A Dissertation

entitled

The Lived Experience of a Community College Grow-Your-Own Leadership Development Program from the Perspective of Program Graduates: A Phenomenological Study

by

Shawna J. Forbes

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Doctor of Philosophy Degree in

Higher Education

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August 2019

An Abstract of

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This study investigated the shared, lived experience of graduates participating in a Grow-Your-Own (GYO) leadership development program at a comprehensive community college with several campuses and educational centers. There is a noted, growing shortage of talented community college leaders needed to address the complex challenges faced by community colleges across the country. This leadership shortage is attributed to an increased number of retirements among community college leaders and a lack of community college leadership development through either university doctoral programs or national professional associations. With GYOs identified as the preferred method of developing emerging community college leaders, it is important to understand the lived experience of participants in GYO programs.

The study used an inductive approach to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. From data analysis, three themes emerged to describe the shared lived experience of GYO program participants, including: (a) the value of connectedness, which participants expressed as “being a part of”; (b) understanding how leaders should be developed; and, (c) how participants perceived the impact of their leadership role on

college processes, students, and subordinates. At the very center of the phenomenon under study was the essence—connections—which guided policy and practice recommendations. This essence of connections was explored through participants' connection to: (a) colleagues, college leaders, and the institution; (b) the GYO program and how participants perceived and connected to their personal development; and, (c) participants' ability to impact others within the institution. Concluding the study, two inferences were suggested: (a) GYO program structure may assume recruiting participants with a requisite level of confidence needed to lead within the community college; and, (b) an individual's perception of leadership considers a leaders' ability to move projects through the college's internal system.

Recommendations for practice include the development of programming dedicated to leaders with more than 10 years of leadership experience and the integration of programming to develop, cultivate, and maintain relationships into the GYO curriculum. Policy recommendations included the development of degree programs or coursework on community college leadership at the university level and implementation of community college GYO programs to address the leadership gap.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to God who is the head of my life and to three very important people in my life. To God, I thank You for Your ongoing love, guidance, and strength throughout this process. Through my many life challenges of death, new love, and new life chapters, You have given me the necessary inner strength and confidence to complete this journey. Through You, I have accomplished this notable achievement and You will always receive the praise.

To the late Dr. Trent A. Forbes, thank you – you gave me continuous encouragement and instilled in me unwavering love during our life together.

To Tyler Forbes, my wonderful son, thank you for helping me to maintain perspective during this journey. You provided me with a healthy amount of distraction; and a demand of my time and attention to be paid to you. Tyler, you always knew I would complete this journey victoriously.

Last, but definitely not least, to my dear and faithful husband, Timothy A. Henry, I thank you for being my rock and loving companion during this journey. For many hours you sat on the couch and kept me company while I wrote and researched this topic – although you often fell asleep; your relentless affection and commitment to my success is greatly appreciated. Thank you, Husband!

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I also want to acknowledge the Continuing Education & Workforce Development Team at Wayne County Community College District for rallying around me during this process. Special acknowledgement to Ms. Melodie Bunkley for keeping my thoughts engaged during those times when I wanted rest from the dissertation process. Finally, I want to acknowledge my close family and friends for understanding the importance of this work to me as I missed many family functions and holidays. Thank you Mom (Fannie Wilkins) for always praying for me and believing in me over all these years – I love you.

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List of Abbreviations

AC.....Abstract Conceptualization

AE .....Active Experimentation

AACC .....American Association of Community Colleges

AAJC.....American Association of Junior Colleges

ACE.....American Council on Education

APA.....American Psychological Association

CE .....Concrete Experience

ELI .....Executive Leadership Institute

GED .....General Education Diploma

GYO.....Grow Your Own

IRB.....Institutional Review Board

RO.....Reflective Observation

TCC.....Tidewater Community College

WCCCD.....Wayne County Community College District

WKKF.....W. K. Kellogg Foundation

Chapter 1

Overview

One of the most critical issues facing higher education is the shortage of leaders, specifically among community colleges. The noted literature gap reflects the increasing need for leaders to operate complex, diverse systems and to possess the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in community colleges (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2013; Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002). This phenomenological study sought to understand the lived experience of grow-your-own (GYO) leadership development program graduates and their perception of the relevancy of the GYO program to their leadership role. This study is relevant because of the current leadership gap within community colleges and the overwhelming number of current leaders retiring from senior leadership positions that has created the leadership gap (AACC, 2013; Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002). The leadership gap is defined as the lack of available talent or insufficient capability needed to lead the community college (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002). It has been exacerbated by competition to attract individuals who are both qualified and committed to stepping into a senior leadership role within community colleges. Chapter 1 of this study provides background information on the community college, current community college leadership development programs, and relevant data substantiating the leadership shortage. Chapter 1 further articulates the problem, purpose, and significance of the study, and research questions. The chapter concludes with definitions of key terms, limitations of the study, assumptions of the researcher, and a synopsis of Chapter 2 of this study.

Background

Significance of the Community College

This study focused exclusively on the community college. Given the role that the community college plays within American society, the demand for effective leadership within community colleges requires leaders who are accountable, able to integrate broad-based leadership structures, and can collaborate both within and outside their institutions (Aspen Institute & Achieving the Dream, 2013; Connaughton, Lawrence, & Ruben, 2003; Romero, 2004). Unfortunately, one of the most critical issues facing higher education is the shortage of qualified leaders who want to assume senior-leader positions within the community college. Baker (2003) noted higher education leaders must have the capacity "to implement changes and innovations of their own creation and to continue to steer toward a future that will uphold the institution's mission, vision, and values" (p. 13). Leadership competencies such as strategic planning, resource management, interpersonal communication, collaboration, professionalism, and ethics are essential for the future success of the academy (AACC, 2013); however, the challenge is how these competencies are developed or enhanced in future leaders.

Unlike four-year colleges and universities, community colleges share the following attributes and goals: open access to students at every academic level, affordability as compared to four-year colleges and universities, and the ability to design and offer coursework based on workplace requirements and community needs (AACC, 2013). As a result, community colleges have a broader and deeper reach than most other colleges and universities (Canova, 2012). This broader and deeper reach can be observed in the wake of the recent recession insofar as community colleges continue to play a

critical role in local economic development. Community colleges create educational opportunities and career pathways to jobs and specialized training. These opportunities and pathways address immediate local business needs as well as provide remedial education such as basic computation, composition, and reading courses (Canova, 2012).

This study also focused exclusively on the community college because these institutions are best positioned to fulfill President Barack Obama's 2020 College Completion Goal Agenda. The community college is better situated than four-year institutions—based on its affordability and accessibility (open-door policy) to college and workforce training—to close the American opportunity gap (Lazin, Evans, & Jayaram, 2010). The American opportunity gap refers to how children move up the educational and economic ranks when faced with such factors as low family educational attainment, living in an impoverished community, attending an under-funded educational system, and/or lacking access to post-secondary education and support services (Isaacs, Sawhill, & Haskins, 2008). As a result of such factors, American children born into the top fifth of the income distribution are about twice as likely to enter the middle class or better in their adult years as those born into the bottom fifth (Isaacs et al., 2008). One way that children who are born into lower-income families can close the gap is by earning a college degree (Sawhill, 2013). President Obama, in his 2009 address to the joint session of the United States Congress, asserted that "By 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world . . . . I ask every American to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training . . . every American will need to get more than a high school diploma" (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

President Obama's 2020 Strategic Vision and Goals as outlined in his 2020 College Completion Goal Agenda are illustrated in Figure 1.

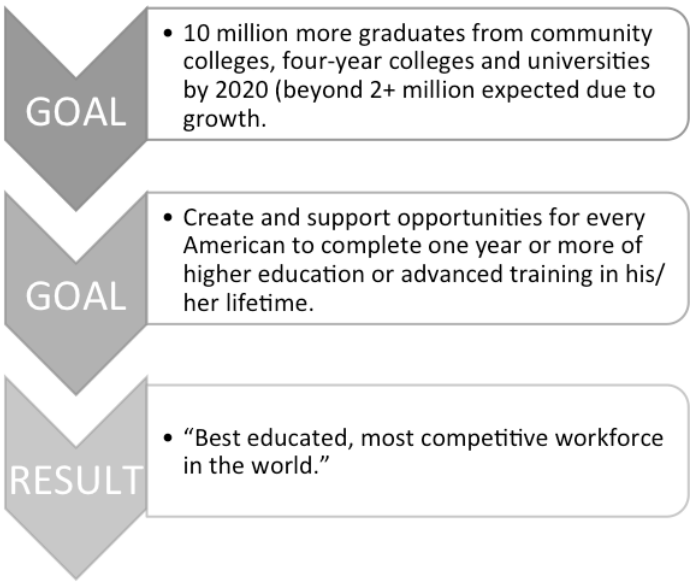

Figure 1. 2020 strategic vision and goals: College completion agenda. Adapted from *Meeting President Obama's 2020 College Completion Goal*, U.S. Department of Education, 2011.

During his 2015 State of the Union address, President Obama continued to support the notion of community colleges serving the role of educating and training community members, veterans, youth just entering college, and older individuals looking to retrain or retain employment. Moreover, AACC (2013) noted that community colleges are a vital part of the postsecondary education delivery system. In comparison to four-year colleges and universities, community colleges are known for their ability to reach and accommodate a much larger pool of people, including first-generation, underrepresented, and economically disadvantaged populations. This is due to their accessibility and strong commitment to the open-door policy. The open-door policy grants access to post-secondary education for students who have earned a high school

diploma or have passed the tests of General Equivalency Diploma (GED) regardless of academic preparedness. Moreover, many community colleges offer adult basic education, GED, or adult high school programs for those who do not possess the credential. All of these offerings are taught through continuing education programming and coursework within community colleges (AACC, 2013).

Together, Achieving the Dream and The Aspen Institute developed and published a report that recognizes the role community colleges play in impacting the economic success of the United States of America. The report emphasizes that community colleges educate over 7 million degree-seeking students, more than 40% of the U.S. college population. Community colleges have, in recent years, been growing at four times the rate of four-year colleges, and community colleges enroll a disproportionately large share of the rapidly expanding number of college students of color and first-generation students (Aspen Institute & Achieving the Dream, 2013). Achieving the Dream is an initiative founded by Lumina Foundation and seven founding partner organizations to champion evidence-based institutional improvement – today the organization leads the most comprehensive non-governmental reform movement for student success in higher education (Achieving the Dream, 2013). The Aspen Institute was created by Chicago businessman Walter Paepcke in 1949 as a gathering place for leaders to meet, discuss, and understand challenges facing the organizations and communities they serve throughout America. Today, the Aspen Institute is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, DC, with the mission of fostering leadership and providing a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues facing organizations, including community colleges (Aspen Institute, 2013).

Community College Leadership Shortage Substantiated

Over the past two decades, sources have reported or projected a high number of retirements of community college leaders. In 2001, the AACC announced survey results indicating 45% of responding presidents planned to retire by 2007 (AACC, 2005). These survey results were supported by a presidents' age demographics report, which noted that from 1996 to 2006, the reported age demographics of college presidents suggested a significant wave of retirements with 13.9 % of presidents 61 years of age or older in 1996 to 49.3% of presidents 61 years of age or older by 2006 (Jaschik, 2007). These trends were anticipated to continue throughout the executive-level ranks as well, including senior administrators, faculty, and other mid-level administrators preparing to retire (Scott-Skillman, 2007; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). Shults (2001) reported that presidents projected at least 25% of faculty and top administrators—those who traditionally fill senior leadership positions—would retire by 2006. These projections have been seen over the past 15 years with the following: (a) in 2003, St. Louis Community College replaced nearly 60% of its full-time administrative staff resulting from retirements (Shannon, 2004) and (b) between 2007 and 2008, California replaced or had newly appointed 55% of its 109 two-year colleges with new presidential appointments (Ashburn, 2007).

The importance of addressing the leadership shortage facing community colleges has become paramount, and organization leaders agreed that there is an alarming number of current community college leaders facing retirement and the pool of qualified candidates that possess the requisite skills and knowledge needed to hit the ground is dwindling (ACCT, 2013). According to the *Compensation and Benefits of Community*

College CEOs, 2012, compiled in partnership with the ACCT, 75% of respondents completing the survey plan to retire by 2023 (Tekle, 2012). In addition to a loss of 75% of current CEOs, institutions are projected to lose a large number of senior administrators and faculty members (AACC, 2013). If this projection holds true, then more than 500 community colleges will be directed and managed by different presidents and senior administrators than were leading those community colleges in 2013 (Aspen Institute & Achieving the Dream, 2013).

There is limited literature that reveals the current number of vacancies that exist in 2017. However, a review of the July 2017 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* employment section reveals there are currently 168 executive positions available at the community college level with 56 of those positions being chancellor/president. Although there is limited research on the actual number of vacancies from 2012 to present, Smith (2016) reported actual vacancies that reflect data reported by community colleges that are members of AACC. The data may reflect multiple leadership changes at a single institution as well as new presidential appointments. In 2016, it was found that nearly one in four community colleges turned over college presidencies – that represents approximately 269 college president positions. These openings were attributed to retirements as well as the lack of knowledge and skills (e.g., financial mismanagement, board communications, etc.) (Smith, 2016). Table 1 reveals actual presidential opening by year as found according to the AACC membership database, however AACC does not know whether the transitions are due to death, retirements, or terminations (Smith, 2016).

Table 1

Community College Leadership Transitions by Year

Year	No. of Transitions
2011-12	134
2012-13	158
2013-14	262
2014-15	269
2015-March 2016	203

Note. No. = number, source of table information: Smith, 2016.

Community College Leadership Development

The exodus of community college leaders that has been stimulated, in part, by the surge of retirements among its presidents and CEOs has potentially created a significant void or leadership gap in the understanding and comprehension of community college history, culture, philosophy, and institutional memory (Watts & Hammons, 2003). The nation's community college leadership shortage has heightened the competition for competent leaders (Shannon, 2004). The literature notes factors that have contributed to the widening of the leadership gap, including the reduction in the number of community college leadership doctoral programs, the lack of professional development opportunities for more experienced leaders, and the disconnect between the curriculum of higher

education doctoral programs and the requisite skills required to operate a complex system (Eddy & Rao, 2009; Romero, 2004; Watts & Hammons, 2003).

The leadership gap is compounded by the reality that few universities offer graduate programs that focus on preparing community college leaders, and institutions with such programs have experienced a decline in enrollment in recent years (Nevarez & Wood, 2010). Universities have allowed these programs to languish or have replaced them in favor of programs focusing on K-12 administration or generalized higher education (Evelyn, 2001; Nevarez & Wood, 2010; Romero, 2004; Williams, Pennington, Couch & Dougherty, 2007). An individual interested in becoming a community college leader is often forced to choose between K-12 leadership programs or four-year institution leadership programs, with the potential of one or two courses offered focused on community colleges (Nevarez & Wood, 2010; Williams et al., 2007). A review of the Council for the Study of Community College Graduate Programs website reveals 63 universities currently offer either courses or doctoral degrees relating to the community college (www.cscconline.org). However, of the 63 universities, only 13 universities offer doctoral degrees focused on community college leadership. Forty-one universities offer some variation of an educational leadership program with courses offered highlighting the community college, five universities offer some variation of an educational leadership program utilizing the cohort model, and four universities offer masters level degrees with community college courses. The small number of doctoral programs that focus on community college leadership cannot begin to produce the number of leaders needed to fill the projected vacancies (Council for the Study of Community College Graduate Programs, www.cscconline.org).

The individuals transitioning to senior administration or a presidency may be faced with the challenge of navigating such complexities as fundraising, budget management, and re-tooling a qualified workforce (Aspen Institute & Achieving the Dream, 2013; Scott-Skillman, 2007; Shults, 2001; Watts & Hammons, 2003). In a study pertaining to doctoral-level higher education programs' structure and focus, Eddy and Rao (2009) presented findings that indicated that when program directors reviewed 15 program leadership practices, they noted 9 of those practices as critical learning opportunities. However, only three of the leadership practice areas were generally offered in degree programs. Brown, Martinez, and Daniel (2002) surveyed community college leaders on their perception of the effectiveness of their doctoral programs in higher education. Results indicated a disconnection between the knowledge of theoretical frameworks and the requisite leadership skills (Brown et al., 2002). Such findings highlight the need for strategies to address the leadership challenge.

Limited studies exist pertaining to leadership development of community college leaders (Boswell, 2015; Gmelch, 2002), however, as noted in Figure 2 the literature (Boswell, 2015; Gmelch, 2004) does recognize three strategies for fostering leadership development in community college leaders: (a) university doctoral programs (Brown et al., 2002), (b) in-house GYO leadership programs, (c) and participation in external professional development programs (Boswell, 2015; Eckel, Cook, & King, 2009; Eddy & Murray, 2007).

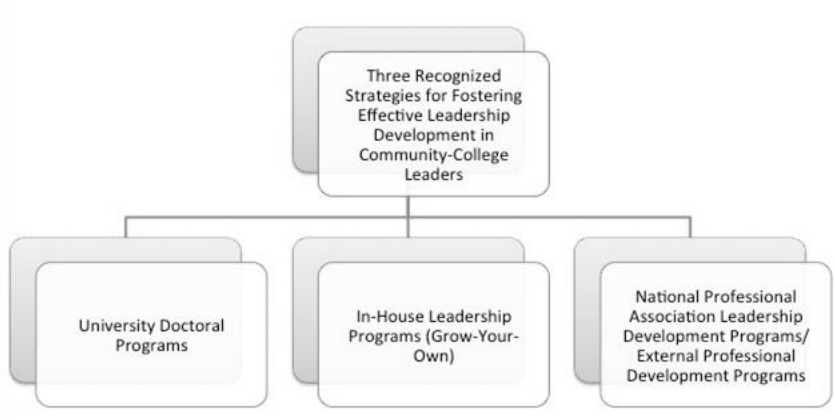

Figure 2. Strategies for community college leadership development. Noted strategies for developing community college leaders, adapted from Boswell, 2015; Eckel et al., 2009; Eddy & Murray, 2007.

Professional associations have filled identified gaps between traditional education and needed applicable skills for those who aspired to community college leadership positions since the 1960s and early 1970s. In the early 1970s, there was a rapid expansion of community colleges and a growing number of administration vacancies (Anderson, 1997; Boggs & Kent, 2003; Brown et al., 2002; Cooper & Pagotto, 2003; Laden, 1996). During the 1970s, there was a focus to train division and department chairs; however, training is available at all organizational levels (Watts & Hammons, 2003). Leadership development programs have proliferated and professional associations offer a number of developmental experiences, ranging from two-day workshops and forums to a year-long internship (Connaughton et al., 2003). Programming is designed to address challenges faced by higher education and to build skills (Romero, 2004). In a study conducted by Eddy and Rao (2009), sitting community college presidents and executive leaders, at the time of the study, reported their participation in professional organizations' leadership programs as follows: the Chair Academy at 23.8%, AACC Leadership Program at 19.9%, and the League for Innovation in the Community College at 14%. The numbers may be

skewed since individuals may have participated in more than one program (Eddy & Rao, 2009). However, there is very limited research that supports the relevancy of these programs or if these programs are perceived to develop or enhance leadership knowledge and skills needed to prepare leaders for these complex positions.

This study focused on community college based GYO leadership development programs, which has been noted as the preferred approach for training (Jeandron, 2000). According to Piland and Wolf (2003), it is the role and responsibility of the current leadership to prepare future leaders and to fill the gap that exists. GYO programs train individuals to meet the specific needs (e.g. knowledge and skills) of the organization and are noted as the emerging strategy for building institutional capacity (Benard, 2012; Boswell, 2015). Campus-based GYO programs serve as a mechanism to recruit mid-level managers, support institutional application of learning, and increase networking and communication across the institution (Benard, 2012; Reille & Kezar, 2010). GYO programs further provide future community college leaders with theory and practical skills needed to be successful in a leadership role within the respective college. These practical experiences allow community colleges to develop future leaders at a rate that universities and/or professional organizations cannot produce. More community colleges are offering in-house professional development opportunities to meet the skills and knowledge needed to lead colleges (Boswell, 2015).

