leadership identity. In addition, I sought to understand what experiences and influences (people or events) students encounter throughout high school and college that impact their leadership identity development and how students’ evolving views of leadership influence their self-identification as a leader. Findings from my study can help inform the future work of leadership educators and student affairs professionals as they design more intentional initiatives that meet students where they are developmentally and trigger their movement along a developmental path.

To understand fully the experiences of the participants and to gather rich data, I used a qualitative research approach. The inductive and deductive processes applied by qualitative researchers typically allow for more comprehensive and deeper data than can be gathered in quantitative research. The inductive process of qualitative research offered space for a back-and-forth among the students, the data, and the emerging themes, thus allowing for the coconstruction of knowledge. This interactive, bottom-up process helped me organize my data into abstract concepts and themes (Charmaz, 2014). Once themes were developed, the deductive process allowed me to return to the data to
identify evidence to support the theme or to identity the need for additional information (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative researchers are expected to reflect upon their roles in the research as well as upon the understanding, bias, and experience they bring to studies that may influence interpretation of the data. Finally, the qualitative research process is recursive, allowing changes to be made in various phases of the research as relevant data emerge. Given (a) my research objective to understand a developmental process and (b) the importance of engaging the participants in constructing an understanding of the emerging themes, a constructivist grounded theory methodology was appropriate for my study.

**Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory was initially developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s in a study that aimed at understanding the process of dying. They viewed grounded theory as “a general methodology, a way of thinking about and conceptualizing data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 275, italics in original). Glaser later defined grounded theory as “a general methodology of analysis linked with data collection that uses a systematically applied set of methods to generate an inductive theory about a substantive area” (Glaser as cited in G. Evans, 2013, p. 37). Over time, Glaser remained true to the original constructs of grounded theory, with explicit methods of codifying data and researcher as a “blank slate” (having no preconceived notions as one enters the research). Strauss moved to a symbolic interactionist approach to grounded theory, assuming people can and do think about their actions and recognizing that researchers cannot completely separate themselves from the study. More recently, Charmaz (2006), deploying a
constructivist approach, moved grounded theory in new directions. The researcher understands that in constructivist grounded theory the participants construct their life experience: They do not have it imposed upon them by the study (G. Evans, 2013). This also means that researchers assume that social reality is constructed and thus need to consider their position, privilege, and perspective as they analyze and interpret the data. A necessary component of constructivist grounded theory is to acknowledge subjectivity and researchers’ involvement in the construction and interpretation of data. As opposed to Glaser’s view that researchers begin with a desire to learn more about an area but enter the research with no preconceived questions, the constructivist approach begins with specific questions about an area to be studied. In addition, the constructivist approach is flexible, allowing the researcher to respond to the data, adjusting questions as the study progresses.

**Rationale for Use of Constructivist Grounded Theory**

To explore the experiences of the students in my study as a way to understand their leadership identity development process, I employed Charmaz’s (2006) constructivist grounded theory method. In learning the students’ stories, I found that their voices were important in the construction of the emerging model as well. As a result, I followed a process of working with the participants to make sense of their insights and experiences so we could mutually construct an initial understanding of an emerging model of leadership identity development. This approach allowed me to “take into account how the researcher and the research participants’ standpoints and positions affect [their] interpretations” (Charmaz, 2011, p. 169). This iterative process provided
me the opportunity to clarify points as well as to revisit my subjective interpretation of the data based on my worldview that may have been in conflict with the students’ experiences. As my initial individual interviews progressed and I reviewed the transcripts, I found that the wording of several questions required revision to yield a deeper understanding of leadership identity development. The notion that being female matters evolved to connect the students’ experiences more specifically with their socially constructed views on gender and leadership, and a question regarding early views of leadership was adjusted to focus the students on when they first “saw” leadership enacted by others, not when they were first a leader. In addition, constructivist grounded theory allowed me to reexamine with the participants key emerging categories and points that needed clarification after I had conducted individual interviews. The reexamination occurred through additional questions I posed when sending the students their transcripts for member checking and when conducting a focus group with the students to discuss and order the categories that had emerged from the data as well as to clarify sense making associated with the concept of women as caring leaders.

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to develop a leadership identity development model from the data. Glaser and Strauss (1967) initially defined grounded theory as the development of theory that emerges from the data. Charmaz (2006) defined grounded theory methodology as consisting of “systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves” (p. 2). With little known about the leadership identity development process of college students, the construction of a model grounded in the data would contribute to
leadership educators’ and student affairs professionals’ knowledge and inform their future educational approaches with students. More specifics about the use of grounded theory methodology are addressed below in the data collection and analysis sections.

**Researcher as Instrument**

In qualitative research, the researcher is “at one and the same time instrument, administrator, data collector, data analyst, and data interpreter” (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 128). As the instrument, I focused on being responsive, adaptable, and holistic (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). It was important to note how my past experiences and knowledge influenced my approach to this study and my interpretation of the data. As a female undergraduate student leader, I often took on more traditionally female roles (e.g., secretary) until being encouraged by two peers to run for president of our residence hall council. Elected to this role, I never perceived myself as a leader in the sense that I was the one with the positional power to make things happen and saw myself instead as more of a facilitator, bringing people together to accomplish our goals for the building. Even when I pursued a resident assistant position, I did so with the aim of helping people; I did not see this as a leadership role. Since my undergraduate experience, I have had numerous opportunities to serve in leadership roles but rarely acknowledged those roles as such, seeing them as more about the group than about me. This view influenced how I defined leadership and perceived leadership in others, which I needed to acknowledge as I analyzed the data. My experiences as a student affairs professional for more than 20 years provided me with many opportunities to observe student leaders and provide leadership education designed to advance student development. In my work with
leadership education, I observed a difference in the way female and male students “led.” These observed differences caused me to question what was happening with these students that could explain what I was seeing. Several recent experiences also influenced how I understood the process by which I came to view myself as a leader and what leadership meant to me. These experiences included conducting research on women and leadership and feminist leadership and creating a women’s leadership retreat designed to help undergraduate students understand the challenges they may face as leaders and to develop skills to be change agents.

I recognized that my experiences and knowledge biased my views, and I began this study with the view that college women experience additional layers in their leadership identity development process because of socially constructed views of gender and leadership. These layers may include lower self-efficacy for leadership, perceptions of a woman’s ability to lead, and competition instead of support and encouragement from other women. My perception of socially constructed views of gender and leadership fit the constructivist grounded theory understanding that social reality is constructed and that the researcher’s perspective must be taken into account. As I interviewed participants, I consciously worked to filter my own experiences as a leader from the participant’s, neither anticipating their responses nor analyzing and judging their answers in relation to my experience and views. One way I reflected on my experience and perceptions was through the use of a research journal. As I reflected throughout the interview and analysis processes, I was able to make note of questions about imprinting my experiences
on the data. This allowed me to review my analysis again through a critical lens and to make adjustments as necessary.

I accepted that my perspective was one among many as I reviewed the data (Charmaz, 2006). For example, when interviewing a student who expressed a strong feminist viewpoint, I was conscious not to engage in a dialogue that would detract from the purpose of the study. After each interview I wrote in my research journal, reflecting on my own reactions and interpretations of what the student stated. When coding transcripts from participants like the student noted above, I reflected on whether I was imposing my views and values on the codes or truly reflecting what the participant stated. My use of line-by-line coding ensured that I avoided imprinting my experiences and personal views on the respondents’ data (Charmaz 2006). I also allowed for opportunities to engage the students in dialogue after an interview had concluded, such as when I discussed views on Sandberg’s (2013) book, *Lean In*, with one of the students. My use of member checking and a peer review process also ensured that I was as unbiased as possible in my interpretation of the data collected.

**Participants**

Purposeful sampling involving the use of “information-rich cases” (Patton, 1990) that could provide depth related to the central research question was used to identify initial participants for my study; therefore, I sought participants who had lived the experience of leadership in some way. Participants had to be “experts” in the experience, willing to participate, reflective, and able to articulate their experience (Morse, 2011).
Sample Selection

The students in my study were traditional-aged (defined as students between the ages of 18 and 22) female undergraduate students who exhibited leadership ability, either as students currently in leadership positions or roles or as students who were perceived by advisors or supervisors to have leadership potential. Traditional-aged students were identified as participants because of several specific life experiences that may have impacted their views of leadership (e.g., September 11, 2001, election of the first African American U.S. president, impact of social media). Although people in other age groups also experienced these events, those individuals would have experienced additional historical or cultural events that may have impacted their views and self-perceptions of leadership in different ways. The students, who were from a large, public, research university in the Midwest, were solicited from this campus only because of the variety of involvement experiences available to them. This variety provided a wide array of areas from which to recruit potential participants, allowing for the exploration of leadership identity across experiences. Although other campuses may have also offered a variety of involvement opportunities, the breadth available at this institution ensured an appropriate diversity of experiences to support it as the single source of data. Additional sampling criteria included seeking participants from across class standing, from a variety of majors, and from a variety of types of student involvement opportunities (i.e., not all the same type of organization, such as sororities; or not all involved in residence hall activities). These criteria were identified to ensure a range of student involvement experiences as well as the potential to develop a model that spanned development from high school
through college. Students who were currently involved and identified as leaders or potential leaders were selected as participants because their involvement provided them with specific experiences they could speak to regarding leadership. I accomplished my aim of reaching a broad segment of students, not to examine only one archetype of the female student leader, by contacting individuals who worked with diverse groups of students for recommendations.

I chose not to include uninvolved female students for two primary reasons. One reason was difficulty in identifying potential participants who would be able to reflect on and articulate their views of self as leader. The second reason was that I wanted to understand the influence of involvement in student leadership roles on a female student’s leadership identity development. To include both involved and uninvolved students would have shifted the focus of my study to one of comparison instead of an understanding of the developmental process for a specific group of students.

I identified participants through recommendations from student organization advisors or student leader supervisors with whom I had a previous professional relationship. I sent emails outlining the purpose of the study (see Appendix A) to these individuals and requested recommendations of students who fit the aim of the study. I asked whether I could inform the invited students who had recommended them, and all recommenders agreed. The recruitment of participants through individuals with whom I had a connection allowed me to establish trust and credibility with potential participants from the outset of the process. Given the rapport I had established with individuals
across the campus, these individuals were likely to provide recommendations and encourage students to participate.

My request for recommendations yielded a list of 76 potential students to invite to participate in my study. Invitations were sent to the students via email, outlining the study, informing them of who had recommended them, and inviting them to participate (see email template in Appendix B) along with a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix C). I originally planned to use the demographic questionnaire to select from students who agreed to participate as a way of ensuring a broad representation from across class standing, majors, and involvement experiences. Because I interviewed all participants who responded to the initial participation invitation, the demographic questionnaire instead served as a way of understanding who the participants were—their background and involvement or leadership experiences.

**Sample Description**

Twenty undergraduate student leaders from a variety of backgrounds and experiences participated in the study. They had stories to tell about experiences, influences, and observations regarding their leadership identity development. Not all their roles were traditional, elected officer positions. Some were student leader staff members (e.g., resident assistant, orientation leader), student athletes, student employees in a department, or volunteers for mentoring programs. Among the 20 students were three sophomores, five juniors, and 12 seniors. The group comprised four African Americans, one Latina, and 15 Caucasian students. Common high school involvement experiences included participation on sports teams and involvement in student council.
Additional high school involvement included volunteer experiences, service-oriented groups, and academic honorary organizations. The students’ involvement in college ranged from residence hall groups to orientation programs, academic organizations to Greek life. One student continued her sports team involvement through college, completing four years of eligibility (see Appendix D for a full listing of students with select demographic information). These varied experiences contributed to their leadership identity development process, explained in more detail in Chapter 4.

Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot study in spring 2014 with a convenience sample of four female undergraduate student leaders at a public research institution in the Midwest. The purpose of this pilot study was to “obtain an overview of the overall process” (Morse, 2011, p. 235), more fully defining my sampling criteria and testing my interview protocol.

Interview protocol development involved a review of (a) interview questions used in the grounded theory research conducted by Komives et al. (2005) for the leadership identity development (LID) model (S. Komives, personal communication, August 11, 2013) and (b) interview questions used in additional LID-related studies (Lawhead, 2013; Shehane et al., 2012). I then developed a revised set of interview questions that were submitted for peer review. Based on the feedback from the peer review, changes were made to the questions that were then used in initial interviews in the pilot. After conducting several interviews, I further refined and reordered the interview questions. In addition, I added one question that specifically asked why being female mattered in terms
of the students’ leadership experiences and another that addressed individual motivation for taking on their leadership role(s). The discussion with my peer reviewer and experience with the initial interviews helped me to conceptualize a set of interview questions that could be arranged in a manner that made the most sense depending on who I was interviewing, allowing for flexibility to ask questions in whatever order was necessary to reflect the individual participants’ experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Conducting interviews in the pilot study also helped me to hone my interview skills. After each interview, I reflected in my research journal on my ability to stay focused, to listen actively, and not to analyze responses while still conducting the interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I reviewed each audiotape, listening for my tone to determine whether I had allowed my personal frustrations or surprise to come through because I did not want my reactions to influence students’ responses. Conducting the pilot study interviews also provided me opportunities to learn how to establish a comfortable space for the students, which then allowed me to revisit questions to which students initially provided limited answers. This process allowed me to learn how to incorporate follow-up questions that delved more deeply into the students’ understanding of their experiences.

**Data Collection**

Following are descriptions of my data collection processes, which included individual interviews and one follow-up focus group.
Individual Interviews

Of the 76 students invited to participate, 20 responded and scheduled individual interviews. These students participated in one 60- to 90-minute individual semistructured interview (see Appendix E for interview protocol). In a semistructured interview the researcher “prepares a limited number of questions in advance and plans to ask follow-up questions” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 31). I designed the interviews in order (a) to discover students’ individual experiences and influences on them and (b) to understand each person’s leadership identity development process as a way to understand and “portray” what this experience meant. As the researcher I conducted the individual interviews to develop an ongoing rapport with the students and to hear all of their voices. I opened each interview with (a) an overview of my study, (b) my background and role, (c) the manner in which the student had come to be invited to participate, and (d) an explanation of the interview process. I reviewed the consent form and stated that I would occasionally make notes during their interview, typically related to a point I wanted to follow up on later. Informing the students they had been recommended and by whom (I obtained permission from the recommenders) also contributed to their belief that my study was legitimate and that I had some initial credibility because of my relationship with the person who recommended them. Several students noted during their interviews that they had spoken to the person who recommended them before agreeing to participate. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed, and pseudonyms were assigned to the students.
The interview protocol was structured to move from basic questions about experiences to eliciting more reflective questions. Although the interview questions were chronologically ordered to cover first high school then college, the students’ responses structured the way the interviews proceeded. For some interviews I followed the questions in order; for others, I moved back and forth, letting the students’ reflections order the topics. In some interviews not all questions were asked because while answering a particular question, a student might address a later question. Based on student responses, I asked appropriate follow-up questions to gain more insight, often asking students to share a specific example related to an answer they had given. The flexibility of the interview protocol allowed for this immediate follow-up on ideas or issues that arose during the interview, thus allowing for the co-construction of the emerging knowledge by me and the students (Charmaz, 2014). By creating a comfortable environment for the students during the interviews, I was able to return later in an interview to questions to which a student had provided a limited response. I created this comfortable space by (a) letting students know that there were no right or wrong answers and that they would be sharing their own experiences, (b) asking less threatening questions initially, and (c) encouraging the students through my empathetic nonverbal behavior. I wanted students to know I was interested in what they had to say and in learning from them (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I ended every interview with an opportunity for the students to add anything else they wished about their experiences or their views of leadership or to answer questions they thought I would ask but had not. This closure allowed for a discussion with the students about the process from this point forward and
solicitation of their continued involvement in reviewing their transcripts and attending the focus group. Following each interview, I wrote in my research journal, reflecting upon what I had observed and heard from each student. This process allowed me to identify additional follow-up questions and to identify common experiences or categories from the data across students (see Appendix F for sample journal entries).

As each interview was transcribed, I conducted a line-by-line coding analysis of the interview transcript. By using this analytic process, I examined what was happening in the data and what ideas each line suggested. Using line-by-line coding encouraged me to think analytically about the data and to “generate fresh ideas” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 343). As common responses and coding categories emerged after several interviews, my interview questions shifted to accommodate gathering more data associated with these commonalities. One example was the notion of being part of a team and the influence this had on students’ views of leadership. Several students spoke to learning how to put others first and being a part of something bigger than themselves when reflecting on their high school sports involvement. This led me to ask students in later interviews who had also been student athletes more probing questions about their team experiences and how they influenced who they were as leaders or how they viewed leadership. This initial analysis contributed to my understanding of emerging categories. This overlapping process of interviews, analysis, and question adjustment to gather deeper data was indicative of the constant comparative approach of grounded theory methodology.
Focus Group

Following the individual interviews, data analysis, and the identification of an initial set of categories, all the students were invited to participate in a focus group or a “group validation interview” (Morse, 2011, p. 241) (see Appendix G for focus group protocol); nine of the 20 students chose to participate. A focus group was necessary for group exploration and clarification of the emerging categories. The focus group allowed the students and me to co-construct meaning from my initial data analysis, making connections among the participants’ experiences and creating stronger support for the emerging categories. This group discussion focused on students’ reactions to the emerging categories, to determine whether my analysis was consistent with their experiences and the emerging themes (Morse, 2011). It also allowed me to explore and clarify what participants meant by the emerging categories of women as caring leaders and perceptions of women as less capable leaders. Flipcharts with the emerging categories were posted around the room, and participants were asked to read the categories and write their reactions on the flipcharts. After the students had had a chance to reflect individually, we discussed the categories as a group. The students indicated consistency among many of the categories and their experiences with the exception of the ideas concerning women as emotional, caring leaders and women as less capable leaders. Further discussion allowed for clarification of what those two concepts meant for the students. They also expressed surprise that the role of mothers was not a category. The aim of the focus group was to understand how the students’ actual involvement
experiences impacted their leadership identity development, not the role of influences on this process.

After the students ranked the identified categories individually, a group discussion was held to come to consensus on the rank ordering as a group (see Appendix G for the ranking sheet, which is included in the focus group protocol). The discussion during this activity focused on when the students first identified as a leader (either when first elected to a position in college or later in their college years), their views on positional versus nonpositional leadership, and societal views of women as leaders. Although no consensus was reached, rich discussion on the categories took place, providing me with additional insights on the importance of several categories in the leadership identity development process.

To capture the focus group data fully, the session was audio and videotaped, and the audiotape was transcribed. I opened the focus group with a review of the consent form and an explanation of how the focus group would proceed. In addition, another doctoral student familiar with my research question observed behaviors of and interactions among the students. I introduced the observer to the students and verified that they were comfortable with having this additional nonparticipant in the room; they all agreed. The observer made note of concepts that were repeated by multiple students as well as students’ responses to one another and to me as the facilitator. The addition of this observer allowed me to facilitate and follow up on comments without the distraction of also taking notes. Following the focus group, I wrote my own reflections in my research journal, which included my observations, my concern that I may have led the
discussion at times, and the commonalities that I heard during the conversations. The audio and videotapes allowed me to return to the setting to observe and hear what had occurred from my researcher perspective as opposed to my facilitator perspective as well as to check some of the concerns I noted in my research journal before I moved into my analysis of the transcript.

The 11 students who were unable to attend the focus group were sent the ranking activity as well as a modified set of questions to which they could respond (a copy of the email and questions sent is included in Appendix H). Gathering insights from as many of the students as possible was necessary to ensure that a majority of their voices were heard during the analysis process. Five of the students responded, and I inserted their responses into the overall focus group transcript. A majority of the responses from nonattendees were consistent with those of the students who had attended, further solidifying my insights on the importance of several key categories.

I collected the rank ordering sheets from the students who attended the focus group and the nonattendees who responded to my email; the responses were averaged to facilitate my understanding of students’ perceptions of their leadership identity development process. Their rankings clustered around aspects later identified to be components of Phases 2 (Leader Identified) and 3 (Leadership Differentiated) of the emerging model. Examples included being perceived as a leader by others (Phases 2 and 3), first seeing self as leader when elected to a position (Phase 2), realizing others have good ideas (Phase 3), and being a role model (Phase 3). These clusters were consistent
with my perception that a majority of the students fell into one of these two phases in their leadership identity development.

**Data Management**

To ensure that the students understood what their participation involved, clear explanations of the purpose of the study and their roles in it were provided in the invitation email (see Appendix B). The consent forms approved by the Institutional Review Board (see Appendix I) clearly outlined expectations of participants in this study as well as their rights, which included the option not to answer any question asked or to withdraw from the study at any point without repercussion. Consent forms were reviewed before each individual interview and were revisited during the focus group session. Any questions related to the study, participation, or the students’ roles were addressed at this time as well.

To ensure confidentiality of the data and protection for the students, individual interview and focus group audiotapes and the focus group videotape were erased upon completion of analysis. Students were assigned pseudonyms to mask their identities in the final analysis; students were offered the opportunity to select their own pseudonyms, further engaging them in the study. All transcriptions and all participant identifiers were stored in a separate, password-protected file, accessible only by me. Transcripts were shared with individual students for their review, providing them with an opportunity to add information or make changes. Additional follow-up questions were included in the transcript review to further clarify points made by the students. Additional information for those students who responded (a majority did not), was included in their original
transcript. With pseudonyms in place, shielding personally identifiable information, I shared my analysis and interpretation with two peer reviewers in order to assure that my work was unbiased. The peer reviewers had no direct access to the password-protected files and were unable to make any changes in the transcripts; they were, however, able to raise questions about my interpretation and analysis. My memos and research journal were also kept in a password-protected file. The data from this study will remain stored on a password-protected computer indefinitely for possible future analysis and study.

**Data Analysis**

The development of a grounded theory involves a constant comparative process in which data collection and analysis occur simultaneously. This recursive process, a moving back and forth between data gathering and analysis, “shape[s] the kinds of data to collect and how and when to collect it” (Charmaz, 2011, p. 166) and helps determine whether the data supported the emerging categories (Holton, 2011).

**Coding Processes**

The coding processes for my study included line-by-line, focused, and theoretical coding, which are described more fully in this section.

**Line-by-line coding.** After each interview, I initially coded the data through line-by-line coding, defining each line of data. Line-by-line coding provided an opportunity to examine closely what the participants said and “to look for what is happening in the data” (Charmaz, 2011, p. 172). I read a line of text and decided what message that line conveyed, assigning it a descriptive word or short phrase. This early coding helped me to understand what the data suggested as well as areas where I needed
clarification. From the outset, coding helped shape the “analytic frame from which [the researcher builds the analysis” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 113). Charmaz (2014) explained that the researcher defines what is happening with the data and grapples with what it means (p. 113). Coding line by line ensured that I did not miss ideas that I may have overlooked by reviewing an entire response at once; it helped me examine the data more critically. This coding approach also ensured I was analyzing what the students stated instead of imposing my views on their thoughts and experiences. As I continued line-by-line coding in later transcripts, the process moved more rapidly because of previously established codes. As more students expressed a common sentiment, I was able to connect codes across student experiences.

**Focused coding.** Following line-by-line coding, I returned to the data and initiated a focused coding process by reviewing the line-by-line codes to develop an initial set of categories. I determined which “initial codes [made] the most analytic sense to categorize” my data (Charmaz, 2014, p. 138). As I continued focused coding, I identified a set of categories that either had consistency across a majority of interviews or required clarification. Categories I reviewed with the focus group came from this first round of focused coding, which yielded a set of over 90 categories (see the full list of emerging categories in Appendix J). I then analyzed these focused codes again, and drawing connections among them, I placed them into emerging themes.

**Theoretical coding.** The emerging themes developed through my focused coding process led to my theoretical coding, identifying “possible relationships between categories [that were] developed” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 150). As I integrated and further
synthesized these codes, the leadership identity development model emerged from the data (see list of theoretical coding themes in Appendix K). Using the themes developed through my focused coding, I mapped out an initial developmental trajectory, outlining what became the four phases of the leadership identity development model. Because several themes spanned multiple phases, I returned to the data to identify support for each theme at a specific developmental phase. I then identified quotations from the students to support and illustrate aspects of the emerging phases more fully.

**Analytic Memos**

As the emerging themes and phases became clearer, I wrote analytic memos to enable my thinking about the data. Charmaz (2014) explained that memo-writing “keeps [researchers] involved in the analysis and helps [them] increase the level of abstraction of [their] ideas” (p. 162). My memos served as a conversation with myself, a way to think about the data and the ideas I had about the categories and emerging developmental phases. This process allowed me to ask questions about the codes I developed and to explore the categories in as much analytic detail as I could (Charmaz, 2011). My initial memos focused on specific themes and exploring what those themes meant, often in the students’ own words. My next set of memos shaped aspects of the leadership identity development phases, synthesizing aspects of the themes but also allowed me the opportunity to continue questioning what I was analyzing (see sample memos in Appendix L). At this point I was also able to identify several outlier concepts that required attention, specifically one student who perceived herself as a leader beginning in elementary school, the concept of faith, and the role culture played in the processes of
several students’ leadership identity development. These outliers are addressed in
Chapter 4 and also served as suggestions for future research. The process of analysis,
theoretical coding, and memoing continued until saturation had been reached or as
Charmaz (2006) stated, “when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical
insights nor reveals new properties of . . . core theoretical categories” (p. 113). The more
I reviewed the data, synthesized the themes, and incorporated quotations from the
students, the clearer the emerging model phases became.

Once saturation was reached, I began the process of more fully describing the
emerging model. I used my memos and the data to describe the developmental process as
I interpreted it. I used quotations from participants to clearly illustrate specific aspects of
the developmental model, to make it “come alive” for the reader. From this, a
well-defined model for the development of leadership identity emerged.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Several methods were used in this study to ensure the credibility of my analysis
and findings. From the outset, I maintained a research journal, in which I wrote after
each individual interview as a way to reflect on what I had observed and heard as well as
to check myself for the imposition of my views or values on the students’ comments. I
continued to write journal entries as I coded the data as a way to consider questions I had
or categories that were connected across several students. Journaling at this point
allowed me to examine similarities among students’ stories and to shape what would
eventually become the emerging model.
As I concluded coding and developed a set of themes and emerging theoretical phases, I moved to memo writing. My memos were written as a way to think about the data and my ideas about them (Charmaz, 2014). Memos helped me to develop ideas “in narrative form, . . . clarify and direct [my] subsequent coding, . . . [and] elaborate processes, assumptions, and actions covered by [my] codes” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 171). The use of memos allowed me to reflect upon what I brought to the study and how I saw the participants and the data. This helped me avoid reproducing the students’ views as my own and instead interpret their views (Charmaz, 2006). As I wrote memos, I was able to be critical of myself in the process, acknowledging when my reactions or perceptions may have influenced my analysis. This acknowledgement then allowed me to review and adjust my analysis as needed.

Member checking (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2014) was used to ensure the credibility of the data. The students were given the opportunity to review their interview transcripts and make changes or provide additional data as one method of member checking. A second method was the use of a focus group discussion, the aim of which was the emergence of initial categories from the data to allow the students’ voices to be heard in the early analysis and verify that the initial categories were reflective of their experiences. I also incorporated the use of two peer reviewers to examine my analysis and findings as a way to ensure my bias had not influenced the analysis and interpretation.
I used rich description to support my analysis and findings and to create the emerging model for leadership identity development. To ensure that I had rich data, I asked myself the following questions:

1. Have I gained detailed descriptions of a range of participants’ views and actions? (Charmaz, 2014, p. 33)
2. Have I gathered the appropriate data to enable me to identify categories?
3. Do the data reflect enough depth of experience to support the themes?
4. Did I lead the students in my questions in such a way that would contribute to an inaccurate analysis?
5. Did I allow my emotional response to some answers to cloud my interpretation of any particular students’ data?

The use of a research journal allowed me to reflect on questions like these to ensure not only the use of rich data but also an accurate interpretation of the data. The use of individual interviews allowed for an in-depth exploration with the participants, thus creating a richer set of data. Student quotations were used to reflect the model that emerged from the data more fully. I also addressed “negative cases” (“participants who [did] not respond in the anticipated way or who [had] opposite reactions to the majority” [Morse, 2011, p. 240]) found in the data. These “negative cases” were included as a part of the emerging theory and not merely discarded as outliers.

**Delimitations**

Although the findings of this study contributed to the understanding of the processes of leadership identity development for traditional-aged female undergraduate
students that can then inform the work of leadership educators and student affairs professionals on college campuses, the delimitations of my study require attention. Because this study was conducted on one campus, some question of transferability to other campus settings may arise; thus, future research in other settings is recommended. The participants in this study were current student leaders and students identified as potential leaders. The developmental process for these students may not have been reflective of an uninvolved or less involved female student. No first-year students participated in my study; one first-year student responded, but she did not follow up to schedule an interview. Although I aimed to include students from across all four class standings, the data from the participating students provided a sound foundation for the leadership identity development model. This study also focused on traditional-aged undergraduate students, raising the question of whether the findings of this study could also apply to nontraditional students and graduate students.

**Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to understand the process of leadership identity development of traditional-aged female undergraduates and to construct a developmental model. Student experiences, influences, and views of leadership contributed to the construction of this model. Gaining an understanding of female student leadership identity development can provide knowledge for leadership educators to design initiatives that intentionally facilitate the development of these students. Chapter 4 includes a description of the themes identified in the data and provides an overview of the emerging leadership identity development model. A discussion of the contribution of my findings
to the scholarship as well as implications for practice and future research appear in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the leadership identity development experienced by traditional-aged female undergraduate students. Research questions related to the impact of experiences, influences, and the way the students’ evolving views of leadership influenced their identity of self as leaders. To address these research questions, I used a constructivist grounded theory methodology. Based on the experiences and reflections of the students, a leadership identity development model emerged. Four phases of development along with transitional experiences between phases were identified based on the data provided by the students. This chapter includes the themes identified in the data and the emerging model of leadership identity development informed by those themes.

Themes That Influenced Leadership Identity Development

An analysis of the data produced five themes: influences, meaningful involvement, expanding views of leadership, changing views of self as leader, and reflective learning. A majority of these themes were consistent with those identified by Komives et al. (2005) in their seminal research on leadership identity development in college students. These themes formed the foundation for the leadership identity development model described later in this chapter, providing a picture of a dynamic process experienced by the students. The descriptions of these themes spanned student
experiences from high school (or before in some instances) through their current time in college.

**Influences**

As students reflected on their leadership identity development, they identified people and events that impacted their views on leadership and their ability to perceive themselves as leaders. For the students in my study, these influences were more typically people than events. Early in the developmental process, the individuals having the most impact on the students were adults, including parents, teachers, and coaches, consistent with the findings of Komives et al. (2005). Unlike in the study by Komives et al. (2005), throughout the developmental process for many of the students, mothers played significant roles: encourager, supporter, sounding board, friend. Peers played a more significant role in the students’ development as they moved into collegiate leadership roles, initially serving as role models and later as strong supporters and encouragers.

**Adult influences.** Adults served in primary influential roles for the students in my study throughout their developmental processes. Although parents and teachers were most commonly mentioned, other adult family members, such as aunts and grandmothers as well as teachers and coaches, played roles in guiding the students through their leadership identity development.

**Mothers.** Mothers were the most frequently mentioned influences, with a majority of the students talking about the role their mothers played in their lives and how they impacted their views of leadership. Mothers became role models for many of the
students—people to emulate, to make proud. In addition some participants wanted to do what their mothers had been unable to do, as illustrated by the following data excerpts:

“My mom, she is such a go-getter, such high energy, very independent. . . . I want to be like her” (Wendy); “If people ask me why do you sing, . . . why do you write those songs that inspire others? I do it for my mom. . . . She was always there for me and she still is always there for me” (Samantha); “I want to go above and beyond just because my mom never got . . . a college education” (Penny).

Initially, mothers may have been the ones prompting students to get involved; for example, Leila’s mother inspired her involvement in activities as a way to stay focused and out of trouble; and Abigail’s mother encouraged her exploration of interests by providing information and then letting her pursue her interests. Playing the role of encourager, mothers provided the students with direction and a sense that they were supported at home, which allowed them to pursue their activities freely. Abigail said:

Whenever I have any doubt about anything, she’s always, “Abigail, you are not that person. You are so much better than this.” She’s always constantly encouraging me. . . . She makes me see things in a different perspective. She’s like, “Well, how are you going to feel if you miss this opportunity because you were too scared? Or how are you going to feel if you miss this opportunity because you were too timid or shy?” She really makes me see things in a different perspective and really kind of put myself out there [emphasis added]. Abigail’s mother provided her with the confidence that she could pursue her interests.
As students progressed in their leadership identity development, the influential role of mothers shifted to giving advice or listening to concerns and frustrations. Faith said the following about her mother:

Going to her and just being like, “This is what I did or what should I do?” or that kind of thing, and usually she’s pretty good with giving me not direct answers but at least getting me thinking [emphasis added].

Mothers played an important role throughout the students’ leadership identity development, supporting, encouraging, and admiring their daughters.

**Other family members.** Other family members also played influential roles in the students’ developmental process. Leigh shared her father’s influence in her early choice to join Student Council: “Hearing him previous years talk about it like, ‘Oh, my Student Council kids did this,’ got me interested in running for the position.”

For some students, the influence of family members was negative. Bridget shared the story of her father’s negative influence on her future identity as a leader when she lost her relationship with him after her sports injury,

I kind of lost my relationship with my father through that time . . . because [sports was] what brought my dad and I together. So over the years, we just kind of became less and less close because he was so disappointed about my injury, and I think he just didn’t know how to cope with that situation [emphasis added].

This experience shaped her desire to be a helper and supporter as a leader, standing by people in need of assistance, leading to her strong involvement in community service activities.
Siblings also had an impact on a number of the students, particularly during their formative years, growing up, and in high school. Joan’s siblings contributed to her view that she could do anything a male could do. She said, “I wanted to do what they were doing. They’re not better than me. They’re boys, but they’re not better than me. I can do it.”

The siblings of other students were a source of inspiration and motivation, which contributed to their drive to succeed, as illustrated by the following data excerpts: “I’m the typical little sister that totally looks up to my big sister. . . . Watching her helped a lot in knowing that effort was required to get where I wanted to be” (Faith); “My sisters have so much influence on me, everything I do. . . . If my sisters are doing it, it’s valid, you know?” (Grace).

A point eventually came, however, when the students realized that they did not have to be just like their siblings, that they needed to do what made them happy and be their own person. Grace continued:

Subconsciously I always wanted to be my older sisters, . . . but when it gets to the point where I’m starting to value my happiness off of when they’re happy for me, . . . I have to separate what they’re doing and what I’m doing and be content [emphasis added].

Samantha explained how wanting to be just like her sister made her lose her sense of self: “I wanted to be just like her. . . . She was able to just do all of these different things, . . . but then really, I wasn’t able to find myself, you know? I wasn’t paying attention to myself.” Grace and Samantha were able to move to a point of incorporating
qualities they admired about their siblings into who they were becoming as leaders without losing their sense of self.

**Teachers.** Teachers constituted another set of adults who had an impact on the students during their leadership identity exploration and development. A majority of the examples shared by the students were high school teachers who saw their leadership potential and were instrumental in shaping their emerging views of leadership. Several students shared stories of the power of these adults as role models and individuals the students admired and strived to emulate. Christine said the following about a high school teacher:

> She was just the kind of woman, the way she carried herself—she was someone you wanted to be around. . . . She didn’t do things the way everybody else did: She *did what she thought was right*, and I really idolized that characteristic of her because I *wanted to be able to carry myself the way I saw her carry herself* [emphasis added].

Relationships with impactful teachers continued to evolve for several of the students, and they continued to influence them at the time of this research. These teachers showed that they still cared about the students and wanted to know what they had accomplished. Christine stated that her relationship with her theatre director had become more real:

> “Now we talk about things, so I think it’s as I’ve matured, the relationships have matured in a way where they’re more real.”

Many of the examples the students shared of teachers who had impacted them in some way were female. A few influential male teachers were identified, both in high
school and college; but a majority of the teachers mentioned were female. Although students gave some examples of influential teachers at the college level, high school teachers were the most significant in terms of impact on student development.

**Coaches.** For a majority of the students involved in sports in high school, the influence of coaches was both positive and negative. Although the immediate impact of coaches’ influence was limited over time, the lessons the students learned stayed with them and contributed to their early views of leadership. The coaches who had the most impact on the students and their views of leadership were those who participated with their athletes, working out with the students and never asking them to do what they themselves would not do. Leila stated:

> I loved how she *did everything* with us. So when we would run about maybe four miles and she would be in the front of the pack. And I thought that was really impressive as a coach, just someone who was doing the drills or knew how to do the stuff or was still in really good shape. So she *wouldn’t ask me to do anything that she couldn’t do herself* [emphasis added].

Faith learned the value of hard work from her coach and said the following: “She was very hands on, very into helping us get better and pushing us, which was great, and I think I just learned a lot of discipline from that, and working hard to get places.”

Coaches also had an impact because they showed the students they cared and they expected the best from their students. Holly explained, “So he [the coach] just always makes sure that we were doing what we needed to do, . . . just making sure that I’m doing what I need to do to get where I want to be.”
Bridget shared the following about her coach: “He always expected the best from me, and held me to a standard.”

Although very few of the students mentioned maintaining relationships with their coaches after high school, the lessons they learned about teamwork, work ethic, and success had a definite impact on the types of leaders these students became.

In summary, adults influenced the students in their early exploration of leadership by serving as role models. The students learned how to behave by observing the behaviors and actions of these adults in their lives, leading them to strive to be more like them. These adults saw the potential in the students and inspired confidence in their abilities. Naomi shared the way a teacher helped her see that her approach to leadership was valid: “She really encouraged me. . . . She’s like, ‘You’re one of those behind-the-scenes people. You do a lot, but people don’t always notice it.’ Her encouragement really helped me stick through with it.”

In college some students connected with staff members who had a direct impact on their leadership identity development, providing honest feedback and challenging the students’ assumptions. Melissa shared her appreciation for a staff member’s honesty when seeking advice: “She guides me and gives me her advice when I need it and doesn’t always tell me what she thinks I want to hear; she’s always honest with me, and I really appreciate that.” The encouragement and support provided by these adults was critical to the students’ movement throughout the leadership identity development process.

**Peer influences.** Adults were not the only ones who had an influence on the students throughout the process of their leadership identity developmental: Peers also
played an influential role. In high school, the impact of peers took one of two forms. The first comprised peers who reflected what a leader looked like in a manner different from the way the students perceived themselves. Cassie shared this idea when discussing that she did not see herself as a leader: “I always thought a leader was someone that was extroverted, that took charge, that people looked up to, and I just thought I was the opposite of that.” The second comprised peers whom the students admired and aspired to emulate as shown in the following example from Leigh: “I looked up to all the kids he [her father] coached.” High school peers provided the students with role models to follow and observe and opportunities to reflect on how they could be more like their peers.

Relationships with these high school peers also helped students understand that being themselves was acceptable as Catherine noted: “My [peer mentor] wasn’t the most popular girl at [high school], but she always encouraged me to do what I loved and because she was the kind of person who wasn’t afraid of being herself and I loved that.” Over time, these initial influential relationships offered the students insight into what leadership meant and provided a base from which to develop their own identities as leaders.

As the students entered college, the impact of their peers became more significant in the development of their leadership identity; but the students did not always recognize the direct influence. According to many of them one of the primary ways they learned about leadership was through the observation of others. Faith stated: “I think a lot of it was just watching other people, . . . seeing what they were doing.” These observations
provided them with examples of ways they wanted to behave as leaders and of behaviors they wanted to avoid. As the students moved through their college experiences and their developmental processes, peers became a much more direct influence on their evolution as leaders. Often this influence was reflected in the role peers played as encouragers, providing the students with opportunities for involvement and supporting their endeavors, as illustrated by the following data excerpts: “My RA . . . encouraged me a lot to get involved” (Leigh); “I clearly had an interest in being involved, and she really helped me with that process. She was super encouraging . . . so I clearly do look up to her when it comes to things like that” (Bridget).

Peers provided the students with role models to aspire to emulate and motivation to be the best they could be. Penny stated, “I had friends who would pull me back in when I felt the loneliest. That influences my view of leadership because it’s like that no one’s left out rule.”

Peers played an influential role in the development of leadership identity in the students in my study in both direct and indirect ways. Whether acknowledged or not, peers were important in shaping the students’ leadership identities.

**Sports involvement.** In addition to the influence of individuals on the students’ leadership identity development, several experiences had an impact. One example was involvement in sports teams. Over half the students had participated in one or more sports teams in high school. Only one student continued this involvement in college, but the students’ experience in sports had a clear impact on their views of leadership. Because of their involvement with sports teams, an expectation was placed on them that
they would take on leadership roles, typically team captain. Joan stated, “When you got to your senior year, you’re supposed to make sure you stepped up. . . . It was if you were a senior, you were the captain.”

The students reported that team captains were typically selected by virtue of seniority instead of ability. Melissa shared a story of being at the front of her cheerleading squad formation just because she was the captain even when there were others on the squad who were better than she.

Because . . . when you were a captain, you were in the front, but even though I was a very good cheerleader, there were people that were better than me. But they weren’t in the front and their skills and abilities weren’t being showcased and showed off to make the rest of us look good because I was captain, so I needed to be in the front.

This idea of being a leader because of one’s position or seniority on a team had an impact on students’ early views that leadership was positional.

Participation in sports also contributed to students learning to accept criticism that they were then able to translate into their abilities as leaders in general and when dealing with challenges or conflict in particular. Referring to her sports team coach, Holly described the way she learned to be open to criticism:

Because he would always get on me like, “Blah, blah, blah, you can’t shoot, or something, something.” And I would take it. I was hurt at first, but now over time I’ve gotten better. . . . It . . . definitely helped me build confidence and be able to accept criticism [emphasis added].
Learning not to take criticism personally but as a way to improve helped build the confidence of these students.

Joan explained, “You’re used to somebody telling you you’re terrible, and knowing that you’re not actually terrible, it’s just [to] do better.” This ability to be open to critical feedback became an important skill when the students felt a passion for what they were doing and believed that their leadership actions were justified. They were able to use the skills and abilities they developed as athletes as well as their confidence in themselves as leaders to be able to face down criticism and pushback on decisions they made. Involvement in sports had a direct, positive impact on the leadership identity development processes of those students who had participated in high school.

**Role of leadership training.** Another example of an experience that influenced leadership identity development was participation in leadership training. Given the degree to which the students in my study were involved, I logically assumed that they would have participated in some form of leadership training, which would have influenced their understanding of leadership in general and of themselves in particular. In fact, all of the students had participated in leadership development activities, ranging from one-day conferences to workshops to semester-long courses. As a part of their experiences, two students discussed reading books about the various aspects of leadership. The impact of these experiences, however, appeared to have a minimal direct conscious impact on the students’ leadership identity development. Leadership training experiences fell into two categories: (a) gaining an understanding of leadership styles and (b) learning skills necessary for a specific position.
Understanding leadership styles. A majority of the students indicated learning about different leadership styles during their training experiences. Some learned through the administration of various personality-type indicators. For example, Catherine learned about styles by exploring what animal type participants resembled: “We’ll figure out what kind of leader you are based on an animal. So you don’t always have to be a lion: You can be a koala bear. . . . You can be any range of a leader.” Catherine, who continued to discuss her lion leadership style throughout her interview, had definitely taken to heart what she learned about this style of leadership, embracing the lion to signify who she was as a leader.

Cassie shared what she remembered from having done the True Colors activity. She said, “And I just remember that there’s different categories of leadership and different styles that some may or may not apply to you personally.”

Others learned about leadership styles and roles through their understanding of the various aspects of their role. Abigail said:

We definitely talked about leadership a lot, and it was kind of dynamic when we talked about it in that class because you’re kind of in a weird phase where you’re the same age as these people, but you’re supposed to be kind of an authority or a mentor or someone that they look up to; so we talked a lot about how being a leader is also about being a friend but also still sticking to what you are supposed to do [emphasis added].

These students indicated that they had learned different styles of leadership and identified what their styles may have been based on an assessment, but they did not
directly connect this learning to their identities as leaders. Most often they indirectly addressed the influence of these training experiences when discussing how they had learned to work with people different from themselves, typically when the difference related to personality or approach to situations, learning they may have gained from understanding leadership styles.

*Leadership training as skill development.* The second category that emerged from the students’ leadership training experiences was the focus on skill development necessary for the responsibilities of specific position (e.g., resident assistant or orientation leader). Joan talked about learning to be a leader on the playing field through a leadership training experience:

> Just learn about leadership on and off the field. . . . And talking about how to handle team issues, so *how to step up and be a leader on your team.* When there’s these two people who are fighting, how do you solve this problem to help better a team relationship? [emphasis added].

Although the development of these skills was important for the students in the performance of their specific roles, they did not internalize this learning into aspects of who they were as leaders.

What was apparent for a majority of the students was the lack of direct impact their leadership development training experiences had on the development of their leadership identities. For many students, their learning about leadership appeared to have come from observing others or actually performing tasks as Joan verified: “I think I learned more about how to be a leader on the team than I did in [an organized leadership
program].” Other students expressed how they learned leadership by doing instead of by attending trainings and workshops. What appeared to be missing from any of the training experiences were opportunities for the students to learn about themselves, their values, or their perceptions of themselves, information that would have directly influenced their leadership identity development.

Although the leadership training experiences of a majority of the students did not appear to have a direct impact on their leadership identity development, two exceptions surfaced. Catherine said that her experience attending an all-female high school, where the focus was on developing the next generation of women leaders “because . . . their tagline is Shaping Future Women Leaders Since 1923,” certainly influenced her belief in her ability to be a leader and established an expectation that she would be a leader. She took what she learned, applied it to her leadership roles, and found opportunities to share her knowledge with her peers.

Melissa had also participated in a number of leadership training experiences during her college years, not only giving her insights on styles but also providing her with opportunities to examine what she valued and who she was as an individual. Melissa took her leadership training experiences to heart and used those experiences to reflect and learn more about herself. This self-learning influenced how she developed as a leader and provided her with ways to explore what this meant to who she was as an individual.

**Impact of culture.** For two students in particular, their culture contributed strongly to their sense of leader identity. These two students came from immigrant
families, and the beliefs, values, and traditions of their cultures played key roles in their development.

For Penny, her cultural heritage taught her how to respond to situations particularly in relation to making people feel included. She said,

[I was taught to] accept people no matter who they are. . . . I was also raised to believe everyone’s your family. . . . I need to accept these people as my family because being raised like that, I don’t want anybody to feel left out.

For Grace, her culture provided her with a source of inspiration that motivated her career goals and her desire to help her peers explore their backgrounds. She said the following about her culture:

I mean it’s everything. I feel like it’s my survival instinct. . . . I’ve grown and gotten to know how important it is to be a Liberian woman. . . . Being attached to my culture has really humbled me and has also made me be a lot less selfish and more open, to sharing my culture, . . . so I think my culture, behind everything that I want to do, it’s inspired by who I am. . . . I think my peers should know those answers as well [emphasis added].

For both these students, a strong familial expectation that they take on leadership roles and do well was in place. Often their parents were role models for them, and their examples contributed to the students’ leadership identity development. These two students were the only ones who directly addressed culture, which had a strong connection to their development as leaders.
Meaningful Involvement

Meaningful involvement, a second theme identified in the data, provided a “training ground where leadership identity development evolved” (Komives et al., 2005, p. 598). Activities played key roles in students’ exploring their interests, developing their skills, and coming to see themselves as leaders. The students became involved in extracurricular activities largely as a result of the influence of their peers. At no time, however, did these students connect the concept of leadership with those activities. They wanted to do what their friends were doing or to hang out with them; they wanted a sense of belonging as illustrated in the following data excerpts: “I enjoyed being with my fellow band members, and my friends were in band” (Cassie); “[I liked to] hang out with my peers . . . either before school or after school” (Catherine); “It was just more of like wanting to join the group and be a part of it” (Janice).

Several participants saw involvement in extracurricular activities in high school as a way of appearing more attractive to colleges as illustrated by the following data excerpts: “That was another great thing to put on my resume, I guess” (Gretchen); “I have got to get ready for college, you know” (Catherine). These students understood the value of participating in school activities, seeing the need to enhance their experiences to make themselves more marketable to colleges; but they did not see their participation as related to the concept of becoming a leader. For some students participation meant being involved in as much as possible. Catherine exemplified the student who overcommitted, taking on roles in as many organizations as she could to enhance her resume. She said, “I was in every club except one at my high school. . . . So the clubs and stuff—it kind of
started off as . . . a way to build up my resume as a high schooler.” At an early phase, these students’ reasons for involvement were strictly about getting ahead, gaining admission to a good college, and knowing that they needed extracurricular activities on their resume to be seriously considered for admission.

Early in their development, students were encouraged to try new opportunities and take on new roles. They were typically encouraged by teachers, coaches, or parents as illustrated by Faith, who said: “I guess they always were just very aware of telling me if I was doing a good job and that I was and that I had potential to go places.” Other students were placed in roles, typically by teachers, where they had responsibility for their peers as demonstrated by the following data excerpts: “[I was put] in the position, a leadership position” (Holly); “I don’t know if I was nominated or appointed, but I wasn’t elected” (Wendy); “My P.E. teacher picked me to be a Lieutenant for Safety Patrol, and my Social Sciences—I guess—teacher picked me to be a conflict mediator” (Melissa).

The reasons the students chose to become involved in college focused on who they were or wanted to be. A number of them said that going to college provided an opportunity to reinvent themselves as illustrated in the following data excerpts: “I reinvented myself, and I’m just a lot more positive” (Penny); “College is an opportunity to redefine those, that life and those choices” (Christine). They specifically talked about reinvention in terms of who they were as individuals, but their comments also connected to the idea of what they chose to become involved in and how they evolved into leaders. Leila completely changed herself in college, leaving the lessons of high school in the past. She said, “I feel like those lessons learned were from the past, and I’ve completely
changed as a person in terms of college.” Reinventing oneself in college gave the students the chance to define who they were becoming as opposed to having others define their identities for them.

Initially, many students chose to be involved in college activities similar to what they pursued in high school, doing what was “easy” as illustrated by the following examples: “I survived through all that prom planning—I think I can handle [residence] Hall Council my freshman year here” (Leigh); “It kind of made it a little less stressful for me knowing that I’ve done it before and that I could do it again” (Catherine). They also explored new options. Involvement early in their college days provided students with the opportunity to explore new things, sometimes pushing themselves out of their comfort zones, accepting opportunities presented to them by others, and learning what they truly enjoyed instead of doing what their friends were doing or being involved because others (adults) placed them in an activity or position. As students became engaged and involved, they realized that one opportunity often led to others with doors being opened to them because they were involved than would have been had they not chosen to branch out and try new activities. These opportunities provided students the chance to enhance their skills, build their confidence, and explore who they were as leaders. Having these opportunities presented to them also made the students aware that others saw their potential. The recognition that others saw their potential had a positive impact on the students’ belief in their ability to be leaders and helped them further incorporate being a leader into their identities.
The students made conscious choices about their involvement as they continued their college educations, realizing that they did not have to do everything in order to be perceived by others as leaders. They saw that although they wanted to give 100% to what they were involved in and to do their best, they did not have enough time to do everything that interested them as shown by the following data excerpts: “I want to do so much, but I don’t have the time to do it” (Holly); “I just need to be conscious of not biting off more than I can chew” (Penny); “As I’ve kind of grown and matured a little more, I realize that I can’t be everything” (Catherine). As students grew and matured, explored their options, and made choices regarding their involvement, their leadership identity development process was impacted.

**Expanding Views of Leadership**

The conceptualization and definition of leadership evolved throughout the students’ leadership identity development process. An expanding view of leadership, which emerged as the third theme in the data, influenced students’ construction of who they became as leaders (Komives et al., 2005). One challenge of being a leader was the ability to define what leadership meant. Leadership educators, student affairs professionals, business leaders, and even members of the general public have difficulty identifying one definition of leadership; and these students were initially no different. In early phases of their leadership identity development, students did not have a clear view of what leadership meant to them as demonstrated by Leigh, who said, “I don’t know if I really had a clear idea of what a leader was in high school.”
They often commented that they knew of no single definition or that leadership meant different things to different people as shown in the following data excerpts:

“There’s no right or there’s no one definition of leadership, I think” (Catherine); “I don’t think there’s one definition to what leadership is” (Leila); “I view the concept of leadership as meaning something different to different people” (Cassie).

The students believed that they knew what leadership was and could identify what it looked like, but they struggled to put the concept into words. Leila stated, “I feel like I don’t have a good idea of what actual leadership is or what it’s supposed to be. I just know how to do it, if that makes sense.” The lack of a clear definition of leadership made fully incorporating the notion of leader into their identities difficult for the students early in their leadership identity development. This lack of clarity explained why students did not see their early involvement as leadership.

Early in their experiences, if students had thoughts on what leadership meant, it was defined for them by others: hearing others praised, seeing peers put into positions of responsibility, or a parent’s commenting on the abilities of a friend. Students were sometimes exposed to the idea of leadership at an early age, such as in the case of Melissa, who in third grade saw leadership enacted by an older student even though she did not identify the actions as such at the time. She said:

I wasn’t getting picked for something, and I remember there was a fifth grader who came into our classroom because we had recess inside that day, and I wasn’t getting picked to play with, be played with, and that fifth grader came over and she started playing with me. And then everyone else wanted to play with me
because the fifth grader was playing with me. So while she was older than me, she was still a leader, especially in the eyes of a bunch of third graders. So I guess that was kind of when I realized that that’s kind of what a leader is without really realizing, putting a word to it like “This is leadership” [emphasis added].

Other students equated leadership with management. This was reflected in comments about how their experiences would benefit their careers and how employers would be impressed by what they had done. According to Gretchen, “When employers look at a resume, if you have all this experience [involvement] plus went abroad to look at international business, . . . that just looks great to future employers.” This view of leadership was connected to the students’ employability as opposed to identification as leaders.

In addition to struggling to define leadership, students did not believe that they possessed the qualities or characteristics necessary to be leaders early in their developmental processes even when they were fulfilling leadership roles. For some of these students, they rationalized being in those roles with a belief that they were leaders “by default.” This belief was common when students involved in sports were placed into the role of team captain not because of their ability to lead but because of their ability to play as illustrated by the following examples: “People followed me because I was good at it [the sport]” (Kate); “I was the captain of our cheerleading squad. And it wasn’t because I was a good leader: It was because I was a very good cheerleader, which are two totally different things” (Melissa). These students still had not come to see their potential to be leaders.
Leadership as positional authority. As students gained experience and moved into leadership roles in college, two views of leadership emerged. The first view of leadership was rooted in the belief that with a position came authority and decision-making responsibility. Leila stated, “You feel like you have some sort of authority to talk to that person.” In an early phase the students perceived leaders to be the ones who took control and took charge of a group or organization as illustrated by the following data excerpts: “You get to like command stuff” (Gretchen); “I like to tell people what to do. I’m very bossy” (Janice); “leading people to the right direction” (Gretchen).

Students also believed that leaders had to perform perfectly and that they could not make mistakes. They incorporated this view of leader as authority figure into the way they behaved in their first leadership roles. For some, the idea of not holding onto control meant others might realize how unqualified they were to be leaders. An authoritative approach to leadership suggested a lack of self-confidence in some students. Their choice to maintain control, do everything, and prevent others from having a say reflected their uncertainty in their own abilities.

Evolving definition of leader. The manner in which students defined who a leader was evolved as they gained experience. They saw leaders as individuals who could gather others around an issue and influence the accomplishment of a goal. Holly shared her perception: “You have the ability to be a role model and influence others as a part of a whole group.” Although the students’ view of what leadership meant expanded,
they continued to gravitate toward an element of taking charge, being in control, or holding a position of authority. Holly stated:

If we’re doing a group project, I know what I’m doing or I know how to do something or I can figure out how to work with everybody. I would just take charge and sort things out or say, “Oh, this is the agenda. This is what needs to be completed,” and then people see where they fit, where they want to do stuff.

Students were not quite ready to give up their control to allow others to take the lead.

As the students experienced new roles and observed others’ behaviors, they understood that that leaders played different roles and that they did not always need to be in control. Some students understood that an individual could step into a follower role and still be a leader. Although their earlier views may have been influenced by others’ perceptions that they should be leaders, not followers, at this point some students recognized that they could shift between roles. Being a follower did not mean they were not a leader: It just meant a shift in who was taking responsibility at any one time. Joan discussed her willingness to let others lead on her sports team if they were better equipped and prepared. She talked about the idea of discovering who was better to take the lead: “Being a leader is knowing when you need to voice your opinion and when you need to just follow somebody else, and know when to step back.” Along with realizing they could play various roles, these students also understood and appreciated that not all leaders should be the same; for example, Leigh stated, “I realize there are different kinds of leaders.” Believing that leaders had no need to follow a formula, students’ conceptualizations of what a leader was or should be implied an acceptance of leadership
as a part of the students’ identities, a conscious incorporation of the role into who they were and how they acted as a leader.

**Nonpositional leadership.** A noticeable shift occurred in students’ understanding of who leaders were: They no longer believed that a leader required a position (i.e., elected, with authority and specific responsibilities) but instead adopted the notion that anyone is capable of being a leader. Naomi stated this change best when she described how leadership could happen anywhere to anyone. She said:

> It could be as simple as if you’re in a group project, *being the one who steps up* and says, “Here’s what we could do. Does anyone else have any ideas?” Or it could be, for example, with a committee, just one of the committee members either coming up to me and saying, “I would like to take on this responsibility” or *somebody who just jumps in and does something*. You don’t have to have a label or a title to be a leader. Definitely not [emphasis added].

Other students also recognized that anyone could be a leader as demonstrated by the following data excerpts: “Being a leader can be anything. . . . A random student could be a leader” (Wendy); “Anybody has the potential to be a leader” (Bridget). This view of nonpositional leadership indicated a change in how the students viewed themselves as leaders, too. Several students acted as leaders whether they held a position or not.

**Focus on others, not self.** At a later phase in the students’ development, leaders were viewed as those who provided opportunities to others. The focus was on helping others in an organization to develop skills as Melissa put it: “Kind of helping them
develop their skills.” Students shared their stories and experiences with younger students as a way to help those students see possibilities. A focus on others also meant involving others, encouraging others to take advantage of opportunities, and cheerleading for other students. Grace expressed this idea with the metaphor of planting a seed: “Planting seeds in people and . . . watching them grow . . . because I feel like I wouldn’t be who I am if somebody didn’t plant a seed.” Several students also shared stories of making the decision not to pursue a leadership role again so that someone else would have the opportunity they had been given. Grace’s seed metaphor illustrated the importance of giving others a chance to grow and develop as well as a recognition that without having someone do that for them, they would not be the leaders they had become.

Several students described mentoring younger leaders, providing them with the opportunities necessary to achieve their own dreams. According to Faith, “It’s very important to me, too, to just pay attention, to give other people the opportunity to move into these roles.” Christine concurred: “It’s how can I help you achieve your vision.” Students realized the importance of passing on their knowledge and sharing their experiences and lessons learned with others to help make the way smoother for those emerging leaders.