In-house leadership programs or GYO programs are based on community college campuses and are usually at no cost to participants. Potential leaders experience professional development training ranging from internal internships and work-based projects to formal programming with a well-established curriculum and theoretical

framework (Reille & Kezar, 2010; Watts & Hammons, 2003). A large number of participants, at varying levels within the institution, can experience practice-of-the-knowledge while gaining transferable skills at an affordable rate (Kirkland, 2016). According to Kirkland (2016), the greatest number of individuals readily available to fill the leadership pipeline to senior-level leadership roles are currently employed on campuses serving in mid-level positions. In addition, information relating to career pathways and the requisite skills and knowledge needed for these roles can be shared with current mid-level professionals to encourage entrance into senior-level positions (Kirkland, 2016; McFarlin & Ebbers, 1998). Durbin (2010) further supported the notion of growing leaders from within the organization. He stated "Leadership is not only found among people in high-level positions. Quite the contrary: leadership is needed at all levels of an organization and can be practiced to some extent even by a person not assigned to formal leadership position" (Durbin, 2010, p. 3). Since leadership is needed at various levels, it is important to rely on promotions from within, and there are viable candidates ready to be trained in an effort to fill impending vacancies (Eddy, 2010). According to the literature, leaders must be grown (Piland & Wolf, 2003).

The literature underscores the need for leadership development programs and to understand the relevancy of GYO programs in developing leaders from the perspective of graduates (Connaughton et al., 2003; Eddy & Rao, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

Community colleges are facing a leadership gap; a report released by AACC (2013) projected 75% of community college presidents anticipate retirement by the year 2023. This problem is compounded by a limited number of leadership development

programs and graduate programs that are relevant to community college leadership (Smith, 2016). Although GYO programs are the preferred training approach for preparing community college leaders to address the complex challenges facing institutions (Jeandron, 2000), limited research exists on GYO programs and their relevancy to leadership roles, or graduates' perceptions if GYO programs develop or enhance knowledge and skills that are needed to lead. Without critical independent research, GYOs run the risk of offering programs that are too narrowly focused (Reille & Kezar, 2010) or lack the in-depth training needed for community college leaders (Kirkland, 2016). A community college leader's unpreparedness to lead may have a negative impact on student success, the open-door mission and, ultimately, the economic success of the United States as a whole.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experience in a GYO program from the perspective of graduates. This qualitative study focused on the GYO program experience, the perceived relevancy of the GYO program to current leadership roles, and how the GYO program may have developed or enhanced skills or knowledge. Given the overwhelming demand for leaders facing community colleges, it is imperative that community colleges develop, support, and/or promote GYO leadership programs and to understand how experiences are perceived to contribute to the necessary knowledge, attributes, and skill sets that the next generation of community college leaders must possess in order to thrive. This study is significant because it captures the essence of the shared lived experience of participants in the GYO program that can help GYO program managers continue to make the necessary inclusion of

information and experiences that are seen by GYO participants as having value. These perceptions are also significant in supporting GYO program managers in creating and shaping programming that is perceived to be relevant consequent to participating in the program. This study provided an understanding of the lived experience of participating in a GYO program and how meaning was made from the perspective of participants.

Research Questions

This phenomenological study sought to understand the lived experience of GYO leadership development program graduates, their perception of the relevancy of the GYO program to their leadership role – and their perception of these leadership experiences in developing or enhancing their leadership knowledge or skills.

The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

Central Question: What is the experience of a GYO community college leadership program, from the perspective of program graduates?

1. How do graduates perceive the relevancy of the GYO program to their leadership roles?
2. How do graduates perceive the GYO program enhanced or developed their leadership skills or knowledge?

Significance of the Study

According to Hammons and Miller (2006), “There is a need for the academic community to reflect critically on what community colleges need in terms of training, and to develop a response that is both professionally responsive and academically responsible” (p. 374).

Leadership development plays a crucial role in ensuring that community colleges leaders are equipped to tackle and create solutions for the challenges they will face. Specifically, with the retirements of current community college presidents will come not only a loss of institutional history, but also a loss of the broader understanding of the community college's mission and talent (Brown et al., 2002). The importance of this research is further emphasized by the rapidly changing nature of community college funding, accountability systems, and completion agenda. This study is significant in that it informs professionals who develop and implement community college GYO programs of leadership experiences that are perceived by participants to be relevant in contributing to knowledge and skill sets needed and inform GYO curriculum developers of experiences perceived as relevant in leadership development.

Moreover, understanding GYO graduates' perceptions of the relevancy of GYO programs in developing or enhancing leadership and how they incorporate the knowledge and skills into their leadership roles is significant. Understanding how meaning was made consequent to GYO programs can inform program professionals of how the experience developed the skills needed to lead the community college. The results of this study could be beneficial to potential leaders who aspire to advance into leadership positions and are seeking leadership opportunities to advance their knowledge, skills, and career. Considering the lack of empirical studies on community college leadership development, this phenomenological study contributes to the body of scholarly research in this area by expanding the understanding of the lived experience in a GYO program.

Framework and Methodology Overview

This phenomenological study utilized Kolb's Learning Theory as the framework to gain insight into GYO graduates' perceived relevancy of the GYO program to current and future leadership roles and the development or enhancement of skills and knowledge. According to the theory, individuals go through a four-stage learning cycle by which new experiences develop new knowledge that can be applied in various situations (McLeod, 2017; Turesky & Gallagher, 2011). Kolb (1983) noted, "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38). In other words, as GYO participants encounter new experiences, they cycle through the four stages of learning and new concepts are formed, concepts that can then be applied in a leader's role. Kolb's four-stage learning cycle is as follows: (a) concrete experience, (b) reflective observation, (c) abstract conceptualization, and (d) active experimentation (Kolb, 1983). The theory will be explored further in Chapter 2.

Since the aim of the study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of the lived experience of participating in a GYO program, a qualitative approach—specifically phenomenology—was most appropriate (Creswell, 2008). The data collection process included interviews with GYO graduates who served in a leadership role within a community college in which they were a participant in a GYO program. Utilizing data gathered from open-ended interviews, I noted common themes, notable learning experiences, and perceived knowledge and skills gained from the GYO program. An in-depth description of the methodology is included in Chapter 3.

Definitions

AACC leadership program: AACC's Future Leaders Institute (FLI) is a five-day leadership-training program for mid- and senior-level administrators and faculty who are interested in moving into a higher-level position within the community college (AACC, 2013).

Community college: A two-year postsecondary institution with an open-access philosophy, community colleges have a mission to deliver career programs, university transfer, and community and workforce programs (Cohen & Brawer, 2002).

Competency: Key knowledge, skills, values, and other characteristics of community college leaders (AACC, 2013).

Grow your own (GYO): campus-based leadership development program offered to develop skills and knowledge needed within that respective college (Boswell, 2015)

Higher education leadership: Positions with post-secondary institutions that have broad institutional impact such as chancellor, president, vice chancellor, vice president, provost, and dean (Weingartner, 1999).

Leadership gap: The lack of available talent or insufficient capability needed to lead the community college (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002).

League for Innovation in the Community College: The League for Innovation sponsors the Executive Leadership Institute (ELI) in cooperation with the University of Texas Austin and AACC. The Executive Leadership Institute began in 1988 as a unique program designed to provide self-reflective leadership opportunities for community college leaders (The League for Innovation in the Community College, www.league.org).

The Chair Academy: The Chair Academy began in 1992 to offer short-term leadership training opportunity in post-secondary institutions internationally for chairs, deans, and other organizational leaders (The Chair Academy, www.chairacademy.com).

University of Texas at Austin Community College Leadership Program: The Community College Leadership Program was established in 1944 and is the oldest doctoral program focused on community college leadership (Aspen Institute & Achieving the Dream, 2013).

Limitations

There were several limitations that exist in this study. First, the overall sample was limited to GYO graduates of one community college campus-based GYO program. As a result, findings from the study may not be generalizable to other community college GYO leaders' experiences. Second, I am a community college leader and have participated in a GYO program, which may have resulted in bias relating to GYO leadership development programs. As a result, during interviews I avoided leading or guiding discussions in any direction.

Assumption

It was an assumption that all participants responded to the open-ended interview questions honestly, openly, and thoroughly.

Summary and Preview of Next Chapter

This chapter provided background information and analyzed the leadership gap in community colleges. The leadership gap is the result of the overwhelming number of people retiring from senior leadership positions and exacerbated by competition to attract individuals who are both qualified and committed to step into the role of a senior leader

within community colleges. The challenge of retiring leaders is the basis for the community college leadership shortage and supports the need to understand the GYO program experiences community college leaders perceive to be relevant in developing or enhancing their leadership knowledge and skill sets. The chapter identified the problem that was addressed in this phenomenological study, the purpose and significance of the study, and the research questions. In addition, the following were provided: definitions of key terms, the study limitations, and the researcher assumptions.

In Chapter 2, community college leadership will be explored as well as research conducted on the community college leadership challenges and preparation and leadership development programs. The chapter concludes with a comprehensive review of GYO programs, followed by learning theories with a particular focus on Kolb's Learning Theory.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Community colleges are currently experiencing a leadership gap. In an effort to continue their open-door mission and to serve the nation's diverse student population, it is imperative to have leadership that possess the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the complex challenges facing community colleges today. Grow-your-own (GYO) leadership programs are a viable way community colleges prepare future leaders on their respective campuses. This chapter presents a comprehensive review of the literature related to community college leadership development. This chapter begins with an historical overview of community college leadership in America. Next, there is an analysis of the evolution of the community college leaders. Then, research related to community college leadership challenges and preparation for the 21st century is examined. This discussion leads into a description of the three categories of leadership development programs with a focus on GYOs: (a) university doctoral programs, (b) professional leadership development programs/external professional development programs, and (c) in-house GYO leadership programs. The GYO is further explored with a description of the program structure and a review of GYO research. This chapter closes with a review of various learning theories, a highlight of Kolb's Learning Theory as the study's theoretical framework, and a preview of Chapter 3.

Historical Overview of Community College Leadership

Community college leadership has evolved from the once autocratic administrators who made decisions unilaterally regarding college issues to adaptive innovators who must be forward thinking in order to develop solutions to increasing

complex economic, social, political, and global issues (Konovalov & Teahen, 2013). According to Sullivan (2010), there have been four generations of community college leaders. The four generations include: founding fathers, good managers, collaborators, and the millennium generation (Sullivan, 2010). In a leadership abstract, fifth-generation leaders (2010 to the present) will be identified as adaptive leaders (Konovalov & Teahen, 2013).

During the early 1900s, the first generation of community college leaders were called the *founding fathers*. Many of these leaders transitioned from the K-12 system. In addition to establishing the community college, they helped to define and solidify the values, which included the open-door, open-access philosophy still associated with today's community colleges. In addition, the founding fathers are credited for achieving unprecedented growth of community colleges across the country. This generation struggled with financial resources and steady enrollment (Shults, 2001; Sullivan, 2010). In the late 1800s, two prominent educators—Henry Tappan, president of the University of Michigan, and William Watts Folwell, president of the University of Minnesota—envisioned an educational system that was modeled after the German educational system in which students entered the university after completing year 14 of secondary education. Tappan and Folwell, along with William Rainey Harper, who at the time was president of the University of Chicago, identified that the freshman and sophomore years of college are not directly tied to a university-level education (Gleazer, 1971). As a result, they reasoned that by creating a separate higher education institution that focused on general education during the first two years, universities would be able to focus on specialization and research (Cohen & Brawer, 2002; Gleazer, 1971). With this mindset, in 1901 Joliet

Junior College, the first community college was established with Harper serving as president (Cohen & Brawer, 2002).

Gleazer (1971) suggested that prominent educators Tappan, Folwell, and Harper envisioned other purposes for the concept of the junior college. Specifically, they would serve as years 13 and 14 to remediate students who were unprepared or lacked maturity for university work. Junior college leaders served to maintain the separation between the elite and the masses. As a result, college leaders ensured junior colleges would be accessible to the masses, but universities would be reserved for the elite and exceptional (Gleazer, 1971).

With the established purpose of junior colleges, the American Association of Junior Colleges (AAJC) was developed as an avenue for leaders to discuss and frame the role and mission of junior colleges (Gleazer, 1971). The AAJC determined that the mission of the junior college would be to educate the masses and to serve as an open-access higher education institution to all, regardless of race, socio-economic status, or preparedness. By 1925, the AAJC expanded the role of the junior college to include terminal vocational-technical programs that reflected the employment needs of local businesses (Gleazer, 1971).

The second generation of community college leaders were the *good managers*. The good managers led colleges through the 1960s and 1970s. Good managers were instrumental in the rapid growth and acceptance of community colleges across the country. This generation increased the number of physical resources available to community colleges, secured financial resources, and led the way to unprecedented student enrollment growth. The first two generations of community college leaders were

comprised of similar demographics; (e.g., white males who were in the 50-something age group and, typically, married). Overall, good managers built on the efforts of the founding fathers as well as extended the community college mission. The Truman Commission Report democratized higher education and introduced the term *community college,* which is the current term used when referencing two-year colleges (Geller, 2009). The phrase *community's college* is used for public comprehensive community colleges that have a civic responsibility to serve and address the needs of its community. By 1970, there were approximately 900 community colleges across the country, and community college leaders had successfully integrated general education with career and technical, continuing education, and workforce development training (AACC, 2013). Community college leaders had also embraced the open-door, open-access philosophy and gradually released their long-standing ties to universities and secondary institutions (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisher, 2013). By the 1990s, most of the good managers had retired (Konovalov & Teahen, 2013).

Before the end of the 20th century, the *collaborators* were in place. This was the first time that the community college leaders represented the diversity seen in the student body (Konovalov & Teahen, 2013). These leaders had experiences in social action movements, such as movements that fought for race and gender rights and equality. By this point in the evolution of community college leaders, women represented 25% of all presidents, while more than 10% represented various minority groups. This generation of leaders aimed to and was successful in developing internal and external partners to make higher education more accessible. Unlike the first two generations of leaders who held liberal arts or teaching degrees, the collaborators earned an advanced degree in higher

education or administration. They also sought to participate in leadership development programs designed to increase community college leadership skills and knowledge (Konovalov & Teahen, 2013).

The *millennium generation* leaders who followed the collaborators are technologically savvy. This generation approaches leading community colleges from the framework of workforce development, which means shaping learners so they are prepared to meet the needs of business and industry (Konovalov & Teahen, 2013). Moreover, millennium generation leaders collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to address challenges, and this generation's demographics and educational attainment reflect those of the collaborator generation leaders. However, millennium generation leaders have taken advantage of professional development opportunities from top leadership positions as well as external professional organizations (Konovalov & Teahen, 2013).

Konovalov and Teahen (2013) classify community college leaders from 2010 to the present as the fifth or adaptive generation. These leaders are being called upon to break the mold and to create new models and strategies that will effectively address the challenges of today's community college (Cohen et al., 2013). As a result, they must be more malleable and forward thinking than the leaders from previous generations because today's leaders face a higher level of scrutiny with respect to demonstrating results such as completion rates, retention, financial stewardship, and student achievement of learning outcomes (Cohen et al., 2013; Konovalov & Teahen, 2013).

The evolution of the community college leaders from the founding fathers who established community colleges to the adaptive generation that are trailblazing the future,

must be flexible as well as qualified to develop and execute new and effective academic, social, and economic strategic models. Leaders are needed to ensure community colleges not only survive, but also thrive. This challenge provides legitimacy to the community colleges' sense of urgency regarding the leadership shortage.

As noted, community colleges are facing a leadership shortage with 75% of community college presidents anticipating retirement within the next 10 years (AACC, 2013). The predicted retirements of 75% is higher than what actually occurred in 2016 when only 25% of college presidents retired (Smith, 2016). In 2003, this projected exodus of community college presidents was stated as the most significant impact on leadership in the entire history of community colleges (AACC, 2013). Failure to address this leadership shortage could jeopardize the quality and effectiveness of community colleges across the country (Smith, 2016). The leadership shortage can diminish organizational sustainability and, by extension, its ability to attract and retain a knowledgeable workforce (Scott-Skillman, 2007; Smith, 2016). There is an undisputed need for leadership development opportunities for current and potential leaders (Hull, 2005). Currently, there are no agreed upon solutions for effectively addressing the shortage (Strom, Sanchez, & Downey-Schilling, 2011). However, community colleges are moving toward growing and developing leadership internally. Community college GYO programs allow institutions to provide professional development opportunities that are unique to the organization and relevant to the challenges and strengths of the institution (Boswell, 2015). In addition, colleges can offer programming to a number of individuals at a faster rate and lower cost than universities and professional organizations (Kirkland, 2016).

Community College Leadership: Challenges and Preparation for the 21st Century

Coupled with the impending leadership gap, the role of the community college leader has grown more complex and is faced with a myriad of challenges, including maintaining the open-door mission, funding, and reporting challenges relating to completers (Wallin & Johnson, 2007). Unlike the university, the mission of the community college is to accept all who want to pursue post-secondary education regardless of race, religion, or academic preparedness; however, with the increase of accreditation body standards in areas such as healthcare, community colleges are forced to make many of these programs closed-admission. In addition, many students come to the community college to take a single course or a cluster of courses to gain a skill. However, this student practice penalizes the community college as this student cannot be counted as a completer even though the student may have accomplished his or her goal (AACC, 2013; Rothstein, 2016). While community colleges have traditionally been funded by three revenue streams—state support, tuition, and local property taxes—dwindling funds at the state and local levels have prompted community colleges to generate additional revenue streams by pursuing grants, workforce development training contracts, and other fund raising efforts (Rothstein, 2016). Community colleges across the country are being challenged to train and educate the workforce in response to the talent shortage across various industries. The expectations of training/creating talent is inclusive of those who are chronically unemployed, returning citizens, and those lacking a high school diploma or GED (Jenkins, 2017; Rothstein, 2016).

Community colleges face other leadership challenges that are prominent throughout higher education, including greater accountability, rising costs, declining state

allocations, tensions over governance, and concerns over campus security (Jenkins, 2017). The environmental complexities, along with internal and external challenges, require leaders to possess skills and knowledge that were not required of their predecessors (Jenkins, 2017; Riggs, 2009). Wallin and Johnson (2007) noted the many complexities and rapidly changing demands of the community college leadership role. They proposed that these challenges serve to deter aspiring leaders from leadership roles as they view the roles as overwhelming and humanly impossible. Results of a survey of 299 chief academic officers revealed that agreeing to become president of a community college is a risky career move (Wallin & Johnson, 2007). The noted leadership gap is not only the result of impending retirements, but is coupled with the lack of qualified candidates who possess the knowledge and skill sets needed for the challenges facing community college leaders today (Jenkins, 2017; Kirkland, 2016).

Boggs (2003) provided a concise description of challenges being faced by current and potential leaders:

> While the founding leaders of the Community College Movement were pioneers and builders, today's leaders operate in a more complex world. Resources are constrained, accountability requirements are increasing, labor relations are more contentious and society is more litigious than ever before. Students expect community colleges to offer more learning opportunities and services twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Distance learning technologies are erasing geographical boundaries and competition for students is increasing. College leaders are expected to respond ever more quickly to meet emerging community and national

needs, such as shortage of health care workers and teachers, and to prepare students to live in an increasingly global society and economy. (p. 1)

Challenges in higher education continue to mount. Community colleges, along with universities, share such obstacles as enrollment declines, integration of technology, fewer resources, threats of litigation, collaboration, safety and security, and a leadership shortage. Higher education has experienced demands of increased accountability to accrediting agencies, governmental bodies, business/industry, and students. These factors have given rise to a culture of assessment, transparency, and accountability. Moreover, student demographics are becoming more diverse (Mellow & Heelan, 2008).

Community colleges must be responsive to meet the academic and personal needs of students. The diverse student body has resulted in higher proportions of first-time/first-generation students, at-risk learners, racial and ethnic populations, and students in need of remedial education (Boggs, 2003; Mellow & Heelan, 2008). Community college leaders must respond efficiently and effectively to emergent instructional delivery modalities and pedagogies and to integrate technology in a way that positively impacts the institution's ability to meet the needs of students while being adaptable to changing workforce needs. Dwindling resources at the federal and state levels have also given priority to the need of resource development. Effective community college leaders must be creative and innovative in generating alternative revenue streams to sustain programs and services that support the mission and vision of the institution (Roueche & Jones, 2005). Leaders must be equipped to navigate today's turbulent, rapidly changing demands while being fiscally responsible, financially resourceful, and attuned to threats of litigation as changes to policy and procedures are implemented (Cloud, 2010). AACC (2005) published the

Competencies for Community College Leaders, which defines leadership effectiveness, the report was updated in 2013 (AACC, 2013) and again in 2018 (AACC, 2018). The third edition (AACC, 2018) is much different than the two prior editions. The updated version expanded the competency focus areas from 8 categories to 11 categories to reflect competencies that were found to be significant in today's leaders within the community college. In addition, each category is described in relationship to career-level grouping, and competencies are provided under each respective category. Therefore, the competencies of a CEO are described much different than those of a faculty member.