Participants chose to pass on their knowledge in a number of ways. For some, it was through sharing their own experiences. Leila said:

Just by talking to them, coming from a place of empathy and understanding and just being relatable—I think that’s the best way to convince someone that if you need tutoring, it’s OK. I’ve gotten tutored before. Coming from a place of not
that you need to do this, but this will really help—*this was what worked for me.*

This is the information—you can take it or you know—this is what worked for me—doesn’t mean it’ll work for you, but *you should at least try it* [emphasis added].

Another way students approached the development of others was through mentoring a younger person in an organization. Faith provided an example: “You have this knowledge, and you’re a couple years ahead of them in class or whatever. Just use that to help guide them so that they can be better.” The students understood that they needed to share their knowledge and experience, not keep it to themselves.

As the students moved through the developmental process, their views of leadership evolved from a quality they did not see in themselves to a positional role to a collaborative approach and finally to mentoring others. Their experiences were important in their continuing to broaden what being a leader meant, incorporating a clear definition into who they were as leaders, and then putting that definition into action.

**Perceptions of female leaders.** In addition to the students in my study broadening their views of what leadership was in general, they also expressed a wide range of views regarding women as leaders. In early phases of their development, the concept of gender connected to leadership was external to the students, not directly related to who they were as leaders. Gretchen acknowledged that few women held major leadership roles in business—“CEOs are popping into my head. I think it’s only 20% of CEOs . . . are female”—and that male leaders are held up as examples in the media. Participants were, however, able to identify the problems faced by female leaders in
contemporary society; for example, Bridget pointed out that “people don’t really view women as leaders a lot.” They were unable to connect those challenges to their own lives as something that they might have experienced or might face in the future. The students discussed the need for women to prove themselves. According to Holly, “You have to prove yourself more to the male that you’re just as equal as them, you’re just as good a leader as they are.”

During the focus group students expressed the view that women have to act in socially approved ways: “Women are naturally nurturing but some female leaders know that that’s a norm and they try to suppress it.” Students were aware that different expectations were placed on women leaders as illustrated by the following data excerpts: “There’s different expectations between a male leader and a female leader. I think males can get away with a lot more than females can” (Cassie); “I just feel like as women, I feel we go through more stuff. I feel like men have the easier route” (Samantha). These viewpoints were often consistent with traditional stereotypical views of women and leadership in contemporary society.

As students gained leadership experience, they understood that women could be pushed aside or were likely to be stereotyped and were judged more harshly, as illustrated by the following data excerpts: “They look at you and say you can only play this role” (Rhonda); “We judge men on their potential and women on their accomplishments” (Christine). The students asserted that female student leaders were judged on appearance, having to look well put together to be taken seriously as opposed to male leaders showing up oblivious to their appearance. Melissa stated:
I don’t want to play the appearance card, but if I go into a meeting and I *don’t look put together*, if I go into a formal meeting and I’m wearing sweatpants or I’m not wearing a dress shirt or a dress of some sort or if my hair is all crazy or I’m *not wearing make-up* or something like that, I’m honestly *not taken as seriously* as I am when I walk in . . . put together. I have on at least a blazer and a nice pair of slacks, something like that. So *being a woman, you have to look put together* when you are in those kinds of leadership roles and positions or you won’t be taken seriously. . . . Whereas sometimes *men, they can walk in wearing a pair of khaki pants and a button down shirt and call it a day* [emphasis added].

The concept of appearance was incorporated into the leadership identity of students as they moved through early phases of leadership identity development. These students believed that appropriately styled dress, hair, and makeup were necessary to be taken seriously as a leader.

The students also shared insights on their perceptions about gender in terms of leadership on campus, identifying certain organizations as attracting male leaders while others attracted female leaders. Leila stated, “If it’s more helping or social or humanitarian, I see woman; but if it’s more business or even STEM, I feel like there’s a lot of male representation over women representation.” Although they could identity these gendered leadership roles, they were still unable to see the direct impact on who they were as leaders.

Many of the students shared examples of strong female role models and influences in their lives. These women were mothers, female teachers, and female
coaches as illustrated by the following data excerpts: “My mom . . . she did it all, . . . worked and had kids, and had time to hang out with us, and got me to soccer practice on time; and she was kind of like super woman in my head” (Faith); “She would go above and beyond” (Gretchen); “She was the coach that always worked out with us and didn’t just watch us” (Faith). The participants were initially unable to discern that what they admired about these female influences were aspects of leadership and, as demonstrated in later phases, were qualities they wished to incorporate into aspects of their own leadership identity. With very few exceptions, however, the participants connected these female role models with who they had become as leaders when they later reflected on their views of leadership and how these influential women impacted them.

**Changing Views of Self as Leader**

Early in their involvement, a majority of the students did not see themselves as leaders. If they were in a position in an organization in high school, they often saw these positions as “hollow,” a title only with no real work occurring as illustrated by Catherine, who said, “Student Council . . . didn’t do anything.” Selection for these roles happened either through popularity or because someone was willing to step up and take the role; Leigh stated that “a lot of the leadership was what family you were from or kind of a popularity contest.” Those students who lacked self-confidence did not willingly seek out these opportunities until they were encouraged by others or were assigned to a role. Although they had often been given opportunities to be a leader, they were unable or unwilling to incorporate leadership as an aspect of their identity. Other students
expressed a fear of being themselves during this time, believing that it was better to stay in the background than to stand out. Cassie stated:

My view as a leader back in high school was just someone that was affiliated with all these different clubs, that was popular, that was extroverted, that was outspoken and could get things done, that had more of an aggressive and direct leadership style. While looking back on my high school years, I was quiet, submissive, I played by the rules, I didn’t want to get in trouble, and I just saw myself as a team player [emphasis added].

These students often chose to be merely a member without drawing attention to themselves.

Depending on their experiences in high school, some students entered college believing they already possessed strong leadership skills and thinking they could move directly to the top of an organization without putting in their time. Faith said, “I felt like, this is going to sound pretentious, but that I was a lot better than what I was getting assigned.” These students desired to stand out, wanted others to be like them, and believed they had better skills than other student leaders. They were driven to do more, wanted to be in charge, and were disgruntled when they were not given the opportunities they felt they deserved. For some students, their frustration then manifested in correcting others and telling them what they did wrong. Their belief in their skills may have exceeded their actual abilities, causing them to question themselves and reevaluate how to proceed as leaders. The leadership identity developmental process was very frustrating when the students were in the moment, experiencing challenges.
**Self as positional leader.** For many participants, their early view of themselves as leaders typically accompanied election to a position in college. At this point, they did not truly identify themselves as leaders but instead as having leadership roles. Their views of themselves as positional leaders reflected a desire to control everything and complete tasks themselves so they would be perfect. The following data excerpts support their views: “I like to do everything myself. . . . I don’t always trust that somebody else will be able to do as good of a job as me” (Naomi); “Nine times out of ten if you really want something done right, you’ve got to do it yourself, you know?” (Grace); “I edited every single story for every edition of the paper, and I helped edit layouts, I helped lay out the paper, and just kind of had a finger on everything” (Faith). These students believed that they had to do it all. For some students, this belief was reflected in their desire to have things done the way they wanted and not accepting others’ approaches—a “my way or the highway” approach. They were unable to trust others to accomplish tasks, believing that they could do them best. They had not yet moved into understanding that others’ ideas may be better than theirs and lacked confidence in themselves to let others take the lead.

Other students expressed the idea of learning all one can from a position and moving on, believing that once it was completed, they’d learned everything and assuming the same role again would provide no new learning. Faith asserted:

I kind of decided that doing the magazine again wasn’t going to give me any new skills I didn’t already gain from doing it one year. I would have learned things,
but it probably would have been a very similar process to what I had done the year before [emphasis added].

Christine also shared an example of having learned everything she could from a role, “but at the end of the day, [she’d] gotten everything that [she] wanted out of this role.” Some of these views may have reflected the earlier held aspect of doing everything oneself; after taking on all the responsibility and learning from it, then little more was left to learn.

**Lack of self-confidence.** A commonality among the students in their early views of self as leader was a lack of self-confidence and maturity. Gretchen was an example of someone whose lack of confidence and maturity showed in the way she handled the challenge of being passed over for a leadership position in her organization. She talked about being bitter—“I am extremely bitter about this”—almost resentful that others who she perceived as less capable were chosen over her. She chose to pull back (or run away) from the group and become more involved as a leader in another departmental organization. Gretchen stated:

> I applied for three vice president positions and the president position, and I did not get them. However, *I feel that I am more qualified* than the girls who did get them, and then I just—that *totally turned me off*. I was very upset about that.

> And so I instead *took my skills elsewhere* [emphasis added].

She perceived her actions as turning a negative into a positive when really she did not see the advantage this experience could have provided her to learn about herself and ways to improve her leadership abilities. Even though she said it had been a positive to move into this new role, she continued to be challenged by (in her view) the denial of an
opportunity in her organization: “I’m still bitter about it because I still have to go to the meetings and see all the girls up there.” Her view mirrored the idea at this early developmental point that students were focused on themselves and the belief that they knew the right way of doing things as leaders.

**Others’ belief in a leader.** Being perceived as leaders and encouraged by others was a key component for students’ changing views of self as leader. Initially, students were uncomfortable identifying themselves as leaders, but as they were given opportunities or were elected by their peers, they conceptualized that leadership as a part of who they were. While in high school, adults (e.g., parents, teachers, coaches) had more influence on students’ identification as a leader; in college peers influenced their beliefs as shown by Catherine when she made the choice to run for president of an organization: “The past president . . . encouraged me to do it.” Being asked by a peer to perform a task or role, being trusted by peers, and having friends come to them all contributed to the students developing a sense that they were leaders.

**Expectations placed on a leader.** As students’ acceptance of themselves as leaders evolved and they took on more advanced leadership roles, the expectations placed upon them also increased. A number of the students internalized this as having to be “on” and not make mistakes as illustrated by Leila, who said, “I had to be on 100% of the time”; and Naomi, who questioned, “Is what I’m doing the right thing to be doing?” Other students understood that because they were seen as leaders, people were always watching them as verified by Naomi, who said, “You don’t always realize that people are sort of watching what you’re doing.” These higher expectations placed more pressure on
the students to want to do well and perform to the best of their abilities. For some students, the pressure felt forced and unnatural, almost as though they had to fit impossibly into a mold as Leila described: “I feel like you’re expected to look a certain way, to be a certain way, and to be available; but sometimes you just don’t want to be.” Although some students thrived in this type of environment, other students chose not to take on advanced roles, not to put themselves into this situation.

As the students internalized and accepted themselves as leaders, they also expressed confidence in their abilities. As belief in their abilities strengthened, they became less concerned about what others thought. The students also came to understand that their roles were changing and that now they could provide insights and perspectives for others as their supporters had done for them. Faith stated, “I just appreciated what they [past student leaders] did, too, and was like, ‘I can do this for other students.’” In this later phase students no longer worried about the expectations placed on them as leaders; they had moved instead to a place where they could develop others as leaders.

**Being a role model.** As students came to see their leadership roles change, setting an example became a common goal. The students strived to do the right thing, to “walk the talk” of being a leader as illustrated by the following data excerpts: “[I am] mindful that I’m exhibiting what I expect of younger girls on this campus, or my peers” (Grace); “I always feel that actions speak louder than words” (Cassie). These students understood that admitting that they did not know everything was acceptable as verified by Melissa, who said, “I don’t always think that I know everything. I don’t think that I’m the almighty guru of everything.” Willing to learn from their mistakes, they had grown
comfortable enough with themselves to be who they were, not what others wanted them to be. For some, the realization that they could be an example for others was humbling.

For other students, however, taking on the responsibility of being a role model meant that they felt that they had to act as if they had it all together even if they did not feel as if they did as shown in the following data excerpts: “Sometimes I think I can project that I sort of know what I’m doing, the whole fake it ‘til you make it’ thing” (Naomi); “I don’t think I’m ever going to have it completely together, but I can pretend all day” (Christine); “My friends and the people around me perceive me as this all-knowing person—she’s got it all together—and it scared me” (Kate). Sharing these thoughts and feelings could be turned into an example for other students who might feel they were incapable of being leaders, thus still leading by example. The idea of being a role model was best expressed by Holly, who said, “Just [make] sure that what you do reflects who you want to be or where you want to go.” This sentiment took some of the pressure off being an example for others to follow and put role modeling in the context of being true to oneself as a leader.

**Seeing self as leader.** Students at later developmental points assembled the pieces of their experiences into a solid identity of self as leader and understood the necessity of consistency in their actions, behaviors, and values and of reflecting the expectations they had of others as confirmed by Grace, who said, “I really need to walk the talk, what I want to see my peers doing.” The students gained understanding of who they were and who they wished to be as illustrated by the following example from Faith: “I’ve learned a lot more . . . about myself. . . . I see leadership as an opportunity to grow
as a person and kind of pin down what you want.” Students’ identities as leaders had come together for them at this phase, truly becoming a part of who they were.

They had developed a confidence in their abilities as leaders to make things happen and to bring about changes in their environment. A critical component of their view of themselves as leaders at this later phase was to remain true to themselves, refusing to let others change them and ignoring what others thought as expressed by Abigail, who stated, “I don’t care anymore about what are these people going to think about me if they see me walking with this person who is really different from who I am. I don’t care about those social boundaries anymore.” They had found their niches, had identified those leadership experiences that were important to them, and envisioned success in their endeavors.

**Leaders as change agents.** The salient feature of students’ later views of self as leader was that they could (and should) be change agents. The few students who reached this understanding also showed an awareness of their roles as female leaders to make change happen for women both on campus and in the larger society. They had explored who they were as women as well as who they were as leaders and had come to a point where those two identities intersected, prompting them to action. They had found their voices and wanted to use them to make a difference and make life better. Grace shared the example of the power of a campus protest about racial issues to make student voices heard by a wider audience:

Being able to see people all the way in [larger cities in the state] seeing our voice is finally heard, . . . we finally said something as a community, not just a
tweet—“Oh, I’m mad about Ferguson. It’s this [campus] spoke today.

These newly intersected identities of gender and leader emerged from enhanced self-confidence and additional experiences in leadership roles as well as exposure to other women who could be seen as role models.

**Acknowledging being a female leader.** Earlier in their development, students did not perceive being female as having an impact on who they were as leaders. Students who were at a later point in their leadership identity development process understood that gender played a role, and for several students this knowledge evolved into their view that leaders should be the change agents noted above. A number of students discussed the power of labels applied to them during their early lives. The label of bossy impacted Leigh as she considered taking on roles in high school (and even in college). She questioned whether she could or should take a leadership position, wondering whether she would be perceived as bossy or overbearing. She stated:

*When I was younger, I was called bossy a lot, . . . so looking back, was I discouraged from being the one to take action* and kind of help decide what we were going to do because I was a girl? But I think that a lot of times if a young boy were to do that, people would just listen without thinking about it, and I *never heard any of my classmates or male cousins get called bossy*, but a lot of times I was always told that growing up. So I think that kind of had an effect when I was younger [emphasis added].
Penny, expressed her concern about being “girly” and the accompanying perception that she lacked capability. Labels had a powerful impact on these students’ early views of their ability or capability to be a leader because they were female.

The students in early phases of their leadership identity development held the opinion that female leaders were perceived as emotional or emotions-based in the way they led. Some of them did not want to deal with the emotional aspects of leading, especially when in a group of all women as described by Joan: “You kind of have to rephrase things and work it out around feelings and what not.” Penny discussed the way women, in particular, could be emotional and the negative way emotions could impact interactions and leadership: “Because sometimes, I know being a girl, we’re all psycho; and we feel like we have to the extreme to get our point across.” These students appeared to want to push away identity as a female, to move away from the stereotype of women as emotional, denying this aspect of themselves and leadership.

Although the students were aware of these views and perceived differences, very few of them, early in their leadership identity development, were able to identify either negative or positive examples from their own experiences as female leaders as illustrated by the following data excerpts: “I haven’t had very many situations where I felt like it made a huge difference or something” (Bridget); “I don’t really think there’s been any people not listening to me because I’m a woman in a leadership position” (Faith).

The general perception was that the students’ own experiences on campus were equal and balanced. Students did not believe they had to fight for positions or prove themselves as stated by Catherine: “So I’m not being contested by males—like ever.”
For several participants, gender related to their self-confidence and belief in their abilities in relation to other males or females. Holly asserted, “I feel like I’ve always dealt with males. I kind of gravitate more to hanging with guys than I do to females.” Janice talked about being intimidated by strong female peers and being unsure of how she could fit with them: “If I’m being honest, I think I’d be more intimidated of another woman. . . . Where I guess if it was a bunch of guys, I’d be, ‘Screw this! I’m going to tell them what I think.’” Gender had an impact on the students’ leadership identity development, but they were not consciously aware of the impact during the early phase.

In later developmental phases, students became more conscious of what being a female leader meant, in general and for themselves. Grace exhibited this evolving understanding, specifically related to being a female leader, when she shared the following: “I’m developing as a young woman and realizing that this is time to be a woman now.” These students realized that they had a voice and that they could express their opinions without fear as stated by Bridget: “I’m not afraid to stand alone, and so if I firmly believe in something, I will stand alone if I have to, and . . . if you will, stick up for myself.” These students no longer worried about the negative perceptions associated with strong female leaders.

Students shared examples of other women who helped them understand how they could stand up as females and break down negative societal views of women as leaders. Samantha shared a story about her sister:
She’s a really good role model for me. I look up to her . . . because she is defying the odds with the gender roles in boxing. . . . She literally shows me that whatever you put your mind to, you can do it.

Her observation of another woman’s choices encouraged her to make the decision to remain in a major where she was one of a few students of color as a way to show other females they could do whatever they wanted.

These students understood that women were as capable as men and could do what men did just as well, as stated by Holly: “It’s just another way for me to prove that I’m just as good as you [a man].” Identifying as a female leader and challenging stereotypes were ways these students connected aspects of their gender and leader identities.

As students progressed in their leadership identity development and understood that their gender identity was a part of who they were, they wanted to change boundaries for female leaders. Abigail shared a story of denigration by another girl in high school and how she wanted to help people realize they did not have to accept the labels others put on them. She said:

I think comments like that [denigration] probably really put a damper on other people, and really make them not want to do things, which is really sad. So I think that’s kind of what I want to do is say, “You know what, maybe they did say that, but you don’t have to listen to them, and you can be better than that, and you can prove them wrong [emphasis added].

Abigail wanted to send a message that female leaders are better than the stereotypical labels placed on them.
Students in the later phase were willing to take a stand for what was right and to advocate for the rights of women. A few of these students had a strong desire to change the societal messages women received. For example, Samantha stated, “I have to figure out a way how I could be able to change society. . . . What are we teaching our girls?” These students wanted other female students to see the possibilities and used their experiences as examples. Samantha continued:

A lot of people come to me, and they’re like, “Oh, you’re a [voice] major. Why don’t you just switch?” And I’m like, “No, I’m not gonna switch because I can become that leader, and I can show that new freshman, that AALANA [African American, Latino, Asian, and Native American] freshman, that she can accomplish anything. . . . There’s no limits” [emphasis added].

The message students at this developmental phase of leadership identity wanted to send was that anything is possible and roadblocks should not slow anyone down.

Leila stated that gender was less an issue for her as a leader than race. She did not perceive her gender as the primary reason she might be challenged as a leader, but she acknowledged that it could be secondary. Her larger challenge was her race. She perceived that as an African American in a scientific field, she was often questioned about her abilities or her right to be in that major, which was also reflected in the way others perceived her as a leader. She felt that she had more to prove even beyond what others talked about in terms of women needing to prove themselves. Leila stated:

I don’t feel like my leadership skills have been impacted because I’m a woman. I feel like they’ve been impacted because I was Black. People will, I feel, question
my intelligence, not because I’m a woman but because I’m Black. But then they’ll go back to I’m a woman. I feel I’ve never been attacked because I’m a woman because if they can relate it to oh, that’s my mother and my mother’s pretty smart. Or my sister’s pretty smart. If you just know of a woman who doesn’t fit the stereotype, that’s a lot easier. But you hear people coming to college who’ve never seen Black people or who’ve never interacted with different types of people, so I feel like race is a stronger indication at least in my life and in my own experiences than being a woman [emphasis added].

Although my study did not explore identities beyond gender, Leila raised a point that requires additional exploration. The intersection of the multiple identities students bring to the table as leaders cannot be dismissed.

**Having a voice.** Having a voice and using it were important to the leadership identity development processes experienced by these students. Early in their leadership experiences, they viewed voice increasingly as their opportunity to represent their peers on advisory boards, not acknowledging those roles as leadership but as something with which to be involved. For example, Joan served on an advisory board to voice the concerns of other student athletes. She said, “There’s two representatives from every team. Meet every other week to make decisions about or to voice concerns. So we’re the in between, between the athletes and the Athletic Department.” Gretchen, who also had the opportunity to serve on a student board with school administrators to voice the needs of her peers, said, “We met with the principal once a month and kind of talked about issues that were going on.” Joan and Gretchen expressed a desire to be a voice for others,
yet they did not directly connect that desire with an identity as a leader. Although they may not have internalized an identity as a leader in their advisory board roles, they were indeed leaders who had simply not yet acknowledged this identity, reflecting aspects of subjective knowledge (Belenky et al., 1986).

Other students provided examples of feeling they had no voice or could not use it. Janice talked about being intimidated by other strong female student leaders. When she was around students such as these, she tended to shut down and avoid contributing her voice to discussions. She was aware of this issue and attempted to work through it by challenging herself to speak up in those uncomfortable situations. Melissa shared her experience with males leaders talking over her in a meeting: “Males will try and talk over me or something.” Early in her leadership experience, Melissa was uncomfortable standing up for herself in situations with overbearing males, wanting to avoid social isolation (Belenky et al., 1986) by standing up for herself and making her voice heard.

Early in the leadership identity development process many students were likely to attribute their failure to make their voices heard to personality or specific experiences with the people in the situation instead of gender. Leigh provided some insight into this idea when she discussed a situation in which she could have taken the lead but deferred to the male in the room because she was not “the leader” at that point. She said:

Maybe in crisis situations because I’m a girl. I can specifically remember the day of the [campus crisis incident]. . . . We were in a Hall Council meeting and right away, one of the male RAs just took charge. But he also—that’s why this isn’t a great example—he is going into the police academy, so he’s very good in those
kinds of situations. But right away, everyone listened to him, and I felt like if I had any suggestion, it wasn’t going to fly . . . even though I knew what to do just as well.

The idea of having a voice emerged to a degree but some students were able to make their voices heard only when in a positional role: Voice could be used only when one had the power and authority of a title to back it up. Students gained self-confidence but had not yet come to truly incorporate in their visions of themselves as leaders whose voices were valued no matter what their role.

Students’ views of themselves as leaders evolved from believing that they could not be leaders unless they had titles to developing stronger self-confidence resulting from the encouragement of others to identifying themselves as fully confident leaders and finally to recognizing the importance of serving as role models for others. Early in the leadership identity development process the aspect of being female remained unacknowledged, but as students progressed through their development, they gained awareness that being female mattered in who they were as leaders. For some, this realization propelled them into becoming (or striving to become) change agents.

**Reflective Learning**

The final theme that emerged from the data was reflective learning, defined by Komives et al. (2005) as occurring when students were provided “structured opportunities for critical reflection” (p. 598). While the students in my study were learning by doing and by observing others, none were prompted to think about their experiences and what they meant to them as leaders. Much of their reflection related to
specific actions or programs and how they could have been improved or the recognition of the students’ own weaknesses as illustrated in the following data excerpts: “I’ll think back with regret and think, ‘Oh I wish I could have done this’” (Rhonda); “I do that for myself in the terms of you are your own worst critic” (Christine); “I think when I reflect, it comes in moments of self-doubt” (Leigh). Students did not consider how their actions may have impacted others or what they learned by observing other student leaders. They did not think much about themselves beyond what they had done wrong in specific situations and how they could ensure they did not make the same mistake again, focusing on behaviors instead of who they were as leaders.

Early in their leadership identity development, students did not consider what their values were, what they believed in, and the way their beliefs played out in their leadership. Even when reflection was a required aspect of their leadership role, it often focused on how to improve a certain program or how to enhance a specific skill. Abigail explained that she was required to do weekly reflections as part of her peer mentor role: “For my [peer mentor] job I have to write a reflection every week. . . . They need to understand what’s happening, . . . whether I’m actually engaging with these students.” Students required to reflect as an aspect of their role did not note any particular contribution to their leadership identity development. They saw these reflections as exercises in improving some aspect of their performance or as a “chore” instead of a learning opportunity. Students were not encouraged to explore their identity and how it impacted their roles as leaders.
In later phases of leadership identity development, reflection took a different form. Some students used reflection as a way to think about past experiences and goals and to see how far they had progressed. For several students, reflection became a way to understand how they made things happen as Catherine illustrated when she said, “What am I doing to make those ideas a reality? . . . What do I need to change about how I’m dealing with the officers and all that kind of stuff.” Some students realized how their experiences could have been different; for example, Bridget discussed her early high school sports injury, which had set her on a different path: “I reflect on those [injuries] a lot, and I’m always reminding myself if it weren’t for my injuries, I don’t think I’d be doing what I’m meant to be doing right now.” In addition, Naomi commented on the impact of her involvement: “So I really think that if I hadn’t gotten involved, my college experience would have been vastly different; and who knows if I would still be here right now?” As the students looked back on their experiences to date, their pride in what they had accomplished contributed to their willingness to integrate the notion of leadership into their identities.

Although some of the students in my study were provided structured time for reflection, most reflection was self-initiated and seldom occurred. In early phases of development, student reflection focused on fixing what had gone wrong, not on any aspect of themselves as leaders. In later phases, reflection provided an opportunity to look back and analyze who they had become as leaders. Little reflection occurred between these times of reflection to move students along in their leadership identity development process.
The five themes emerging from the data— influences, meaningful involvement, broadening views of leadership, changing views of self as leader, and reflective learning— contributed to the leadership identity development model described in detail below.

**Emerging Model of Leadership Identity Development**

What emerged from the data and the themes described above was a four-phase process of leadership identity development (see Figure 1). Progression from one phase to the next was often marked by a series of transitional experiences. Although this process is described in a linear fashion, the students did not move through the model in a straight line. In addition, a number of the students exhibited aspects of two phases at once, particularly during the transition from one phase to the next. For example, a student may have exhibited a view of leadership as defined by stepping up and helping out (Phase 2) while acknowledging that multiple approaches were possible for resolving a conflict.

*Figure 1*: Leadership identity development model.
(Phase 3). The lines between the phases were fluid: Students moved between phases, depending on their experiences and the successes or challenges they faced. For example Faith demonstrated this fluidity with her desire to empower others (Phase 3) yet maintained aspects of controlling behavior (Phase 2). Although few students in my study progressed through Phase 4, several students moved toward a transition to that phase. Phase 4 was characterized by a shift from cognitive development to ethical development, given its focus on encouraging future leaders and bringing about social change, not a focus on students’ individual leadership identity development. The leadership identities of students in Phase 4 had been established, allowing them to explore the issues and challenges they saw in their local communities as well as to address societal challenges facing women and people of color. Additional understanding is needed about the ethical development occurring in Phase 4 to ascertain reasons that few students reached this phase. The remainder of this chapter provides an explanation of the phases of the emerging leadership identity development model.

**Phase 1: Awareness and Exploration**

Phase 1: Awareness and Exploration manifested in the belief of students that leaders existed externally to them. These students were provided with opportunities, typically by adults, to take on responsibility and leadership roles without seeing themselves as leaders or seeking out these opportunities on their own. As students became more deeply involved, they understood what it meant to be a leader yet continued to be uncomfortable applying this label to themselves. Students had difficulty equating
involvement with leadership. Major aspects of their experiences in this phase included exploring options and finding their comfort zones, not seeing themselves as leaders.

**Meaningful involvement.** During Phase 1 students were involved in activities but did not identify their involvement as leadership. Involvement meant having fun, experiencing a sense of belonging, and exploring new things as shown in the following data excerpts: “Honestly, I had friends that did it” (Gretchen); “It was a lot of fun” (Wendy); “I just felt a sense of pride and belonging in band” (Cassie); “I just try new things” (Bridget). Their experiences did not involve self-identifying as leaders or even considering that they could aspire to leadership. Their reasoning connected to early psychosocial identity development related to developing relationships (see Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Students simply wanted to be a part of a group of people with whom they could connect and have fun.

For other students, their early involvement contributed to their resumes and made them marketable to colleges and universities. Their end goal was college admission, but they did not yet grasp the way involvement facilitated self-development, either personally or as leaders. Although involvement certainly shaped their development, they experienced no conscious connection to the development of leadership identity in this phase.

**Expanding views of leadership.** In Phase 1 students identified leaders as public figures, such as presidents or celebrities as Gretchen demonstrated when she said, “Presidents are popping in my head. So George Bush, Al Gore, that type of thing.” Leaders, who possessed necessary qualities, such as charisma, assertiveness, or
extroversion, were individuals to be admired or respected; but few students in this phase aspired to be like these people. In addition to public figures, students looked up to people in their specific realm of influence as potential leaders. These included peers, captains of their sports team, or teachers who exhibited behaviors that students respected. Gretchen talked about the older girls who helped with cheerleading practice when she was young; she said, “Oh, my gosh, these girls—they can do anything in the world.” Christine talked about her drama teacher, who brought students from middle school (Grades 7 and 8) to perform in high school musicals. She saw how this teacher inspired all the students to buy into a common goal and was then able to guide the group to accomplishing it; she commented on “that strong individual who’s able to get a group of people to accomplish one goal.” In Phase 1 they were unable to connect the concept of leadership in others to their own abilities. Cassie, for example, perceived herself to be the opposite of who leaders were: “I always thought a leader was someone that was extroverted, that took charge, that people looked up to; and I just thought I was the opposite of that. Just someone who was just there.” Leaders were viewed as others, not who the students were or could be.