The 11, expanded AACC Leadership Competencies and their descriptions are as follows (adapted from AACC, 2018, p. 37-47):

1. **Organizational Culture** – Embraces the mission, vision, and values of the college, and acknowledges the significance of the institution's past while charting a path for its future
2. **Governance, Institutional Policy, and Legislation** – An effective leader is knowledgeable about the institution's governance framework and the policies that guide its operation
3. **Student Success** – Supports student success across the institution, and embraces opportunities to improve access, retention, and success
4. **Institutional Leadership** – Understands the importance of interpersonal relationships, personal philosophy, and management skills to create a student-centered institution
5. **Institutional Infrastructure** – Leader is fluent in the management of the foundational aspects of the institution, including the establishment of a strategic

plan, financial and facilities management, accreditation, and technology master planning

6. **Information and Analytics** – Understands how to use data in ways that give a holistic representation of the institution's performance, and is open to the fact that data might reveal unexpected or previously unknown trends or issues
7. **Advocacy and Mobilizing/Motivating Others** –
    a. Understands and embraces the importance of championing community college ideals
    b. Understands how to mobilize stakeholders to take action on behalf of the college
    c. Understands how to use all of the communications resources available to connect with the college community
8. **Fundraising and Relationship Cultivation** – Cultivates relationships across sectors that support the institution and advance the community college agenda
9. **Communication** – Demonstrates strong communication skills, leads and fully embraces the role of community college spokesperson
10. **Collaboration** – Develops and maintains responsive, cooperative, mutually beneficial, and ethical internal and external relationships that nurture diversity, promote the success of the college, and sustain the community college mission
11. **Personal Traits and Abilities** – Possesses certain personal traits and adopts a focus on honing abilities that promote the community college agenda

Across the nation, community colleges are facing a shrinking pool of qualified candidates who possess the appropriate educational background, knowledge, and skill set,

as current leaders are retiring. From 2001 to 2006, community colleges across the country hired more than 500 new executive-level leaders, including deans, vice presidents, and provosts (Jeandron, 2000). Just one year later, an additional 80 to 100 new community college presidents entered the ranks. This trend was anticipated to continue as imminent retirements continued throughout the executive-level ranks (Scott-Skillman, 2007). In 2016, there were 269 college president positions open, representing approximately 23% of all community colleges experiencing a turnover in presidents (Smith, 2016).

Higher education institutions, particularly community colleges, are competing for talented human capital to replace retiring baby boomers while remaining vital particularly in light of the call by former President Obama (Riggs, 2009). In July of 2009, former President Barack Obama put forth the American Graduation Initiative during a speech delivered at Macomb Community College in Michigan. The initiative was designed to invest in community colleges and help American workers get the skills and credentials they needed to succeed in a more competitive job market (Obama, 2009). As a result, on March 30, 2010, during a ceremony at Northern Virginia Community College, former President Obama signed H.R. 4872, the Health Care and Education Affordability Reconciliation Act, into law. The Act provided $2 billion for the Community College and Career Training Grant Program, which was a new Trade Adjustment Assistance program focused on workforce preparation. The American Graduation Initiative promised to build on the legacy of community colleges as a gateway to opportunity in America and to usher in new innovations and reforms for the 21st century economy (Boggs, 2003). The initiative included:

- Aiming for 5 million additional community college graduates by 2020.

- Creating the community college challenge fund that would provide the necessary investment to improve education, foster productive relationships with businesses, and approve other reforms.
- Funding innovative strategies to promote college completion.
- Modernizing community college facilities.
- Creating a new, online skills laboratory (AACC, 2014).

In 2011, six national community college organizations—representing trustees, administrators, faculty, and students—signed a call to action to commit member institutions to match President Obama's 2020 goal (AACC, 2012). As part of this commitment, in 2012, the AACC published the *21st-Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges*. The commission was created to comprehensively examine the challenges and opportunities facing the fastest-growing sector of higher education (community colleges) – with leadership being noted as a challenge (AACC, 2012).

Leadership Development Programs: A Review

The goal of developing leaders is not a new concept; as early as 1960 the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) had the vision to fund community college leadership development programs. The WKKF funded grant projects for 12 major universities to train community college leaders (AACC, 2012). By 1983, the WKKF supported leadership programs focused on rural areas and was the first statewide program of its kind in the United States (Black & Earnest, 2009). These early efforts are notable, but did not meet the shortage experienced by community colleges. The field of community college leadership development has evolved over the years from its early growth of leaders rising through the ranks (Eddy, 2010) or selected by the university (Cohen & Brawer, 2008) to

GYOs and other leadership opportunities designed to equip professionals with the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the needs of today's ever-changing demands (AACC, 2013). To effectively address the growing leadership gap that exists, professional development opportunities are paramount. The literature has identified three major areas used to prepare community college leaders: (a) university doctoral programs, (b) professional association leadership programs/external professional development programs, and (c) in-house leadership GYO programs (AACC, 2013).

University Doctoral Programs

A review of the literature and an Internet search (http://www.cscconline.org) conducted March 2018, revealed a number of colleges and universities that offer doctoral programs in community college leadership. Each of the noted doctoral programs varied in scope, curriculum, and in experience requirements for completion; however, there appeared to be a common theme of teaching the critical elements of becoming a great community college leader (Brotherton, 2002. Some doctoral programs prepare students at the Ed.D. level, which focuses on the ever-changing challenges and application of the role, while other programs prepare students for the Ph.D. level, which typically prepares individuals for policy research and mid-level to senior-level leadership (Brotherton, 2002). In order to obtain an executive-level community college leadership role, a terminal degree is recommended. The doctoral degree is seen as the passport to the executive level, specifically those degrees focused on higher education (Eckel et al., 2009). Bagnato (2004) provides program information on the leading colleges and universities offering such programs. He notes the overarching learner-centered approach used to deliver instruction and the importance of the focus on the coursework.

Successful doctoral programs are noted to possess such characteristics as conducting original research, innovative teaching strategies, current and past community college leaders as guest lecturers or professors, and an emphasis on diversity (Brown et al., 2002; Duvall, 2003). Doctoral programs are expensive and require an intense level of commitment, which often requires students to take a leave of absence (Duvall, 2003). Today, many programs offer coursework utilizing an online-delivery methodology. Although since 2006, there was a 31% increase in the number of doctoral degrees awarded in community college leadership among higher education administration programs (Dembicki, 2006), there is still a growing concern regarding the number of current and potential leaders and the quality of the skills and knowledge possessed by leaders that are needed to be successful (AACC, 2012).

The literature suggests that university doctoral programs are not relevant to community college leadership roles. The AACC in its *Competencies for Community College Leaders* (2nd Edition; 2013) explains that community college leadership doctoral programs are skilled at developing research-oriented leaders that are trained and qualified to write about their institutions, but lack programming that emphasizes practical application of a leader's research and analysis (AACC, 2013). This document continues to evolve, with AACC publishing a 3rd edition in 2018 (AACC, 2018). The literature cites the heavy focus on theory, little attention to local leadership characteristics, and a narrow understanding of the community college's contextual framework (Eddy, 2009; Eddy & Murray, 2007).

Professional Association Leadership Development Programs/ External Professional Development Programs

In addition to the doctoral degree programs, national professional association leadership development programs or external professional development programs have been developed to strengthen mid-level and senior-level leadership. These professional programs vary in goal, purpose, duration, outcomes, and participants' demographics; however, the aim of preparing leaders for higher education leadership is shared. Some of the well-known professional leadership programs include, but are not limited to, the following: The Executive Leadership Institute (ELI), the AACC Presidents Academy Summer Institute, and the American Council on Education Fellows Program. The ELI is a short-term program designed to prepare future community college presidents for the position of community college CEO. The four-day program offers presentations from experienced community college leaders, interview skills and résumé critique, open discussions, and membership into a network of current and graduated participants.

The AACC Presidents Academy Summer Institute provides a short-term leadership development program designed for current community college presidents. The three-day institute focuses on current critical challenges facing presidents across the country. The institute provides mentors for newly appointed presidents, case studies designed to develop necessary skill sets, and presentations by leaders in the field. In 2003, AACC developed the Future Leaders Institute in response to the rising number of retiring mid-level and senior-level community college leaders. The five-day intensive institute provides career preparation, workshops, and networking resources for future leader (Buggs & Kent, 2003). The WKKF continues to support community college

leadership development initiatives by funding such efforts as the AACC's program *Leading Forward* Initiative, which was formed in 2000 in response to the leadership shortage (AACC, 2005).

The ACE Fellows Program is a long-term program designed to prepare current and potential leaders for leadership positions in higher education. A search conducted on March 8, 2018 of the ACE Fellows Program's website (www.acenet.edu) describes the program as a year-long program that offers a unique, personalized experience that includes mentoring, program retreats, and national association meetings. The ACE Fellows Program identifies and prepares higher education leaders through the program's major components. Although national professional programs boast of the number of president, vice president, dean appointments and other career advancements, the literature suggested that additional research is needed to identify the skills, ability, and knowledge that are perceived to have been developed or enhanced from community college leaders who participated in such programs (Black & Ernest, 2009; Reille & Kezar, 2010).

In-house Leadership Development Programs – Grow Your Own

Reille and Kezar (2010) conducted a national qualitative case study focused on how to fill the leadership gap through the use of GYO programs. In-house GYO leadership development programs have been cited as a vehicle for developing potential leaders within community colleges (Reille & Kezar, 2010). A GYO program is defined as "a leadership development program offered by a college or district to some of its employees as a way of preparing them for future leadership position within the institution" (Reille & Kezar, 2010, p. 10). In the early 2000s, this form of succession planning became an emerging trend within community colleges (Luna, 2010). In the past,

succession planning was not a focus for community colleges, however, with the number of leaders retiring from organizations and creating a loss of institutional knowledge and skills, leaders recognized the need to grow current employees for future leadership roles (Luna, 2010; Reille & Kezar, 2010). According to Benard (2012), succession planning is a systemic, long-term strategy to create a leadership pipeline to meet the mission and goals specific to an organization. This approach includes recruitment, capacity building, career planning, and retention strategies. Succession planning enables a college to develop talent internally and fill the pipeline with skilled and knowledgeable people who exist on campus today. This planning involves the integration of the organization's mission, current trends, and challenges, as well as short- and long-term goals. Although very few formal GYO programs exist across the country, nearly 70% believe that there is a need to offer in-house leadership development opportunities customized to sustain success and to meet the needs of the institution (Hull & Keim, 2007).

According to AACC (2006), GYO programs should be created with a specific purpose to: (a) study leadership theories and understand participant's leadership style; (b) expand the understanding of the institution and its major stakeholders; (c) explore, address, and develop knowledge of current issues in higher education specific to community colleges; and (d) enhance and grow the institutional leadership abilities needed to move into executive leadership roles. In a national study supported by AACC, Jeandron (2000) highlighted the many benefits of GYO programs, such as increasing leadership and management skills, participants being more involved in campus activities, developing more projects, and improving collaboration across disciplines. Piland and Wolf (2003) noted institutional benefits of improved cultural competency, involvement

on committees, and decision-making skills among participants. The benefits were noted as experience, regardless of whether the individual received a promotion (Piland & Wolf, 2003).

Research findings of Piland and Wolf (2003) noted that GYO programs typically lack adequate funding, are poorly organized, and rather than prepare leaders for the field of community college leadership, participants are prepared for that specific institution. Further, Reille and Kezar (2010) found that GYO programs tend to lack adequate assessments, and that decisions are often made based upon convenience and ease rather than best practices that are supported by research and program effectiveness. Of the 15 GYO programs studied by Reille and Kezar (2010), only 5—as identified by program participants—integrated assessment tools that were used to identify knowledge and skills gap. However, none of the five institutions utilized an assessment to identify outcomes. The strongest noted influence on program design was the institution's leaders' thoughts about current needs (Reille & Kezar, 2010). According to Jeandron (2000), one of the most important factors of a leadership development program offered is the commitment and involvement of current leaders. The involvement should range from program design and participation on panel discussions to mentoring and project sponsorship. Involvement at the senior executive level not only lends expertise and experience to the program, but it also brings credibility to the program (Jeandron, 2000). In addition, learning theories and effective pedagogies were not considered; the structure reflected more of current challenges and convenience, rather than effectiveness (Reille & Kezar, 2010).

Today, the preferred emerging trend for developing future leaders at a rate commensurate to the gap is campus-based GYO programs. Although limited research has

been conducted on community college GYO programs, several studies are noted. The national study conducted by Reille and Kezar (2010) provided a critical review of 15 GYOs as a mechanism to address the community college leadership gap. The researchers interviewed GYO program directors and found common program design flaws, such as curriculum content being too narrowly focused, limited delivery format of face-to-face, and lack of the college's culture reflected in the curriculum (Reille & Kezar, 2010). Although there were noted flaws, the authors maintained that GYOs are of great benefit to community colleges in developing leadership skills, improving communication skills, and advancing participants' careers within the institution. While the study focused on GYOs' ability to fill the leadership gap, the study failed to explore the perceptions of leadership skills development from the GYO participants, which may have revealed an understanding of what it is like to participate in a GYO program and how knowledge and skills were enhanced.

Benard (2012) conducted an in-depth, qualitative case study to understand GYO participants' career goals, the programs' impact on fostering career advancement, as well as how AACC's competencies are addressed in the GYO program curriculum. Utilizing the AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders and Malcolm Knowles' key assumptions on adult learning and andragogy as the frameworks, findings indicated that the GYO program merely provided an in-depth, comprehensive orientation to the community college. Participants learned about the culture, the structure, and participated in self-assessment of themselves and others (Benard, 2012). The program curriculum lacked in areas such as experiential learning or hands-on projects, effective management strategies, or collective bargaining techniques. The GYO program merely served as an

internal networking opportunity for participants within various departments and at different levels (Benard, 2012). This study focused on a GYO program that admitted leaders at every level ranging from clerical support to dean level; however, the findings cannot be applied to senior level leaders, which is the focus of the leadership shortage.

Snyder (2015) examined the elements of a GYO and how the program could help advance the college's mission, respect the college's culture, address community needs, and deliver socially responsible education at Tidewater Community College (TCC), an urban, multi-campus community college located in Virginia. Using a constructivist approach, Snyder (2015) conducted interviews with community leaders, GYO participants, and college staff. Findings were presented in relationship to the data reflected by each respective population group. Data from the 17 community leaders yielded 4 major themes related to problems and needs, including (a) lack of preparation by the K-12 system, (b) affordability of post-secondary education and workforce training, (c) talent gap for 21st century jobs, and (d) considerable dependency on defense industries (Snyder, 2015). Findings further indicated that community leaders reported that TCC can address the four noted themes along with promoting diversity and race relations. Findings from TCC personnel (executive staff, deans, directors, faculty, and staff) indicated that in order to meet community needs leaders must possess leadership competencies that are aligned with AACC's competencies, including collaboration, communication, organizational skills, and determination. Snyder's study examined the GYO program elements to help advance the college and meet the needs of the community, but did not provide an understanding of the GYO experience from the

perspective of a participant. This information can help inform GYO program managers of what is viewed as having value from the perspective of a participant.

In 2016, Kirkland conducted a sequential explanatory mixed-methods case study to assess GYO program participants' perceptions focusing on the development or enhancement of leader and leadership skills and competencies. During the quantitative phase, participants were given a pre/post 360-degree tool to determine if leader or leadership skills were developed or enhanced as well as participants' preparation to enter a leadership role. The qualitative phase focused on interviews with program administrators to understand the impact within the community college relating to participants' reported program outcomes (Kirkland, 2016). This single-institution study based in New Jersey opened its GYO program to all levels within the college, from entry level to executive level. Although there were different tracks, this study examined the track that was open to every level within the college such that a secretary could be in the same track as a dean (Kirkland, 2016). Descriptive statistics suggest GYO participants' leadership skills and competencies were enhanced and/or developed. The quantitative and qualitative data revealed five themes around what helped to develop or enhance leadership skills and competencies: (a) collaboration amongst colleagues, (b) comprehending organization dynamics, (c) communication, (d) developing a level of self-awareness, and (e) developing a level of self-confidence (Kirkland, 2016).

All 10 participants reported having a better understanding of the institution and an increased amount of confidence to perform leadership functions within their respective departments (Kirkland, 2016). However, the findings also suggested that the studied GYO program only provided the initial orientation to leadership and additional in-depth

training was required to prepare this population to fill the college's leadership pipeline (Kirkland, 2016). The study examined enhancement and/or development of leader and leadership skills of GYO participants at every leadership level. The study noted that leadership development at the senior level requires a more in-depth training in comparison to entry-level leaders (Kirkland, 2016). This study noted the perceptions of GYO participants while participating in a leadership program designed for leaders at every level within the institution. The findings cannot be applied to GYO programs that are dedicated to developing leaders at the mid- to senior-level. In addition, similar to the research of Benard (2012), findings reflect leadership at every level and are not limited to mid- to senior-level leaders, which is the targeted population to address the leadership shortage.

A study was conducted by Boswell (2015) investigating the success factors, the behaviors or actions, and the pros and cons for implementing GYO programs at 19 community colleges in Texas and in the Middle Atlantic Region. To collect data for this qualitative study, Boswell (2015) used in-depth, semi-structured interview questions with 10 GYO participants/personnel from the various community colleges. Findings concluded that colleges used a process for implementing GYO programs and some form of the AACC's competencies were incorporated into the program. However, Boswell (2015) further indicated that college programs must regularly ensure the currency of the AACC's leadership competencies as well as the relevancy to the college's needs. Research findings by Leon (2016) further noted that consistent content and a structured framework was essential for the success of the GYO program. The study was conducted to explore how and why a GYO program was developed and the benefits and challenges

of developing and implementing the GYO for participants and the college district. The study considered leadership at every level and used the AACC's Leadership Competency Model as the foundation for the leadership development curriculum (Leon, 2016). While these studies focused on the development and implementation of GYO programs, they failed to capture the phenomenon of participating in a GYO program and the potential insight into how the experience was beneficial subsequent to the program.

Although there have been studies to examine many aspects of GYO programs, including but not limited to the pros and cons of GYO implementation, integration of the college's culture and community needs in the program, and the integration of AACC's competencies into the curriculum, there still remains a gap in the literature that focuses only on GYO programs that are dedicated to senior-level leadership development. No study has focused on GYO graduates' perceptions of relevancy of the GYO program to the development or enhancement of leadership skills and knowledge for graduates' current leadership role or future leadership role. The noted literature examined GYO programs that were open to a broad range of college employees; while the literature does note that leadership can be developed at every level (Kirkland, 2016), this study focused on the leadership pipeline at the dean level and above. In addition, this study involved interviews with current leaders who completed a GYO program. The study was not confined to the AACC's leadership competencies, allowing participants to describe the skills and knowledge developed or enhanced, if applicable.

GYO Program Structure

As community colleges look to grow leaders from within the organization, it is important to scan the literature for best practices in the structure of GYO programs.

AACC (2005) noted that along with developing or enhancing the skills and knowledge of future leaders, community colleges should develop GYO programs with three major overarching goals: (a) inform and expose participants to all aspects/divisions of the institution, (b) help participants gain an understanding of his/her leadership style and of leadership theories, and (c) explore current trends and issues that exist in community colleges and higher education. Typically, oversight of GYO programs are the responsibility of the president's office or human resources, which increases the visibility and credibility of the GYO program (Jeandron, 2000). While the literature is sparse on the cost of GYO programs, Jeandron (2000) noted the cost to support such programs can range from $2,200 to $75,000 annually, and some colleges require participants to pay a fee to participate. Colleges fund these programs through general fund dollars, foundation support, and/or state awards; this varies from state to state and college to college (Jeandron, 2000).

According to Ebbers, Conover, and Samuels (2010) full-time faculty or middle managers (deans, directors, or department chairs) with years of experience and an interest in career advancement tend to be those selected to participate in GYO programs. In addition, selected participants should possess the potential to be in a leadership role; this potential can be demonstrated through work performance and/or formal educational preparation (Ebbers et al., 2010). Most GYO programs are campus-based, offered once per year, and programming is held for five to eight months in length. Program content is commonly delivered through face-to-face guest lecturers (internal and external), articles, team projects and case studies, and online meetings (Jeandron, 2000).

Each GYO program is customized and unique to meet the needs of the respective community college; however, the literature appears to reflect several common curriculum elements of GYO programs: (a) college orientation, (b) integration of the AACC's Leadership Competencies Framework (Leon, 2016), (c) workshops and experiential learning, (d) self-assessment/self-awareness tool, (e) mentorship, (f) cultural competencies, and (g) finance and resource management (Benard, 2012; Boswell, 2015; Snyder, 2015).

College Orientation

Although community colleges share similar missions, each institution is a unique organization and their governance structures vary from state to state. Therefore, it is important for GYO programs to assist leaders in understanding the history of the college, how the institution has evolved over time, and the current structure of the college (Benard, 2012; Snyder, 2015). The orientation should also provide an understanding of the college's mission and how the mission functions within the community (Reille & Kezar, 2010).

Integration of the AACC's Leadership Competencies Framework

In 2005, AACC established an identified set of core competencies for community college leaders, which has been integrated as the foundation for leadership learning objectives (see Figure 4). The integration of these core competencies are appropriate for GYO programs developing senior-level leaders as well as emerging leaders as the framework progresses from basic leadership competencies needed to more deeper, comprehensive competencies. In 2013, AACC updated the competencies to include: (a) organizational strategy, (b) institutional finance, research, fundraising, and resource

management, (c) communication, (d) collaboration, and (e) community college advocacy. The updated framework reflects the need for leaders to effectively interact with and manage business and industry (AACC, 2013). Although the framework provides a general list of competencies, a community college GYO program must customize this framework to meet the needs of the institution.

Experiential Learning

A key component to GYO programs is contextualized learning, which gives participants an opportunity to connect the learning and work experience, including mentoring, team projects, job shadowing, networking, and internships (Benard, 2012). The use of experiential learning supports the application of learning in GYO programs (Benard, 2012; Boswell, 2015).

Self-assessment/Self-awareness Tool

According to the findings by Reille and Kezar (2010), GYO programs utilize self-assessment/self-awareness tools to support participants in developing an individual career goal plan. Such tools help participants become aware of their strengths and weaknesses, individual skills, and competencies. Most GYO programs employ the Myers-Briggs or the 360 surveys (Benard, 2012; Reille & Kezar, 2010).

Cultural Competency

According to Reille and Kezar (2010), cultural competency may not be a traditional leadership skill, however, leaders must have a solid sense of the cultural environment internal to and external of the organization. It is also important for leaders to recognize the established college culture and how their role relates to established traditions and diversity (Eddy, 2010; Snyder, 2015). GYO programs should develop or

enhance leaders' cultural sensitivity to regional needs and have an understanding of how the actions may impact change beyond the college, particularly in fostering relationships (Snyder, 2015).

Finance and Resource Management

Community colleges continue to experience financial reporting demands at the federal, state, and local levels as well as continuous reductions in traditional funding streams (e.g., local property taxes and state stipends). These demands for fiscal reporting have forced leaders to become more fiscally responsible, collaborate with business and industry (public and private) to generate grants and contracts, and develop innovative strategies to generate funding through alternative methods (Benard, 2012; Riggs, 2009; Snyder, 2015). Not only do GYO programs provide instruction on broad fiscal information such as federal regulations, state reporting that may have an impact on community colleges, how to collaborate with other institutions to leverage shared resources, but GYO programs are customized to the unique fiscal environment and demands of that respective institution, including such concepts as budgeting, grant writing, facility management, and finance and governance.

Although the structure of GYO programs is generally developed with content to reflect the skills and knowledge needed within the respective college, Reille and Kezar (2010) found that GYO curriculum content reflected AACC recommended competencies for successful community college leaders. Institutions may continue to place emphasis on one competency more than another, but it may be helpful to outline the GYO program structure for those institutions that seek to build a program.

Learning Theories

Learning is a complex phenomenon that has been researched over many years reaching back to the 19th century. However, scientific research of learning started during the turn of the 20th century, and learning is defined by the way we believe learning occurs (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). Benard's (2012) study utilized the *AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders* and Malcolm Knowles' key assumptions on adult learning and andragogy as the frameworks to understand GYO participants' career goals and the programs' impact on fostering career advancement. Findings indicated that while participants learned about the culture and the college structure and participated in self-assessment of themselves and others, the program curriculum lacked in areas such as experiential learning or hands-on projects, effective management strategies, or collective bargaining techniques. The use of a learning theory was also found in the work of Snyder (2015). Using a constructivist approach, Snyder (2015) conducted interviews with community leaders and GYO participants and college staff to examine a GYO program's components to advance the college and the community in which it serves. This section is limited to the examination of four major learning theoretical eras and corresponding description of the learning theories that have helped shape instructional environments. The section provides an overview of various learning theories, and Table 2 provides a brief description of the theories as they have progressed over time.

Behaviorism was the first theory that focused on learning as reports of sensations and the elements of immediate experiences – observable behaviors. For behaviorists Pavlov, Watson, and Skinner, the focus was on observable, quantifiable events, and behavior; these theorists argued that learning should only be noted by observable

indicators (stimulus – response sequences) (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). According to Skinner (1974), operant conditioning involves learning through the consequences of behavior. Behavior that is reinforced (positive or negative) is repeated, and behavior that is not reinforced dies or become extinct. Leaning occurs through the arrangement of contingencies of reinforcement; teachers arrange contingencies of reinforcement to expedite learning that may have otherwise slowly occurred or possibly never occurred. To improve learning, it is important to modify current reinforcers as opposed to identifying new reinforcers (Skinner, 1974). According to Skinner (1974), knowledge is viewed as a set of passive actions in response to environmental stimuli; therefore, the transmission of information from one individual to the next is simply the transmission of the response in relationship to a specific stimuli and the response is reinforced through an effective reinforcement schedule (Skinner, 1974). If the response is not reinforced appropriately (positively or negatively), then the learned responses may quickly become nonexistent (Skinner, 1974).

Cognitive Constructivism theories moved beyond the focus on observable behavior to explain learning through a mental processes approach. Constructivism theorists such as Piaget and Inhelder (1969) believed learning is actively constructed by the learner based on the modification of the learner's existing internal schemes (accommodation) and the filtering of new input (assimilation). Assimilation is a learning process whereby learner takes a broad idea or concept and attempts to make it fit into an existing schema. Whereas accommodation is a process of learning adaptation, existing knowledge has to modified or altered to accommodate the new information. Learning occurs when resources are provided along with guidance and support to the learner as he

or she makes an effort to assimilate new knowledge into old and to modify the old knowledge to accommodate the new (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969).

Table 2

Theoretical Era and Description

Theoretical Era	Description
Behaviorism	Learning is conditioned through observable behaviors – stimuli, response, reinforcements (positive or negative) sequence. If learning is not reinforced then the desired response becomes extinct. Learners are motivated by extrinsic factors such as rewards and punishments.
Cognitive Constructivism	Mental processes and active discovery – dependent upon the cognitive structure, to facilitate learning the learner assimilates new knowledge into old and to modify the old knowledge to accommodate the new knowledge. Learners are driven by intrinsic factors such as understanding the limitation of their existing knowledge.
Social Constructivism	Learning is a social phenomenon, knowledge is actively constructed. Vygotsky's theory knowledge occurs through two developmental levels: 1) actual development or current capacity level and 2) potential or zone of proximal development; where learning takes place through the maturing process. Bandura's theory addressed learning as a reciprocal interaction among persons, behaviors, and environments. Other factors such as modeling, self-regulation and self-efficacy are important elements in learning. Learning is motivated both extrinsically (rewards from the knowledge community) and intrinsically (learner's drive to understand).
Experiential	Learning theory that emphasizes the central role of experience in the learning process. A holistic integrative model that incorporates experience, perception, cognition, and behavior. According to the theory, learning is not fixed but is a process in which learning is formed and re-formed through experiences. Intellectual origins of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget.

Note. Source of table information: Ertmer & Newby, 2013.

Social Constructivists such as Vygotsky and Bandura postulated that learning does not occur separate from its social contexts. Vygotsky argued that knowledge is actively constructed in a collaborative manner, and he placed an emphasis on the role of language and culture in cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning is a collaborative process that involves two developmental levels: (a) actual development level, the level at which the learner is capable of solving problems without help, and (b) potential development level or zone of proximal development, the level at which the learner is capable of achieving with the support of a teacher or in collaboration with a peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, learning takes place at the potential level, since the cognitive capacity to understand and solve problems is matured under the guidance of a teacher or in collaboration with others. This process is dependent upon the learner's existing cognitive structure maturity; the continuous process of maturing is only seen with guidance and collaboration (Vygotsky, 1978). Bandura's theory addressed learning as a reciprocal interaction among persons, behaviors, and environments (Bandura, 1991). Bandura further indicated that through the observation of others or modeling, learners acquire knowledge, rules, skills, strategies, attitudes, and appropriate behaviors. He expanded the social theory to include the concept of self-regulation—an individual's need to control life events and self-efficacy—and personal beliefs that influence achievement (Bandura, 1993).

Experiential theory represents a comprehensive and unique model on learning and development that integrates the work of Dewey (philosophical approach), Lewin (social psychology approach), and Piaget (cognitive development approach) (Kolb, 1983). Kolb postulated six propositions:

- Learning is not a fixed outcome, rather it is a process in which concepts are derived from experiences and are continuously being modified by experiences.
- Learning is a cycle that is driven by the dual dialectically related modes of grasping experience (concrete experience and abstract conceptualization) and dual dialectically related modes of transforming experience (reflective observation and active experimentation); once these conflicts are resolved, learning occurs as a result.
- All learning is re-learning. Learners continue to gain knowledge from experiences and testing out various experiences. The learner is not a blank slate.
- Learning is a holistic process of human adaptation, integrating a person's thinking, feeling, perceiving, behaving, problem solving, decision making, and creativity. Learning is a lifelong cycle that encompasses all life stages from childhood to old age.
- Learning involves the transactions between the person and the environment. This relationship is symbolized by the dual meaning of experience – subjective as it relates to a person's internal state, and objective active change in the environment. For example, 'That kid has five years of experience riding a bike.'
- Learning is the process of creating knowledge, and knowledge is the result of human cultural experiences, referred to as social knowledge, and individual life experiences, referred to as personal knowledge (Kolb, 1983; Kolb & Kolb, 2011).

Experiential learning theory has been noted as a useful framework for designing and implementing educational programs, as well as training and development programs (Kolb & Kolb, 2011). According to Kolb (1983), individuals enter a training program or

classroom with a set of ideas, beliefs, and theories about topics. This theoretical framework provides a foundation for understanding the learning process and how new concepts and ideas may be introduced within a GYO program and how old ones may be modified or dismissed. The theory further provides a process of learning cycle whereby when new ideas are in conflict with old ideas or beliefs, then the education process must expose, examine, and test those beliefs and ideas. Once this is done, then new and more refined ideas can be integrated into an individual's belief system and the learning process will be facilitated. Kolb's Learning Theory provides an appropriate framework for guiding the research to understand the lived experience of GYO graduates. Kolb's Learning Theory stresses that learning rests in how an individual processes the experience, reflects critically on the experience, and makes meaning from experiences. In the continuous learning process, the dual dialectics of grasping and transforming experience creates a synergy, which can potentially create leadership knowledge (Kolb, 1983). This study utilized Kolb's Learning Theory as the theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework: Kolb's Learning Theory

The theoretical framework that guided this study was Kolb's Learning Theory. This study examined the lived experience of GYO program graduates and the relevancy of the GYO Emerging Leaders Program at Edge Water Community College (a pseudonym) to current and future community college leaders' role and the development/enhancement of skills and knowledge. Kolb's framework was useful to understanding how GYO programs develop or enhance leadership skills and knowledge necessary to lead in the complex community college environment (Turesky & Gallagher, 2011). Kolb (1983) described learning as a process through which ideas or concepts are

conceived by a learner having continuous modified experiences. This study was built on the conceptual framework by Kolb (1983) who posited that experiential learning works on two levels: (a) a four-stage cycle of learning and (b) four learning styles (see Figure 4). According to Kolb (1983), individuals must go through all four stages for learning to occur (although not necessarily in order) and individuals incorporate each learning style at one time or another, based upon the environment or situation; however, individuals tend to utilize one learning style over others based on personal preference, culture, and personality.

The theory provides a foundation for understanding leadership development ". . . as a holistic process of adaptation to the world." (Turesky & Gallagher, 2011, p. 7). According to Turesky and Gallagher (2011), leadership development is individualized and having the ability to utilize all four modes of the learning cycle and learning styles supports leaders in being responsive to institutional challenges. Learning is created through the way experiences are processed, reflected upon, and how meaning is made. This transformation of an individual's experiences can produce a dynamic leader.

Kolb's Learning Theory has a four-stage learning cycle and is circular so a leader can begin with any one of the four stages (Figure 3). The stages are as follows:

Stage 1: Concrete Experience – In this stage, a learner encounters a new experience or reinterprets an existing experience. This stage is feeling or having the experience. Within a GYO program, these experiences may be delivered as readings, problem scenarios, or simulating a situation (Kolb, 1983).

Stage 2: Reflective Observation – During this stage, the concept is clearer and a leader can note inconsistencies between experiences and interpretation of those

experiences. A learner takes note or watches what outcomes are generated from the challenge (Kolb, 1983).

Stage 3: Abstract Conceptualization – Now that the process is understood, and a learner can develop new concepts or processes to modify the outcomes. During this phase, reflection brings about new ways of thinking about a challenge to improve the outcomes (Kolb, 1983).

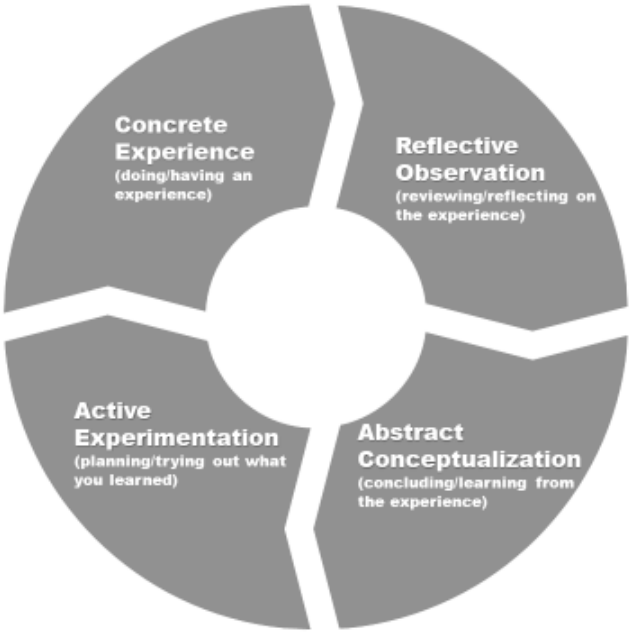

Figure 3: Kolb's Learning Theory: Four modes of the learning cycle. Adapted from Kolb, 1983.

Stage 4: Active Experimentation – Here, the learner applies the new concepts to bring about different outcomes. This phase allows the learner to put new ideas to work and to bring about changes in the outcomes (Kolb, 1983).

This integrated model is a process of learning and development with each stage being mutually supportive of the other (Figure 4) (Kolb, 1983). Further, learning is a process not a set of behavioral outcomes.

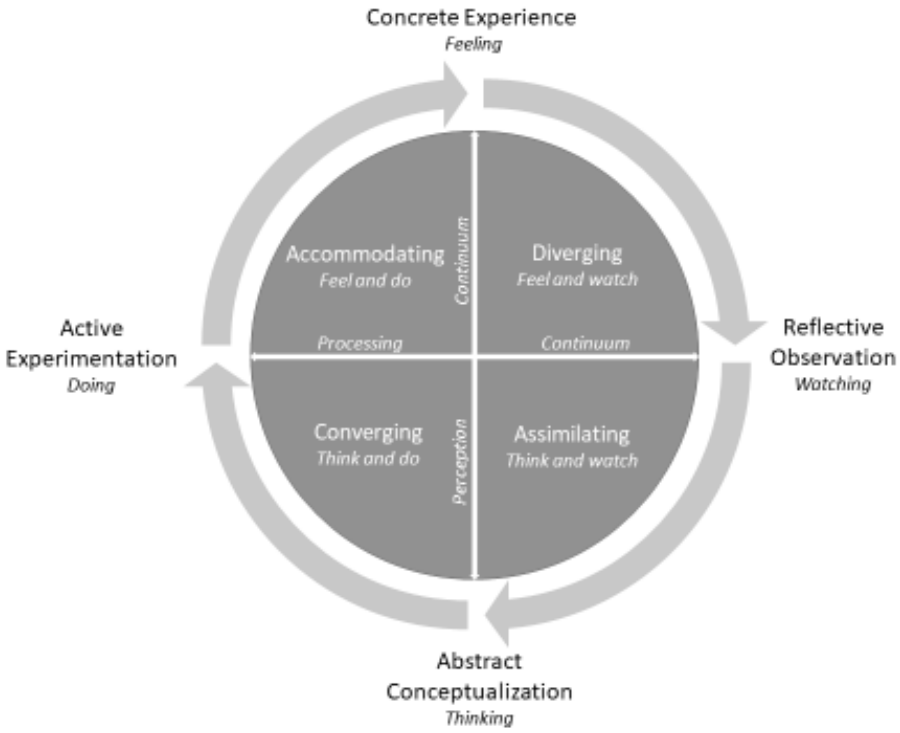

Figure 4: Kolb's Learning Theory: Learning styles. Adapted from Kolb, 1983.

According to Kolb's Learning Theory, there are four learning styles that are based on the four-stage learning cycle, which is influenced by two pairs of variables that run on a continuum (a) processing continuum (how we approach a task), and (b) perception continuum (how we think or feel about a task). The four learning styles are: (a) Diverging (dominate learning abilities – concrete experience and reflective observation), (b) Assimilating (dominate learning abilities – reflective observation and abstract conceptualization), (c) Converging (dominate learning abilities – abstract conceptualization and active experimentation), and (d) Accommodating (dominate

learning abilities – active experimentation and concrete experience) (see Figure 5) (Kolb, 1983).

The study only focused on Kolb's Learning Theory four-stage learning model. This learning theory provided a framework to explain the research findings in response to the three research questions—one central question and two supporting questions– utilizing a qualitative, phenomenological research design: What is the experience of a GYO community college leadership program, from the perspective of program graduates? – (a) How did graduates perceive the relevancy of the GYO program to their leadership roles? (b) How did graduates perceive the GYO program enhanced or developed their leadership skills or knowledge? The framework supported the understanding of the phenomenon, how GYO graduates' developed or enhanced their skills and knowledge through various experiences lived within the GYO program; how graduates thought and reflected critically about those experiences; how graduates thought and formed new concepts or solutions to guide their future actions; and how graduates organized, mapped out actions plans with clear goals and executed. This framework informed the study on how GYO graduates perceived the relevancy of the various program learning experiences to their leadership role. According to Kolb (1983), "Learning is defined as the process of creating knowledge based on the transformation of experience" (p. 38).

Summary and Preview of the Next Chapter

Currently, limited research exists on graduates' perceptions of the relevancy of GYO leadership development programs to current and future leadership roles and the development or enhancement of skills and knowledge. The noted impending leadership

gap, coupled with the critical issues facing community college leaders, illustrates the need for relevant GYO leadership development opportunities. Failure to develop future leaders through GYO opportunities could jeopardize the future of community colleges. Kolb's Learning Theory four-stage learning cycle served as the theoretical framework to support the understanding of the lived experience of GYO program graduates. Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology used in this phenomenological study. The chapter includes justification for using the phenomenological approach. The chapter addressed the research design, the interviews, the interview protocol, the sample population, the role of the researcher, the data collection process, the data analysis, the limitations of the study, and a chapter summary.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Community colleges are facing a leadership gap, with the noted problem of retirements and the limited number of programs that are effectively preparing leaders at a rate commensurate with retirements (Smith, 2016). Community college GYO programs have been identified as the preferred approach for preparing leaders to address the complex challenges facing institutions (Reille & Kezar, 2010). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the shared lived experience of individuals who participated in and graduated from a community college GYO leadership program, how their perceived knowledge and/or skills were developed or enhanced, and the perceived relevancy of the program to their current leadership role. The study was conducted at Edge Water Community College (a pseudonym), which is a comprehensive community college with several campuses and educational centers. Edge Water Community College has a campus-based GYO leadership development program featuring three tracks: (a) Leadership Institute, (b) Emerging Leaders Program, and (c) Developing Leaders Advancement Program. This study considered graduates of the Emerging Leaders Program as this program is designed for the current and emerging leaders within the institution. The aim of the study was to answer three research questions—one central question and two supporting questions–utilizing a qualitative, phenomenological research design: What is the experience of a GYO community college leadership program, from the perspective of program graduates? – (a) How do graduates perceive the relevancy of the GYO program to their leadership roles? (b) How do graduates perceive the GYO program enhanced or developed their leadership skills or

knowledge? This chapter provides the justification for utilizing qualitative research, the research design, identification of the population, and instrumentation. The chapter concludes with the data collection and analysis processes, limitations, and a chapter summary.