The idea of being a leader and what leadership meant was imposed on the participants by others; they incorporated the way others viewed leadership into their views during this early phase. Students in Phase 1 were unable to clearly express or define what leadership meant to them as stated by Leila: “I know what it’s supposed to look like, and . . . the goals you’re supposed to accomplish, but I don’t have a formal definition of what it should be or shouldn’t be.” As students progressed further into
Phase 1, they identified peers as leaders, indicating they understood what leadership looked like but not that what they themselves were doing was also leadership. Rhonda shared her perception of her friend as a leader, not herself:

> My best friend in high school . . . she’s amazing. . . . She is someone who, like my mom, can just do anything. She’s artistic, she’s smart, she has great grades, she excels across the board; so I think maybe at times I was a little bit in her shadow because I thought, “I saw her as a leader, and me as a follower” [emphasis added].

For students in this phase, leadership was directed externally, placed on others like a mantle that they could not wear themselves at this point in their development.

Students’ views of leadership in Phase 1 may also have been influenced by the way society views women as leaders. Naomi stated, “I would say that sometimes women aren’t looked to as natural leaders, that sometimes it’s a man’s job.” The students expressed an awareness of females needing to behave in certain approved ways and an understanding of the expectations placed on female leaders. Other students did not acknowledge gender in leadership at all as illustrated by Gretchen, who said, “I think the quality of a leader’s gender neutral,” implying no difference existed between female and male leaders. Other students acknowledged that they saw males in more powerful positions in society. Leila stated, “I don’t really want to say this, but powerful positions like presidents and things like that, of major companies or the United States—that’s male.” Rhonda spoke about the negative perception of women labeled as leaders: “I think there’s a negative view sometimes of women as leaders, saying, ‘Oh, they’re too
emotional, they can’t do it.” These students had not considered gender as a part of their own identity, thus preventing their application of what they saw or heard about female leaders to themselves. These societal views of leaders may have unconsciously influenced the students’ ability to consider that they could be leaders.

**Changing views of self as leader.** Although students in Phase 1 were encouraged to take on additional responsibility or were placed in leadership roles, typically by adults (e.g., teachers, coaches), they did not realize they were leaders while in these roles. Cassie, for example, shared her experiences as a section leader in marching band; she viewed this role in terms of making sure people knew the routine and what to do.

> I *led my own squad* of myself and three other people, and I would show them the ropes of the formations, make sure they knew all their music, and just *made sure that my squad was holding up their end* on the football field [emphasis added].

She did not see the possibility of her actions as leadership or herself as a leader. Although the students accepted these roles, they did not perceive themselves as leaders; these kinds of roles were simply about doing what needed to be done. What was clear was that others saw potential in the students and wanted to encourage their leadership development.

Students in this phase often lacked self-confidence. For a number of the students, their lack of confidence derived from the way they initially viewed leadership; for example, Cassie stated that leaders were extroverted, loud, social people, and she did not characterize herself as such. Naomi stated that she didn’t “stand out” and questioned
how she could be a leader. Students who struggled with self-confidence took longer to move into later developmental phases of leadership identity; some were still working on their confidence even as they concluded their college years and thus remained in an early phase of leadership identity development.

In this phase students implied that they were merely “stepping up,” doing what needed to be done for an organization or team as illustrated by the following data excerpts: “I just see myself as any place I can help out. I want to help” (Wendy); “What I can do to help our organization succeed and do what we set out to do” (Naomi); “I just thought about it as me doing what needed to be done” (Holly). The students did not view their actions as leadership. Joan talked about her role as a student athlete, filling in the gaps when needed, merely stepping up, which she did not connect with leadership. She said, “I guess I don’t really realize what leadership is sometimes when I’m thinking about it; and when I’m forced to think about it, I realize, ‘Oh, yeah, I guess I was being a leader in that standpoint,’ but to me it’s just doing what needs to be done.” Some sensed that one had an obligation to “do” for the organization and that the work simply needed to be done. Being a team player was also an important aspect of students’ identities in Phase 1. The students wanted to be seen as individuals willing to help out and do what was needed for the group—but not as leaders. Leila stated, “You can’t really be the star of it. Even though no matter how good you are at it, it really is a team effort to accomplish a goal.” Students in Phase 1 did not want to stand out or be held up as examples.

Students strongly valued relationships in Phase 1: Awareness and Exploration. Maintaining relationships was more important for them than leadership. The students
wanted to be close to their peers, not to compete against them for leadership roles.

Melissa stated:

I’m not the kind of person to step on someone else to get ahead or push someone else down to make myself look better. . . . My relationships mean the world to me. If one of my best friends was applying for an award or something, I wouldn’t apply for the same award. I know that sounds silly, and if I think that I deserve that award, I should apply for it; but that’s just not who I am as a person, I would much rather one of my friends get something over me.

Students in Phase 1 placed friends’ successes ahead of their own.

The importance of relationships was also apparent in addressing conflict or—in this phase—not addressing conflict. For these students, the value of relationships superseded making waves or addressing negative behaviors in others. Students in Phase 1 acknowledged conflicts and problems but were either willing to ignore them, let other people handle them, or decided they weren’t worth fighting. Joan shared an example of being part of a group of co-captains in which one leader created problems, but the rest of the co-captains decided to ignore the situation. She said, “There was definitely one person in particular. There’s times where the rest of us were like, ‘Go for it’ because we didn’t like what she was doing, but it was easier just to let her do it.” She recognized the value of sometimes letting things go, realizing that the other person is not going to change. She continued, “You just have to let it go. You can’t do anything about it. It’s not going to change her mindset. She’s not going to change.” Joan illustrated how students in this phase thought ignoring a behavior was better than destroying a friendship.
**Transition from Phase 1 to Phase 2.** Early in Phase 1 students were unable to acknowledge themselves as leaders. They were encouraged by others, often adults, to assume more responsibilities. For some students leadership was an expectation at their high schools, such as Catherine’s mentoring role in a big–little sisters program about which she said, “It’s automatic, doing the [peer mentoring] program. You don’t really get a choice to opt out of that.” As the students gained more experiences and were encouraged to step into leadership roles, they understood what leadership might mean to them. Without seeking roles, they unintentionally experienced leadership as a way to be involved, have fun, build skills, and find their niches. The more these students heard people call them leaders, the more they internalized the concept and explored who they were as leaders. Naomi expressed this phenomenon best: “I guess hearing the label so many times, . . . I finally started to apply it to myself a little bit.” The movement from a view of leadership only for others in Phase 1 to acknowledgment that leadership was a possible aspect of their own identities marked the transition by these students to Phase 2, which is addressed below. This transition often occurred in college when a student was first elected to a position.

**Phase 2: Leader Identified**

To Komives et al. (2005), the expression *leader identified* meant that leaders perform leadership and are responsible for group outcomes. As students in the current study transitioned from Phase 1 to 2, they acknowledged their capability to be leaders and identified themselves as such. For most students the transition to Phase 2 occurred in
college, and their movement into and through this phase typically occurred during the first two to three years there.

**Expanding views of leadership.** Early in this phase students had difficulty clearly identifying what being a leader meant to them. They often commented about the lack of a clear, single definition noted by Catherine: “There’s no right or there’s no one definition of leadership, I think.” Because of this lack of clarity, students had difficulty fully incorporating the role of leader into their identities. Their involvement was important in their continuing to work out what being a leader meant, incorporating a clearer definition into who they were as leaders and then putting that definition into practice. In addition, students learned much about what leadership meant and who they did or did not want to be as leaders by observing others. Kate shared her observation of a professional with whom she worked: “I’ve also seen some things that I know when I become a professional I don’t want to do because of her.” Faith stated, “I think a lot of it was just watching other people that were a couple years ahead of me in school and seeing what they were doing.”

As students were elected to their first positional roles, they typically believed that a leader told others what to do, had authority over others, and took charge as illustrated by the following data excerpts: “need to be commanding and know how to hold somebody’s attention and to give directions” (Gretchen); “take charge and just do things” (Joan). Students perceived the need for leaders to maintain control as illustrated in this statement from Naomi, who was reluctant to trust others to perform tasks: “So I don’t always trust that somebody else will be able to do as good of a job as me.” They
preferred performing tasks themselves if they wanted them done right. Subtle shifts occurred, however, as students moved further into Phase 2. They understood that leaders were unable to do all that was needed alone, exhibited a sense of collaborative leadership, and wanted others to have similar experiences and chances, much as they had been given opportunities.

**Stepping up.** Present among these students early in Phase 2 was a strong belief that leadership was about stepping up and doing what was needed as stated by Naomi: “Let me get more involved, let me take on larger roles, sort of do what I can to help our organization succeed and do what we set out to do.” For some students, stepping up meant completing work and attending to details. Others equated stepping up with fulfilling obligations to the group. For still others, it meant taking the initiative to do what others were unwilling to do or asking to be involved in making change happen. Holly shared her desire to make her organization more active and engaged with its members; she said, “So I went to the advisor at the time and said, ‘Can I be involved’? I just want to help.” Stepping up in this way was not always easy for these students, however. Doing so sometimes meant telling older peers what to do and dealing with the discomfort that came with that responsibility as shared by Joan, who said, “These people are so much older than me. I don’t want to yell at them.” These views about stepping up reflected the students’ varying levels of self-confidence. Those students who were more confident in their abilities were the ones who took the initiative and asked for responsibilities. Those less confident were more likely to feel a sense of obligation and to perceive that they were just doing what needed to be done or that they knew the “right”
way to accomplish a task (cf. the subjective knowledge that comes from the self in Belenky et al., 1986).

**Helping.** As students moved further into Phase 2, helping as leadership emerged. The idea of helping was focused on others, wanting peers to do well, being there for others, and showing them the ropes as illustrated by the following data excerpts: “being in positions where I felt like I could help people” (Faith); “I like helping others” (Wendy); “I knew that I wanted to . . . just connect and counsel students that were just like me, that were just as overwhelmed about the college experience (Cassie). At times, students were unable to help someone they cared about and learned to deal with the frustration resulting from the poor choices of others. Christine shared the story of a friend who was, in her opinion, making poor choices; she wanted to help but discovered that her assistance and advice were unwelcome.

I don’t like to see people fail, and it’s really hard to watch someone continually, consistently make choices that will never lead to a positive outcome. . . . Every choice was hard, and it was hard to watch that because at the end of the day, I want people to do well because you can see the potential in yourself and in the people you are around, and watching them crumble is such a disenchancing experience [emphasis added].

This type of experience provided a valuable lesson in understanding that leaders cannot always fix situations and that they cannot take responsibility for others’ choices.

**Perception of female leaders.** During Phase 2, students continued to express traditional, socially constructed views of female leaders. They perceived female leaders
as emotional or leading by emotion. Thus, students often appeared to want to reject their identities as females and to move away from the stereotype of women as emotional, denying this aspect of themselves and leadership. In the focus group students struggled to reconcile the way female leaders were viewed in society when a debate arose about the meaning of being an emotional or caring leader. The students clarified their positions: To them a caring, emotional leader was concerned with the welfare of others and able to empathize with others; they rejected women leaders as “emotional messes” as illustrated by the following data excerpts: “And it breaks my heart to see when other people are completely alone because I’ve been there” (Penny); “coming from a place of empathy and understanding” (Leila); “being more mindful and more accommodating” (focus group, October 14, 2014). Although the students defended their views about the positive aspects of an emotional leader, a majority of them were also quick to defend male leaders, who could also be caring as shown by the following examples: “Not to say that a man leader won’t do that as well” (Leigh); “Not all guys are that way [overpowering and inconsiderate]” (Melissa). These qualifying, rationalizing statements showed that in Phase 2 the students had either accepted socially assigned gender roles or explored what it meant to be female and did not yet want be “different” from males.

**Changing views of self as leader.** A notable progression took place for students during Phase 2 as they passed from resistance of self as leader to exploration of various approaches to leadership and ultimately arrived at a place of confidence with their handling of leadership roles. Much of Phase 2 involved students’ exploration, trying out different roles, styles, and approaches to find what worked for them and further
developing selected characteristics before incorporating them into their identity. Even as students transitioned into Phase 3, exploration and solidification of their leader identities continued as a result of the positions and experiences the students pursued during their early college years. The situations in which they were placed and the challenges they addressed continued to help shape who they were as individuals as well as who they became as leaders.

Reinventing self. A number of students shared the opportunities that college provided to reinvent themselves. Bridget’s sports injury forced her to reexamine her role and how she could contribute and lead. She said:

When I started realizing that I really did have an impact on the team still when I was off the court, definitely I started to see myself as a leader then, just like a little peep of it though. . . . Doesn’t matter if there’s someone better than me. There’s a reason why I’m on the court, and it’s because even though I’m not scoring 50 points a game, I do something else for the team. I like to call it the dirty work [emphasis added].

Bridget understood that she could contribute and be a leader on her team without being the best athlete.

For Gretchen, reinvention meant keeping life circumstances (in her case an illness) from derailing the accomplishment of her goals, including where she chose to go to college.

My dad just said you need to go somewhere close so that if you need to go to a hospital, we’ll be there. You know? And I just said, I need to live my life. You
know, I need to go out, I *need to experience things.* As long as I get a handle on this, I’m leaving. And so I finally did get a handle on it. . . . And so I definitely just look at it as yes, that time in my life was horrible, but now *I need to move on.* I need to do better things [emphasis added].

For a majority of the students, reinvention meant finding a new direction and becoming the person they wanted to be. For some, doing so was an overwhelming task and caused them to fear incapability or loss of their sense of self. For example, Janice stated, “I just didn’t feel like I could accomplish that.” Although reinvention of self was more specifically related to their individual identities, it had a definite influence on their leadership identity development, particularly related to self-confidence. The students who embraced reinvention moved into Phase 2 more quickly, taking on new challenges and opportunities. By contrast, those who felt a sense of loss during this process took longer to move into Phase 2, and many of them had not yet moved fully into Phase 3 during the course of the study. This time of exploration and change brought with it the opportunity to become the person each student wanted to be, but some remained unclear about who that person might be early in this phase.

*Positional authority.* In Phase 2 students took two approaches to leadership. In the first approach leadership was associated with holding a position. Identifying self as leader initially occurred for these students when they were elected to a position in college. Election by their peers also lent credibility to leadership. Throughout this phase students believed that leadership is earned. Wendy stated, “I view leadership as a position that is earned . . . as a trusted position. You’ve gotten to where you are because
people trust in you, and you have built a rapport or credibility with people.” The students’ leadership identity was affirmed by others’ views of them, not the way they saw themselves.

In their early positional roles, many of the students were directive and controlling, believing that they had to tell others what to do and set goals for a group themselves without input from others. Students in Phase 2 expressed a lack of trust in others to complete tasks, thinking that they could do them best as illustrated by Catherine, who said, “Delegation’s always hard for me. I’m tough. I like to hang onto everything.” The students’ views of leadership as positional authority during this phase also related to their own levels of self-confidence and experience. Students were uncomfortable with ambiguity and with the notion that others were as capable as they were; they had a need for perfection, not yet realizing that nothing is ever “perfect.” A shift occurred later in Phase 2 as students became more comfortable with the label of leader and incorporated that label more confidently into their identities.

**Collaborative leader.** As students moved deeper into Phase 2: Leader Identified, a second approach to leadership involving increased collaboration emerged. Students saw the value of working with others as opposed to directing them. As the shift occurred, the students broadened their perspectives, learning to work with different people as illustrated by Wendy, who said, “I know how to approach different situations, talk to different people.” Students realized that control was ineffective and that understanding led to better leadership. This shift was often facilitated by acquisition of a different perspective from an adult, exposure to new things, or the realization that others had
demands on them as well. For some students, this idea emerged from their experience—
learning to be part of a sports team in high school. This view of leadership reflected
recognition that they were part of something bigger than themselves. Students involved
in sports learned to put others first, placing the team ahead of themselves as Leila
confirmed: “to hear everyone’s opinions and to really delegate and to be a part of
something bigger than yourself.” Being part of a team meant having a passion for
something, learning to work together to achieve an outcome, and setting aside differences
for the good of the team. Experiences of student athletes were reflected in the way they
led collaboratively later in Phase 2.

*Addressing conflict.* As students moved further into Phase 2 and became more
self-confident, the way they addressed challenges and conflicts shifted to accommodate
conflicting views as they tried to understand others’ points of view and to negotiate
among the parties. As this shift occurred, the students saw that as leaders they could not
ignore problems: They had to step up and resolve issues. They also saw that more than
one approach may be taken to resolve an issue as confirmed by Christine, who said, “I
may at times think I have the right answer, but somebody might have one that’s better.”
This broadening perspective reflected the procedural knowledge of Belenky et al. (1986).
These students understood different “ways of looking” (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 97); they
realized that each person views the world through a different lens. Also at a point late in
Phase 2, some participants developed an understanding of the need for consistency,
fairness, and objectivity as a leader. Leigh stated, “One thing is always keeping
consistency and being fair.” The idea of empathy emerged, and some participants
attempted to understand the viewpoint of the other person in a conflict; for example, Rhonda stated the following:

I’ve been introduced with a bunch of different diverse groups, and I think it *makes me empathetic as a person* . . . I think the world would be a nicer place if everyone empathized for each other, and I am very empathetic. When someone has a problem, I feel like I have the same exact problem, so I’m always trying to help in whatever way I can, and I’m very—I’m welcoming of people and all genders and races and sexualities. I just think that’s *so important to be open and just accept people for who* they are rather than trying to prescribe them to what you want them to be [emphasis added].

Students who were able to incorporate empathy and openness to others into their sense of leadership were more successful. These successes strengthened their belief in themselves as leaders.

*Seeing self as a female leader.* As students gained additional experiences and were exposed to varying viewpoints, they became increasingly aware of the potential impact of gender on how they were perceived. They knew when they were being tested by males. Penny shared a story of a challenge by a male peer about her interest in sports, asking her to name five players from her favorite NFL team. She said, “I feel like a lot of times I get challenged because I’m a girl.” The students also perceived variations in the way women led and saw value in the collaborative approach taken by their female peers. Later in this phase consciousness raising occurred, yet the students had not internalized the role of gender into who they were as individuals and who they were as leaders.
Students in this phase grew more comfortable identifying as leaders, but they did not consciously explore what it meant to them to be female or to be a female leader.

*Having a voice.* Associated with the students’ struggle to connect their gender identity to leadership was the concept of having a voice. Several students shared examples of times when they felt they had no voice, particularly when in the presence of others they perceived as strong leaders. In these situations the students deferred to others, remaining silent. As students progressed through Phase 2: Leader Identified, the idea of having and using their voices remained strongly associated with roles involving positional authority. They believed that their voices were useful only when they had the power and authority of a title to back them up. Students gained self-confidence but had still not come to see the value of their voices no matter what their role.

**Transition from Phase 2 to Phase 3.** As students moved through Phase 2 and transitioned to Phase 3, they realized more broadly what leadership could mean and what being a leader could look like. They moved away from the idea of needing to control every aspect and became more open to others’ views and ideas, recognizing the value of including everyone in a process. Leigh shared an example of involving others in making decisions about a process. She said:

> I think often times it’s easy for me to think, “Oh, the way *I want to do it* is the *best way.*” Like, my idea for stuffing the packets is the best way, but *asking others and trusting* that what their thought process is is just as equal. . . . So I think getting the feedback from people is important, too [emphasis added].

The students saw the value of involving others in processes and decision making.
Students also viewed leadership as more than a label and understood their responsibility to develop leadership in others. They wanted others to have the same opportunities they had been given as stated by Faith: “It’s very important to me . . . to give other people the opportunity to move into these roles . . . because it’s been a great experience for me to do that.” The students had developed new skills, moved up in the ranks of their organizations, and realized that they could help others develop as leaders. Their realization led to a desire to see others grow. These transitional experiences reflected movement into Phase 3, moving the students to an advanced view of leadership and a stronger sense of self-confidence, which they then incorporated into their identities as leaders.

**Phase Three: Leadership Differentiated**

In Phase 3: Leadership Differentiated students solidified their views of leadership, moved further along the path to collaborative leadership, and understood how leadership could be both positional and nonpositional. The students enhanced their leadership abilities and developed stronger self-confidence in their ability to be leaders. Enhanced self-confidence and exploration of who they wanted to be led these students to fully internalize self as leader into their identities. They also recognized their responsibility to lead by example and serve as role models for others, consistent with the leadership differentiated stage in which leadership is more a “process between and among people” (Komives et al., 2005, p. 606) than a position.

**Expanding views of leadership.** Students in Phase 3 reflected upon their past experiences to solidify their definition of leadership. Early in this phase, students viewed
leadership related to one’s passion as shared by Wendy, who referred to “finding your passion and just going for it.” Leaders were individuals who could gather others around an issue and influence the accomplishment of a goal. In this phase students had developed a clearer understanding of the role of a leader. The students saw that leaders were the decision makers in organizations and that they had responsibility for guiding their groups in the accomplishment of goals as illustrated in the following data excerpts: “doing something in trying to achieve a goal” (Leila); “Why not help the organization get to where we need to be?” (Holly). They also recognized that leaders had to relinquish control, allowing others to take responsibility even if doing so meant tasks were not completed exactly as they would have done them. Christine stated, “If the end goal was a program that was good that people came to, it didn’t really matter how we got there.” Some students recognized that valuable insights could come from others and realized that goals could be achieved by multiple means.

*Nonpositional leadership.* As students moved along in Phase 3: Leadership Differentiated, their views of leadership shifted toward the notion that anyone could be a leader as illustrated by the following data excerpts: “Being a leader can be anything. . . . A random student could be a leader” (Wendy); “Anybody has the potential to be a leader” (Bridget). They realized that leadership was not specifically about holding a position or having a label or title but that leaders could come from anywhere and that anyone could lead. As the students’ views shifted, they became aware that they no longer needed to be the kind of leaders others wanted them to be but that they should be who
they were and that was sufficient. This new awareness implied a conscious incorporation of being a leader into who students were and how they performed.

**Changing views of self as leader.** Moving further into Phase 3, students learned to delegate responsibility, continuing their development as collaborative leaders, initiated in Phase 2. Delegation led them to realize the impact of empowering others on those students’ leadership development as stated by Wendy: “That’s all about having them grow as a person, too.” Students perceived their role in terms of helping others find themselves and become leaders as noted by Kate: “Helping 70 girls all going different ways kind of find themselves and especially most of them being freshman and sophomores in college—that’s huge.” Sometimes doing so entailed encouraging their peers to stand up for themselves. Faith shared her experiences with “making sure that [student leaders] feel empowered to make decisions and empowered to tell people when they’re making their jobs hard.” Other times helping others become leaders meant providing opportunities like the ones they had been given. These students also served as sounding boards for their peers, now playing the role that others had for them.

As these students developed their skills and abilities, they also examined who they were as leaders and who they wanted to be. They realized that they needed to learn to adapt to the needs of their peers as illustrated by the following data excerpts: “You have to tailor what you’re doing to the specific person and what their needs are” (Catherine); “Because each group that you lead or each position you’re put into is going to be different, . . . you have to be able to kind of morph into different scenarios and situations” (Melissa). Meeting others where they were and openness to others’ ideas
were essential as was knowing oneself as expressed by Holly: “If you can’t understand yourself, how can you truly understand someone else?” In this phase students realized that their ideas were not the only viable ones and may not even have been the best ones. Focusing on what mattered and the accomplishment of the group’s goals were important as illustrated by Leila: “You realize it’s more about the goal than the actual position.” These students understood that being a leader was not always about being the center of attention.

**Addressing conflict.** Because the students grew more comfortable with who they were as leaders and realized that they did not have to do everything, the manner in which they addressed problems and conflicts also changed. These students, now confident in their ability to confront situations directly, realized they were no longer merely enforcers and thus developed plans for addressing conflict that involved others in the resolution process. These students understood that their desire to be fair and consistent could also bring criticism or pushback. Grace shared the example of establishing a new dance team in high school that was more inclusive of a diverse population and provided a space for students of color to feel more welcome. She and the team received a fair amount of negative comments and pushback from parents and school administrators, but she persisted; and the team overcame negativity by winning a state competition. Grace said:

So I started my own dance team. A lot of the cheerleaders’ parents petitioned against us, but we still kept fighting because a lot of the girls are minorities. We ended up placing a state title in Ohio, and then everyone left us alone because once you realized a certain level of achievement, people respect you; so we
brought a title to [the high school]. . . . *Being able to just keep going and fighting* and going to States, to the same competition that predominately White cheerleaders went to and bringing home a title—that *changed the game*.

In this phase students became comfortable with their views of right and wrong and their ability to stand up for an issue that needed to be addressed even when facing conflict with others.

**Aha moment.** A major aspect of the students’ development in Phase 3: Leadership Differentiated was the experience of having an aha moment in relation to their leadership. For Melissa, it came when she realized she was doing what she should be, that she had found her niche. She said: “I, for the first time, I actually I felt like I was doing what I should be doing.” For Cassie, it was the point that she recognized that she truly was a leader. She stated:

> I definitely see my transformation as a leader and now realizing that I didn’t give myself enough credit before. . . . [I] think I can actually now see myself as a leader . . . that I can be quiet, introverted, and lead by example, and that can be viewed as leadership, not as someone that leads meetings or has an important position or has more of an aggressive, direct leadership style.

The impact of these aha moments in conjunction with their other experiences were critical to students’ movement through Phase 3.

**Perception of female leaders.** A shift occurred in Phase 3 as students connected their identities as females to their identities as leaders. Conscious of what being a female leader meant in general and for themselves, they realized that they had a voice and that
they could express their opinions without fear. Grace said, “I always valued just having a platform to speak. . . . If there’s a problem, it needs to be said, and people need to know about it so something can be done.” The two aspects of their identity—gender and leader—intersected, and students explored what the connection meant for the way they led.

In Phase 3 students provided specific examples of times they had been pushed aside or ignored as female leaders. Holly shared her experience on the primarily male executive board of an organization associated with her major in a male-dominated field. She said:

So that’s probably one of the biggest challenges is trying to put something out there and then it being shut down. With ideas that are put out and kind of pushed aside, I try to bring it in pieces. So if I bring one big idea, and it’s OK, that’s a lot. Let’s just push that aside. I bring it like, “OK, maybe we can implement this now” [emphasis added].

She learned how to navigate being ignored or having her ideas downplayed to be successful at achieving her goals for the organization. Her observations were consistent with connected knowing, in which knowledge comes from personal experience (Belenky et al., 1986). These students applied their personal experiences when pushed aside to determine ways to have their voices heard.

In Phase 3 the students raised their personal awareness through their experiences and classes. Rhonda shared the impact of learning about feminism in an English class. She stated:
I think a great thing of my college career was taking a course, an English course, where they introduced—they were talking about feminism a lot. And that was something I had known about but didn’t actually know what it meant [emphasis added].

When Rhonda learned what feminism and being a feminist meant, her preconceived notions were challenged; and her eyes were opened to a new way to be a leader.

These students also developed a belief in women’s abilities as leaders and incorporated that belief into their own identities. These students looked to female role models as examples of what they could accomplish and felt comfortable with their own choices as a result of their newfound confidence. Hoping to disprove the stereotypes of female leaders, Penny stated, “I feel like I always want to crush that stereotype of a woman can’t be a leader.”

Abigail, who was influenced by her mother’s dependence on others, noted, “She’s been really dependent on other people her whole life, so [with] her children, what she promoted was you need to be independent, and you need to be able to do things on your own.” This lesson was then played out for Abigail in an employment setting in which she had to prove herself as a woman in a male-dominated field.

I work . . . as an IT [information technology] tech, . . . so I worked with all men, and it’s very intimidating at first because they . . . think, “Oh, well, she’s a woman. She probably is not going to figure it out.” I don’t mean to make those stereotypes, but since I was living them first hand, I feel like I’m OK to say that. . . . It kind of puts a damper on what I do because I don’t want to worry about what
you’re thinking about me. . . . When I’m working, I think, “This is work.” It should be separate, so it’s hard. It’s definitely really hard being a woman, especially in a man-dominated field, I guess, because I don’t see too many women working in computer science [emphasis added].

Proving oneself as a female leader, which surfaced during Phase 3, had a direct impact on students’ leadership identity development, particularly if they had had a negative experience.

**Role of faith.** Faith, which played a key role in personal development and development as a leader for several students during Phase 3, provided them with the strength to persevere in the face of adversity, as illustrated by Melissa. She said, “God . . . gives you the strength that you need to deal with everything”; and after experiencing bullying in high school, Samantha said, “God got me through it. Look at me now.” Samantha’s belief that she had been given a talent that she should not waste contributed to her decision to change her major and pursue her passion as a way to make a difference in the world. She continued, “God just blessed me with being able to sing. . . . I felt like I was wasting my gift that God blessed me with, so . . . I switched [my major].” Grace also expressed how faith provided her with guidance in her decision making: “Whatever God wants from me is what is going to happen, so I think just trusting Him and knowing that there’s always a plan.” Although faith was not expressed by a majority of the students, for these few students in particular, faith was an integral part of who they were and impacted how they developed as individuals and as leaders.
Confidence in who they were allowed students in Phase 3: Leadership

Differentiated to incorporate the role of leader into their identities. For some students early in this phase, doing so meant continuing to push themselves outside their comfort zones as the following comment from Cassie illustrated: “Just reaching out more to my peers and definitely speaking up at meetings, being less quiet.” By the end of this phase, most of the students had become their own persons, realizing that they had skills that others did not possess; but they were also aware of what they needed to work on to improve. The students gained a solid knowledge of their own preferences and held themselves to high standards but also gave themselves space to make and learn from mistakes as in Bridget’s comment about “taking risks and taking challenges and sometimes even failing and just picking yourself back up.” They realized that who they were continued to evolve and would continue to do so for the rest of their lives.