Qualitative Research Design

The decision of whether to pursue qualitative versus quantitative research was guided by the nature of the research question. In this study, the central research question identified a phenomenon to be examined (participation in a GYO leadership program) in an effort to understand the shared experience of participants in a GYO program – therefore, the study utilized a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is an inductive approach with the goal of gaining a deeper understanding of a person's or group's experience or a social or human problem (Creswell, 2002). Qualitative researchers make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of meaning within a given context. In addition, the holistic world view of qualitative research holds that there is no single reality. Reality is based on various individuals' perceptions, and those perceptions may change over time (Hunt, 2011). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach, studying the phenomenon in its natural settings, and attempts to make sense of or interpret in terms of the meanings people bring to them. The aim of this study was to accurately describe the phenomenon of the lived experience of individuals who participated in and completed GYO leadership program at Edge Water Community College. Consequently, themes were identified that were found within the words of the participants, and those themes were presented in a manner that accurately reflected the experience of the participants.

Ultimately, themes noted reflected an in-depth description of what it was like to participate in a GYO community college leadership development program from the perspective of graduates. The findings are not generalizable to populations, but are contextual in nature (Creswell, 2002; Hunt, 2011). This study could not have been accomplished utilizing a quantitative approach. According to Conger (1996), quantitative methods alone are insufficient in explaining questions seeking answers about meaning.

The specific form of qualitative research that was used in this study was phenomenology. Phenomenology is a qualitative methodology with the purpose of describing a phenomenon or the appearance of things and the essence of lived experiences without preconceived assumptions about the experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The study helped to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of its graduates who are currently serving in a leadership role, including but not limited to how skills and knowledge may have been developed or enhanced through experiences lived.

Research Site

Edge Water Community College is a large community college, boasting an enrollment of more than 90,000. The college has been serving its community for more than 40 years and operates as a community college system. The Edge Water Community College system has multiple colleges, university centers, and community centers located throughout local communities. The college was identified as a leader in developing and implementing GYO leadership development programs by Dr. Walter Bumphus, President of AACC (personal communication, October 16, 2017). The college has offered GYO leadership development for more than 12 years and believes in the philosophy that leaders should be cultivated from within the institution at every level (C. Nesbitt,

personal communication, February 20, 2018). This college was selected to conduct this study because of its extensive work in leadership development as well as the college's program focused on developing leaders, ranging from the associate dean to vice president levels. Over the years, the institution has expanded its system-wide leadership development efforts to include three tracks, including the Leadership Institute, Emerging Leaders Program, and the Developing Leaders Advancement Program. Employees at varying levels and at every site have the opportunity to participate in leadership. The population and respective sample was reflective of individuals system-wide who participated in the Emerging Leaders Program. To participate in the Emerging Leaders Program, employees must have met the following criteria: (a) have full-time employment with Edge Water Community College for at least one calendar year, and (b) must be recommended by the division supervisor.

Population and Sample

There is no set protocol for selecting participants in a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2002), however, this study identified study participants as those who had participated and completed a GYO program and met the following criteria:

- graduated from the Edge Water Community College Emerging Leaders Program;
- participated and completed the program within the last three years to five years; and
- currently serve in a leadership role at the college (vice president, dean, chief academic officer, chief student services officer, chief administrative officer, associate dean, or associate vice president depending upon the structure of the college).

The college has three leadership development tracks: (a) Leadership Institute, (b) Emerging Leaders Program, and (c) Developing Leaders Advancement Program, however, the Emerging Leaders Program track focuses on emerging leaders within a particular rank. Based on the identified criteria, the manager of professional development programming at Edge Water Community College provided a list of GYO graduates who completed the program within the last five years. Contact was first made to individuals who completed the program within the last three years, and a sufficient sample size was reached.

The individuals who completed the program within the last three years were emailed a communication, inviting them to participate in the study. The communication: outlined that their participation in this study was voluntary; explained the overall research study along with its purpose, described how confidentiality will be maintained; and stated their ability to end participation at any time (see Appendix A). As individuals responded with interest, a number was assigned to each individual.

The sample size for this study was eight GYO graduates. According to Boyd (2001), 2 to 10 research participants is sufficient to reach saturation, while Creswell (2002) noted 3 to 10 participants is sufficient. Therefore, eight participants was sufficient to reach data saturation – a qualitative term that refers to the point in the data collection and analysis process where collecting additional data does not provide new information relating to the research questions (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Interview Protocol

Primary data was collected from participants through individual interviews using an interview protocol consisting of six open-ended questions. Using the interview

protocol, participants' experiences, feelings, beliefs, and thoughts of the phenomenon of participating in a GYO program were explored to understand the phenomenon from participants' point of view and how meaning was made from the various experiences within the GYO program. The questions were designed to allow participants to expound on their experiences while participating in the GYO program. The questions were also designed to allow the freedom for participants to explore how various experiences within the GYO program were perceived and how the participant made meaning of those experiences (see Appendix B).

Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot study with two GYO leadership development program graduates from institutions other than Edge Water Community College, using the instrument I created. The interviews took approximately 60 to 90 minutes, and this process helped to refine the instrument, and ensured that the questions were relevant to the three research questions (Creswell, 2002). The pilot study did not consider Edge Water Community College participants or anyone associated with my place of employment, Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD). However, the pilot study did focus on GYO graduates who currently serve in a leadership role. These participants were selected based on the following criteria: (a) completed a GYO community college leadership development program, (b) completed the GYO program within the last three years, and (c) currently serving in a leadership role. To select participants for the pilot, I sent an email to colleagues from three community colleges who serve in roles ranging from dean to vice president/chancellor in the state of Michigan. The email informed the group of the research study and inquired if anyone was

interested in participating. The first two respondents were selected. In-person interviews were conducted and recorded. The pilot study participants were asked to sign the informed consent form from the University of Toledo, which was edited for alignment with this study (see Appendix C). Notes were taken during the interview. Member checking was done during the pilot phase; pilot participants were emailed a copy of their responses and asked to verify the accuracy of the interview transcript, as well as requested to provide recommendations/feedback relating to the interview questions (Creswell, 2002). The pilot study ensured the instrument had the appropriate open-ended questions that were clear and applicable to the research questions.

In addition, a codebook was established to provide an opportunity to maintain organization as codes emerge during the first and second round of coding. The codebook contained code descriptions and a brief example of the meaning of the code to support consistency in the coding process. Interview data was coded following the data analysis process, which is described later in the chapter. The initial coding process yielded a priori codes that were recorded in the codebook and later used during the coding process of participants' interview data.

Data Collection

Prior to collecting any data for the study, approval from the University of Toledo's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was secured, followed by approval from the Edge Water Community College IRB. Consequent to identifying the sample population, study participants received an electronic communication, thanking them for agreeing to participate in the study and providing details of the interview, including date, time, location, and the informed consent document. A 10-day site visit calendar was

established to conduct face-to-face interviews. Participants were provided a calendar with available dates and times to identify interview sessions. Interviews were set-up to be conducted on the college's campus. On-campus meeting rooms were scheduled that allowed for privacy and little distraction. According to Creswell (2002), the interview space should allow for privacy and the ability to speak openly. Participants were given the option of their respective office or the identified meeting space.

Three research questions—one central question and two research sub-questions—guided this study. Data collection for this study was performed utilizing two types of data, including semi-structured in-depth interviews and field notes.

Interviews

I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews using open-ended interview questions. It was imperative to develop rapport between the participants and myself; I maintained eye contact, greeted the participant with a smile, and listened more than I spoke. Care was also taken not to interject personal thoughts and ideas during the interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) as the goal was to allow the GYO graduate to provide a description of the lived experience as a participant in the program. The interviews were conducted in-person with each interview ranging from 60 to 90 minutes and used the six open-ended, probing questions. With the permission of the participants, interviews were recorded to ensure the accuracy of information, and all participants were made aware of when audio recording started and ended (Bailey, 1996; Creswell, 2002). Each interview was assigned a code based on the date the interview was conducted and the participant's first and last name initial. For example 12/12/17CK would represent an interview

conducted December 10, 2017 with a participant who had the initials CK (Creswell, 2002).

Field Notes

Field notes were used to document what I saw, heard, and thought during the course of the interviews to ensure recall of essential details of the interview. These data were used during the analysis process to provide context that was not readily available on the recording or transcript and included the general ideas participants conveyed, their tone, and a general sense of overall meaning (Lofland & Lofland, 1999). Since multiple interviews were conducted on the same day, at the end of each day, field notes were written to capture my reaction to participants' voice inflections when they spoke about an experience, repeated a subject, or a physical response relating to a GYO experience. In addition, I documented how I described and defined the meaning of the diverse set of experiences from the perspective of the participant (Creswell, 2002; Schön, 1989).

Data Analysis

In this study, it was important to capture the phenomenon of participating in a GYO leadership development program. Therefore, the data analysis process was utilized to interpret and make meaning of the data and to capture the essence of the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants. The data analysis approach I utilized in this study had five phases and was supported by Creswell (2008). The phases included: (a) organization and preparation of the data for analysis, (b) reading through all the data, (c) detailed analysis and coding, (d) generation themes for analysis, and (e) creation of a narrative to describe how themes were represented. The approach was outlined by Creswell (2008) as a way to achieve a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

The first data analysis phase involved transcribing the interviews, typing the field notes, and organizing data by type. The data was approached with an open mind by noting my own experiences of participating in a GYO program, thoughts of how a GYO program was of value to the institution as well as the individual, and thoughts and feeling of what were the most important elements of the GYO program in developing leadership skills and knowledge. This approach supported the analysis process by allowing the meaning to emerge while keeping in mind personal experiences in GYO programs and relevancy of those experiences to my career. Creswell (2002) recommends to make every attempt to set aside any preconceived ideas, thoughts, and meanings of the phenomenon, thereby helping the researcher to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of the participant. In the second phase, a detailed read-through of all the data was done to get a general sense of the overall meaning expressed by participants in the transcripts. Additional reading of the data was completed by carefully reading the transcripts multiple times and making notes of recurring ideas and comments, which was isolated and highlighted. This was done by hand and written within the margins of the transcripts.

The third phase included detailed analysis and coding of the data. Coding is a process of data organization and reduction of raw data relevant to the research question to higher-level understandings to support the development of themes (Creswell, 2008; Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016). As this process began, it was important to keep the research questions, theoretical framework, and the goal of the study clearly present to ensure a sense of alignment during the coding process. First, a priori codes and emergent codes were assigned to statements, words, or recurring ideas that were relevant to the research questions (Saldana, 2015). Data were coded in two ways, first by the code

followed by a number that correlated to the research question number. For example, the three research questions were labeled 1-3 and the code was labeled along with the corresponding research question code (e.g. “NETWORKING IS CRITICAL” 1). Two cycles of the coding process were done to further refine, rearrange, or reclassify codes to move to more abstract and conceptual codes. In the first cycle, two interview transcripts were identified, read in detail, and coded, and noted emergent codes were documented in a codebook. All remaining interview transcripts were coded, whereupon additional codes emerged and codes were redefined. This process allowed for data to be organized and chunked in a manner that supported the essence to emerge from the data (Creswell, 2008). Once the coding process was completed, the codes were grouped into similar meaning and given a category label that gave a sense of the main idea within that group of codes. A category refers to a word or a phase that gives an explicit description of the participants’ account of the phenomenon (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). The continued reduction of codes into similar meanings was repeated until all codes were labeled into categories. The codebook was utilized to chart how this reduction occurred, moving from the particular to the abstract.

During the fourth phase and as an outcome of coding the data and clustering the coded data into categories; themes were noted that described the phenomenon of the lived experience of participating in a GYO program. According to Saldana (2015), “Theme brings meaning and identity to a recurrent [patterned] experience and its variant manifestations. As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole” (p. 199). According to Vaismoradi et al., (2016), a theme is used

> As an implicit topic that organizes a group of repeating ideas, it enables researchers to answer the study question. It contains codes that have a common point of reference and has a high degree of generality that unifies ideas regarding the subject of inquiry. (p. 101)

The categories were interpreted to note those emergent themes that stood out, shared some commonality, showed difference, and/or reflected a relationship. To note and organize themes, a Word document was developed with three-columns: (a) codes, (b) clustered codes into categories, and (c) themes. The emergent themes were noted by phrases that helped to define the meaning of the phenomenon. These themes represented major findings in the study supported by specific quotes from the participants to shape a general description of the phenomenon.

The final phase was to create a descriptive narrative of how the various components of the study integrated together. An exploration was done of the relationship between the themes and the theoretical framework, the themes and the literature review, and their possible interrelatedness. The essence of the phenomenon of participating in the GYO program from the perspectives of the participants was captured.

Personal Experiences and Bias

My role was to serve as the principal investigator for the study. With more than 20 years of experience in a community college, I currently serve as the Vice Chancellor for the School of Continuing Education and Workforce Development at a two-year urban, comprehensive community college – Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD). Within the past seven years, WCCCD has experienced a mass exodus of retirements, with approximately 70% reflecting mid-to-senior level administration and

faculty. These retirements have resulted in a leadership gap. The retirees who held leadership positions included vice chancellor, dean, program director, and faculty. As a result, I have my own thoughts, ideas, and philosophies about the need for leadership development opportunities and the critical skills and knowledge needed for community college leadership roles. Over the last 10 years, I have participated in a number of leadership development opportunities—both in-house and external—and I think GYO community college leadership development programs are most effective in developing leaders with the necessary skills and knowledge that are requisite to lead within the community college. Due to my participation in leadership development programs, I remained conscientious of my thoughts and predisposition relating to the research as I collected data as well as analyzed data for this study. As field notes were taken during and subsequent to the interviews, notes were taken on the thoughts and feelings that were generated during the collection process. This data was later challenged to ensure objectivity, as much as possible, throughout the process.

Verification of Interpretation

In this phenomenological study, two approaches were utilized in the data collection process to strengthen the validity of the results. There are no straight forward means to test the validity of qualitative findings (Patton, 2002). Therefore, it was important to ensure data were collected, analyzed, and the findings reported correctly. Validity within this study was established using member checking (Creswell, 2002). Member checking increased the validity of findings. It was assumed that participants responded in an honest and open manner. Participants were emailed a copy of the interview data to ensure the interview transcript accurately reflected the phenomenon

being studied, and participants were asked to respond with any modifications or additional information that may have shed additional light on the phenomenon.

Limitations

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the shared lived experience in a GYO program from graduates of the Edge Water Community College leadership development program. This qualitative study focused on those lived experiences that were perceived to be relevant to current leadership roles and how skills and knowledge was developed or enhanced. There were two identified limitations within the study.

- Experiential differences. Community colleges and consequently GYO programs vary considerably in culture, political landscape, budget allocations, and demographics; therefore, GYO program experiences will vary. In addition, each participant came to the program with varying levels of knowledge, skill sets, and personal experiences. Consequently, the data cannot describe *why* GYO graduates' skills and knowledge were developed or enhanced. Therefore, it was important that the data analysis process was approached systematically to identify overarching themes that emerged and any uniqueness noted within the data so that findings accurately reflected the phenomenon from the perspective of the GYO graduate.
- Transferability. Graduates of Edge Water Community College GYO Program indicated program participation was based upon being selected by the campus president or vice chancellor of their respective department. Therefore, transferability is limited as not all programs are involuntary. Results may vary

depending upon how participants are selected – voluntary versus chosen. In addition, Edge Water Community College is a large urban/suburban community college with a large operating budget, which allows the college to offer such robust leadership development programming. Results from this study may not be transferable to small, rural community colleges with limited funding.

- Sample size. The sample size was relatively small. This study was limited to cohorts who completed a leadership development program within the last three years and a sample size of eight. Consequently, findings from this study are not generalizable to all community college GYO leadership development programs. However, findings are contextual in nature, so other GYO program may glean useful data that can be utilized within other programs.

Ethical Considerations

In accordance with the American Psychological Association and the University of Toledo IRB ethical guidelines, all participants were provided with the following: (a) a description of the research project, including the purpose of the research, the research questions, and the audiences for the findings; (b) a description of the procedures to be followed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality; (c) a written notice of their right to withdraw from the study at any time or to refrain from answering any question they choose not to answer; and (d) an informed consent form, which participants signed. Given the personal nature of some interview questions, participants may not have provided open and honest responses without the protection of their identity. Confidentiality was achieved by assigning the college, college staff, and research participants pseudonyms. All data were stored in a confidential manner in a locked file

cabinet with an electronic backup copy on my personal computer. Only I have access to the digital recordings. Two separate copies of electronic files were kept, one on my personal computer and one on a backup drive that is stored separately.

Summary and Chapter Preview

This chapter described the research method for this phenomenological study of understanding the shared lived experience of GYO participants and how skills and knowledge was developed or enhanced through various experiences lived or relived. The study utilized purposive sampling to identify the eight GYO graduates that served as the sample for this study. Interviews were conducted utilizing six open-ended interview questions I designed. In addition, the chapter outlined the research design and procedures used to analyze the data. Chapter 4 reports the results from the analysis of the identified data.

Chapter 4

Results

There is a leadership shortage facing community colleges and an inadequate number of graduate and leadership development programs that focus on community college leadership (Smith, 2016). Community colleges across the country offer GYO programs in an effort to develop future leaders to meet the complex challenges faced by community colleges. These GYO programs are now being recognized as the preferred training approach as these programs can meet the need of training leaders for the community college (Jeandron, 2000; Kirkland, 2016). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experience in the Edge Water Community College Emerging Leaders Program from the perspective of its graduates. The study was guided by three research questions – one central question and two sub-questions. The research questions were as follows:

Central question: What is the experience of a GYO community college leadership program, from the perspective of program graduates?

1. How do graduates perceive the relevancy of the GYO program to their leadership roles?
2. How do graduates perceive the GYO program enhanced or developed their leadership skills or knowledge?

The Edge Water Community College Emerging Leaders Program is a year-long leadership development program that targets existing leaders or emergent leaders on campus. Each cohort is approximately 30 individuals. The participants described the

program as a series of presentations by campus presidents and division heads who delivered information relating to their respective functions; site visits to local organizations that served as partners with the community college; readings of books and articles focused on leadership; and a capstone project designed to address a current issue facing Edge Water Community College. For the capstone project, the cohort was divided into groups of 5 participants, and a campus president provided mentoring to support the identified project. A final presentation highlighted the challenge and proposed solution for the capstone project.

Chapter 4 provides a summary of the pilot study conducted, a description of the participants included in the study, including demographics such as gender and years of leadership experience. In addition, the data collection and the data analysis processes are reviewed. The chapter concludes with findings from the study, including emergent themes and supporting quotes of participants' lived experience.

Pilot Study

Prior to selecting participants and conducting interviews, a pilot study was conducted to help refine the interview questions and obtain feedback as to whether the interview instrument was relevant to the research questions. The pilot study also aided in gaining experience in the qualitative data collection and coding processes. An invite letter was emailed to five community college leaders at two community colleges in Michigan. The two individuals who agreed to participate in the pilot study met with following criteria: (a) completed a GYO leadership development program within the last three years and (b) currently serve in a leadership role at a community college. The two participants signed the informed consent form and both agreed to be recorded during the interview.

The first interview was conducted face-to-face on the interviewee's college campus and lasted approximately 100 minutes, while the second interview was conducted via Skype and lasted 60-70 minutes. At the conclusion of each pilot-study interview, participants were asked to provide feedback on the interview instrument as it related to clarity of the interview questions and relevance to the research questions. Both participants indicated that the interview questions were clear and relevant to the research questions.

Once the interviews were transcribed, participants were emailed a copy of their respective transcript for review. Member checking was done by asking the pilot participants to review the transcript and approve with modification(s) or to approve as presented. Both participants approved the interview transcript as presented. Consequent to receiving approval of the transcripts, I coded the two pilot interviews and established a codebook with definitions of codes. The pilot study produced three a priori codes that were later used during the coding process of the study participants' transcript data.

Participants

This phenomenological study was conducted on the campus of Edge Water Community College. There were eight participants in the study, including five females and three males. Individuals who participated in the study varied in the number of years of leadership experience ranging from 1 to 5 years of leadership experience to more than 30 years of leadership experience – three-fourths with more than 10 years of leadership experience and one-fourth with less than 10 years of leadership experience. All participants hold leadership positions at the executive dean level or above. A brief description of participants' gender, years of leadership experience, and highest degree earned is provided in Table 3 with pseudonyms used to ensure confidentiality.