Transition from Phase 3 to Phase 4. As these students moved into and through Phase 3, belief in themselves was strengthened. They saw leadership as externally focused on helping their peers develop and seeing their organizations succeed instead of internally focused on aspects of command and control. The confidence that these students developed during this phase encouraged them to believe that they could address issues and make a positive difference that led some of them to transition into Phase 4 of the leadership identity development model. In addition, these students embraced their emerging identity as females and merged being female and being a leader into one, which developed further for students as they moved into Phase 4.
**Phase 4: Generativity**

Phase 4 differed slightly from the previous phases because self-identity as a leader had been integrated by these students. Much like Perry’s (1968) final stage of commitment to relativism, Phase 4 reflected the use of newly developed confidence and voice to do the right thing. This phase also involved an understanding of the responsibility to develop other students as leaders, which was consistent with the way Komives et al. (2005) defined *generativity*, that is, commitment to larger purposes and acceptance of the responsibility to develop others.

As students became confident in themselves and who they were as leaders, fully integrating the role of leader into their identity, they reflected on the larger community and societal needs and considered their roles in addressing said needs. The first aspect of leader identity in Phase 4 was a desire to enhance others’ leadership capacity. The second aspect was a realization that they could make change, often focusing initially on what they could do in their immediate environment to create a potential for a ripple effect in the larger society. This potential resonated with the concepts of the social change model of leadership: “Leadership is ultimately about change, and . . . effective leaders are those who are able to effect positive change on behalf of others and society” (Higher Education Research Institute [HERI], 1996, p. 10). Few students in my study, however, achieved Phase 4 in their developmental process.

As students transitioned from Phase 3 to Phase 4, their understanding a leader shifted from one who requires a position (i.e., elected with authority and specific responsibilities) to anyone as leadership. Coming to this realization was important for
students in this phase, particularly as they looked forward to graduation and their transition out of college. Several students who had reached Phase 4 did not hold specific leadership roles in any organizations yet still identified themselves as leaders and saw how they could make a difference without a title.

In this phase students realized the value of relationships and worked to maintain their long-term relationships with peers and adults who were important to them. Even in conflict situations, these students were able to maintain their relationships with others. Students in Phase 4 realized that they could focus their attention on areas of importance to them. They needed no acknowledgement from their peers about how involved they were to assure themselves that they were leaders; involvement and overcommitment no longer fit their identities as leaders. Some students came to this realization through reflection, looking back on their experiences and analyzing what they meant in terms of who they were becoming. This lesson was important to the students establishing a sense of self and learning to be comfortable with the choices they had made. Students at this phase mirrored aspects of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 1998), exhibiting the “ability to collect, interpret, and analyze information and reflect on one’s own beliefs in order to form judgments” (p. 143).

These students had become concerned with the need to mentor younger leaders, providing them with the opportunities necessary to achieve their own dreams as noted by Bridget, who stated, “I was able to mentor other people.” Mentoring also meant stepping back from opportunities to allow others the chance to grow. Christine said:
So I didn’t rerun for [president of a residence hall organization]. It was a really difficult decision for me, but at the end of the day, I’ve gotten everything that I wanted out of this role, and I think it’s time for someone else to get what they want out of it [emphasis added].

Phase 4 was a time for the students to pass on their knowledge, to share their experiences and lessons learned with others to help make the way smoother for emerging leaders. These students also recognized that they had built upon the foundation that past leaders had laid for them and wanted to provide that same foundation for others. Grace said:

There’s a network of women that have already done it. . . . They’ve already fought for students of color to do this and that. They’ve done a lot of legwork for us to be in positions that we are in. . . . So for them to do that legwork inspires me to make the same changes for the next generation [emphasis added].

Building others as leaders and providing them with opportunities was a central tenet of students in Phase 4.

Change was the second tenet associated with the leadership identity of students in Phase 4. They learned that making change happen was a process and that it was difficult and time-consuming, but if it was the right thing to do, it should be done. These students also believed that they could not let roadblocks deter them from working toward positive change, a lesson illustrated by Grace, who used her voice to fight for what she believed was right. She fought to keep a print publication traditionally for students of color from being moved to online only. She said:
No, *that is history* right there. *We want to touch and feel this thing.* Yes, we want to have an online portion, but we’re definitely not getting rid of this. . . . We’ve got stuff to talk about here, and *I’m not going to let it go* until you completely drop the idea. Having to fight for things like that, yeah, that was pretty tough because *people don’t take you seriously unless you follow through* and keep following through like no, no, no, just keep telling them no. . . . I was just like, “You really want to take this thing that’s been around since the 1960s and just throw it away? . . . That’s not fair. We don’t have a voice, so you want to get rid of our voice?” [emphasis added].

In Phase 4 students saw their roles as leaders (positional or not) in terms of doing what was right and taking a stand when right was challenged.

These students had internalized an aspect of activism and inserted it into their leadership identities particularly around issues of gender and race, expressing a desire to break down stereotypes and to help women realize the impact of gender on their life experiences. Rhonda used her major as a springboard to raising awareness, writing a play that highlighted traditional female roles and challenging the audience’s thinking about the meaning of those roles. Rhonda stated:

So it’s working that into it the fact that the character has to decide *does she want to be like what this academy tells her to be? Does she want to be something else?* . . . And ultimately even though this is femalecentric, this is something *people can relate to with identity issues:* Not knowing what they want to do, feeling a pull towards one area when they want to do something else [emphasis added].
Samantha perceived her leadership ability as a way to unify people, to bring them together no matter their background. She said, “As a leader, I really want to be able to unify everybody. I want to be able to unite everybody. Regardless of race, sexual orientation, gender, I want to be able to bring everyone together as one.” Samantha also wanted females to embrace their gender identities and be proud of who they were and used every opportunity given to her to instill confidence in young women as she illustrated with this example about a song she wrote:

And I wrote it to inspire all ages of African American women to help them—it’s just an empowerment song to basically help them realize that you know what? You’re beautiful. You’re worth it, and you can accomplish anything you want in life. Don’t let anyone tell you that you can’t [emphasis added].

These students identified ways to be leaders and use their voices to challenge stereotypes and encourage other females to follow their dreams.

In addition to breaking down stereotypes, these students also understood the need to educate others, particularly young women, about leadership. Rhonda stated, “I especially think I’m such an advocate for young women being taught leadership roles and encouraged more because it seems like it’s just a man’s world to be a leader, and that is so unfair.” Rhonda also shared her belief that college students should be educated about feminism, indicating that learning what feminism truly meant changed her views and prompted her to take a stand.

And that [feminism] was something I had known about but didn’t actually know what it meant. I heard the concept that I was one of the uneducated, ignorant
people who said, “Oh, that’s just a bunch of ladies complaining about stuff, complaining about being equal.” But I think the notion of wanting everyone to be equal but looking out for women in particular because even though we are part of the majority, we are definitely looked down upon. So I think it’s important to introduce those ideas and educate especially about it [emphasis added].

Education and raising others’ awareness was an important aspect for students in Phase 4.

Students who had transitioned to Phase 4 worked to bring about change and showed their abilities to be trailblazers as illustrated by the following data excerpts: “I am not afraid to speak my mind and have a voice” (Samantha); “There’s so many male characters, and I find a problem as an actor is that there are never good enough female roles that are actually round and dynamic. And not just the girlfriend, the housewife. . . . I want to change that” (Rhonda). A key understanding of Phase 4, related to being a change agent, was the realization that change could occur on both micro and macro levels that a leader did not have to make change happen in the larger society to be effective. Change was sometimes best served at the local level in an organization with the hope and desire that this small change would ripple out to broader and broader communities. For some students this was an important distinction because they could be intimidated by the idea of “large” change and lack belief in their ability to influence those kinds of societal shifts. The students who reached Phase 4 had been able to explore aspects of who they were as females and who they were as leaders and bring those two identities together, making them stronger and increasing their confidence in their abilities.
Conclusion

The findings of this study supported a developmental process experienced by traditional-aged female undergraduate students in developing their leadership identity. Students’ voices communicated the emerging model as they looked back on their overall leadership journey to this point in their lives. Leila shared how the process was one of continual learning and change. She said, “I’m constantly learning, and I’m constantly trying to figure it out myself.” A number of the students provided metaphors to illustrate the journey to leadership identity development. They appear below.

I think it started from being just a given label in high school and not something I thought about, too, as I grew through college, being something that I realized was a skill that I could become one [a leader] or that I, myself, was one and actually trying to fine tune it and develop it more, realize that I had skills that were different than others and other people had skills that were different than mine. And actually saying I am a leader and saying it with confidence from high school when I felt like the other people were leaders [emphasis added] (Leigh).

From high school to college, I would have to say I did blossom into a butterfly. I didn’t see myself as a leader, or I didn’t value my own traits or characteristics as a leader, especially from being a freshman in high school to being a senior now [in college]. I always just thought of myself as just another person, another team player. I never actually saw myself as actively leading. Looking back, I did lead, I did participate, I was active, I was a leader, but when I was a freshman in high school, that didn’t occur to me. I always thought I wasn’t
good enough, I wasn’t this enough, I wasn’t that enough. And now as I—from high school to college, *built my confidence, had new experiences*, broadened my horizons, joined different things, and became more well-rounded and gained more insight into my different traits as a leader—I now see that *just because I’m quiet doesn’t mean I can’t lead*. Just because I’m sensitive or emotional to other people’s feelings, that can be a strength. . . . And now I can confidently say that I am a leader [emphasis added] (Cassie).

I think it’s a journey that if I think of *a straight line* and how I went about from high school maybe all the way to college, there has been *a lot of loops backwards*, and revisiting things, being knocked on my butt and starting over and rebuilding to learn from that experience. But in those *little loops were the parts where I learned the most* [emphasis added] (Kate).

Broadening views of leadership, changing views of self as leader, the influence of societal views of gender and female leaders as well as the influence of adults, peers, sports, culture, and leadership training impacted the students’ leadership identity development. In the next chapter I discuss recommendations, implications for practice, and topics for future research.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Faculty and staff members at higher education institutions have made a commitment to develop students as “citizen leaders” (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education [CAS], 2009). Leadership education programs are available on campuses to enhance students' leadership abilities in an effort to prepare them to become citizen leaders (Day, 2001; Wenger, 1988). A majority of these programs, however, are generic, developed to serve any and all students without regard to the specific needs of certain populations, such as women or students of color. Along with these generically designed programs, much of the research on college students and leadership development has been conducted with mixed gender groups of students (Cress et al., 2001; Posner, 2009; Shertzer & Schuh, 2004). Little research has been specifically conducted about female college students and leadership. Research into the ways students develop leadership identities is even more limited. Komives et al. (2005) were the first to provide a comprehensive model of leadership identity development in college students, yet little research has been conducted since their work to increase understanding of this developmental process. The purpose of my study was to explore the leadership identity development processes of traditional-aged female undergraduate students. My study focused specifically on female students because of the lack of research addressing female college students and leadership.
In Chapter 4 I presented the findings of my study and described the phases of the leadership identity development model that emerged based on the experiences and insights of the students. Using constructivist grounded theory allowed me to involve the students in the construction of my initial understandings of the model, further connecting their experiences to the themes that I had identified, which eventually became the described developmental model.

The purpose of this chapter is to integrate my findings with previous research and theory, explore the implications of my findings, present limitations of my study, and offer direction for future research. Ultimately, leadership educators and student affairs practitioners have a responsibility to provide female students with opportunities to explore their developing identities as leaders. First, however, I offer a brief reflection on myself through this process.

(Re)Situating Self as Researcher

As the sole researcher of this grounded theory study, I was responsible for all aspects of the research—data collection, analysis, and interpretation—while at the same time remaining adaptable and responsive to what I was learning from the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). As I conducted my interviews and analyzed the data, I had to be aware of myself in the process, recognizing when I brought my personal experiences and biases to my interpretation. During several interviews this meant having to refocus my energies on the student and the questions asked instead of pursuing a line of questioning unrelated to the purpose of my study. A number of students held views similar to mine about the role of women in society that could have led to conversations about feminism, the
treatment of women in the work place, and messages in books such as *Lean In* (Sandberg, 2013). Although these conversations would have been interesting and appealed to my feminist view, they would not have contributed to my learning and understanding of the leadership identity development processes of the students. In addition, my strong views about the ability of women to accomplish their goals and overcome obstacles had to be tempered at times when speaking with students who were at an early developmental phase in the model. These students challenged my views with their lack of confidence in themselves and their choices to take a back seat to allow others, typically males, to take the lead. My inclination in these interviews was to challenge the students’ choices instead of letting them tell their stories and reflecting on how their experiences influenced who they were as leaders. I had to be consciously aware of my reactions to the students’ statements and remain as neutral in my approach as possible. I continued with a critical eye during my coding and analysis processes to ensure that I was not imposing my views of what female students should be on the students’ actual experiences and their learning about themselves as leaders. I have acknowledged that my feminist views influence my interpretations and provide a foundation for my recommendations for practice later in this chapter.

**Discussion**

Conceptualizations of leadership have evolved, and consequently, so has the need to understand various aspects of leader and leadership development (Day, 2001). To fully comprehend the concept of leadership and how college students portray themselves as leaders, understanding aspects of leadership identity development is critical in order to
create leadership education initiatives that best meet the needs of the individuals they are meant to serve. In this section I discuss my findings in relation to the existing scholarship on identity development, student development, and leadership identity development.

**Identity Development**

This section contains my findings in relation to the identity development theories proposed by Erikson, Josselson, and Downing and Roush as well as the work on multiple identities done by Jones and Abes.

**Erikson’s identity development process.** Erikson (1968), who provided a foundation for understanding identity development processes across the lifespan, viewed identity as ever changing and theorized that development occurs with the successful resolution of a crisis in each stage. As one resolves each crisis, commitment to established identity grows stronger (Jones & Abes, 2013). Erikson’s Stage 5: Identity versus Identity Diffusion is often associated with college students’ development of a core sense of self, in which students struggle to synthesize the way others see them with the way they see themselves and seek answers to the question “Who am I?” Much as in Erikson’s resolution of crisis, the students in my study frequently experienced aha moments that served to transition them into aspects of the next developmental phase. In the context of a broad overview, Erikson’s theory of identity development was demonstrated in the experiences and development of the students in my study. They unconsciously explored aspects of their identity, reflecting on their past experiences to make sense of who they were becoming as leaders. A common criticism of Erikson’s
work, however, is that he focused on males, attributing a female’s identity development to her attractiveness or her ability to identify the type of men by whom she wanted to be sought (Jones & Abes, 2013). His expression of female identity development may have been consistent with the historical context in which he worked but was inappropriate for understanding identity development in contemporary female college students.

**Josselson’s model of female identity development.** A more accurate reflection of the identity development experiences of the students in my study came from the work of Josselson (1987), who wrote, “Identity is the ultimate act of creativity—it is what we make of ourselves” (Josselson, 1996, p. 27). She sought to understand the internal and developmental roots of identity formation for women (N. J. Evans et al., 2010), challenging Erikson’s approach to female identity development and acknowledging that the place of a woman has historically been defined by her society, a point that was echoed in the students’ discussion of women in today’s society and how they are perceived as the weaker sex and as less capable as leaders. My analysis of the students’ responses was consistent with Josselson’s agreement with Erikson that identity development is largely unconscious and tends to occur gradually. The students’ movement from one phase to the next in the model was often a gradual, unconscious process guided by their experiences as well as support and encouragement from others. In a process more recursive than linear, students often incorporated aspects of different phases at the same time. Although the students did not actively engage in the kind of reflection that may have made this developmental process more obvious to them, what they shared in their interviews indicated a consistency with this gradual process of
development. The developmental process exhibited by the students in my study differed from Josselson in one important way. Her four pathways to identity were not phases for individuals to work through. Although the women in Josselson’s research (1987, 1996) could move into a different pathway, her findings did not reflect a specific developmental trajectory as indicated by the model of leadership identity development that emerged from my findings.

In Phase 1: Awareness and Exploration and Phase 2: Leader Identified in my emerging leadership identity development model, the students were unable to connect their experiences with leadership to their identity as females. The students at these earlier stages reflected a lack of self-confidence and expressed self-doubt that exhibited similarities to the pathways to women’s identity development that Josselson (1987) called foreclosures or identity diffusions. Foreclosures often continued the beliefs women gained in childhood without question. Much like these individuals, students in Phase 1 often accepted what they had been taught about leaders being of a certain “type” and what they understood about women as leaders. These students had not yet experienced an identity crisis that challenged them to reexamine their beliefs about who they were. Similarly, students in Phase 2 acknowledged societal views that women were less capable than men as leaders, accepted a more traditional, masculine view of leadership traits, and viewed leadership as positional and hierarchical.

The influence of adults on their participation in activities and the importance of the students’ relationships in these early phases resembled Josselson’s concept of women on the identity diffusions pathway as willing lumps of clay to be molded by others. Their
concepts of who they were as leaders and what they should be involved in were influenced by others, typically adults. The impact of relationships was important to leadership identity development during these phases, and students were often unwilling to “rock the boat” when confronted with challenges. For some students, maintaining a relationship was more important to them than taking on a role in which they were interested, as expressed in a story told above by Melissa about stepping back if a friend wanted to pursue a role in which she was also interested. This focus on relationships (versus self) allowed the students’ experiences to be shaped by others.

In Phase 3: Leadership Differentiated and Phase 4: Generativity, students acknowledged their gender identity as a part of who they were, recognizing that being female in certain situations mattered. Students in Phase 3 acknowledged the role that gender played in how they led. Consistent with Josselson’s findings that women were more likely to focus on the kind of person they wanted to be (N. J. Evans et al., 2010), students in Phases 3 and 4 were comfortable expressing who they wanted to be as individuals and as leaders. Several students understood how these two aspects of their identity—gender and leader—overlapped and could not be separated. In addition, two of the students discussed their race as a component of their identity inseparable from other aspects.

The few students who reached Phase 4 reflected Josselson’s identity achievements, connecting with their identity as females on their own terms. “Identity is the stable, consistent, and reliable sense of who one is and what one stands for in the world” (Josselson, 1987, p. 10). For Rhonda identity achievement was prompted by both
her personal experiences and her classroom learning. Exposure to feminism and understanding what it meant propelled her into an activist role with a desire not only to improve things for herself but to make the world a better place for other women as well. Several other students who achieved Phase 4 recognized the impact of women who had come before them, providing a foundation upon which they could stand and be confident in who they were becoming as women. From this recognition came the understanding that they needed to continue to pave the way for future female students, whom they would show that anything was possible. Although the students exhibited aspects of Josselson’s pathways at different phases, the major difference was that the students continued to grow and move along a developmental trajectory as opposed to the more static nature of Josselson’s pathways. My findings provided support for components of Josselson’s pathways but also illuminated the need for further study on how female college students may move from one pathway to another as their identity evolves.

**Downing and Roush’s feminist identity development.** Throughout the phases of the emerging leadership identity development model, the students reflected on various aspects of their identity as female. Students in early phases projected this identity outward, able to speak to the challenges of being a female leader in society but unable to connect those challenges to themselves. As students moved into later phases, they acknowledged the reality of the role gender played. A few students in Phase 4: Generativity exhibited aspects of a feminist identity, taking action to change others’ views of what it means to be female in contemporary society.
Downing and Roush (1985) developed a model of feminist identity development in which they took into account “the prejudice and discrimination that are a significant part of [women’s] life experiences” (p. 696). Aspects of this model were echoed in the students’ views of themselves as female and the social construction of gender roles.

In Stage I: Passive Acceptance Downing and Roush (1985) described women as unaware of prejudice and discrimination against them. This description fit students in my Phase 1: Awareness and Engagement and Phase 2: Leader Identified; they perceived no negativity directed toward them. Many of the students in these phases accepted traditional gender-role stereotypes as shown in Cassie’s comments about seeing her style as more traditionally feminine (i.e., quiet, submissive), which was consistent with Downing and Roush’s Stage 1.

As students moved into Phase 3: Leadership Differentiated, several experienced negative situations causing them to question why their abilities as females were less valued. Leigh had a glimmer of this realization when sharing her experience during a campus crisis, in which a male leader stepped up; she knew her voice would not be heard. Abigail raised questions when she described her experience as the only female in a male-dominated work place. These experiences were consistent with Downing and Roush’s Stage 2: Revelation, in which a series of crisis or contradictions could no longer be ignored or denied. By contrast, students in my study never expressed perceptions of men as negative; in fact, in early phases their defense of men was consistent with acceptance of traditional gender roles in Downing and Roush’s Stage 1.
Several students exhibited aspects of Downing and Roush’s (1985) Stage 3: Embeddedness–Emanation, particularly with reference to the use of the arts to depict “the oppressed role of women” (p. 701). Rhonda’s play challenging traditional gender role stereotypes was a prime example of a student at this stage of feminist identity development. A small number of students, primarily those in my Phase 4: Generativity exhibited aspects of Downing and Roush’s (1985) Stage 4: Synthesis; in this stage, women value the positives associated with being female and are able to integrate these qualities with their own attributes to create “a positive and realistic self-concept” (p. 702). Several students in Phase 4 of my model had come to a developmental place where they were comfortable with themselves and able to make decisions based on their values. Grace demonstrated her ability to “channel [her] energies productively but also to respond appropriately to experiences of oppression and discrimination” (Downing & Roush, 1985, p. 702) when she spoke about organizing a campus protest or when she organized an inclusive dance team in high school.

Although none of the students in my study exhibited aspects of Downing and Roush’s (1985) Stage 5: Active Commitment, several students in Phase 4 of my model moved in this direction. Although only two or three students used the word feminism in their interviews, a number of them clearly moved through aspects of Downing and Roush’s feminist identity stages. My findings highlighted a need to make leadership educators aware of identity development models like Downing and Roush’s. Such knowledge will aid in the design of initiatives that enable students to explore aspects of themselves in relation to leadership as well as the roles society expects them to play.
Because feminism can be negatively perceived, framing it in a developmental process may make students more willing to explore what this means for them.

**Multiple identities.** The work of Jones and Abes (2013) is also important to consider in relation to understanding leadership identity development in female college students. The assumption underlying much of the scholarship on identity development is that the process was similar for all students, regardless of consideration of various aspects of who they are (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation) (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Jones and Abes’ development of a framework for understanding the multiple dimensions of identity was critical to understanding how students made sense of their experiences in relation to their identity development. Identity as a female was unacknowledged in early phases of the model, but as students moved into Phases 3 and 4, they understood how being female mattered, and some struggled to incorporate their gender identity into their emerging leadership identity. Particularly, students in Phase 4 were able to incorporate aspects of multiple dimensions of themselves into how they responded to situations, how they saw themselves as leaders, and how they used those multiple dimensions to make a difference in their communities. For several students, cultural background also became a relevant dimension of their identities and influenced how the students developed as leaders. Although I did not specifically seek to understand the influences of multiple dimensions of identity on development, they were reflected in the way the students came to identify themselves as leaders. Given limited new research on foundational student development theories, my findings suggest a need to reexamine the idea of linear progression through developmental stages.
Student Development

Cognitive and psychosocial student development theory can provide a perspective from which to examine my model of leadership identity development. Although this connection was not the focus of my study, gaining a better understanding of how leadership identity development fits with student development theory is an area for future study. In a majority of student development theories, one finds the presumption of a trajectory of increasing complexity and a concern with a systematic change in students over their time in college (Jones & Abes, 2013). Development is presented as linear, sequential, and as a series of stages, phases, or vectors. Such a clear linear trajectory was not, however, exhibited by the students in my study. They were more likely to exhibit aspects of different phases of the emerging leadership identity development model at any one time. For example, a student might have exhibited aspects of Phase 2 in relation to seeing one right way of doing something while also having exhibited aspects of Phase 3 in terms of wanting to provide opportunities for others to develop as leaders. Development as fluid and as incorporating aspects of multiple phases at one time was more prevalent in my findings than may be implied in aspects of student development theory.

Intellectual and ethical development. How students thought about and made sense of their lives in my study was consistent with cognitive student development theory. Students early in Phase 2: Leader Identified viewed decision making and how they made sense of their leadership experiences in terms of black and white, right and wrong. Much as in Perry’s (1968) dualism, when faced with challenges these students
looked to policies or established rules to resolve an issue instead of exploring possible alternatives or using their past experiences to make a decision. Students in Phase 1: Awareness and Exploration were more likely to believe that authorities possessed the right answers as opposed to a number of students in Phase 2, who believed they knew what was right, differing from Perry’s dualism phase. Having a dualistic view provided the students with a sense of how to respond, even if that structured response may not have been the most appropriate. These students knew where they fit and were unwilling to step outside those bounds as expressed by Joan. She knew that as a freshman on a team she had a certain role to play, and that is what she did. As students progressed further into Phase 2, they thought more independently yet were still unable to distinguish between alternatives in making sound decisions. As they progressed through Phase 2, they reflected on their past experiences and what they observed about other leaders, and realizing the existence of multiple perspectives and ways of leading. As in Perry’s multiplicity phase, these students understood that different people and opinions could be equally valued.

When students moved into Phase 3, they were able to be more relativistic (Perry, 1968), understanding that not all opinions were equally valid and that choices had to be made in a specific context, leading them to see that groups needed different things from leaders. At this phase students saw a need to adapt how they approached leadership, but they did not yet understand that this did not mean adapting who they were as leaders (i.e., their values, ethics). When students moved into Phase 4: Generativity, they understood the importance of making decisions based on what was right—not what was
popular—and the importance of challenging the status quo. Students in Phase 4 exhibited consistency with Perry’s commitment to relativism, related to their ethical development and establishment of their identities as females and as leaders. A definite developmental process for these students involved making sense of their experiences and incorporating that sense-making into their identities as leaders, reflecting Perry’s cognitive development model. Although Perry’s model bore some significant resemblance to the students’ identity development processes, failing to note that Perry’s study has been criticized for its lack of inclusiveness would be negligent. Although his original study included both males and females, he supplied only the results regarding males in the development of his model, thus producing limited applicability to the students in my study. My findings support the notion that leadership identity development is more a cognitive process than leadership educators often acknowledge. Students made meaning of their experiences to understand who they were during various phases of my model.

**Women’s ways of knowing.** Belenky et al. (1986) developed five “epistemological perspectives from which women know and view the world” (p. 15). Silence, their first perspective, was consistent with students at Phase 1: Awareness and Exploration. These students were obedient and subject to external authorities. This was most commonly exhibited in Phase 1, when students did not actively seek leadership roles that would distinguish them from their peers. They were placed into positions of leadership by adults, told they had the potential to perform but not seeing or believing that themselves.
Students in Phases 1 and 2 reflected received knowledge, in which they listened to others’ voices as a result of their lack of self-confidence. They did not believe that they possessed voices to challenge the conventional wisdom of others. Numerous examples of comments came from students doubting that they had the characteristics or traits necessary to be leaders. Students shared several examples of allowing others to define who they were, often relying on their peer groups to determine their identities.

As students moved further into Phase 2: Leader Identified, they exhibited aspects of subjective knowledge, seeing that truth resided in themselves which led them to explore who they were. A number of comments from students about their desires to reinvent themselves when they came to college, to explore for themselves what they were interested in and who they wanted to be as leaders reflected subjective knowledge. The procedural knowledge concept of separate knowing (Belenky et al., 1986) was shown by students in Phase 2 who desired structured procedures and in several examples of students who, instead of seeing themselves as a part of a situation, separated themselves from it. This was most notable in Gretchen’s example of taking her leadership abilities to another organization when she was denied a position instead of examining her role in the situation.

Students in Phases 2 and 3 were able to show empathy and care, and many students emphasized their view that these traits were critical aspects of their leadership identities. Some students in Phase 3 were also able to apply the concept of listening to others without losing a sense of self. These behaviors reflected aspects of connected knowing (Belenky et al., 1986), illustrated by students engaging others in decision
making and recognizing that as long as a goal was achieved, theirs was not the only way to accomplish it.

The few students who achieved Phase 4 understood that knowledge was constructed, an understanding that influenced their realization that they were capable of making positive change happen to improve the status of women in society consistent with constructed knowledge (Belenky et al., 1986). Although the students in my study exhibited aspects of the perspectives of Belenkey et al. (1986), they were less aware of the impact of their gender identities on how they made sense of the world. This lack of gender awareness is a key point for consideration in the design of leadership education initiatives. Leadership educators and student affairs professionals have a responsibility to help students explore their gender identities so they have a stronger self-concept when they leave their campuses. My findings indicate that this does not currently happen.

**Self-authorship.** Baxter Magolda’s research on self-authorship included three major questions with which students grappled during their time in college. Those questions were (a) How do I know? (b) Who am I? and (c) How do I want to construct relationships with others? (N. J. Evans et al., 2010, p. 184). The three identified domains, which included self-authorship, the cognitive, and the interpersonal and intrapersonal, influenced how development occurred, moving from external influences to internal meaning making. Students at Phase 2 who expressed a desire to reinvent themselves in college were consistent with aspects of Baxter Magolda’s Phase 2: Crossroads. Although these students desired to establish new plans for who they were, early in Phase 2 they were still dependent on positive reactions from others and were thus hesitant to make too
many changes in their identities. As students moved further into Phase 2 and transitioned into Phase 3, they moved away from Baxter Magolda’s crossroads and resolved their inner conflict between listening to others and listening to themselves.

Much like Baxter Magolda’s finding that few students achieve true self-authorship, few students in my study achieved Phase 4 (generativity). Students in Phase 4 mirrored achievement of Baxter Magolda’s Phase 3: Becoming the Author of One’s Own Life and were able to maintain their own leadership identity while recognizing and appreciating the accomplishments of others. Students who were able to choose their own beliefs, stand up for those beliefs, and exhibit a strong sense of self-concept trusted themselves, needing no others to provide validation for who they were as leaders yet expressing feelings of satisfaction from recognition as leaders. For several students, though, this feeling of accomplishment was more about their organization’s successes than their own as shared by Christine’s belief in her organization to achieve and having the group receive recognition from a national organization.

Student development theory provided insights to understand the leadership identity development of the students in my study. Their development occurred as a progression through a series of phases, but movement was more fluid than implied by many traditional student development theories. With the exception of Belenky et al. (1986), most student development theories were developed based on males or mixed gender groups, raising a warning against connecting theory to the leadership identity development process of the students in my study. My findings reflect a need for further research specifically on female college students.
College Student Leadership Development

Much of the scholarship surrounding college students and leadership has focused on the development of traits (Bass, 1990; Zacarro, 2007). More recent researchers have examined contemporary models of leadership as well as gender differences in college students and leadership (Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Thompson, 2006). Much of my model reflects insights and experiences similar to those in existing research findings. In my work, however, I added insights on the impact of female influences on students’ leadership identity development, pointed out a discrepancy with previous research on the impact of leadership training on students’ perceptions of themselves as leaders, and provided more active ways students could challenge the process of traditional gender roles in society. In this section, I explain ways that my findings were consistent with recent studies on perceptions and leadership traits and also highlight differences.

Shertzer and Schuh (2004) stated that the ways students defined leadership may play a significant role in their perceptions of themselves as leaders. This was true for the students in my study as well, particularly in early phases of the model. For many students in Phase 1: Awareness and Exploration and Phase 2: Leader Identified, leadership was defined as positional or characterized by certain qualities or traits that the students did not perceive themselves possessing. In Phase 2, a number of students exhibited a lack of both confidence and belief in their capability to be a leader, most notably expressed by Cassie’s examples of who she perceived to be leaders and how her identity did not fit that mold. Students expressed this lack of self-confidence even when in leadership roles or exhibiting leadership abilities. Although others may have seen the
students’ abilities, the students did not. This lack of belief in self contributed to what Shertzer and Schuh described as constraints to leadership development for these students. As Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, and Burkhardt (2001) found, the students in Phase 3: Leadership Differentiated had developed a stronger understanding of themselves from their involvement, had enhanced their ability to resolve conflict in a more collaborative fashion, and had an interest in developing others. These students identified themselves as leaders. Their observations of other leaders helped frame a definition of leadership that went beyond merely having a position or title, broadening what leadership meant to them.

Given that much of the scholarship on college students and leadership focused on traits, styles, and competencies (Northouse, 2010; Zacarro, 2007), it is not surprising that the students in my study illustrated the impact of traits on their identities as leaders, particularly in Phases 1 and 2. As defined by trait theory, individuals possess an innate or inborn set of characteristics or qualities that make them leaders (Northouse, 2010). This definition was mirrored in the students’ views of leaders as charismatic, assertive, and admired by others as well as the perception that, in order to be a leader, one must possess these traits. This is why so many students in Phase 1 did not perceive themselves as leaders as expressed by Cassie regarding being “just a member” but not contributing to the group in any significant way because she did not have the qualities she identified as necessary for a leader.

Wielkiewicz (2000) identified traditional views of leadership, including responsibility assigned to special individuals. Students in my study expressed similar traditional views about the competence of leaders and the idea that only “special” people
could be trusted with leadership responsibility. The assumption of these traditional views for the students in my study was also that leaders were typically male. This was true even for those students who talked about the female influences in their lives, especially mothers, who played a key role in shaping who these students developed into as leaders. In early phases, they were unable to see beyond their traditional views and understand how the women they held up as role models and influences in their lives broke stereotypes. In addition, the students expressed traditional thinking about the types of organizations led by different genders, such as organizations focused on human service led by females and those more focused on business led by males. My findings show that student leaders come to campus with socially constructed views of gender and leadership, which has been rarely addressed in the leadership research. This is indicative of a need to further examine the beliefs students bring to their leadership roles and how, for female students, this may hold them back from accepting leadership responsibilities.

Their views on leadership as positional and having specific traits were consistent with Day’s (2001) scholarship about the difference between leader development and leadership development. Students at Phase 2, for example, viewed themselves as being in a leadership role more than as being a leader. They had not yet incorporated this role into their identity, seeing it instead as a responsibility and as tasks that needed to be accomplished. Their leadership training experiences further reinforced this view with a focus on skills, not on reflection and self-learning. With few exceptions, these training experiences did not push students out of their comfort zones. For students who had moved into Phase 3: Leadership Differentiated, some training experiences provided this
push, which helped them further develop their leadership identities. Christine described a training experience that opened her eyes to the concept of privilege and an understanding that other students had different, more challenging experiences than she, given their backgrounds. This new awareness was critical to her movement into Phase 3. Other students expressed similar experiences often tied to leadership roles that prompted their understanding of difference in a new way. The way training experiences were designed had an impact on how students viewed leadership, particularly related to the development of skills. The leadership philosophies of those designing such programs were communicated through topics addressed and activities facilitated. Students incorporated these messages into how they define leadership and behaved as leaders, impacting their leadership identities. Thus, further research is needed to understand how the leadership philosophies of leadership training designers influence programs and students’ leadership identity.

**Kouzes and Posner’s five practices of exemplary leadership.** In this section, I explain how my findings reflect some consistency with Kouzes and Posner’s (2008) leadership model but also point to ways that challenging the process could be examined differently. Although a number of leadership development models have been designed for college students, the students in my study specifically exhibited aspects of Kouzes and Posner’s (2008) five practices for exemplary leaders. Modeling the way was a strong component of leadership identity for students in Phase 3. This practice indicates that the way leaders behave is what earns them respect and that leaders must understand how their actions impact the organization and others. Leaders who model the way set the
example for others through their actions. Melissa, Gretchen, Abigail, and Bridget discussed the importance of being a role model and leading by example in their identities as leaders. Students also recognized that others watched the way they behaved. Naomi shared her realization of the way many others paid attention to what she did and the impact that her behavior could have on others’ perceptions of her and her ability to be effective in her leadership roles.

A second practice outlined by Kouzes and Posner was to inspire a shared vision. Few students actually spoke directly to this practice, but Faith provided insight into the way she approached making a significant cultural change in her organization by having a clear vision of what she thought the group could achieve, sharing that with the other leaders, and giving them the opportunity to develop how that change would occur. Christine shared similar insights with her belief in her organization’s capability to be nationally recognized for their programming efforts, which was then achieved through the hard work of the organization’s members, who bought into her vision and enthusiasm.

Kouzes and Posner (2008) described their third practice, called challenge the process, in terms of making change happen and providing an environment for innovation and improvement. Addressed above, Faith implemented this practice with her desire to bring about organizational change. Fewer students provided specific examples of how they, as leaders, personally challenged processes or encouraged others to challenge how tasks are done. This practice appeared to be less prevalent for these students in terms of organizational change but was prevalent in several examples from students in Phase 4, who actively attempted to bring about positive change in their community. This is a key
difference from how Kouzes and Posner described challenge the process. Grace’s example of questioning the idea of putting online a publication that was the voice of students of color was a good illustration of a leader challenging the process.

Students in Phase 2: Leader Identified still focused on the idea of control and performing tasks their way and so were unable to see the value of enabling others. Their trust in others’ abilities had not yet been developed as shown in Noami’s comment about not trusting others to perform tasks as well as she. In Phase 3: Leadership Differentiated, however, students understood that others had good (and often better) ideas and that control was not an effective approach to leading. At this phase students also realized the importance of providing opportunities for others, showing aspects of the practice Kouzes and Posner’s (2008) called enable others to act. Maintaining control of all tasks and decisions would not provide others with those opportunities.

Encourage the heart, the final practice in Kouzes and Posner’s (2008) model was exhibited by quite a few of the students and was reflected in their comments about caring about others, their concern for others’ welfare, and recognition of the contributions other students made to an organization. Kouzes and Posner also found that “leadership is everyone’s business” [italics in original] (p. 21); leadership is not about position but is a process that can be learned. This was consistent with students’ views in Phases 3 and 4 regarding the ability of anyone to be a leader. Examples included someone stepping up in a group project to provide direction, a random student leading a campus protest, or an individual addressing an inappropriate comment. Although students in Phase 3 expressed the view that anyone could be a leader, few were able to provide specific examples of
times when they led without a positional role. When students reached Phase 4, they were able to see and actively exhibit nonpositional leadership, such as Rhonda’s writing of a play to confront socially constructed views of women’s roles or Samantha’s use of song to empower other young women of color to believe in their ability to achieve.

Throughout the four phases of the leadership identity development model, students’ actions were consistent with behaviors of Kouzes and Posner’s (2008) five practices, with modeling the way and encouraging the heart having the strongest connection. My findings provided insight into how female students were reflected in Kouzes and Posner’s model. These findings also highlight a need to explore what challenging the process means at a level deeper than campus practices.

**College women and leadership development.** Although much of the research on college student leadership development has been conducted with mixed gender groups, several relevant studies focused specifically on female college students. Boatwright and Egidio (2003) found that women do not express aspirations for leadership frequently enough. This was consistent with opinions expressed by several students in my study, who did not want to be leaders or did not see themselves as leaders. Students particularly in Phase 1: Awareness and Exploration and Phase 2: Leader Identified reflected aspects of Boatwright and Egidio’s findings that students who held traditionally feminine gender stereotypes, such as being quiet, were likely to exhibit less aspiration to lead, like Cassie, who reflected on how her traditionally feminine, quiet style was not suited for being a leader. Students in later phases accepted leadership as a part of their identities and sought out opportunities to serve in leadership roles. This developmental
shift based on students’ experiences provided insight that female students could develop stronger aspirations for leadership.

Studies have shown that female students learned leadership abilities through trial and error and through observation of others (Haber, 2011; Romano, 1996). These findings are consistent with the students in my study who described learning by doing and stated that their observations of other student leaders helped them understand what they perceived to be good qualities of leadership to which to aspire and qualities that should be avoided. In addition, two students discussed the impact of reading about others’ leadership experiences as ways of incorporating characteristics and approaches into their leadership identities consistent with Romano’s (1996) findings. The students’ insistence that their leadership training experiences had little direct impact on their leadership identity development is also consistent with the findings of Belenky et al. (1986) and Baxter Magolda (1998) that women’s ways of knowing are based on personal experience, not logic. These students learned by doing and by incorporating past experiences and observations into how they evolved as leaders. This finding differs from previous research on the effectiveness of leadership training on students’ perceptions of themselves as leaders.

Much like the findings in Whitt’s (1994) study, students in Phase 2: Leader Identified, Phase 3: Leadership Differentiated, and Phase 4: Generativity were able to attribute their gains in self-confidence to the leadership experiences they had had. Cassie connected her leadership experiences and the support and encouragement she had received to her revelation that she was a leader and the incorporation of leader into her
identity. These results showed the importance of encouragement and support, which was addressed in Chapter 4, in the students’ leadership identity development.

Surprisingly few students could identify negative experiences they had had as female leaders on campus. With a few exceptions among students who were further along in Phase 3 or who were in Phase 4, students believed their leadership experiences had been primarily positive. Even when they identified a negative experience, the students attributed it more to personality or position than to the role gender played in the situation as in the case of Leigh, who deferred during a crisis situation to a male enrolled in the police academy even though she had the same knowledge and ability to take charge. Other students were able to provide stories of women who fought battles as in Wendy’s learning from a woman at her internship who worked in a male-dominated environment and had to fight every day to have her voice heard. The students in these examples and others did not see how their views were based on socially constructed views of gender and appeared to accept the way they perceived their situations as normal. This raised questions about how student affairs administrators on campuses address gender in their programming and what they are or are not doing to provide opportunities for students to explore the role gender plays in their lives. This is not often a topic addressed with students, but my findings indicated a need for leadership educators and student affairs professionals to have these dialogues with students. College campuses are often seen as safe spaces for students to explore and learn more about themselves, but for a majority of these students exploring aspects of being female did not appear to happen.
It was almost as if the aspect of gender was nonexistent for many of these students, especially during the early phases of their leadership identity development.

Findings from a number of studies on college women and leadership indicated the value female student leaders placed on collaboration, positivity, support for others, and the importance of helping to being a leader (Haber, 2011; Haber-Curran, 2013; Romano, 1996; Whitt, 1994). These findings are consistent with students in Phase 3: Leadership Differentiated and Phase 4: Generativity of my emerging leadership identity development model. Although helping was identified as a key aspect of leadership for a majority of students throughout the phases, in Phase 3 helping became strongly connected to developing leadership in others, working together on organizational goals as opposed to imposing goals on a group, and developing self-confidence in a way that allowed for the consideration of others’ ideas. For several students, the concepts of positivity, being a positive person, and surrounding oneself with others who were positive were also exhibited at Phase 3, yet these concepts had been developed based on previous experiences in Phase 2. Although limited leadership research has been conducted on female college students, I found many consistencies in my findings and existing research. More research should be conducted, but the connections are encouraging.

**Leadership Identity Development Model**

Although my study is not a replication of the research by Komives et al. (2006), some findings reflected the original leadership identity development (LID) model, but other findings did not match. Key differences in my findings are as follows. Students in my study had no clear view of what being a leader meant at Phase 2; they focused on the
individual than the group and had more activist-oriented identities in Phase 4. These similarities and differences are discussed in more detail below. Existing LID model stage titles were often reflective of my findings, making the need for new titles unnecessary and potentially problematic for future researchers; thus, a number of the phases in my study have names resembling those of LID stages. Although the differences in my findings are indicative of the need for further gender-specific study, the similarities support the use of several consistent phase titles.

LID Stage 1: Awareness (Komives et al., 2006) involved the recognition that “leadership was happening ‘out there somewhere’” (p. 406). The same was true for the students at Phase 1: Awareness and Exploration in my study. They identified a leader as someone else, someone in a position of authority, often a public figure or an adult in their lives who had influence (e.g., teacher, coach). At this phase, in my study, adults played a role in the students’ lives but more as defining what leadership looked like based on who they admired and the actions these individuals exhibited. This phase was about identifying who a leader was, external to self, and involved no consideration of self as leader, consistent with LID Stage 1: Awareness.

LID Stage 2: Exploration–Engagement (Komives et al., 2006) also resembled my Phase 1: Awareness and Exploration. Students in both studies explored ways to be involved and connected to others, making new friends and in some cases trying new experiences. They had experiences reflective of a leader even if the students did not believe so. Adults played a key role as influences for students at this phase, providing them with opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities, often placing the students
in those roles. Students continued to view leadership as external, a leader as someone else, not themselves; at this phase peers were seen as examples of leaders, but the students were not yet convinced that if their peers could be leaders, so could they.

In LID Stage 3: Leader Identified (Komives et al., 2006) and in my Phase 2: Leader Identified leadership was identified as a position. Students in my study recognized that leadership came with election to a role along with the authority to make decisions and the power to influence others. Early in this phase, students learned about leadership by observing others, looking to their peers for examples of what to do and what not to do in order to be an effective leader. Students in my study early in Phase 2 needed to be in control, believing that their approach was right and that they had to perform all tasks because no one else could do them as well. The students in my study, different from those in the study by Komives et al. (2006), viewed leadership as helping, which later in Phase 2 focused on others, making sure they could do well and helping them develop leadership skills. Students in Phase 2 in my study still did not identify themselves as leaders despite acknowledging that their actions reflected leadership. Some of these students identified themselves in this phase as “just a member,” playing the role of follower even when taking on responsibilities in an organization or group. This differed from responses in Komives et al. (2006), in which students either saw themselves as leaders or not, having a very clear view of what being a leader meant. This difference may indicate potential gender-related differences and requires further exploration.
As in LID Stage 4: Leadership Differentiated (Komives et al., 2006), Phase 3: Leadership Differentiated in my model brought students to view leadership as nonpositional, occurring from anywhere in an organization. Students in my study could see that one did not need to be in a position with a title to be a leader, yet they still held to positional leadership in their identities as leaders. Their beliefs differed from the findings of Komives et al. (2006), in which students who felt empowered to step up when in a general membership role and serve leaders without titles. Grace and Samantha, the two students in my study who provided examples of leading without a title, shared experiences specific to their personal goals of serving as role models so other female students could see what was possible. At this phase, in both studies, adults served as sounding boards and guides, directing the students’ experiences. Peers assumed influential roles in this phase, providing models to emulate as well as supporting and encouraging the students. For students in both studies, this phase also meant learning as leaders when to step back and let others take the lead. Trust and belief in others’ abilities emerged, and the students understood that their methods were not always the best approaches to situations.

Another difference between my findings and the LID model at this phase was in the development of community in the students’ groups. Participants in the Komives et al. (2006) study worked toward the building of community at LID Stage 4. Students in my study did not address the concept of community building, focusing instead on how they, individually, behaved as leaders. The students discussed the development of skills to
adapt to differing needs of individuals and groups but did not connect this adaptability to community building in their organizations.

LID Stage 5: Generativity (Komives et al., 2006), and students in Phase 4: Generativity in my study show few similarities. One key similarity is the desire to provide other students with opportunities in order to develop new student leaders. Christine shared her decision not to run again for president of an organization so that someone else who was equally qualified could have the opportunity. Faith talked about helping to identify students to participate in a faculty-led trip as an opportunity for her to provide others with the same chances she had been given.

A major difference between the findings of these two studies appears in my Phase 4 and LID Stage 5. Students at this phase in both studies expressed “a passion for their commitments” (Komives et al., 2006, p. 411). Few students in both studies reached this stage, but the key finding in my study at Phase 4 was the idea of acting as a change agent, addressing inequities for women and people of color. The students in this phase shared examples of approaches they took on a micro scale to address social issues, such as Rhonda’s play, Grace’s taking a stand about a media publication for students of color, and Samantha’s decision to remain in her major as a way to role model what was possible for other female students of color. For the students in my study, this aspect of being a change agent was more prevalent than the organizational sustainability that emerged in LID Stage 5 in Komives et al. (2006). Students in my study may have discussed their desire for the success of their organizations; however, they did not express the manner in
which their roles contributed to the ongoing sustainability of their organizations as did
the participants in the LID Model.

The students in my study did not reflect LID Stage 6: Integration/Synthesis
(Komives et al., 2006). For Komives et al. (2006) this phase included students’ ability to
“view themselves as effective in working with others and [have] confidence they could
do that in almost any context” (p. 412). Students exhibited resiliency at this LID stage,
able to find their places in any new groups. One similarity expressed by a few students in
my study is the idea of self-care. Participants in the study by Komives et al. (2006)
realized they had to know themselves and care about themselves before they could care
about others. Samantha discussed the need to know oneself before leading others, a view
expressed by very few students in my study, producing no strong similarity with the
findings of Komives et al. (2006).

My findings do not reflect the sixth stage found by Komives et al. (2006). Their
findings as well as mine suggest the need for longitudinal studies to understand how the
leadership identity development process continues as students transition out of college
into the world of work or into graduate school. Because so few students achieved Stages
5 or 6 in their study, further research is needed to determine whether these stages occur in
the leadership identity development processes of college students. Additional studies
(Wagner, 2011; Lawhead, 2013) have also called into question whether six stages
actually constitute the LID model; my study, for example, resulted in only four phases.
In addition, the exploration of gender identity is a major difference between my study and
the one by Komives et al. (2006). Differences reflected by students in my study suggest
that gender, previously unaddressed in the leadership identity development process, indeed matters.

**Implications for Practice**

My findings yielded a number of implications for the practice of leadership educators and student affairs professionals. The lack of connection at early phases to what leadership meant to students provides an opportunity for leadership educators to examine the connection with their students, helping them to define leadership and to consider how their involvement and activities connect with their definition. The connection may be made by having students define leadership at the beginning and end of their experience and discuss how and whether their definition changed and why. This type of exploration could prompt students to move more quickly through Phase 1 into Phase 2, where they see themselves as leaders and to apply what they learned from their past experiences. Leadership educators should increase their awareness of emerging leadership identity development models and consider how to incorporate the understanding of students’ developmental processes into their programs to provide opportunities that are developmentally appropriate for their students. Accompanying this suggestion is the need to ensure that leadership educators and student affairs professionals are educated on emerging leadership perspectives.

**Gender Identity Development**

Given my finding that gender makes a difference in the leadership identity development of female students, leadership educators and student affairs professionals should incorporate exploration of gender identity as well as socially constructed views of
gender into their work with students. Those in my study were involved, engaged with
their campus communities, and made progress in developing their leadership identities;
but with a few exceptions they were not challenged to explore their gender identity and
the manner in which the social construction of gender impacted their leadership identity
development. Colleges and universities do a disservice to their female students by
leaving them unprepared for the experiences and challenges they may face as females in
the workplace, and one way this exploration of identity and development of abilities to
address challenges can be accomplished is through leadership education initiatives.
Programs should provide activities that give students a sense of discomfort and
dissonance in order to encourage their exploration of other aspects of their identity and
what that means for them as leaders. This could be done through the use of clips from
television or movies that illustrate females in a variety of leadership roles. Although
some examples may be extreme for the entertainment value provided, they can prompt
discussion and reflection by students related to their own behavior and sense of self.
Stories of recently graduated female leaders should be heard by students participating in
leadership education programs to provide a frame of reference and relevant experiences
from women who have recently been where they are. Female voices should be heard in
the readings and media used in leadership education programs to provide a balanced
perspective on leadership, and contemporary models of leadership like relational
leadership should be explored. Leadership educators should incorporate all three aspects
of leadership—training, development, and education (Roberts & Ullom, 1990)—in their
program offerings. Moving beyond training would provide space for exploration of
aspects of identity, incorporation of reflection, and development of leaders who are more aware and prepared to face and address challenges in society based on gender. And this shift in approach is not needed only for female students in leadership education programs but for male students as well.

The incorporation of gender identity exploration into leadership programs yields two implications for leadership educators. One is that programs will require redesign with a change in learning outcomes to include the exploration of identities as related to leadership as well as an understanding of contemporary theories and models of leadership. I recognize that specific needs will need to be addressed in certain training programs in order to prepare students for their leadership roles (e.g., orientation leader, resident assistant), but approaches can be developed to accommodate even small aspects of education and development. Education on new, more contemporary models of leadership can provide enhancement to female students’ abilities to see themselves as leaders (Kezar & Moriarty, 2000). Students could be provided case studies to address, using a contemporary model as their basis for decision making. Providing opportunities for students to reflect on what they are learning and what it means for them as opposed to the reflection that many students experienced with regard to improving a specific program can facilitate the developmental process for students. For instance, students could tell why a situation was challenging for them, what that challenge implied about a conflict with their values, and what they learned that solidified their sense of self as a leader. Another developmental approach is to provide opportunities for female students to grow in confidence in using their voices. This could be done by holding debates,
encouraging letters to the editor of the campus paper around an issue of importance to the
student, or placing a female student in charge of an aspect of the educational process for
her peers.

The second implication is for leadership educators themselves, who should explore their own assumptions about leadership and about gender. They bring assumptions and acceptance of socially constructed gender roles to the work they do, often unconsciously. They need to challenge themselves about what they believe and how those beliefs are reflected in how they perform their jobs. Leadership educators should review what voices are (and are not) incorporated in the readings they select for students. Much of the commonly used scholarship and literature about leadership was written by men; leadership educators who are concerned about providing a balance of knowledge and experience to their students must challenge themselves to find writings from a variety of viewpoints from a variety of voices, including those of women and people of color. Leadership educators must also be willing to confront sexism when it occurs in their programs, addressing sexist comments and providing safe spaces for students to explore what they know about gender identity and their acceptance of socially constructed views and to develop skills to challenge those views in themselves first and then in the larger community. This may not be an easy process for leadership educators and will require learning and self-exploration on the part of these professionals, which could be accomplished through attendance at conference sessions, reading, journaling, and departmental professional development activities designed to explore the social construction of gender. Although these shifts may present challenges, it is important for
leadership educators to make these changes in their programs in order to contribute to
students’ leadership identity development.

**Student Development Theory**

Owen (2012) asserted that “leadership development and human development are
inextricably intertwined” (p. 18). Student development theory explains and suggests
actions for working with students, guiding practice, and facilitating learning (N. J. Evans
et al., 2010). A key aspect of my leadership identity development model is the
connection to the concept of developmental readiness. To assist students in their
exploration of self as leader, considering the developmental level at which the student
currently operate is important. Leadership educators’ design and implementation of
leadership education should reflect the varying developmental levels of the students
involved as supported by the students in my study. One way to address this is through
the use of reflection. Students in Phase 2 restricted their reflections to analyzing
situations in which something had gone wrong and proposing ways to fix what had not
worked well. The reflections of these students exhibited Perry’s (1968) dualism, which
posits a right and a wrong way to approach situations; students in Phase 2 felt compelled
to understand how to “fix” something that did not work the way they anticipated. This
differed from students at Phases 3 and 4, who were more likely to reflect on how their
past experiences shaped who they were and how to use that knowledge to further their
work as leaders. As leadership educators incorporate reflection into their programs,
students in Phase 2 should be prompted to think beyond how to fix something and to
examine who they are and how that has influenced their leadership behavior. This could
be prompted by examining a specific program or event but must move students to looking at themselves, not merely determining what to do differently in the future. For female students, this also means prompting reflection on whether or how gender may have played a role. In discussions with female students, leadership educators may need to challenge students’ views of how a situation played out. At early developmental levels, conversation may be more directed than at later stages. This type of reflection can prompt movement along the students’ developmental journey.

Much as in Erikson’s concept of crisis, leadership educators have a responsibility to challenge students in ways that provide dissonance and promote students’ cognitive development. Engaging students in Phase 2 of the leadership identity development model in case studies and scenarios that require them to address ambiguous situations provides opportunities to push students beyond their comfort zones, where they can no longer rely on rules and what has previously been done to resolve a situation. Simulations can provide a safe place for students to explore, make mistakes, and learn how they would handle such situations in real life. Some degree of disequilibrium can create the dissonance needed to move students to the next phase of their development. Leadership educators must also be aware of and challenge behavior in simulations that reflect socially constructed gender roles (e.g., female students deferring to a male).

For students who are in Phase 2 of the model, this type of experience, however, could be challenging and frustrating. Leadership educators must be prepared to provide encouragement and support for these students while at the same time pushing them to move outside their comfort zones. Based on my findings, female students may back
down from pursuing their ideas when they find their solutions in conflict with their peers. Leadership educators must ensure that all solutions are explored and discussed. To create a comfortable experience for students, ground rules for exploring alternatives should be established and a discussion held about how conflicting views among peers do not mean they can no longer be friends; friends do not always have to agree with one another. Upon completion of these activities, students should be encouraged to reflect and process what they learned and how they made meaning of their experience.

**Leadership Identity Development Model**

Dugan (2011) stated that “leadership capacity is rarely transformationally accrued but built incrementally through exposure to meaningful interventions across time” (p. 80). Connected to the concept of developmental readiness and meeting students where they are, this section addresses implications for leadership educators in relation to each phase of my leadership identity development model.

**Phase 1: Awareness and exploration.** At this phase, leadership education is primarily conducted at the high school level, if it is done at all. The findings suggested the need for more specific leadership education opportunities for students at earlier ages to guide them in exploring what leadership means and the exploration of different types of leaders. Leadership educators should build connections with high school staff to offer leadership development initiatives in the schools. These initiatives should be designed to allow students to explore societal views of leaders, breaking down the stereotypes of who those students think of as leaders from a traditional viewpoint. An activity asking
students to share who they identify as leaders and why could provide a springboard to discussing gender-related leadership stereotypes.

Students at this phase were often unable (or unwilling) to connect their involvement experiences with their potential as leaders. Leadership education during this phase should focus on helping students examine what they have accomplished and how it connects to their idea of leadership. Boatwright and Egidio (2003) suggested that initiatives should work to keep female students from losing their leadership aspirations. During this phase some students shared their negative experience with labels. Previous experiences being labeled “bossy” had an initial negative impact on students’ belief in their ability to be leaders; they did not want to be disliked or misperceived by their friends and peers. Student perception of how female leaders are viewed and labeled in society also had an impact on some students’ ability to see themselves as leaders. Experiences with labels and language impacted their desire to place the label of leader on themselves, leading to the need for education for all students about labels and the impact those labels can have on their identities; the incorporation of empowering language, not labels, is needed. Given the media attention on the concept of bullying, now is a perfect time to create educational initiatives to address labels and language for all students, which can have a direct impact on future leadership identity development.

**Phase 2: Leader identified.** Students at this phase were very focused on traits and behaviors and came to campus with traditional views of leadership. During Phase 2 leadership education should address the difference between traits and characteristics and understanding of oneself in relation to being a leader. This is a time for students to
explore and clarify their values, to reflect on who they are and who they want to be. The incorporation of aspects of the Cs of the social change model of leadership (Komives, Wagner, & Associates, 2009)—consciousness of self, commitment, and consistency—could provide an ideal structure for leadership education initiatives at this phase. Leadership educators could provide opportunities for students to identify their values through activities, such as values auctions and simulations for students to determine whether they are consistently applying their values to their actions. This exploration could also provide the dissonance necessary for movement from one phase to the next through the use of case studies and simulations that require students to put their values into action. If students discovered inconsistencies in what they stated their values were and their actions, leadership educators could challenge them by asking why and help students evaluate the inconsistencies through discussion questions following such activities.