Table 3

Demographics

Participant	Sex	Highest Degree	#Years Experience
Kate	Female	BA	16-20
Tyler	Male	MA	6-10
Randy	Male	MA	30+
Ethel	Female	MA	30+
Brittany	Female	MA	21-25
Tim	Male	MA	11-15
Ann	Female	Ed.D.	1-5
Stephania	Female	Ph.D.	11-15

GYO Program Summary

The participants described the Emerging Leaders Program as a year-long, intense commitment. Each participant was identified as an emerging leader within the organization by their immediate supervisor or campus president. Participants talked about feeling honored to be selected for the program as they believed that graduates would be considered for upcoming leadership positions. Approximately 30 participants met on a monthly basis and followed an outlined program agenda for a total of 56 to 60 clock hours and participated in presentations, mentoring, leadership assessment, and a capstone project. Throughout the program, participants experienced various opportunities to bond with their fellow colleagues to develop and/or strengthen their relationships such as: leadership assessment exercises where leaders with similar leadership styles were placed in the same group for guided discussions; online reading assignments with the requirement to post comments on the thoughts of other participants; and rock-paper-scissor, ice-breaker fun sessions where everyone laughed and freely moved around the room. Tim was able to connect with fellow GYO participants in a number of ways and on

various topics, saying, “We had readings and then it was an online course and so we may engage in online discussions about various topics. We were also able to connect with others throughout the system in relation to helping.”

The program rotated from campus to campus, which allowed the participants to explore each campus, engage with various campus-level leaders, and tour the academic programs offered on the respective campuses. Participants experienced engaging conversations with the campus president while on campus and heard a presentation about their respective roles. During the question and answer sessions, participants expressed how the informal environment permitted them to view campus leadership as a future resource – someone whom they could call upon if needed. Presentations were also held at the district office where participants heard from vice chancellors regarding the internal operations of the district. The ability to network with vice chancellors and campus presidents was communicated to be of great value during and after the program.

The participants’ newly expanded network aided them in gaining insight into work projects and supported participants in pushing approvals of work products through the system. They were able to pick up the telephone and have candid conversations with system-wide leaders or go to lunch for advice on how to move projects forward. This expanded network was also experienced in terms of mentoring. Each participant was assigned a mentor, and although the mentoring was not necessarily a structured relationship, mentors were experienced as a sounding board and an advocate for the participant throughout the system.

Participants also had an opportunity to work collaboratively with a campus president to address an existing problem at Edge Water Community College – called the

capstone project. The capstone project served as a culminating experience that allowed the participants to take a leadership role in developing a resolution that would later be presented to the cohort and the leadership team. Overall, the capstone project gave participants a real-life problem that had impact throughout the organization.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data were collected on the campuses of Edge Water Community College, a multi-campus community college serving more than 90,000 students. The interviews were held at four of its campus locations in the participant's respective office location. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with all eight participants. Before the interview, I explained the study, the consent to participate in the study, and the commitment needed to participate in the study. A signed consent form was secured from each participant. The interview started with capturing demographic information, which also allowed for developing rapport with the participant. Interviews ranged from 60 to 120 minutes in length, and with the permission of the participants, all of the interviews were recorded to ensure accuracy of data collected. During the interviews, field notes were taken to reflect the non-verbal responses and emphases that were placed on words or specific discussions. At the end of each interview, the participant was invited to ask any questions regarding the study, and the participant was reminded that he/she would be asked to review the interview transcript and to provide feedback. Field notes were completed once in a quiet location that allowed time to reflect on the interview and my thoughts and feelings about the interview, how I perceived the responses to interview questions, and how I perceived the participant's openness during the interview.

The audio recordings were transcribed by me, which allowed for the opportunity to revisit the participant's responses and become more familiar with the data. Once the interviews were transcribed from the audio recordings, participants were asked to review their respective transcript for accuracy and completeness – member checking. An email communication was sent, requesting participants' feedback of their interview transcript, and a two-week timeframe was allotted to return responses. There were three options provided for review of the transcript: (a) approved as presented, (b) approved with edits, and (c) see additional information not provided at the time of the interview. All participants provided feedback – six participants indicated approved as presented and two participants indicated approved with edits. The edits reflected only minor grammatical corrections.

The data analysis process included: (a) organizing and preparing the data, (b) reading through the data several times, (c) analyzing and coding the data, (d) generating categories, and (e) developing themes and creating a narrative that described the themes. To become more familiar with the data, I read through each interview and coded statements containing a description of the experience and other relevant information relating to the research questions. The first round of coding was completed with two interviews coded in their entirety, and definitions were noted in the codebook along with the a priori codes that were established during the pilot study. Data that lead to coding varied in length, ranging from a phrase to a single sentence to a paragraph that was relevant to the research questions and/or expressed an aspect of the GYO experience. Throughout the process, I reflected on the research questions to ensure the coding process was being guided by the questions. The first round of coding was completed to include

the remaining six interviews. A second round of coding was done whereby additional codes were noted and codes with very similar meanings were further refined or condensed. In an effort to maintain organization of the codes, a numbering system was used to label the codes, and as the second round of codes was done, notes were made of any reclassification or renaming of codes. Codes continued to change as data were refined, resulting in 26 codes at the end of the coding process (see Table 4).

The 26 codes were organized based on shared characteristics or patterns, and 7 categories were identified (Saldana, 2015). The seven categories included: (a) growing leaders, (b) integrated connection for growth, (c) seasoned leaders learning, (d) new leaders learning, (e) helping others, (f) moving the institution, and (g) internal, continuous growth. A description of the seven categories follows:

Growing Leaders

This category emerged from grouping codes that were related to participants talking about the college's recognition of the need to grow leaders and to provide the necessary training and development required for their current and potential leaders on campus. Stephania explained how the college allowed the vice chancellors to identify talent within their respective department, "I believe that each of the vice chancellors was asked to nominate someone from their team that they felt this [program] would be a good fit . . . I was pretty much handpicked." Participants expressed that their respective supervisor identified them as an emerging leader and often connected with them in some way – whether from work on a specific project or from their personal interests. Brittany described how, as a new leader, the college president had identified her as an individual with the potential to move further along within the college, stating:

> I had been working in this position for probably a year, maybe two and I mean in hindsight it was clear that my president had decided that she wanted me to move forward and to take additional responsibility and so this was part of that.

Integrated Connection for Growth

The *integrated connection for growth category* emerged from the grouping of codes: college operations, program peer interactions and networking, and mentors (see Table 2). Participants described the interactions that were experienced during the program as (a) how the program was delivered for an understanding of the inter-relatedness of the college systems, (b) mentoring experiences that supported the movement of work projects both during the program and subsequent to the program, and (c) the bond that was developed through collaborations with peers and networking with various colleagues across the system. Kate explained how she found value in connecting with colleagues across the system:

> I do think there was value in bringing our colleagues from other campuses together because we work in silos. So having the ability to interact with folk you hold similar positions but [work] at other campus and [work] at the system office, I think there is always value in that [collaborating with colleagues across the system].

Table 4

Data Analysis Results – Themes, Categories, and Codes

Themes	Categories	Codes
Value of Connecness	Growing Leaders	• College's interest in developing leaders • Involuntary selection to participate
	Integrated Connection for Growth	• College operations • Program peer interactions and networking • Mentors
Understanding of Leadership Development	Seasoned Leaders Learning	• Leadership experience • Leadership growth • Levels of leadership • Mid-level leader training
	New Leaders Learning	• Comprehensive community college • Feeling overwhelmed • Skills and knowledge • Exposure • Institutional history knowledge
Meaningful Leadership Impact	Helping Others	• Everyone has value • Growing other leaders • Caring about student growth • Leader's role and responsibility
	Moving the Institution Forward	• Improve college processes • Community college evolution • Leadership styles • College supporting the community
	Internal, Continuous Growth	• Leadership is rewarding/inner-strength • Born leader • Dedication to leadership role • Integrated knowledge/skills

Seasoned Leaders Learning

Through an analysis of the codes, the category *seasoned leaders learning* was developed from conversations with seasoned leaders to describe leaders with more than 10 years of leadership experience in the GYO program. The seasoned leaders learning category highlights how participants grew to understand their current and previous leadership skills and knowledge. This category summarizes how participants perceived the current skills and knowledge they hold and what is needed or necessary to grow their skill set to the next level of leadership. Kate spoke for herself and colleagues regarding their level of knowledge and the need for the curriculum to be more informative:

> I know that I and some of my fellow participants felt like the level of curriculum was probably not where it needed to be for this type of program . . . those of us that are in those positions that we were in, we should already know and we did already know [the information].

New Leaders Learning

This category was developed from the responses of new leaders to describing the experience of leaders with less than 10 years of leadership experience. Elements from the data were gathered to tell about how participants experienced the GYO program as new skills and knowledge were gained. The participants discussed their understanding of how these experiences helped to develop their leadership skills and knowledge during and consequent to the GYO program. Tyler expressed how the GYO program helped him understand the college's functions and various departments by stating, "I think one of the big outcomes was to get to know the system office of finance, general counsel, like that .

. . What makes it tick, why certain decisions are made, what goes into offering a new program."

Helping Others

The category *helping others* emerged from grouping codes: (a) everyone has value, (b) growing other leaders, (c) caring about student growth, and (d) leaders' role and responsibility. This category developed from similar responses from participants of their perceived role and responsibility as a leader and the need to continue to support others by encouraging potential leaders to take advantage of professional development opportunities, by embracing the various talents that different individuals hold, and by considering students' growth and development through the college's programs and services offered.

Moving the Institution Forward

The *moving the institution forward* category was developed from responses to explain participants' description of the need for various leadership styles and leadership skills to respond to the changing needs of the community college and the community it serves. To accomplish this task, participants expressed that leaders must continue to create innovative ways to address current challenges being faced within the college, the community, and the higher education environment. In an effort to remove a barrier faced by students system-wide, Brittany described how an experience in the GYO program lead her to create a food pantry:

> It [the GYO program] made a big impact to me because I thought about a food pantry on wheels program . . . As a result, we have a school pantry here, and now that we are on the bus line, we will have more community

> members coming up so it will become more lively. But it's designed to kind of reduce our students' food needs, because students are totally choosing between food and books.

Internal, Continuous Growth

The category *internal, continuous growth* emerged to describe the interview data relating to leadership as an ongoing, possibly inborn, drive. Participants described how the GYO program helped them to understand that the role of being a leader is a personal journey that never ends, yet, is necessary and rewarding. This category explains participant's desire to create change. Brittany described the capstone work as a project that helped students with the rising cost of textbooks and one she found of impact:

> The project that they had us doing was interesting too and one that I could really get behind. Looking at the cost [of textbooks] and what are some alternatives for students; you know instead of purchasing the very expensive $200 textbook. So that was a good project because it was one that students here feel greatly.

Consequent to identifying the seven categories, three themes emerged which helped to provide a deeper understanding of the lived experience of the GYO leadership development program. The chart below highlights the emergence of themes – moving from codes to categories to themes within the analysis process (see Table 5).

Themes

Following the data analysis process, three themes emerged describing the phenomenon of interest. The three themes that evolved describe the essence of how graduates experienced and understood the Emerging Leaders Program: (a) value

experiencing connectedness, (b) understanding of developing a leader, and (c) meaningful leadership impact. In an effort to exemplify emergent themes, verbatim quotes expressed by participants are offered to provide a richer account of the lived experience and to support the findings of the study.

Theme One: Value Experiencing Connectedness

The *value experiencing connectedness* theme emerged to describe the pattern of feeling connected – having a sense of knowledge of the college's system-wide operations and networking with colleagues both within the program and outside the program. Value was placed on working collaboratively with fellow participants to identify, develop, and present the capstone project during the final phase of the program. The capstone project was designed to support a group effort in addressing an existing challenge/problem within the institution. Participants also expressed great appreciation of being able to meet with executive-level leaders who were the decision makers within the institutions, understanding how and why decisions are made, and being able to network with those leaders during the GYO program as well as subsequent to completing the program. Brittany talked about the value of being connected with executive level leaders and moving beyond seeing them as just a "cardboard figure":

> We have some really dynamic and very interesting people in the highest levels of administrators but when you don't network with them, they're not that way, you just see them as this cardboard figure that makes this decision and then you carry it out. You don't see all the different layers cause that's not your level.

Along with this connection with executive-level leaders came a deeper connection with the culture – an understanding of how things work and how to move things through the system to approval.

The theme value experiencing connectedness was a central theme that emerged from the data. All participants described the value of being connected or being a part of something. This connection was often expressed in such terms and phrases as 'networking,' 'working with others,' 'peer interactions,' or 'connecting' to the learned knowledge and skills and expressed the value of being a part of a team. This theme was expressed in two major ways: (a) experiencing connectedness to fellow GYO participants and college executive-level leaders, and (b) experiencing connectedness to leadership knowledge and skills. Ethel explained that networking with key leaders supported the advancement of her departmental goals within the college system:

> The value came forth in a couple of different ways. One of them was building a network. When my network is larger throughout the organization then so is the network of my department. We have to work with all colleges and all system office departments. So the better I know them the better off we are. It helps us get our work done better.

During the interview with Tyler, he talked about the benefits gained from being able to network throughout the college, "I think the other thing I liked with the networking is really being able to know who to talk to, knowing who the contacts are – I think is very helpful." While Brittany described this connection or identification with executive-level leaders in terms of her ability to network with these leaders and hear first-hand their personal stories:

> What was interesting to me as we looked at the structure of the college system was talking to the leaders or hearing from the leaders and having a chance to network and hearing their story and what they were passionate about.

While participants expressed value in being connected with executive-level leaders, Tim expressed the value of connection with fellow participants across the six college campuses while going through the program and how that connection moved him beyond his comfort zone. Tim stated:

> I think my experience involved engagement with my colleagues, not just from on campus but from all across the system. And being able to get out of my current space, doing what I do and being able to engage others I think was hugely valuable.

The participants also expressed connectedness in terms of being connected to the learning – the leadership skills and knowledge. Participants reported being connected to the college's internal operations through presentations from guest speakers (college leaders), readings focused on leadership styles and leadership development, and panel discussions and how this knowledge was relevant to their leadership roles. Tyler expressed how understanding the college's operating system provided aligned information that was relevant to his leadership role, "I mean for me understanding how a lot of the system functions work enable me to run the division in the right direction." Ann described her connection with the knowledge being offered through the experience by connecting with the relevancy of new knowledge and the potential upcoming leadership role:

> One of the sessions was a dean's panel. They were very forthcoming, honest, about what their positions were and some of the topics were budgeting, leadership, how best to lead, dealing with faculty and employees, conflict resolution. . . so if we were to go into leadership we would kind of know what to expect just by getting just a little touch of this information.

Stephania talked about the feeling of being connected to the learning experience and the learning environment and what it meant to be thrust back into that experience:

> I think that any time that you haven't had to do projects or anything academic in a long time. Yes I oversee, facilitate, and do things [projects] in this capacity [as a director] but it's not me actually doing research or presenting or doing that kind of thing [like the capstone project]. So it was good for me to kind of go back . . . It was good for me to kind of get back into that [learning], you know to remember what it's like to be a student. To be in a learning environment, I am in a learning environment. To be kind of thrown back into that [learning] was good.

The first theme highlights the significance that was placed on being connected to colleagues, various college leaders, and the overall culture of Edge Water Community College while participating in the GYO program.

Theme Two: Understanding of Developing a Leader

The *understanding of developing a leader* theme emerged from the data to describe what GYO graduates believed to be important attributes of the GYO program to

develop leaders for the executive level. This theme describes how participants understand executive-level leadership, the skill sets necessary to be successful, and the knowledge needed. Participants suggested that leadership is best developed from understanding the leader's role and the challenges faced internally and externally. A dichotomy of opposing ideas of what skills and knowledge is needed to develop leaders in the GYO program was noted between seasoned leaders and new leaders. This dichotomy is represented by (a) seasoned leaders wanting to know more and (b) new leaders feeling developed for future leadership. Seasoned leaders wanting to know more was expressed as the desire of participants that the GYO program experiences be commensurate to the leadership level beyond their current leadership experiences – meaning the participants expressed the attributes of the GYO program was not presented at the appropriate leadership level. While new leaders feeling developed for future leadership was expressed by the participants as the GYO experiences provided personal and professional growth as well as insight into leadership development – meaning the participants expressed that the attributes of the GYO program provided the appropriate level of leadership development.

Participants expressed wanting to know more in terms of the attributes of the GYO program not providing skills and knowledge beyond their current understanding. Randy painted the picture of the lack of new knowledge provided by the GYO and how this may be due to his years of leadership experience. Randy was expecting more from the program:

> The downside of it was because of my years of experience a lot of what we were exposed to I already knew. That was a little somewhat frustrating for me because I was hoping to get a little bit more out of it [GYO

> program]. I thought it might be a little bit more advanced, so for me it wasn't as beneficial as I thought it would be. A lot of the presenters, really, the subject matter may have sounded good but their presentations were very basic.

Participants expressed that the Emerging Leaders Program should have provided experiences that prepare leaders for challenges that are currently facing community colleges across the country. These learning experiences should inform leaders of what challenges are present and what trends to expect, along with the opportunity—possibly in the form of case studies—to address such issues should they arise. Stephania discussed how utilizing a program format that was more interactive would have been more welcomed as opposed to lecture-based instructions, "I think we were anticipating more applicable hands-on, peer-driven instruction and what we got was more informational talking head type of class." Kate indicated that the need to offer skills and knowledge relevant to the 21st century demands of a community college leader is critical. Not offering such important topic areas does not prepare a leader for the next level:

> When you talk about leadership in the 21st century, for example, there really wasn't a session that talked about diversity in higher education for example. There really wasn't a session that talked about managing change in depth and when you work in higher education at this level, you know those two things and many other things that probably need to be addressed; because at some point and time you are going to have to navigate through some of that.

Another participant described what she and her fellow colleagues felt regarding the program curriculum not providing the depth necessary for the respective leadership level. Stephania stated, “I know that I and some of my fellow participants felt like the level of curriculum was probably not where it needed to be for this type of program.” In addition, Tim expressed his feeling of wanting more out of the program and his thought of lack of content being offered through presentations, “So there was a lot of presentations, presentations, presentations . . . so the presentations that we were getting there was not content.” The participants believed that training more aligned to noted trends was necessary to develop more experienced and more skilled leaders. Such activities as the 360-degree leadership assessment was viewed as redundant information that leaders should already have experienced or should already know. Randy provided insight of his thoughts of the program curriculum level being appropriate to development leaders. Not only did Randy want more, but he expressed feeling trapped into listening to the lower-level lectures:

> I don’t know if it was time management but it was something where the presenter, what he presented was something that you probably give to a high school student. It was just that basic and there we are in a room like ok we are sitting here for two hours having to listen to this. Then we had this presenter who was talking about, I don’t know if it was how to manage time or how to be devoted and I found the example that she used was not, I just thought it was horrible.

Although all the participants shared in the program, not all of the participants experienced the program the same. Participants with less than 10 years of leadership

experience expressed developing future leaders in terms of the value received from the Emerging Leaders Program experience. Two participants indicated they gained new knowledge and new skills and felt prepared for a leadership role subsequent to the Emerging Leaders Program. These participants explained how the reading assignments expanded their knowledge of leadership and leadership styles; the presentations provided by internal and external leaders increased their understanding of the processes within the organization and helped them to comprehend what their respective roles entail including the challenges and successes; the mentoring offered support to improve their level of confidence needed to enter a leadership position; and the capstone project exposed them to new concepts and information that is requisite knowledge for leadership. For example, the vice president of finance gave a presentation on the process of granting a 2% wage increase to faculty and the implications of doing so. Ann indicated that as a new leader, this information shared throughout the GYO program was helpful and shed light on what it was like to be an administrator as opposed to being faculty:

> I would say that it [the GYO program] was very eye opening, because coming from faculty going into administration, it's a totally different world. So as far as knowing about the overall scope of [Edge Water Community College] and the different positions, that was really great for me. So it was a good experience, learning like the other side of the college . . . it was pretty enlightening to, you know the format how they had it laid out. They [the presenters] were very forthcoming, honest about what their positions were.

Tyler similarly described the new knowledge he gained in the GYO program, specifically during a presentation focused on budgeting, “One of the presentations that I really learned was the CFO did a presentation on the system budget talking about raises.” The participants talked about how the GYO program prepared them for a leadership position and continued to develop their current knowledge level.

The focus was on the attributes of the GYO Emerging Leaders Program for the understanding of developing a leader theme. Although it appears that participants’ experiences were opposing, a closer look at the data revealed that participants with more than 10 years of leadership experience expressed *wanting to know more* from the GYO program, while participants with less than 10 years of leadership experience expressed the GYO program did develop future leaders.