**Phase 3: Leadership differentiated.** As students in this phase narrow their level of involvement and fully engage in the work of specific organizations, leadership educators could guide students in the exploration of how their depth of involvement influences their views of who they are as leaders. One-on-one conversations with female students about the reasons they choose (or do not choose) to pursue opportunities should be held. Students who moved further into Phase 3 of the leadership identity development model understood the need for self-care. Leadership educators should provide opportunities that help students explore how to take better care of themselves, including activities to explore setting priorities, learning to say “no,” or incorporating aspects of
wellness into their daily lives (e.g., getting enough sleep). Although some students in Phase 3 arrived at the same understanding, this phase provides an opportunity for leadership educators to encourage students to examine their involvement—how their activities reflect who they are and how to live a more balanced life. This is also an opportunity to challenge the findings in my study related to care and concern for others that may cause female students to burn out or feel overburdened. An exploration of self-care also provides an opportunity for leadership educators to explore with students how to be a leader without having a title. A final aspect that should be addressed at this phase is developing future leaders. A number of students in my study talked about the importance of being an example for others and providing others with the opportunities they had had, but very few talked about specifics ways in which they worked to accomplish this leader development. Leadership education programs could, at the very least, explore effective delegation techniques with students to help them learn not only to let go but also to provide other students with opportunities to build upon their strengths and contribute to an organization.

Phase 4: Generativity. Given that few students in my study reached this phase, leadership educators must consider what prohibits students from developing a leadership identity as someone who can make change happen and how traditional gender roles may impact the ability to take action. The focus on development of citizen leaders by many institutions in their mission statements supports the need for leadership educators to create initiatives that provide students with opportunities to develop in this area. Leadership education programs that encourage students to tackle social issues or address
campus needs, putting into action what they have learned about themselves and about leadership, should be developed. This could include holding a protest or having students plan a conference with a focus on social justice. These types of program initiatives provide a safety net for students attempting to address issues in a “safer” environment, where they are supported and can develop the skills and confidence needed to address issues in their larger communities after graduation.

**Programming Specifically for Female Students**

The students in my study indicated that their early views of leadership were shaped by the way society assigns gender roles and perceives female leaders. These students came into their college experience holding very traditional, masculine views of necessary leadership traits and skills. Until students moved into Phase 3, they made little connection to their identity as females and even less connection to what that meant for them in terms of how they led and were perceived as leaders by their peers. The comments and experiences shared by these students were consistent with the findings of Haber (2011) and Haber-Curran (2013), particularly related to the importance of relationships and how students were perceived by their peers.

Few leadership education initiatives have been designed to meet the specific needs of female college students. A majority of programs are open to any and all students, resulting in difficulty addressing the specific needs of certain student populations. One-size-fits-all programs do not often address the multiple identities students bring to their leadership roles and instead focus specifically on traits and characteristics needed to be successful leaders, whatever that may mean for a particular
campus. The findings from my study indicate a strong need for the development of leadership education initiatives that focus specifically on women. Providing separate opportunities for female students to explore what leadership means to them and how they come to identify as a leader with a focus on supporting and affirming women’s identity, aspirations, and accomplishments (Sagaria, 1988) is invaluable. Providing an environment of only females avoids both the need to impress the males in the room or to defer to them. Whitt (1994) verified the importance of the all-female experience in the leadership development of students. Showing female students other ways of approaching leadership by educating them on contemporary theoretical models, such as collaboration, entrepreneurialism, or relational leadership, is crucial. Connecting female students with strong female role models should be another aspect of women-only leadership development programs (Astin & Leland, 1991) as well as opportunities for students to network with and learn from women in leadership roles in a range of organizations (Haber-Curran, 2013). Hosting roundtable discussions for female student leaders is one approach to consider. Finally, leadership educators must create opportunities for female students to develop skills and to be leaders as a way to level the playing field for them—on their campuses and in the world around them. A one-day or weekend retreat for female students focused on issues they may face in the workplace and the development of strategies for changing those barriers is an example of one such opportunity.

Merely educating female students about various approaches to leadership and challenging the stereotypes of women as leaders is, however, insufficient. Male students
need this education as well. Students of both genders must be educated about how society has defined who leaders are and how they should behave in order to bring about changes in societal views. Discussions about gendered views of leadership in programs should be held as a way to initiate this educational process. Leadership educators cannot focus on just one side of the equation and imagine that change will happen: They must educate all students.

A final thought about leadership education is my belief that leadership educators concerned about changing how society views women and leadership must also incorporate aspects of feminist leadership into current programs and initiatives. Rhonda shared her very skewed views of what feminism was until learning more specifically about the concept in an English class. To change the dialogue about leadership in general and women and leadership in particular, leadership educators must be willing to address societal views of women and the impact they have on students’ leadership identity development as a part of their educational initiatives. Leadership educators should read the works of Downing and Roush and others to educate themselves and become better prepared to address this topic in their programs.

**Limitations and Future Research**

Although the findings of my study contribute to understanding leadership identity development in traditional-aged female undergraduate students and can inform the work of leadership educators, some limitations require examination. This study was conducted at one point in time. As my findings and those of the Komives et al. (2006) indicate, a need exists to understand how the leadership identity development process continues and
what impact early experiences have on future identity development. Longitudinal studies are needed to better understand the developmental process, much as Josselson’s (1987) continued research facilitated an improved understanding of female identity development. To address the need for such longitudinal studies, the students from my study have been invited to participate in a follow-up study to be conducted in three years.

Leadership training experiences for the students in my study had an indirect influence on their leadership identity development; however, the underlying philosophy or premise upon which these training programs were created was unknown. As the researcher, I had no control over how these training experiences were designed or even how the developers of these programs defined leadership. A lack of consistency in the approaches across campus further complicated understanding the influence of these experiences on students’ leadership identity development. Further research on the underlying philosophy of leadership training design and campus-wide approaches to leadership development is needed to better understand the impact of training on leadership identity development.

Continued research is needed on women and leadership specifically at the college level. A better understanding of the role that relationships play in female leadership identity development is needed. Students in the early phases of the model indicated that having, finding, and using one’s voice were important to the development of a leadership identity. The concept of voice and its implications for leadership education require further examination.
The participants in my study were current student leaders and students identified as having leadership potential. The developmental process for these students may not be reflective of a more general, uninvolved, or less involved female student. Studies about less involved students are necessary to gain a broader understanding and view of how leadership identity development occurs for an array of students. Such research could add to student affairs professionals’ understanding of the impact of involvement on the creation and development of intentional initiatives designed to engage students. My study also focused on traditional-aged undergraduate students. Whether the findings of my study apply to nontraditional students or graduate students as well is a consideration for future research. Finally, I did not specifically examine the aspect of the multiple identities these students may have brought to their experiences and the intersection of these identities in their leadership identity development. For example, what role does race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, or socioeconomic status play in a female college student’s leadership identity development? I acknowledged that the intersections of multiple identities may play a role in the leadership identity development process, but I did not specifically address them in my study. Future research on the intersection of multiple identities in relation to leadership identity development is recommended in order to gain a fuller picture of the developmental process.

The role of participation in sports on leadership identity development deserves further study. Over half the participants in my study were involved in high school sports, which had a direct impact on their initial views of leadership as they entered college. Less clear was how these experiences and learning about leadership, particularly the
concept of being part of a team, influenced leadership identity development at later points. The role of influences on students’ leadership identity development also needs further exploration, specifically the difference in influence of males and females in students’ lives and students’ reflections on the impact these individuals had on their development. Culture played a key role in the initial leadership identity development of two students in this study. Grace pointed out that few students explore their cultural heritage or understand how it may influence who they are. Additional research on the impact of understanding one’s culture on a student’s leadership identity development is needed. Such research could also improve ways to understand how to raise awareness of privilege and inequities in our society, thus contributing to the development of aspects of Phase 4.

Conclusions

Leadership identity development is a complex, evolving process; female students appear to experience some aspects of this process differently. Gaining an understanding of this developmental process can benefit leadership educators in the design of developmentally appropriate initiatives. Knowledge of this process can help student affairs professionals in their work with students in a number of settings, including student organizations, residence halls, or orientation programs. Understanding how students develop a leadership identity could inform the design of leadership development programs and create opportunities for new initiatives aimed at achieving institutional missions of developing students into leaders. Ultimately, enhanced knowledge of leadership identity development processes would benefit students as well. Additional
research may be needed to understand more fully how leadership identity development occurs; however, the findings of my study have added to the existing scholarship and provide a base from which to build in the future.
APPENDIX A

RECOMMENDATION REQUEST EMAIL
Appendix A

Recommendation Request Email

Greetings! I am beginning work on my dissertation and am reaching out for your assistance. The purpose of my dissertation is to understand how female undergraduate college students develop their leadership identity. The development of a leadership identity is a little explored aspect of leadership yet is important for understanding how individuals identify themselves as leaders and what experiences contribute to that development. Students will be asked to participate in one to two individual interviews and one focus group, each lasting one to two hours.

I am requesting recommendations from you of traditional-aged female undergraduate students you think may be interested/willing to participate in this study. For this study I am looking for students who exhibit leadership ability, either as someone currently in a leadership role or as someone you perceive as having leadership potential. My aim is to reach a broad segment of students from across class standing, from a variety of majors, and with a variety of types of involvement. Additionally, I am looking for students who can be reflective and who could speak articulately about their experiences.

If you have students you would recommend, please email me their names and email addresses by Friday, August 8, 2014. I will reach out to these students by email inviting their participation. Let me know if I may use your name as the person who recommended them. I am also available to attend meetings after school starts to share information on my study directly with students. Face to face meetings can sometimes be more beneficial to encouraging participation.

Thank you for any assistance you can provide. If you have questions about my dissertation, please contact me at bmckenzi@kent.edu or 330-388-7117. This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. If you have questions about the rights of research participants, you may call the Kent State’s IRB at 330-672-2704.

Brenda McKenzie
Doctoral Candidate
bmckenzi@kent.edu

Susan Iverson
Associate Professor
siverson@kent.edu
APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT EMAIL
Recruitment Email

You are being invited to participate in a research study. You have been recommended by xxx as someone who might be interested in participating. The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand how female undergraduate college students develop their leadership identity. The development of a leadership identity is a little explored aspect of leadership yet is important for understanding how individuals identify themselves as leaders and what experiences contribute to that development.

We would like to invite you to take part in this project. If you decide to do this, you would be asked to participate in one to two individual interviews and one focus group. Each interview and the focus group will last between one and two hours, and will be audio-recorded to accurately capture the interviews.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts beyond those encountered in everyday life. You may benefit from knowing that your response will help us better understand the leadership identity development process college women experience. This knowledge may impact the work of leadership educators and student affairs professionals who work with college students. Additionally, you may personally benefit from reflecting on your experience and learning more about yourself.

If you are willing to participate, or would like more information about this project, please contact us at bmckenzi@kent.edu or siverson@kent.edu. In addition, please fill out and return the attached demographic questionnaire to Brenda McKenzie, bmckenzi@kent.edu. This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the Kent State’s IRB at 330-672-2704.

Regards,
Brenda McKenzie
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education Administration & Student Personnel
Kent State University

Dr. Susan V. Iverson
Associate Professor, Higher Education Administration & Student Personnel
Kent State University
Appendix C

Leadership Identity Development Study

Demographic Questionnaire

Thank you for expressing an interest in participating in this leadership identity development study. This study will help us understand how female undergraduate students develop their leadership identity. Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire and return to Brenda McKenzie, bmckenzi@kent.edu.

Name: ____________________________

Year in College (circle one):

   Freshman    Sophomore    Junior    Senior

Major: ____________________________

Age: ______

What race do you consider yourself?

   _____ African American/Black
   _____ Asian
   _____ Caucasian
   _____ Latino/a
   _____ Native American
   _____ Other: ____________________________

What is your sexual orientation? ________________________________________

I was involved in activities/groups/organizations in high school (circle one).

   Yes    No
List what you were involved in:

I am involved in activities/organizations/service in college (circle one).

Yes  No

List what you are/were involved in:

Others have told me I have leadership potential.

Yes  No

By whom were you told you had this potential?

Please return to Brenda McKenzie, bmckenzi@kent.edu.
APPENDIX D

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS WITH SELECT DEMOGRAPHIC DATA
Appendix D

List of Participants with Select Demographic Data

(see list of involvement abbreviations at the bottom)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Class Standing</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Race/ Ethnicity</th>
<th>Select High School Involvement</th>
<th>Select College Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abigail</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Culture Club; volunteer; Orientation student staff; peer mentor</td>
<td>Kent Peace Corps Organization; Orientation student staff; peer mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridget</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Interpersonal Communication</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Sport; peer mentor</td>
<td>Residence hall student staff; Orientation student staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassie</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Band; SADD; NHS</td>
<td>Peer mentor; college advisory council; English honorary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Public Relations</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Student Council; theatre; sport; ministry</td>
<td>PRSSA; student media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Public Relations</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Band/choir; NHS; Environmental Club; Model UN</td>
<td>Hall Council; KIC; PRSSA; SQAC; Provost’s Leadership Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Magazine Journalism</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Sport; school paper; NHS</td>
<td>Intramurals; student media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>NHS; Student Council; dance team; peer mediator; peer ministry</td>
<td>Student media; NAAACP; Sister Circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Extra Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gretchen</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Band; NHS; Principal’s Advisory Council</td>
<td>Sorority; Orientation student staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Construction Management</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Sports (3); JROTC; Math team</td>
<td>Construction Management Student Organization; peer mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janice</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Sports (2)</td>
<td>Campus job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Visual Communication Design</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Sport; Ski Club</td>
<td>Sport; Leadership Academy; study abroad experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Educational Studies</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Sports; Student Council</td>
<td>Sorority; Orientation student staff; Golden Key</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leigh</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Interpersonal Communication</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Sports (2); Student Council; Student Council; SADD; school paper</td>
<td>Orientation student staff; Hall Council; KIC; Student Ambassadors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leila</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Biological Anthropology</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Student ministry; sports (2); Dance team</td>
<td>Advocates of Culture &amp; Knowledge; peer mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Public Communications</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>NHS; volunteer; Cheerleading; Key Club; Student Council</td>
<td>Sorority; Orientation student staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Student Council; French Club; Band; sport; NHS</td>
<td>Hall Council; KIC; honoraries; Student Ambassadors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penny</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>French Club; volunteer; sports (2); Mock Trial</td>
<td>Orientation student staff; volunteer; high school rugby coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhonda</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Drama; Choir</td>
<td>Student Ambassadors; United</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Club/Activity</td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Extra Activities</td>
<td>Other Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samantha</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Vocal Performance; African American</td>
<td></td>
<td>Music; drama; Student Council; Origami Club</td>
<td>Choir; volunteer at Campus Kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Sports (4); Student Council; NHS; peer mentor</td>
<td>Provost’s Leadership Academy; student media</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Abbreviations**

JROTC – Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps  
KIC – Kent Interhall Council  
NAACP – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People  
NHS – National Honor Society  
PRSSA – Public Relations Student Society of America  
SADD – Students Against Drunk Driving  
SQAC – Student Quality Advisory Committee
APPENDIX E

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Appendix E

Individual Interview Protocol

Interview Introduction, Explanation of Study, etc.

1. Thank you for agreeing to be in this study. Explain my interest in leadership and my role in the study.

2. Discuss the process. Tell them it should be beneficial and interesting (and fun) to focus on them and reflect on their experience. Share that they may benefit by learning more about themselves through this process and use this information to become a better leader. Explain you may refer to them by their first name as you go through the questions but you will give them a chance to create a pseudonym in the study later, if they wish.

3. Give them the informed consent form to sign and explain.
   a. May choose to not answer any question.
   b. May drop out at any point
   c. No repercussions
   d. Benefit for leadership educators
   e. Benefit to them – enhanced self-awareness and the opportunity to reflect on your own experiences (something we don’t often get/take the time to do)

4. Ask if they have questions. Encourage them to ask questions throughout the process.

5. Explain you will be taping the interviews and taking notes so you have a record and can understand their ideas.

6. Give them audio-taping consent form to sign.
   a. Recording will be erased once transcribed and analyzed; pseudonyms will be used in place of their names
7. Tell them you will be sharing a copy of the transcript of each interview with them if they would like to read it to expand on or correct anything.

8. Unless they have further questions, let them know you be starting to record. – *turn on recorder*.

9. This interview is to help me understand you and your leadership experiences. These experiences could be in high school, on campus, in the community, in religious organizations, etc. This is your story.

**Interview Questions**

1. Tell me a little about yourself – your background, etc.
   - Prompts:
     - Tell me about your high school activities.
     - What leadership roles did you have in high school.
     - What brought you to [institution]?
     - What kinds of activities are you involved in here?
     - What role did you play in your involvement experiences?
     - What motivated you to become involved in this/these activities?

2. Think back to when you were in high school. As you think about this time, what experiences or individuals had an impact on you, in what way, and why?
   - Prompts:
     - Who played key roles in your life during this time? Why?

3. As you continue to think about those impactful events or people, in what ways do you think this has shaped who you are today?

4. Tell me a little more about your involvement and leadership roles on campus/in the community.
   - Prompts:
     - What role have/do you play in your involvement experiences?
       - Follower/Member versus leader
       - Positional leader versus non-positional leader
       - Influencer
5. Think about your time here at [institution]. As you consider your time here, what individuals or experiences have had an impact on you?
   - Prompts:
     - In what ways has that shaped who you are? Can you give me some specifics/examples?
     - In what ways has this influenced your view of leadership? Give me some examples.

6. When do you remember first thinking about the idea of leadership?
   - Prompts:
     - What did it mean to you then?
     - What or who influenced your way of thinking about leadership?
     - Could you see yourself fitting this concept you had of leadership? Why or why not?

7. When did you actually start to see/consider yourself as a leader?
   - Prompts:
     - Tell me about this process.
     - What (or who) prompted you to have this view of yourself? Share an example.
     - What role did adults, peers play in guiding your leadership efforts?

8. Did you learn about leadership in any formal way at this time? In what way?
   - Prompts:
     - What role did this have on your view of yourself as a leader?
     - What did you learn that resonated with you and your views of leadership?
9. We know you can face challenges when you take on the role of leader. Share an example of a challenge you have experienced as a leader and how you overcame it.

10. From your leadership experiences, what have you learned about relating to other people?
   - Prompts:
     - What did the experience of working with others teach you?

11. As you think about the experiences you have had working with others, what have you learned about working with people different from you?

12. We often get caught up in the day-to-day demands of our lives and do not take the time to reflect on our experiences. How do you (or do you) reflect on your leadership experiences?
   - Prompts:
     - Who do you talk to about your experiences (i.e. a parent, an advisor, a peer)?

13. After having served in a leadership role and having experienced the expectations of leaders by others, how do you view the concept of leadership today?
   - Prompts:
     - What (or who) has influenced this view?
     - Thinking about your view of leadership, do you see yourself fitting this view/definition? In what ways?
     - What is your philosophy of leadership now?

14. As you reflect back on your leadership experiences, how does being female matter?
   - Prompts:
     - How does being female influence you as a leader (i.e. how you lead, how you interact with others, your ability to influence others)?
     - Have you ever had experiences, positive or negative, that reflect you being a female leader?
Give me an example of a time when you were negatively affected, as a leader, due to your gender.

15. Now that we have thought about this together for awhile/several sessions, how would you describe the process, since high school, of how your view of yourself as a leader has changed over time? How has it evolved? Summarize this for me as if it happened in steps or stages or some similar process.

- Prompts:
  - Would it be helpful to draw out or graph your response? (provide paper to be able to do so).

16. Is there anything else you want to add about your leadership or your experiences?

**Closing**

1. Thank them – turn off recorder.
2. Remind them to send you their comments on the transcript for this session when they receive it – provide a date for return.
   a. Ask if they have a pseudonym preference.
3. Remind them you will be inviting them to participate in the focus group you will be scheduling to explore initial emerging categories. Let them know you will be emailing with specifics about this in several weeks.
   a. Provide a general sense of when this will be scheduled.
4. Thank them again for participating in this study.
APPENDIX F

SAMPLE RESEARCH JOURNAL ENTRIES
Appendix F

Sample Research Journal Entries

August 1, 2014

The dissertation process has begun! Today I sent out 39 emails asking faculty, staff, and graduate students I know on campus for recommendations of students to invite to participate. The exciting part is that this generated me, in just a few days, a list of 61 potential participants with a variety of involvement experiences. And I already have 2 interested students – who have VERY different involvement experiences.

I attempted to be clear in the email I sent asking for recommendations about the purpose of the study, asking for students who exhibit leadership ability either as someone in a current leadership positions or as someone who has leadership potential (see email for specific wording, if necessary for chapter 3). I also asked for students who could be reflective and speak articulately about their stories. Participation time expectations were also outlined and I defined with leadership identity meant to me for this study. I think one of the most important aspects was asking if I could use the person’s name in the email I sent to the students. I think telling the students, up front, that someone had recommended them did two things – it validated this study as “real” and not just some random person reaching out to them, and it encouraged some of them to participate because they were thought enough of to be recommended by an “adult” they had a relationship with in some way.

I really appreciate the support from the people who have responded. It’s an illustration of how important establishing relationships in your work are but also showing those people that you are credible. As I reflect on the people who have responded, I truly believe it is due to my credibility as a professional.

This process is becoming very real to me now which is both exciting and overwhelming. I do question my ability to tackle this. Who am I to question Susan Komives’ work? The irony of this statement is that I know she wants others to explore LID and build on what her team initially learned. But I have so little true research experience, I worry about my ability to do this well (and need to let go of my perfectionist tendencies). Did I take on too much with doing grounded theory? Should I have scaled back my methodological approach? Questions I need to work through.

August 21, 2014; note pseudonyms are used

Interview #2 successfully in the books! Wendy was a great student to interview. She was engaging, open, and has some good insights, some of which were prompted by
the interview (always a good thing!). I can understand why her peers like and respond to her – she pulled me in right away with her friendly attitude and openness to sharing her story. I am already beginning to see some connections between her interview and Leigh’s, particularly as it relates to relationships and allowing others to have a voice. It will be interesting to see if this continues to play out as a dimension of the experiences of other participants.

Wendy had a series of words that seemed to continue to crop up as she talked, in some form – cheerleader, team, action-orientation, and passion. When I re-listen to her interview, this is something I want to pay more attention to to try and understand what might be behind her choice of these words. For example, does she use cheerleader to reflect encouraging and motivating behaviors tied to her time involved in sports? The same thing applies to the word team since she used several examples of sports teams when she talked about this idea.

She does not perceive herself as a leader and seemed embarrassed by being referred to in this way. The story she shared about the volleyball coach telling her dad that she and her sister could run a small country is a good example of this embarrassment. She kept saying she didn’t get why the coach said that and that she did not feel like she was a leader. This came up as well when she talked about Jan recommending her because of her leadership – again, not how she would define herself. Her perception is more about being in a position where she has a chance to make a difference or has specific responsibilities. This is somewhat in conflict with her response that you don’t have to be in a position to be a leader. Interesting that she talks about a lot of the aspects of leadership – confronting situations appropriately, encouraging others, action not words, establishing trust and credibility – but doesn’t see herself as a leader. She appears to exhibit all these aspects. Is this something related to the messages women get about leadership?

I like that she reflects on her experiences, positive and challenging, in some way whether that be just thinking, journaling, or talking with her mother. Most of the students I have talked with to this point (Leigh and my pilot study) only reflect on things that go wrong. This is something else to keep an eye on to see if women tend to focus on the negative in terms of reflection or if more of the participants are like Wendy.

Tied to this question, it was interesting to hear her share her internship experiences where she say, first-hand, a women having to fight for her rights in a man’s world at the Columbus Dispatch. I could have asked her more about this – for specific examples, how she would take this knowledge with her as she leaves Kent State (follow-up). This is in direct contrast to her experiences at Kent State where she does not seem to have had negative impact from being a female leader. She perceives equality in the
journalism area, which is a positive sign. It could be interesting to find out what the demographics of the journalism program are to see if that may have some influence.

Many of her influencers were women – her mom, her sister, an English teacher in middle school, Jan, the features editor when she was a freshman. There was definitely a common theme across these women, as she talked about them, of being strong, independent, caring, and encouraging/supportive which appears to be what she tries to be as a person/leader. Her other main influencer was her dad, which was nice to hear. She has taken to heart something he told her about being a leader not a follower. Several times she mentioned being frustrated by people who talk about doing things but never follow through. She clearly embraces a more action-oriented approach although I would have liked to have explored this a bit more (follow-up).

One-on-one interaction is important to Wendy. She mentioned this numerous times and it was evident in examples she shared of connecting with people on a personal level and with wanting to help other students grow and develop. She appears to be “nervous” about being the managing editor since this more of an administrative position than interacting with her peers. It would be interesting to hear from her after the semester to see how this experience has influenced her views of leadership – will she see that being in those types of roles can have a huge impact on others?

Wendy’s leadership roles seem to have come from a natural progression process. She mentioned several examples of joining something and then somehow moving up the ranks, into positions of leadership. She couldn’t clearly articulate how this happened. This is something to follow up on after she has had some time to think – do others recommend her? Does she see a need to be filled? Or is it just truly a natural next step? This may be somewhat connected to her explanation of how she would define her leadership journey to this point as one of identifying you passion, getting experience to build confidence and skills, and then put words into actions to accomplish that passion. Trust also seems to play a key role for her and seems to be something that has evolved with her experiences.

It was interesting to hear her talk about the importance of learning how to work with different people. It was intriguing to hear how she seeks out opportunities to work with others, to establish credibility, and learn how to negotiate conflict – her diversity beat example is a good one here as is her PLA experience. She realized that she was sheltered growing up and didn’t know much, if anything, about others. While she answered my question about why she seeks out those opportunities, I feel there is still something more there. Is this something about her, her experiences and family that make her pursue opportunities? Did something happen that prompted this exploration? I want to explore this more with future interviews (and may follow up with Wendy as well) to
see if there is something to this idea as part of the leadership identity development process.

One other follow up area with Wendy would be her decision to study abroad in Spain. I made a note of this and then never returned to the topic. I would like to know if this experience has influenced how she views leadership, what she learned from that time that she incorporates into how she works now, etc.

As I look ahead to future interviews, I’m wondering if I need to explore the role of sports more. Quite a few of the participants were involved in sports of some sort in high school and Wendy used several sports examples in her interview. After a few more interviews, I need to come back to this and explore whether this is a topic of importance.

I am also wondering if I am digging enough in my interviews? I try to make notes and ask follow-up questions to get deeper responses and examples. I am thinking I may want to ask Susan or Alicia to listen to a tape and give me some feedback. I also need to clarify how to go about asking follow-up questions. With the MCSA study, I inserted questions in the transcript. Can I do the same thing with this study?

October 13, 2014

I have started doing more focused coding since I have finished line-by-line coding with the transcripts that I have back. This is a much more overwhelming process than I realized it would be. And trying to figure out a process that works for me has been slow going. I’m still not convinced I’ve latched on to the best process, but… My first approach was to put each line code on a post-it note with the thought that I could then move them around into categories. After just one transcript I realized that would not be the best approach. I went through one and a half pads of notes – and that was with not doing a new piece for each code but tracking how often a code (or very closely related code) was used. I know some people have used an Excel file to write quotes/codes and color code them but that seems like an exceedingly overwhelming task to me. So I have settled on using the first interview transcripts notes as a starting point for creating broader categories and making note of specific codes/concepts underneath them. Then as I review subsequent transcripts, I add codes/concepts to existing categories and add new categories as necessary. Although this seems to be working, I am worried that I have gotten a little caught up in the categories I have and am hesitant to add more new ones (I am over 75 categories now, I think). It is hard to keep them straight and remember what already exists. I keep thinking that as I go forward this will get “easier” in terms of not adding as many categories or codes/concepts under existing categories. Five transcripts in and I’m still adding – although I probably could stop adding as much as I am – I’m still in the mode of needing to be super thorough in my approach. I also need to take a break and go back through the emerging categories to see if they are really titled
correctly. For example, I added one today on awareness/diversity that needs a better title but in the moment it was the best I could do.

One comment on the line-by-line coding aspect. As I was moving into focused coding the other day, I reached out to Alicia to see if I needed to include all the codes or just the “relevant” ones – meaning codes related to some aspect of their hometown or something like joining a team. Her comment was since it seemed like I coded every line (isn’t that what Charmaz says to do???), that I probably did not need to include every code – to just focus on what lines were relevant to the study. That could have saved me some time when I was doing the line-by-line coding if I had understood the process that way. Lesson learned.

I have also significantly revised my focus group protocol after a conversation with Dr. Lara over the weekend. She made good points about needing to look at this as an opportunity to truly co-construct meaning with the participants as the constructivist GT process models. So I have focused on two big questions – one related to the emerging categories, their thoughts/reactions to them and having them put them into a developmental order; and the other related to women being caring as leaders to really tease out what this means to them and how that is reflected in who they are, bringing in some probe questions related to helping and encouraging others. I am also having them talk about why they “do” what they do as an initial break-the-ice type of question. I’m anxious to see how this goes tonight and hear what the students have to say about the emerging categories as I see them. It doesn’t mean I will necessarily change my mind about my emerging categories but their insights may provide some clarity to ensure I am not imprinting my bias on the interpretation to this point.

I am starting to feel frustrated/stressed about the fact that I am still missing half my transcripts. It is difficult to feel confident in my moving forward progress when I still have so many transcripts to code/review. And with the focus group tonight, I’m starting to feel the pressure of getting behind on my timeline and being able to fully flesh out my thoughts so that I can begin writing in late November/early December. I also need to give some thought to peer debriefers and get moving forward on that process. I am feeling like I need to have someone double check my coding process with one or two transcripts to see if I am on track or letting my views influence my interpretation. I have tried to make note of places where student’s responses impacted me in a more personal way (i.e. when they made more judgmental comments) so that I take that into account when analyzing the data.