Theme Three: Meaningful Leadership Impact

The third theme, *meaningful leadership impact*, emerged to describe the common pattern of leadership impact that was found throughout the categories. This theme describes participants having a sense of leading positive change and knowing the lasting impact experienced by the GYO program. Participants expressed value in understanding the college’s operations and challenges, thereby creating value-added solutions and consequently the solutions being adopted by the college system. A deeper connection was made with the role of leader and the leader’s impact on the institution. Participants experienced inspiration to continue to develop as a leader and to develop other leaders, as well as make contributions to further the mission of the college subsequent to the GYO program.

The third theme explained what participants believed to be important project work that was successfully developed and implemented district-wide. The capstone project was an opportunity for a group of participants to work collaboratively with a campus president, serving as mentor. The purpose of the capstone project was to identify an existing challenge at Edge Water Community College, conduct research and benchmark best practices, develop a solution, and present the findings to the entire cohort along with a few Edge Water leaders. Each participant expressed that their capstone project was adopted by the college, which generated a feeling of being a change agent within the organization.

Although three-fourths of the participants indicated they did not receive new information and/or skills in the GYO program, all participants indicated that the capstone project provided an opportunity to explore a new problem and develop a solution. Participants described how the capstone project challenged them to research and to become more familiar with the identified problem, develop possible solutions and outcomes associated with those solutions, and finalize the best approach to address the capstone problem. The capstone project was experienced by all participants as new knowledge and skill(s) that would be later integrated into their leadership position. Randy explained that he integrated the capstone project into his work, ". . . as much as I have complained about our capstone project, the one thing that I have incorporated into my work has been our capstone project." He also expressed how the capstone project influenced his daily work with developing a process to onboard new employees that work within his department: "So I have modified our capstone project to meet the needs of two different sets of employees who work for me."

Ann talked about the impact of the capstone work subsequent to the GYO program in terms of continuing to work collaboratively with her GYO colleagues, even later publishing and presenting their findings:

> My cohort, we continued that writing and so we went and did a presentation and later we decided to make an article out of it and it did get published in a pretty well-known magazine so we were proud of that.

Tim stated that the capstone project helped him to think of leadership in terms of impact, ". . . I've learned through the capstone and through experiences that I have to be strategic at times in how I respond in order to make sure that the ripple is a productive impact instead of a negative impact." The capstone experience helped the leaders to understand how their knowledge and skills have purpose and meaning within the institution. The participants' perceived impact seems to encourage the cycle of learning through addressing existing challenges within the college.

Participants also discussed how the GYO experience increased their confidence to address other system-wide issues. Randy talked about the growth of a project subsequent to the program and the system-wide impact of launching such an innovative initiative to address student retention:

> We have a new retention, a new system-wide retention initiative and basically it was developed to help increase all of the key performance indicators for African American males. Then it went from males to females . . . and they [the college] placed an advisor to operate this program on each of our campuses.

Participants also expressed impact in terms of their leadership role in developing themselves, developing other potential leaders, and making positive contributions to further the college's mission. Brittany discussed the importance of developing people beyond just work assignments. In addition, she viewed the leadership role as a commitment to grow other potential leaders:

> . . . the organization, me, is asked to look at all of the people as resources that we have, who would you choose. I mean who are you going to invest your money in if you have the opportunity, right? So it makes us think differently about the people not just their meeting all of their goals, but who do I think has more potential and so that way it develops talent, right? . . . So I have made a much more deliberate commitment to how I am with the people that I manage. It's something that, you know, I don't know if you have heard this before, but you know your work is your ministry. If you are not in ministry, your work is your ministry. I have had some level of commitment to that but that was deepened even further and so I am more aware that every day, and particularly at critical moments, I have to recommit to what is ethical, caring, inspiring, and effective.

Tim also expressed a deep connection to his leadership role and the impact that his leadership style has on others' development:

> My gifts are, very well, how can I put this? My gifts are valuable in relation to a team and although I can't articulate that like some people may in front of a large group of people, I can do incredible work as a leader behind the scenes and one-on-one. I can help groups of people develop in

a way maybe that a person who may not have quite the natural way may not be able to touch. And that's a God given gift and leadership to me has become my embracing my gift.

Through the GYO Emerging Leaders Program, a deeper connection was made with the role of leader and the impact on the institution. Participants expressed inspiration to continue to develop as a leader and to develop other leaders, as well as make contributions to further the mission of the college subsequent to the GYO program. There was a sense that their leadership would positively impact other's career advancement and advancement of their respective departments.

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the three themes that emerged from the data that captured the essence of the lived experience in the Edge Water Community College Emerging Leaders Program from the participants' perspective. These findings included an overview of the data collection and data analysis processes, along with the emergence of categories and themes. The chapter concluded with a description of the themes, and the findings were supported by direct quotes by the participants.

The next chapter will provide a response to the research questions, discussions outlining research findings supported from the literature, and the use of Kolb's Learning Theory as the theoretical framework for the study. Chapter 5 will also highlight policy implications and recommendations. The chapter will conclude with possible directions for future research.

Chapter 5

Summary, Discussions, and Conclusions

This phenomenological study explored the lived experience of participants in the GYO Emerging Leaders Program at Edge Water Community College (a pseudonym) and how they understood their experience. The purpose of the study was to explore how graduates experienced the GYO program and what they found of value – as GYO leadership development programs are being noted as the preferred method for developing leaders while building institutional capacity (Benard, 2012; Boswell, 2015; Jeandron, 2000). Skilled leaders on campus are critical in addressing both internal and external demands that are being placed on community colleges today such as funding, accountability reporting, declining enrollment, and the completion agenda. The literature on the leadership shortage revealed two major explanations of why a leadership gap continues to be present on community college campuses across the country, including (a) a growing number of college presidents and other executive-level leaders anticipated to retire by the year 2023, and (b) a limited number of professional development or graduate programs that offer degrees or courses focused on the community college (AACC, 2003, 2013, Smith 2016).

Given the demand for skilled leaders in the community college and GYOs being noted as the approach-of-choice in developing leaders with the requisite skills and knowledge needed to navigate the challenges facing the community colleges, this study was significant in providing an understanding of the GYO program lived experience and what was of value from the perspective of the graduates. The study was guided by three research questions, one central question—What is the experience of a GYO community

college leadership program, from the perspective of program graduates?—and two sub-questions: (a) How do graduates perceive the relevancy of the GYO program to their leadership roles?, and (b) How do graduates perceive the GYO program enhanced or developed their leadership skills or knowledge?

A review of the literature revealed that limited research currently exists on the perceptions of GYO leadership development programs; however, several studies (see Boswell, 2015; Jenkins, 2017; Kirkland, 2016; Reille & Kezar, 2010) were highlighted along with their reported findings relating to: (a) program curriculum and design, (b) program benefits, (c) GYO's impact on fostering career advancement, (d) how the GYO program advances the college's mission, culture, and community responsibility, and (e) GYO program participant's perceptions of skills and competencies development for leaders at all levels, including clerical. Although these studies were conducted to investigate various aspects of the GYO program, none explored the perceptions of graduates from a management-level GYO program and their perceptions of leadership skills and knowledge development/enhancement. The literature underscores the need for community colleges to offer GYO programs to recruit and train upcoming leaders on the specific needs of the institution as well as current trends being faced by community colleges (Boswell, 2015). Further, since a number of potential leaders are currently serving on college campus, GYO programs can prepare leaders at a faster rate than professional development and graduate programs (Kirkland, 2016). This phenomenological study contributed to the body of literature by expanding the understanding of the GYO lived experience.

The lived experience of eight GYO graduates was captured through face-to-face interviews that were held at a large, multi-campus community college. Chapter 4 outlined the data analysis process, which reflected the identification of 26 codes and the emergence of 7 categories. The seven categories were further organized and three themes emerged to describe the essence of participants' lived experiences including: (a) value experiencing connectedness, (b) understanding of developing a leader, and (c) meaningful leadership impact. Refer to Chapter 4 for a detailed description of the themes. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings and their implications for policy and practice. The chapter concludes with a case for future research of GYO leadership development programs.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the lived experience of graduates who participated in the Emerging Leaders Program at a multi-campus community college. A review of the literature was presented in Chapter 2 as the groundwork for existing research relating to GYO leadership development programs. An exhaustive search of the literature revealed empirical studies that yielded findings relating to various aspects of GYO programs. The chapter outlined a foundation for understanding the leadership gap facing community colleges and the evolution of its leadership. The literature review highlighted the challenging trends currently confronting these institutions and the necessary competencies leaders should possess, as recommended by the AACC. Chapter 2 presented empirical studies, both quantitative and qualitative, that explored GYO leadership development programs, including findings related to a GYO

program's benefits, program structure, AACC leadership competencies offered in GYOs, and participants' perceptions on participating in GYO programs.

Kolb's Learning Theory was the theoretical lens by which the findings were analyzed. This theory describes learning as a process by which ideas or concepts are comprehended by the learner through continuous modified experiences. Kolb (1983) explained that experiential learning occurs on two levels: (a) a four-stage cycle of learning and (b) four learning styles. However, this study only focused on the four-stage cycle of learning to understand how leadership development/learning occurred by way of experiences being processed, reflected upon, and meaning made. The four stages include, in order: concrete experience; reflective observation; abstract conceptualization; and active experimentation. Kolb's Learning Theory, along with relative research, was utilized to support discussions around the three emergent themes. Although this study addressed a gap in the literature, noted studies were used to highlight similarities and differences noted in the findings versus the literature. The literature and theoretical lens will also be utilized to suggest implications for policy and practice.

Discussion of Findings

The research questions informed the development of the interview protocol questions and guided the data analysis process. The participants provided insight into their experience while in the GYO leadership development program. Although not a finding, the following is a response to the research questions from the perspective of the participants in the study.

The GYO Experience

The first research question provided an overarching inquiry of the GYO Emerging Leaders Program phenomenon from the shared lived experience of its graduates. The GYO program was an intense program that required a number of dedicated hours both in the sessions and outside the sessions. The program was structured in the form of various sessions/workshops that was predominately face-to-face, however, there were online discussions from time to time. Participants had many opportunities to collaborate on reading materials, leadership assessments, discussions, and later a capstone project, which cultivated many bonds with colleagues within the GYO program and outside the program. The participants described the Emerging Leaders Program experience as a year-long commitment that required a lot of engagement and reading, which one might think helped to nurture the bonding process.

The program helped participants to gain a deeper understanding of Edge Water Community College's six campuses through tours and open discussions with campus-level leaders. During the campus visits participants, had the opportunity to understand how the academic programs on that respective campus are structured and to understand the role of the campus leadership. The district office leadership team was also very active in offering presentations regarding the operations of their departments. District leaders described the major functions within their departments and allowed the participants to have open dialogue with them. These newly formed relationships with vice chancellors and campus presidents widened participants' network within the college.

The participants' newly expanded network aided them in gaining insight into work projects and supported participants with pushing approvals of work products

through the system. They were able to pick up the telephone and have candid conversations with system-wide leaders or go to lunch for advice on how to move projects forward. Participants reported feeling more connected to the institution and the leadership team. Participants understood that networking and working with others on a project helps to get around the system. This expanded network was also experienced in terms of mentoring. Each participant was assigned a mentor, and although the mentoring was not necessarily a structured relationship, mentors were experienced as a sounding board and an advocate for the participant throughout the system.

Participants also had an opportunity to work collaboratively with a campus president to address an existing problem at Edge Water Community College – called the capstone project. The capstone project served as a culminating experience that allowed participants to take a leadership role in developing a resolution that would later be presented to the cohort and the leadership team. This effort was reported to have increased the confidence of the participants in a number of ways such as: (a) working with fellow group members encouraged participants to work within their respective leadership strength since each person was allowed to select what aspect of the project he/she would address, (b) receiving positive feedback from the campus president that the project was moving in the right direction reassured the participants of their abilities, and (c) integrating the solution of the capstone into the college system helped participants to believe that they made a difference at the college. The institutional decision to integrate the recommended solutions into the college system strengthened participants' confidence in their leadership skills because they felt they made a difference within the organization.

Relevancy of the GYO Program

In response to the second research question relating to relevancy, all of the participants perceived that the Emerging Leaders Program was relevant to their leadership role, however, only a few participants recognized the program curriculum as new information. Table 5 identifies topics areas that were covered by various leaders within the Edge Water Community College system. These topics are considered necessary competencies for community college leaders according to the *Competencies for Community College Leaders* (AACC, 2013) updated report, which identifies six competencies needed by leaders today: organizational strategy, communication, collaboration, resource management, community college advocacy, and professionalism. As noted by Jenkins (2017), leaders must be experienced to successfully respond to the current demands on community colleges and possess the necessary skills and knowledge needed to address relevant internal challenges and complexities faced. It should also be noted that the Emerging Leaders Program provided information that was relevant to participants' leadership roles, but the information was not valued by participants with more than 10 years of leadership experience because the information was already known and they anticipated a higher level of leadership development.

Skills and Knowledge Enhanced/Developed

The interview questions were developed to help participants explore which aspects of the GYO program enhanced or developed participants' perceived skills or knowledge. In response to the third research question, participants perceived that the Emerging Leaders Program enhanced or developed their leadership skills and knowledge in three ways: a) through their work on the capstone project, b) through the presentations

provided by the Edge Water Community College leaders, and c) through mentoring. These methods of enhancing or developing skills and/or knowledge are presented in the order in which participants reported most enhanced/developed.

Table 5

Program Topics Covered – Emerging Leaders Program

Subject Area	Description
Community College History	Introduction of community colleges, past to present
Edge Water Community College History and Organization	Organization structure, mission, vision, and values. Historical perspective
Workforce Development	Career and technical education, corporate college
Resource Development	Securing and managing grant funding
Accreditation	The agency rules and documentation needed to prepare for an accreditation process
Labor Relations	Civil rights, FERPA, faculty and staff
Human Resources	Employee relations, hiring, coaching, terminations, faculty and staff
Campus Safety and Security	Campus violence and campus security, inclusive emergency plans and preparedness, security audits
Finance and Administration	Budgeting, operations, allocation, and strategic planning
Student Development	Role of student development in community college
Communication	Communicating using a positive focus
Conflict Resolution	Scenarios of techniques required to resolve conflict

All of the participants reported the Emerging Leaders Program capstone project developed their leadership skills and knowledge. The capstone project created a real-life

challenge that needed to be addressed. This hands-on project allowed participants to work collaboratively and hone in on their various leadership strengthens to discover how to address an institutional issue that had impact throughout the system. The participants represented the various functional areas within the institution, which helped them to view the capstone project from different lenses and conduct the required research from the vantage point of their respective functional area. The capstone project developed or enhanced the leadership skills of communication and collaboration and participants continued to value these skills well after the program ended.

Participants learned through the informal mentoring relationship with college leaders and through networking with GYO colleagues. Mentors were assigned to participants, and although the relationship was more informal in nature, participants could communicate with their mentors frequently by phone or email. This allowed participants to utilize their mentors as a sounding board on various projects particularly those outside of the leadership program. The mentors encouraged their belief in their respective leadership skills, and they gained confidence to apply those skills.

Although many of the participants indicated that the curriculum provided information that was previously learned, a few participants reported that, during the presentations, new knowledge was gained relative to the college system. During the early part of the program, participants gained knowledge about the history of community colleges and the history of Edge Water Community College. These presentations were perceived as invaluable for a leader working within community colleges and Edge Water specifically. Although participants indicated the curriculum was not commensurate with their respective leadership level, the information was reported to have reinforced prior

learning. For example, the historical backdrop of higher education seemed to resonate with participants' purpose of leading within a community college. Therefore, the GYO program did develop and/or enhance participants' leadership skills and knowledge.

Discussion of Themes

During the data collection process, face-to-face interviews were conducted with eight GYO program graduates from the Emerging Leaders Program, which provided insight into the phenomenon under investigation. Through the data analysis process, seven categories were identified and three themes emerged to describe the phenomenon of participating in the GYO leadership development program. The three themes included: (a) value experiencing connectedness, (b) understanding of developing a leader, and (c) meaningful leadership impact. A discussion of the three themes follows.

Program Connections

The phenomenon of the GYO program was experienced through many connections valued by the participants – connections with colleagues, mentors, college leaders, and the college system. The value placed on feeling connected to or being a part of something was regarded as significant and appears to be a core element discovered in the findings. From the time that participants were selected by their respective supervisor to becoming a part of the program, they perceived themselves as leaders and capable of moving into the next level of leadership within the college. Once in the program, participants were able to connect with a number of emerging leaders from across the community college as well as executive leaders currently serving in roles such as vice chancellors or campus presidents. According to Jeandron (2000), the commitment and involvement of executive-level leaders in a GYO program is one of the most important

factors. Program involvement at this level is recommended to bring a level of credibility to the program and expertise (Jeandron, 2000). Many participants attributed their ability to move projects through the college system as a result of developing these connections with executive-level leaders within the organization. Findings suggest that the value that was placed on feeling connected was critical for the involvement and development of participants in the GYO program.

Participants learned through the informal mentoring relationship with college leaders and through networking with GYO colleagues, which was provided by the program. Mentors were assigned to participants, and although the relationship was more informal in nature, participants could communicate with their mentors frequently by phone or email. This communication allowed participants to utilize their mentors as a sounding board on various projects, particularly those outside of the leadership program. Findings suggest that the ability to connect with current college leaders can support the advancement of a participant's career. Similar findings were found by Reille and Kezar (2010) in a study of 15 GYO programs as a vehicle to address the leadership gap. The authors noted that GYO programs serve as a benefit to community colleges by improving communication skills and advancing the careers of participants within the college. However, findings in this study did not indicate career advancement during or subsequent to the program as a part of the lived experienced in the GYO program.

According to Kolb's Learning Theory, individuals flow through a cycle of learning through various experiences, both new and relived. The learning process can be used to explain how participants learned that by developing a strong network/connection with colleagues and leaders both during and subsequent to the program increased their

ability to successful as a leader. When faced with the concrete experience of connecting with others through informal and formal discussions, and mentoring, participants: (a) encountered these relationships as the new experiences, (b) were than able to reflect on these connections and view them as potential connections for future support, (c) learned that these individuals are a resource that could possibly yield a positive impact on their career, and (d) after receiving positive results, continued to learn the importance of connecting with others in leadership.

These findings suggest that it is very important to have a mentoring and networking component to GYO programs as a platform that allows participants to connect during and subsequent to the program. Although some of these bonds may have occurred organically within the Emerging Leaders Program, it appears that an intentional and formal process would serve well to ensure these connections were available to all participants notwithstanding the college's environment.

Leadership Development

According to the *Competencies for Community College Leaders* (AACC, 2018) updated report, there are 11 overarching competencies needed by leaders: organizational culture; governance, institutional policy, and legislation; student success; institutional leadership; institutional infrastructure; information and analytics; advocacy and mobilizing/motivating others; fundraising and relationship cultivation; communications; collaboration; and personal traits and abilities. As noted in the literature, leaders must be experienced to successfully respond to the current demands on community colleges and possess the necessary skills and knowledge needed to address relevant internal challenges and complexities faced (Jenkins, 2017).

Participants perceived that the Emerging Leaders Program provided information that was relevant to their leadership role, but three-fourths of them did not value the information because it was already known and they anticipated a higher level of leadership development. The data suggest that seasoned leaders are keenly aware that they are in need of additional training/development in order to be properly prepared for the next level of leadership. This was noted in the second theme of understanding leadership development, which provided the insight that leaders with years of experience need to be developed at a deeper level. Although the literature (AACC, 2013) and participants support that the topic areas covered within the Emerging Leaders Program were relevant to leadership development, the depth at which these topics were covered was not adequate for their needs (see Table 5). Kirkland (2016) also noted similar findings from a case study to assess 10 participants' perceptions of the development and enhancement of leadership skills and competencies while in a GYO program. Findings suggested that the GYO program only provided the initial introduction to leadership at the executive level and additional training is needed in order to be prepared to meet the need for competent leaders (Kirkland, 2016). However, it should be noted that the Kirkland study focused on GYO programs that were open to leaders at various levels, including secretarial to dean levels. While this study focused on leaders currently serving in a leadership role, there may be a limitation to similarities found in the studies, but findings do relate to seasoned leaders with more than 10 years of experience. Particularly in light of new leaders who participated in the GYO program indicated that their leadership skills were developed.

Similar challenges in the GYO program were noted by Piland and Wolf (2003) where reported findings noted that GYO programs are poorly organized and only prepare participants for the specific organization and not the field of community college leadership. In addition, it was found that GYO programs lack assessment tools to identify leadership knowledge and skills gap of participants (Reille & Kezar, 2010), which could have possibly differentiated between new and seasoned leaders. Therefore, these findings would suggest an additional track dedicated to seasoned leaders at a level commensurate to their current development level is needed.