I also need to go back through my journal notes, notes I’ve made on transcripts and the coding pieces to pull together questions, reflections, comments about the potential emerging LID process. This is a piece I’m struggling to get a handle on as well – how to keep track of and organize these emerging thoughts/questions/reflections in a
place where I can easily access them. Maybe this is the place for an Excel file. Part of my struggle, too, is not wanting to take time away from my coding process to dig through everything and get some level of organization going. But in the long run, this will save time, right? And I need to pull all my questions for Susan, too, and schedule a time to meet with her just about my dissertation so that it isn’t a part of our regular, weekly meeting discussions.

I am also going to start my foray into analytical memos which should be interesting. I need to review what Charmaz says about memos. But I have some ideas that are beginning to come together around a couple of the emerging categories and I want to get them on paper before I lose them.
APPENDIX G

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL
Appendix G

Focus Group Protocol

**Introduction/Review Consent**

1. Thank you for agreeing to continue your involvement in this study.
2. Discuss the process. This focus group will focus on categories that have begun emerging from the interview. The purpose is to understand if these emerging categories are reflective of your experiences. Explain you may refer to them by their first name as you go through the questions but you will use their pseudonym in the transcriptions.
3. Remind them about the informed consent form they previously signed.
   a. May choose to not answer any question.
   b. May drop out at any point
   c. No repercussions
   d. Benefit for leadership educators
   e. Benefit to them – enhanced self-awareness and the opportunity to reflect on your own experiences (something we don’t often get/take the time to do)
4. Explain observer’s role
   a. Note taker/observer to help me with my analysis later
   b. Won’t be identifying you by name
5. Ask if they have questions. Encourage them to ask questions throughout the process.
6. Explain you will be video and audio taping the focus group and you have someone assisting who will take notes so you have a record and can understand their ideas.
7. Unless they have further questions, let them know you will be starting to record. – *turn on recorders.*
**Introductory Question**

1. Let’s take a couple minutes to go around the table and do introductions.
2. In your interviews, I asked you all to share what you have been involved with, leadership roles you have held. As you reflect on your involvement on campus, what motivated or fueled your decisions to be involved, to do the things you do (involvement, leadership roles)?
   a. A number of participants talked about “moving up the ranks” in organizations. Why did you chose to do this (if this relates to you)? What prompted you to want to move up (i.e. thinking you have to, being encouraged by others, having an inner drive to succeed)?

**Flipchart Review**

1. Flipcharts are posted around the room with categories that have emerged from the interviews you have participated in and that are beginning to reflect categories of a leadership identity development process. (see attached list of emerging categories)
2. As you think back on your individual interview, what do you think some of the emerging categories might be?
   a. Uncover the categories after some group discussion.
3. I want you to take a few minutes to walk around the room and read the categories.
4. Then take a marker, go back around the room, and write comments and reactions on the flipcharts.
   a. Note where you see yourself reflected in the categories and why.
   b. Note examples of how a category fits you as a leader.
   c. Note where you do not agree with the category/phrasing and why.
5. Respond to others’ comments as well.

**Questions**

1. As you looked at the categories, what were your reactions?
   a. What did you agree with? Disagree with? Why?
   b. Share examples of how a category resonated for you.
2. Distribute ranking sheets. Individually, if you had to organize these categories into a sequence of leadership identity development, how might you organize them?

3. Now as a group (or 2 small groups), how might you organize them? (distribute blank ranking sheet for the group)
   a. Why did you choose this order?
   b. What from the emerging categories didn’t fit the idea of a developmental sequence? How are those items relevant (or not) to the idea of leadership identity development?
   c. If someone disagreed with the order decided, where did you disagree and why? How would you change it?

4. The idea of women being more caring as leaders came up numerous times in the interviews. What does this mean to you as a leader? In what ways are women more caring as leaders? How is this demonstrated? Is this how you lead? Provide examples.
   a. Helping kept coming up in interviews. How does the idea of helping connect with caring?
   b. A number of participants talked about encouraging others as being important to leadership. What does encouraging others have to do with the concept of caring, if anything?

5. Is there anything else you want to add about your leadership, your experiences, or these categories?
   a. If time, ask them to draw what leadership meant to them when they initially thought about/recognized it and what it means to them now.

Closing

1. Turn off recorders.
2. Thank them again for participating in this study.
3. Let any of them who have not seen their transcripts yet know they are will be coming in the next couple weeks. Thank those who have reviewed their transcripts and provided feedback.

4. My next steps
   a. Continue reviewing transcripts
   b. Review FG information
   c. Being organizing categories into themes and then into an emerging process/model of leadership identity development

**Rank Ordering: Name:**

Rank order the following these categories into a sequence of how an individual might experience these categories, from 1 – 21, starting with 1 at the initial/beginning end and 21 at the more fully developed end.

- Leadership is about a title/position (Evolving views of leadership)
- Not always about being in a “position” (Evolving views of leadership)
- Leading by example/being a role model for others (Evolving views of leadership)
- Leadership is about action/doing not talking (Evolving views of leadership)
- Being part of something bigger than self (Evolving views of leadership)
- Leadership is about helping, helping others (Evolving views of leadership)
- First not seeing self-as-leader – it’s about others (Evolving views of self-as-leader)
- First seeing self-as-leader when elected to a position in college (Evolving views of self as leader)
- Becoming confident in ability as a leader (Evolving views of self-as-leader)
- Being a role model, encourager for others as a leader (Evolving views of self-as-leader)
- Women are more caring, emotional as leaders
- Perception of women leaders as less capable
Opportunity to reinvent self in college
Recognizing multiple styles, approaches to leadership
Being perceived as a leader by others/Having others perceive your potential
Working with people different from yourself (Broadening perspective)
Realizing others have good ideas; things don't always have to be your way (Broadening perspective)
Trying new approaches (Broadening perspective)
Becoming more inclusive (Broadening perspective)
Evolving/changing relationships with peers
Evolving/changing relationships with people who have impacted you
APPENDIX H

FOCUS GROUP NONATTENDEES EMAIL AND QUESTIONS
Appendix H

Focus Group Nonattendees Email and Questions

Thank you for participating in this second phase of my dissertation study. This piece involves looking a bit deeper into the emerging categories I am beginning to see. These are only a few of the emerging categories; there are many more that I could have chosen to include, but I had to narrow down to some specifics. Please take some time to respond to the questions below – just add your comments below each question – and email back to me at bmckenzi@kent.edu by **Monday, October 20, 2014**.

3. In your interviews, I asked you to share what you have been involved with, leadership roles you have held. As you reflect on your involvement on campus, what motivated or fueled your decisions to be involved, to do the things you do (involvement, leadership roles)?
   a. A number of participants talked about “moving up the ranks” in organizations. Why did you chose to do this (if this relates to you)? What prompted you to want to move up (i.e. thinking you have to, being encouraged by others, having an inner drive to succeed)?

4. On the attached sheet is a list of the emerging categories I identified for this focus group. Review the list and write your reactions to them.
   a. What did you agree with? Disagree with? Why?
   b. Share examples of how a category resonated for you.

5. After you have written your initial reactions to the categories, I would like you to organize these categories into a sequence of how an individual might experience these categories, from 1 – 21, starting with 1 at the initial/beginning end and 21 at the more fully developed end. For example, I might say #1 is not seeing self as a leader and #21 as not always being about being in a “position.” If you do not think something fits into a sequential order, make note of that.
   a. Why did you choose this order?
b. What from the emerging categories didn’t fit the idea of a developmental sequence? How are those items relevant (or not) to the idea of leadership identity development?

6. The idea of women being more caring as leaders came up numerous times in the interviews. What does this mean to you as a leader? In what ways are women more caring as leaders? How is this demonstrated? Is this how you lead? Provide examples.

7. Is there anything else you want to add about your leadership, your experiences, or these categories?

**Rank Ordering; Name:**

Rank order the following these categories into a sequence of how an individual might experience these categories, from 1 – 21, starting with 1 at the initial/beginning end and 21 at the more fully developed end.

- Leadership is about a title/position (Evolving views of leadership)
- Not always about being in a “position” (Evolving views of leadership)
- Leading by example/being a role model for others (Evolving views of leadership)
- Leadership is about action/doing not talking (Evolving views of leadership)
- Being part of something bigger than self (Evolving views of leadership)
- Leadership is about helping, helping others (Evolving views of leadership)
- First not seeing self-as-leader – it’s about others (Evolving views of self-as-leader)
- First seeing self-as-leader when elected to a position in college (Evolving views of self as leader)
- Becoming confident in ability as a leader (Evolving views of self-as-leader)
- Being a role model, encourager for others as a leader (Evolving views of self-as-leader)
Women are more caring, emotional as leaders
Perception of women leaders as less capable
Opportunity to reinvent self in college
Recognizing multiple styles, approaches to leadership
Being perceived as a leader by others/Having others perceive your potential
Working with people different from yourself (Broadening perspective)
Realizing others have good ideas; things don’t always have to be your way (Broadening perspective)
Trying new approaches (Broadening perspective)
Becoming more inclusive (Broadening perspective)
Evolving/changing relationships with peers
Evolving/changing relationships with people who have impacted you
APPENDIX I

CONSENT FORM
Appendix I

Consent Form

Leadership Identity Development in College Women Students

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand how female college students develop their leadership identity. The development of a leadership identity is a little explored aspect of leadership yet is important for understanding how individuals identify themselves as leaders and what experiences contribute to that development.

We would like you to take part in this project. If you decide to do this, you will be interviewed two to three times – once/twice in an individual interview and once as part of a focus group. Each interview and the focus group will last between one and two hours. The interviews and the focus group will be audio-recorded to accurately capture the interviews.

Confidentiality will be maintained through the use of pseudonyms and the elimination of other identifying information from transcripts and other documents. We can think of no possible risks to you as a participant in this project. The only inconvenience to you will be the time involved in the interviews and the focus group. Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. You may benefit from participation in this project from enhanced self-awareness of yourself as a leader. This research will definitely be of future benefit to the work of professionals in the field of leadership development, specially working with female college students.

Taking part in this project is entirely up to you and no one will hold it against you if you decide not to participate or do not wish to answer any specific item. If you do take part, you may stop at any time without penalty.

If you want to know more about this research project, please call one of us at (330) 672-0653 or email us at bmckenzi@kent.edu or siverson@kent.edu. The project has been approved by Kent State University. If you have questions about Kent State University’s rules for research, please call the Institutional Review Board at (330) 672-2704.

You will receive a copy of this consent form.

Sincerely,

Brenda L. McKenzie

Dr. Susan Iverson
B. CONSENT STATEMENT(S)

1. I agree to take part in this project. I know what I will have to do and that I can stop at any time. I know that my name will be changed.

______________________________________________  
Signature  
__________________  
Date

__________________  
Printed Name

AUDIO RECORDING CONSENT FORM

LEADERSHIP IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN COLLEGE WOMEN STUDENTS

I agree to audio-recording throughout this project. I understand that I may revoke this permission at any time. I understand that I may hear the tapes if I choose to do so.

I give permission for Brenda McKenzie and Dr. Susan Iverson to use the recordings made of me for this research project.

______________________________________________  
Signature  
__________________  
Date

__________________  
Printed Name
APPENDIX J

LIST OF EMERGING CATEGORIES
Appendix J

List of Emerging Categories

**Emerging Categories**
- Limited leadership experience means lower level of LID (GJ, MJ ex)
- Impact of labels on leadership view, female leadership view
- Not being heard, not having a voice
- Female leadership presence on campus
- Perception of women leaders as less successful, able
- Awareness of gender in leadership
- Girls being catty
- Being an emotions-based leader (females)
- Projecting outward
- Early views of leadership
- Thinking about how to improve, what went wrong – reflection
- Role of sports team involvement on leadership development
- Early involvement about joining something (not sure who I am identity aspect)
- Being a part of something/Finding your tribe
- Being a model for others
- Leadership is action-oriented
- Initial leadership steps
- Feeling out of place, out of sync
- Being perceived by others as a leader
- Valuing relationships
- Being comfortable with own choices
- Dealing with conflict
- Passing on your knowledge
- Positivity
- Seeing self-as-leader
- Leadership training impact – various levels here
- Stepping up, doing what needs to be done
- Encouraging others
- Rewarding feeling
- Realizing what leadership can mean
- Choosing a path
- Evolving/changing relationships
- Being encouraged by others
- Leading as helping
- Being sheltered
- Broadening perspective
- Showing enthusiasm
- Standing your ground
- Being supported
- Next leadership steps
- Not seeing self-as-leader
- Making positive change happen
- Leadership is earned
- Making connections, networking
- Leadership is not just positional
- Influencers – importance of them shaping who becoming
- Realizing you represent others
- Learning how to carry yourself
- Continuing with what you enjoy
- Being given opportunity/developing belief in self because others believe in you
- Having good/strong sense of self
- Taking initiative
- Learning real world skills
- Advanced leadership abilities, skills
- Goal orientation [view leadership tied to success?]
- Not having enough time (does this reflect not knowing self, priorities?)
- Responding to negative experiences as a female leader
- Discipline/Structure
- Being shaped by high school experience
- Self-development
- Not one definition of leadership
- Having/Making friends
- Giving 100+% 
- Awareness/Diversity
- Reinventing self
- Lack of openness
- Being in the spotlight as a leader – see unrealistic expectations category too
- Struggle to go with the flow
- Gaining experience
- Questioning choices/Changing mind
- Play different roles as a leader
• Being willing to fail
• Realizing own growth and development
• Leading by example
• Holding people accountable
• Involving others in decision making
• Having an “a-ha” moment
• Cyclical experience (FG comment)
• Not knowing how to play the game
• Directive approach to leadership
• Vague, unclear view of leadership
• High/unrealistic expectations of student leaders
• Challenging the system
• Importance of self-care
• Not everyone can be a leader
• Negative perceptions of leadership
• Impact of race, not gender
• Putting the pieces together
• Being a team player
• Wanting to be on top
• Leadership is management view
• Dealing with the unknown
• Believing in yourself
APPENDIX K

LIST OF THEORETICAL CODING THEMES
Appendix K

List of Theoretical Coding Themes

Phase 1 – Awareness and Exploration

- Others are leaders
- Reasons for involvement
- Impact of labels
- Messages girls receive
- Not seeing gender issue for self
- See peers, adults as leaders
- Start to understand concept
- Being placed in leadership roles with responsibility – by adults
- Being encouraged to take on responsibility, leadership roles – by adults
- In role by default – team captain ex.
- Buy-in to traditional roles
- Use of qualifying, rationalizing, affirmation seeking statements
- Being perceived by others as a leader
- Not seeing self-as-leader
- Feeling out of place, out of sync
- Not being heard, not having a voice
- Early involvement about joining something (not sure who I am identity aspect)
- Early views of leadership
- Stepping up, doing what needs to be done
- Perception of women leaders as less successful, able
- Role of sports team involvement on leadership development
- Valuing relationships
- Not knowing how to play the game
- Not everyone can be a leader
- Being a team player

Phase 2 – Leader Identified

- Vague, unclear view of leadership – early stage, external to self-understanding
- Leadership is an elected position – leading a group of peers
- Directive approach to leadership
- Discipline/Structure
- Being perceived by others as a leader
- “Be like me” concept
• Dealing with the unknown
• Leading as helping
• Being an emotions-based leader (females)
• Dealing with conflict
• Not delegating – I can do it best
• Not being heard, not having a voice
• Awareness of gender in leadership
• Lack of openness
• Broadening perspective
• Early involvement about joining something (not sure who I am identity aspect)
• Early views of leadership
• Stepping up, doing what needs to be done
• Perception of women leaders as less successful, able
• Thinking about how to improve, what went wrong – reflection
• Role of sports team involvement on leadership development
• Being a role model
• See need and fill
• Concerned with how others are treated
• Being perceived by others as a leader
• Choosing a path – moving up the ranks
• Evolving relationship
• Being encouraged by others
• Not seeing self-as-leader
• Use of qualifying, rationalizing, affirmation-seeking statements
• Initial leadership steps
• Value relationships
• Dealing with conflict
• Self-development
• Not one definition of leadership
• Awareness/Diversity – at basic level
• Reinventing self
• Ways of reacting – women: emotion; men: facts
• Women more collective as leaders
• Positivity
• Seeing self-as-leader
• Leadership training
• Encouraging others
• Show others you want to be there
• Being supported
• Leadership is earned
• Goal orientation
• Shaped by high school experience
• Connections/networking
• Struggle to go with flow
• Questioning choices, decisions
• Leadership equals management
• Tribe

Phase 3 – Leadership Differentiated
• See self-as-leader – belief in self
• More advanced leadership skills
• Addressing conflict
• Perceived by others
• Internalizing label of leader
• Starting to use voice
• Confidence
• Realizing rewards
• a-ha moments
• awareness/Diversity
• Broadening perspective
• Positional/nonpositional – not just a label
• Not experiencing negativity as female leader – not aware
• Belief in self
• Perception of women leaders
• Reflection
• Sports
• Reasons for involvement
• Model for others
• Tribe
• Responding to negative experience as a female leader
• Self development
• Role of faith
• Giving 100+% 
• Being in spotlight/unrealistic expectations of leaders
• Play different roles
• Willing to fail
• Realize own growth
• Lead by example
• Hold people accountable
• Involve others in decisions
• Value relationships
• Being confident with own choices
• Dealing with conflict
• Positivity
• See self-as-leader
• Leadership training
• Encouraging others
• Rewarding feeling
• Realizing what leadership can mean
• Evolving relationships
• Encouraged by others
• Generating excitement in others
• Being supported
• Next leadership steps
• Connections/networking
• Realizing you represent others
• Learning how to carry yourself
• Continue with what you enjoy
• Strong sense of self
• Taking initiative
• Goal orientation
• Not enough time

**Phase 4 - Generativity**
• Having a voice
• Taking a stand
• Encouraging others
• Realizing rewards
• Putting it all together
• Not about position
• Believe in self
• Perception of women as leaders
• Reflection
• Value relationships
• Being confident in own choices
• Passing on your knowledge
• Next leadership steps
• Making positive change happen
• Realizing own growth
• Importance of self care
APPENDIX L

SAMPLE ANALYTIC MEMOS
Appendix L

Sample Analytic Memos

**Analytic Memo 11-29-14 – Influencers**

For many of the participants in this study, women were influential. This included teachers, coaches, peers, and most importantly mothers. What seems to be a common reason for the impact of female coaches is the fact that these women did what they asked of the student athletes. They ran laps, participated in drills, etc. as evidenced by these quotes: “…she was the coach that always worked out with us and didn’t just watch us, so you know she was very hands on, very um in to helping us get better…” or not setting herself apart (Leila). These female coaches helped participants develop discipline to be able to accomplish their goals and provided discipline and structure, something that appears to have been very needed in the high school years for the participants to gain confidence in their abilities. [flesh this section out more]

Female teachers, particularly in high school, were another set of influencers for numerous participants in the study. These teachers had impact because they encouraged participants to be themselves [insert quote], were not dismissive of students [insert quote], taught participants how to be flexible [insert quote], and went above and beyond expectations [insert quote]. An underlying aspect of these female teachers appears to be the care they showed for their students. This idea of caring for female leaders comes up again and again with the participants. Was this idea and aspect of their identities formed by these early experiences with female teachers who showed they cared? Given the formative nature of high school experiences on a person’s identity, it is interesting that
female teachers were mentioned so frequently during this timeframe as having had an impact yet when it came to college, there were fewer female faculty examples (and fewer faculty examples in general). Is this due to the fact that there are more male faculty members on campus than there are females? This may be something to consider more fully as I write up the analysis.

Interestingly, peers were not mentioned frequently as having had an impact. In high school, the “impact” appears to be more about wanting to have friends, be a part of a group, or going along with friends as reasons for why participants chose to become involved in certain activities. In college, there were a few more examples of peers having had an influence and that’s where I’ll focus my analysis and interpretations. This does not mean that peers were not mentioned, just that they did not come up as often as one might assume, given who the participants were. A common reason for a peer having an impact had to do with being the kind of person a participant aspired to be like [insert ex.]. Peers who accomplished a lot, were involved in numerous activities were also respected by several participants, as illustrated by this example from Gretchen. “I’m constantly seeing people go out of their way to go above and beyond. Um, I have my one friend, [name], who’s also in my sorority. Um, she’s been a[n orientation leader] twice, she’s been a[n orientation peer leader] I don’t even know how many times, she’s been a training class leader um, a few times as well. … And so just seeing her, I just think I wanna be like her and so I just, I strive to do half of what she does, you know?” Peers such as these lead participants to want to do and be more as leaders. What is interesting about this is how easily the participants talked about wanting to be like these primarily
female peers without connecting to their own strengths and abilities, especially those participants who appear to be at an earlier stage of the emerging model (i.e. Naomi).

The individual who stood out as influencer for many participants was their mothers. Mothers had an impact in a number of ways. One way was as a strong leader, someone to be admired and aspired to be like. Grace, “…oh she has an MBA, that’s my mom…”, or Faith’s, example of the super woman role her mother played, “Um my mom was-when I was mostly in school-she was the executive director at a housing authority. Um so you know my mom was always someone who-she did it all, you know what I mean? She worked and had kids, and had time to hang out with us, and got me to soccer practice on time and she was kind of like super woman in my head. Um but you know like I always knew that she was important, and she worked hard to get where she was and that she was the executive director [of a housing authority].” These mothers had proven themselves as leaders and were a source of inspiration to participants as to who they could become.

Another important role mothers played was as a sounding board. Many participants discussed talking with their mothers to work through issues or challenges they may be facing. Students went to their mothers for advice and support, Faith, “…my mom keeps telling me…”, Faith, “…my mom’s very helpful with that and my mental sanity.” Joan, “I got a lot closer with my family so that was where I leaned on a lot because athletics I’d get mad at and I’d call … my mom so often [insert another ex.].

For others, mothers had an impact because they encouraged their daughter to not be like them. Abigail, “My mom is really funny because she’s been really dependent on
other people her whole life, so like her children—it’s like what she promoted was like you need to be independent, and you need to be able to do things on your own…”

Participants did mention influencers who were male. Leigh’s early interests often came from, and were encouraged by, her dad, p. 3, “…those interests, again, came from my dad.” “…my dad’s um, a super cool dad and if I would have wanted to play volleyball or pursue something else, he would of backed me up like, 110%…”. For Joan, her brothers played a key role in her choices, “I always wanted to do what they’re doing…”. Insert xxx faculty ex. But the primary individuals that came to mind when asked about people who impacted them were women. Why? Is this because we are drawn to individuals who are “like us?” Would male participants have mentioned more males as influencers (future study?)? What does this mean for leadership identity development? Given some discussion about perceptions of women as leaders, my interpretation of these participants, consciously and unconsciously, want to be seen as strong women and as leaders without the negative stereotypes. So they look to women they admire and learn from them to incorporate aspects of their successes into their leadership identity develop – or to look for ways to not be in order to succeed. The other question is did women come up more often because my study was focused on women and leadership and the participants were aware of this, even though I did not typically bring gender up until the ned of the interviews.

One other interesting aspect that came up for two of the participants was not a person, but the impact of their cultural heritage on who they are. For these two participants, Grace and Penny, their lives were impacted by their cultural heritage
whether that be the way they were raised or the values instilled in them by their family background. For Grace, she was attached to her homeland and has begun to see it as influencing her career choices as well as how she leads [insert quote]. She wants others to know their backgrounds, to know where they come from and how that influences who they are, being grounded by your ancestors, understanding that others came before you. Grace, “…so for me to be so-in tuned with my culture it was um a blessing that I wanted to share with my peers.” Grace, “…being attached to my culture has really humbled me, and has also made me be a lot less selfless and um more open to being-um sharing my culture. Because me eating-cooking beans and rice, and you know spinach and rice for my friends. I’m giving them a piece of my culture, but I’m also teaching them ways to survive as college students, so I think my culture-behind everything that I want to do it’s inspired by who I am before I was who I was.” For Penny, her cultural background and growing up with parents who stayed true to their roots has helped her learn how to respond to situations and about what is important. Penny, “…growing up with 100% European culture, European lifestyle, like, we value family number 1 and like, that is your rock. You know, like, you don’t leave, you don’t get to go away. Like, you are with, like, you were born into this family for a reason, you are in this family.”

Memo, 12-19-14: Reflection and Self-Development Impact on LID

Reflection in any sort of formal, organized fashion did not happen often for the participants. Formalized, written reflection typically only happened if it was required as part of a position’s responsibilities (i.e. sports team, peer mentor). Often this required reflection was focused on how to improve or reflecting on what they had attempted, how
it went, and how to improve in the future. For example, Joan, shared how reflection was required on a sport team, “We used to have mental trainings, so we used to have to reflect on how our team was working, how leadership was working, what we need to correct, stuff like that so I mean reflection was a big part of athletics too because we had to, we had to focus on that to get better…”. Abigail explained how she was required to do weekly reflections as part of her peer mentor role, “Well for my [peer mentor] job I have to write a reflection every week… they need it for their organization for their jobs and stuff… that they need to understand what’s happening… whether I’m actually engaging with these students, or is it just nothing sort of thing…”. This type of reflection did not contribute in any noticeable way to LID for these students. They saw this as more of an exercise in how to improve some aspect of their performance and as a “chore” rather than a learning opportunity.

What came across as a commonality in relation to reflection for many of the participants was the negative connotation/aspect. Any reflecting done most often focused on what went wrong in a scenario and how things could have been improved. In some instances this was related to how to improve as a leader [insert Faith ex of making better future decisions]. More often, however, it was more of a regretful looking back as shared by Rhonda, “I’ll think back with regret and think oh I wish I could have done this. I wish I would have known who I am now because I feel so different from who I was.” or recognizing one’s own weaknesses, Christine, “…I do that for myself in the terms of like you’re your worst critic…” [insert Janice see your flaws ex.]. For most participants, this was done more in their heads than in writing although a few people also mentioned
talking things out with others, Faith, “…I’m just talking to my mom…”; Abigail, “she [her mom] makes me see things in a different perspective…” [insert peer ex]. This focus on the more negative, what to improve aspect seemed to show up more for students at earlier stages of the LID process, particularly in stage 3.

In this stage 3 time, students were starting to learn what they needed to work on as well as what they liked and disliked in themselves and others about being a leader such as Kate’s example of observing a professional she worked with, “But I’ve also seen some things that like, I know when I become a professional I don’t wanna do because of her.” Faith, “I think a lot of it was just like watching other people that were a couple years ahead of me in school or whatever, and seeing what they were doing.” Students at this stage were also potentially being given advice on how to develop leadership attributes, typically by an adult (i.e. an advisor) [insert ex].

As students moved into stage 4, a number of them used reflection as a way to think about past experiences and goals and to realize how far they had come [insert ex]. For a couple of students, this became a way to understand how they were making things happen, Catherine, “What am I doing to be like, to make those ideas a reality. … What can I, like, what do I need to change about what, how I’m dealing with the officers and all that kind of stuff.” or to analyze and assess situations, Christine, “…I like to analyze and assess like where are we, and where can we go? I do that for myself…” Faith also shared how reflecting helped her think about an experience to be able to make good decisions in the future [insert specifics].
For a few students at stage 4, reflection was an opportunity to reflect on the impact of an experience on who they are/have become such as Bridget’s example of how her early high school sports injury set her on a different path, “my injuries specifically, I reflect on those a lot and I’m always reminding myself like, if it weren’t for my injuries, like, I don’t think I’d be doing what I’m meant to be doing right now.” It was also a way to analyze their own behavior [insert quotes], to realize how things could have been different [insert quote], and to work through life decisions as shared by Kate, “I got very scared last year at this point when I was like, you know, I don’t wanna teach anymore, I don’t wanna do that course of my life … figuring out what I wanna do with my life … I just was like holy crap, I don’t wanna do this … I tried to prioritize in my life what made me happy …So my like, reflective process came from kinda being scared, being scared that I was getting to that point where I needed to make decisions and I hadn’t made decisions.” This last piece was most common for students who were close to graduation.

Reflection, consciously done or not, did have an impact on students at stage 4 learning a number of lesions about themselves, including learning from mistakes [insert quotes], realizing they had skills others did not [insert quote], and becoming their own person [insert quotes]. This gave students at this stage a stronger sense of who they were as leaders. Grace exhibited this evolving understanding, specifically related to being a female leader, when she shared, “I’m developing as a young woman, and realizing that you know this is time to be a woman now”, “I think women influence absolutely everything.”
Reflection played a role in the LID of the participants although not in an obvious way to them. How, and if, they did any reflection was connected to aspects of students at stages 3 and 4 most specifically. Students in stages 1 and 2 were really not focused on this idea of thinking and reflecting and the few students at stage 5 did not really address the role of reflection beyond what had been shared in stage 4.

I do wonder if it was my use of the word “reflection” that influenced responses because there is evidence that students did think about and try to learn from their experiences. This was particularly true for students in stage 4 who were attempting to improve themselves as leaders as opposed to students in stage 3 who were more focused on improving events/programs than looking at themselves.

Given the lack of more formalized reflection on self, even when required, and the value of this kind of reflection to development [pull some insights from article from WC internship and readings from service learning reflection], leadership educators need to re-examine what role reflection plays in their programs. This could be especially useful for helping move students from one stage to the next. Review of reflections could also provide insight into the developmental readiness of students in a program. This insight could be useful to leadership educators to know what their students need and to then design programs to meet those needs.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


Patterson, B. (2012). Influences of student organizational leadership experience in college student leadership behavior. *eJournal of Organizational Learning and Leadership, 10*(1), 1–12.