Kolb's Learning Theory provided the framework to support the effort of creating a richer and appropriate experience for seasoned leaders. For example, while the topic of finance does not represent new knowledge, it does, however, represent the opportunity to reacquaint participants with the subject matter and to create an abstract problem that needs to be resolved. The learning cycle of the theory can be used to guide this process of creating a deeper understanding of a subject matter.

Graduates with less than 10 years of experience valued the GYO program and believed the program helped to develop their leadership skills and knowledge. Although those leaders with limited experience reported exposure to the topics at their level was adequate to develop or enhance knowledge, the findings suggest that new leaders would also benefit from a hands-on, deeper exploration of the topic. For example, the topic of accreditation was covered with details relating to who is the accrediting body, how the college is accredited, how long the accreditation is for, and the office of institutional research's relationship to accreditation. In comparison, the less experienced leaders could engage in a project to discover the accreditation process in a more meaningful way. For

example, along with the introductory information, less experienced leaders could respond to a case study in which they respond to being a member of the college's accreditation team. The assignment could entail outlining how campuses are engaged in the accreditation process and what strategies are incorporated to ensure ongoing evidence collection, while writing to one of the criterion for a fictitious self-study. This approach would create a more thoughtful understanding of the topic and what the leaders' role may involve. In a study conducted by Leon (2016), findings suggest that programming focused on real-life situations found within the workplace can assist in the transition into leadership. Although the case study focused on the development, implementation, and benefits of a GYO leadership development program, the findings illustrate the need for in-depth training that reflects trends within community colleges (Leon, 2016).

While the participants did perceive that the Emerging Leaders Program was relevant to their leadership role, three-fourths of participants indicated that the program curriculum was not new information while one-fourth of participants experienced the program curriculum as new information. The findings suggest that although the subject areas represented in Table 5 are aligned with the recommended leadership skills necessary for a community college leader, a more in-depth program is needed for seasoned and new leaders.

Making an Impact

During the interviews, participants in the study shared their experiences of participating in the GYO program. All the participants referenced the impact of the program in relationship to how the program seemed to resonate with their purpose of leading within a community college and understanding their impact on students,

subordinates, and the community. In a case study to understand a GYO program's impact on fostering career advancement and the AACC's competencies as addressed in a GYO program curriculum, Benard (2012) noted different findings. While the findings suggested that participants reported a sense of loyalty to the mission and goals of the organization during the program, participants did not report a sense of leadership purpose within the college, impact on the institution, or impact on students (Benard, 2012). In contrast, findings from this study suggest that there was value placed on leadership impact from various perspectives, including: (a) the ability to create institutional change through improved processes, (b) the ability to help others (students and staff) grow, and (c) the personal growth and feelings of purpose and leadership confidence. The differences in findings could be attributed to the lack of project-based/experiential learning offered in the Benard (2012) study versus the capstone project that is embedded into the GYO Emerging Leaders Program.

Conclusions Based on Results

A review of the literature and the study findings provided a unique look at the participants' experience and inferences into the approach of GYO programs. The GYO program is still regarded as the ideal method to develop future leaders on community college campuses, however, a broadening of the approach may be necessary. This journey to explore the lived experience of participants within the GYO program has yielded two insightful inferences: (a) GYO program structure may assume potential or existing leaders come to the program with a requisite level of confidence needed to lead within the community college, and (b) an individual may lead within his/her respective

department, however, the ability of a leader to move projects through the institution's system creates successful leadership within the college organization.

There appears to be an assumption in the approach of GYO leadership development and management of the program – that identified participants have the requisite leadership confidence that is necessary to lead. The importance of leaders feeling confident and empowered to make decisions and see themselves as valuable to the institution is critical. The assumption that leaders are confident and assured to make the necessary decisions about responses to challenges or to create innovative approaches to address trends being faced by community colleges is flawed. The participants in this study entered the program with leadership experience ranging from 3 years to 30+ years. However, when the college recognized participants' leadership ability by institutionalizing the recommended solution to the capstone project, that acknowledgement increased the confidence of the participants. It appears that the validation given by vice chancellors and campus presidents gave the participants the confidence in their work products and in their thought processes. This fundamental idea of leadership confidence appears to be an important aspect in developing community colleges leaders. The GYO programming may need to be more centered around interpersonal skill development and production of outcomes, which, in turn, could increase the confidence and innovative approaches to solving problems among GYO participants.

The second significant insight, although not new, is the importance of developing relationships – networking. So often on the agenda of state and national conferences, partnership meetings, and workshops, there is an allotted time for a networking session.

In addition, a review of necessary leadership skills identified by AACC (2013) reveals communication as a skill needed to navigate the quickly changing landscape of the community college. However, communication does not translate to the ability to develop relationships. Although the words *networking session* is commonly seen, I believe this is a skill set that is not so common. This would suggest that either people have a challenge with developing relationships, the community college does not promote opportunities for colleagues across the campus to network, or both. There were a few participants that indicated they were introverts or rather shy, indicating that they do not feel as comfortable speaking to strangers or developing new relationships. Having this skill set or being able to develop this skill set appears to be invaluable. As a community college practitioner, I understand the value to establishing relationships both internal and external to the organization and the impact that relationships have on my work. This sentiment was also expressed by the participants in the study. The ability to develop deep and nurturing relationships with others is not a skill set that should be taken lightly.

Implications for Practice and Policy

This phenomenological study presented the lived experience in the GYO Emerging Leaders Program from the perspective of graduates,within a large multi-campus community college. The findings of this study have two implications for institutional practice and two implications at the policy level. Considering the goal of the community college to grow potential leaders that are able to address the complexities currently facing the community college, it is imperative to design programming that is valued by participants and community colleges and is perceived to develop leadership skills and knowledge. The recommendations for practice include: (a) develop

programming dedicated to leaders with more than 10 years of leadership experience and (b) integrate programming on how to develop, cultivate, and maintain relationships into the GYO curriculum. The recommendations for policy include: (a) universities offer graduate degree programs focused on community colleges or offer coursework focused on community colleges, and (b) community colleges offer GYO programs to address the leadership gap.

Practice Implications

Community colleges with GYO programs or considering implementing a GYO program should develop programming dedicated to seasoned leaders. The GYO program should include real-life case studies that are focused on responses to current trends occurring both internally and externally to the college and how to respond. For example, a deeper understanding of the accreditation process would include actually writing to a criterion, collecting evidence, and conducting a mock site-visit with a team of reviewers as opposed to just explaining who the accrediting body is, reviewing the various ways to hold accreditation, and exploring the various outcomes of a site-visit. The deeper exploration provides the seasoned leaders the opportunity to not only gain a better understanding of the process, but allows the participant the opportunity to strengthen his/her leadership skills. Although the same skills and knowledge recommended by AACC may still be appropriate as the overarching curriculum to developed leadership skills and knowledge needed for a leader within the community college, the seasoned leader requires a much deeper exploration into the skill set.

While each community college develops its GYO leadership development program to meets the needs of that respective institution, there are program elements that

were found to be of value. The findings suggest that relationship development was paramount in the GYO program. One could infer that developing these relationships both internal and external to the institution increased leadership involvement, increased sharing of information, improved the response to student and community needs, and built trust in the system's processes. Collaboration is noted as a critical leadership skill needed to navigate today's rapidly changing environment by AACC (2013), however, the focus on the development of this skill is not noted in the literature. Further, findings suggest that the ability to develop and nurture relationship is perceived to have increased the success of GYO graduates, both during and subsequent to the program.

Policy Implications

The literature suggests that GYO programs are the preferred method of developing community college leaders, however, universities that offer Ph.D. and Ed.D. programs in higher education administration and/or related majors continue to play a valuable role in this mission of developing these leaders. The literature revealed that a number of universities offer higher education administration programs, but only a few offer a degree with a major focused on community college administration or courses focused on community colleges (retrieved 2018, March 5, from www.cscconline.org). With the noted leadership gap within the community college, policy makers at the university level should require coursework aimed at developing community college leaders. Current higher education administration programs that fail to offer curriculum dedicated to community college leadership should either (a) integrate this focus into specific courses or (b) add a track or program dedicated to the community college that would embody a comprehensive view of post-secondary education leadership.

The leadership shortage being experienced by community colleges across the country suggests that there is a lack of succession planning. The anticipated retirements of community college leaders are anticipated to continue to be felt through 2023 (AACC, 2013) with a one-in-four turnover among campus presidents alone (Smith, 2016). In an effort to respond to this exodus of leadership off campuses across the country, colleges need to adopt policy relating to sustainability by utilizing the GYO leadership development program as a vehicle to identify, develop, and grow existing talent on the college campus. In addition, the program could include an opportunity for mentoring with a seasoned professional anticipating retirement. The GYO program can be offered at various leadership levels as leaders exist at various levels within the organization. This policy could support the development of talent while capturing the knowledge and skills of leaders before retiring.

Future Research

This study focused on the lived experience of participants in the GYO Emerging Leaders Program at Edge Water Community College. This phenomenological inquiry explored the essence of how graduates experienced the program, and through the data analysis process, three themes emerged to describe the phenomenon. The study involved limitations that are explicit to phenomenological inquiry, which limits how research findings can be applied to the general GYO graduate population. In addition, the program is housed at a large, multi-campus community college with many resources while many other colleges are single-campus colleges that lack the funding necessary to support GYO programs (Piland & Wolf, 2003). As a result of these limitations, findings are best understood through the contextual lens of the eight GYO graduates who were interviewed

for this study. Although this study's findings provide a richness that is unique to phenomenological research, transferability should be considered through the detailed descriptions and findings relative to the graduates' college setting and graduates' lenses. Future studies should incorporate a mixed methods approach, which could include collecting data from multiple GYO community college programs utilizing a survey method to complement and strengthen the findings of the qualitative method approach. This approach would also capture those organizations with varying demographics such as college size and available resources for funding such a program.

The study findings provide groundwork from which future research can continue to explore the importance of the community-college based GYO leadership development program. My suggestions for future research consideration focuses on six areas, including: (a) how a GYO program develops leadership skills and increases career advancement among diverse populations, (b) how to investigate a GYO program's effectiveness using an abbreviated timeframe, (c) how to evaluate the effectiveness of a GYO program's components in developing leadership skills necessary for executive-level positions, (d) the impact of leadership development for individuals who completed advanced degrees at for-profit universities, (e) the lived experience of participants in a GYO program from a small, rural or urban community college, and (f) the GYO leadership development needs of senior-level/CEO college administrators who have no higher education experience.

With the shortage of leadership on community college campuses, it is important to understand how diverse population may be entering the pipeline through GYO programs and if they perceive the GYO program has developed leadership skills and

promoted career advancement. As noted in Chapter 2 (Konovalov & Teahen, 2013), the composition of community college leaders continues to evolve. This evolution of community college leaders calls for a more flexible and strategic leadership training rubric when approaching challenges being experienced today. Therefore, understanding how the GYO develops diverse leaders is important – this includes gender, race, and ethnicity, as well as exploring if career advancement follows program completion.

Throughout the data collection process, participants talked about the intensity of the year-long program, in addition to trying to manage the demands of work/life balance. The program structure required participants to collaborate within the sessions and outside the sessions. Although this supported the bonding process, participants reported the stress on their time and the required coordination needed to meet with colleagues from various campuses. It would be of benefit to reduce the time from one-year to seven or eight months. In an effort to maintain the program's integrity, the reduced timeframe would require further integration of noted recommended leadership skills (AACC, 2013) within the program's projects/assignments. The timeframe reduction could lower the cost of offering the program and increase the number of individuals that can participant in the program over time. However, it would be important to investigate the effectiveness of the GYO program being delivered over less time and if participants perceive the program as having developed or enhanced their leadership skills or knowledge.

This study focused on the lived experience in the GYO program from the perspective of participants. However, understanding the effectiveness of the program components in developing leadership skills needed for executive level positions may be of value. The data could yield best practices for GYO leadership development programs

and inform a process for ongoing program evaluation – thereby possibly cultivating more skilled and knowledgeable leaders into the talent pipeline.

Today, for-profit universities offer graduate degrees with a focus on community college leadership; however, it would be of value to understand how these institutions impact developing community college leaders – if at all. A study that focuses on the career pathway of individuals who complete terminal degrees at these universities could add to the literature of how the talent pipeline is being addressed.

While this study focused on a GYO leadership development program at a large, multi-campus community college with multiple revenue streams, most community colleges are small, rural/urban, and lack appropriate funding for a GYO program. A study focused on the lived experience of participants in a GYO program from a small, rural, or urban community college may have quite different results and may help in understanding the value of such a program within that respective campus environment.

A case study to investigate the leadership development needs of senior-level/CEO college administrators who have no higher education experience could provide significant implications for community colleges considering talent from business/industry. Such a case study may also reveal common competencies, knowledge, and skills needed to transition from business/industry into community college leadership.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the lived experience of graduates who participated in the GYO Emerging Leaders leadership development program. Community colleges are experiencing a shortage of talented leaders needed to address challenges currently being faced. With GYOs noted as the preferred method of

developing potential leaders that exist on community college campus, it was important to understand the lived experience of participants in a GYO program.

At the core of the shared lived experience under investigation, it was revealed that the essence of the phenomenon was connections. A deeper review of the patterns found within the data revealed a single, common thread within the shared lived experience in the GYO leadership development program – the essence of connections. The essence of connections was explored through participants' connection to: (a) colleagues, college leaders, and the institution, (b) the GYO program and how participants perceived/connected to their development, and (c) participants' ability to make an impact on others and within the institution. Regardless of what the experiences were in the GYO program or how participants experienced the GYO program, all the experiences were centered around connections.

The essence was illuminated by the variance found between the new and seasoned leaders. Although there was a difference noted between new and seasoned leaders in how or if they perceived their leadership skills and knowledge was developed, all of the participants reflected upon how the curriculum connected with their own level of leadership expertise and experience. The essence of connections was felt throughout the GYO program experience – while collaborating with colleagues and college leaders, while developing solutions to challenges being faced by students and the institution, and while developing staff members for potential upcoming leadership roles. At the very center of the phenomenon, participating in the GYO Emerging Leaders Program, the essence appears to have been centered around connections.

This study was significant in that the findings provided implications for practice and policy that included a broader approach to GYO programming to include a focus on leadership confidence, along with a recommendation for community colleges to adopt a policy to offer GYO programs to develop talent needed to address the leadership shortage on campuses across the country. There is a lack of empirical studies focused on GYO programs developing leaders. However, this phenomenological study contributes to the body of literature by describing the lived experience of participants in a GYO program and the value that was placed on the program from the participants' perspective.

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Appendix A

Invite Letter to Participate

Date

Dear (Insert Participant's Name):

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my Doctoral degree at the University of Toledo under the supervision of Dr. Penny Poplin Gosetti**.** I would like to provide you with information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand your experience in the GYO program. This qualitative study will focus on your GYO program experience and the perceived relevancy of the program to you as a leader. Given the overwhelming demand for effective leaders that community colleges are facing, and will continue to face in the near future, it is imperative that community colleges that develop, support, and/or promote GYO leadership programs understand your perceptions and what you think is of value.

Participation will involve an interview of approximately 60 to 90 minutes in length and will take place on campus or via Skype. Upon your acceptance, we will schedule a meeting time that is convenient for you. If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 313.410.4197 or by e-mail at sforbes1@wcccd.edu**.** You can also contact my advisor, Dr. Penny Poplin Gosetti at 419.530.2728 or e-mail penny.poplin.gosetti@utoledo.edu**.**

I look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Sincerely,

Shawna J. Forbes
Doctoral Student

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

1. I know you hold the position of ___(current title)__, please share with me a little bit about what led you to pursue leadership in higher education?

2. Edge Water College has been offering leadership development over the past 10 years at various levels. How did you learn about the GYO program?

3. Please share with me your decision to participate in a GYO leadership development program?

4. I would like to learn a little bit about your experience. Please describe your experience as a participant in the GYO leadership program.

5. Leadership development programs are often designed to cultivate talent. How would you describe the value proposition of the GYO program you participated?

6. Since you've completed the program, describe the learning that has been integrated into your leadership role, if at all.

7. In hindsight, describe any experiences that really stood out after completing the GYO program?

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

UT Exempt **IRB # 202726**

ICF Version Date: 6/5/2018

0000202726

Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership2801 Bancroft
Gillham Hall Room 5000
Toledo, Ohio 43614
419-530-2728

ADULT RESEARCH SUBJECT - INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The Shared Lived Experience of a Grow-Your-Own (GYO) Leadership Development Program from the Perspective of Program Graduates: A Phenomenological Study

Principal Investigator: Dr. Penny Poplin Gosetti (Principal Investigator) (419) 530-2728 Shawna J. Forbes (Doctoral Candidate) (313) 410-4197

Purpose: You are invited to participate in the research project entitled, The Lived Experience of a Grow Your-Own (GYO) Leadership Development Program from the Perspective of Program Graduates:
A Phenomenological Study which is being conducted at the University of Toledo under the direction of *Dr. Penny Poplin Gosetti.* The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the lived experience in a GYO program from the perspective of graduates. This qualitative study will focus on the GYO program experience of GYO graduates, and the perceived development or enhancement of skills or knowledge, and the relevancy of the GYO program to their leadership role consequent to the experience.

Description of Procedures: This research will take place at the Lone Star College or a location of your choice, via face-to-face or Skype. A one hour interview will be conducted. The interview will be audio recorded so that it can later be transcribed for data analysis.

Permission to record: Will you permit the researcher to *audio record* during this research procedure?

YES ☐ Initial Here NO ☐ Here _____ Initial

After you have completed your participation, the research team will debrief you about the data, theory and research area under study and answer any questions you may have about the research.

Potential Risks: There are minimal risks to participation in this study. The potential risks include: feeling anxious answering personal interview questions. You are welcome to stop the interview at any time.
There is no financial risk involved in this study.
Potential Benefits: The only direct benefit to you if you participate in this research may be that you will learn more about the shared lived experience of participating in a GYO leadership development program and the relevancy of the GYO program to their current leadership role.

Confidentiality: The researchers will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you provided this information, or what that information is. The consent forms with signatures will be kept separate from responses, which will not include names and which will be presented to others only when combined with other responses. Although we will make every effort to protect your confidentiality, there is a low risk that this might be breached.

University of Toledo IRB Approved

Approval Date: 5/22/2018

IRB # 202726
UT Exempt
ICF Version Date: 6/5/2018

0000202726

Voluntary Participation: Your refusal to participate in this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled and will not affect

your relationship with the community college you are employed. In addition, you may discontinue participation at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits.

Contact Information: Before you decide to accept this invitation to take part in this study, you may ask any questions that you might have. If you have any questions at any time before, during or after your participation you should contact the researcher, Shawna J. Forbes (313) 410-4197 or the principal investigator, Dr. Penny Poplin Gosetti (419) 530-2728.

If you have questions beyond those answered by the research team or your rights as a research subject or research-related injuries, the Chairperson of the SBE Institutional Review Board may be contacted through the Office of Research on the main campus at (419) 530-2844.

Before you sign this form, please ask any questions on any aspect of this study that is unclear to you.
You may take as much time as necessary to think it over.

SIGNATURE SECTION – Please read carefully

You are making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above, you have had all your questions answered, and you have decided to take part in this research.

The date you sign this document to enroll in this study, that is, today's date must fall between the dates indicated at the bottom of the page.

Name of Subject (please print)	Signature	Date
Name of Person Obtaining Consent	Signature	Date

This Adult Research Informed Consent document has been reviewed and approved by the University of Toledo Social, Behavioral and Educational IRB for the period of time specified in the box below.

Approved Number of Subjects: _____

U niversity of Toledo IRB Approved

Approval Date: 5/22/2018

Appendix D

Interview Member Checking Communication

Good afternoon,

Thank you again for participating in the phenomenological study to understand your experience in the Edge Water Community College Leadership Development Program. The interviews were very intense and required much more time to transcribe than I originally anticipated. As a result, I apologize for the time that has elapsed in my follow-up communication.

You will find attached the transcription of our interview for your review. Please return to my attention by November 23rd. There are two available options - you can either approve the transcript as presented or approve with corrections/additional information. Also indicate if additional information is included that was not provided at the time of the interview. If you make corrections, please highlight those corrections in red and if you want to clarify any salient points also highlight in red.

* Approved
* Approved with Corrections/Additional Information
* See additional information not provided at the time of the interview

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 313.410.4197 or by email. If I do not receive any communication from you by this date, I will assume you approve of the transcribed interview. Thank you again for your support.

Shawna Forbes