Leadership Development in Service-Learning: An Exploratory Investigation

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Abstract

The purpose of this investigation was to understand how six students, an alumna, and a faculty member at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro perceived their space to emerge as leaders in service-learning endeavors, and to gain insight into how universities create that space. The results indicated that providing support, resources, and space for students to integrate their studies, values, and civic commitment in a systematic and logical fashion helped them to feel better prepared for leadership roles in communities as well as in their future professions.

Introduction

*T*his exploratory investigation focused on the nature of student leadership development in service-learning activities. The purpose of the study was to document the perceptions of student leadership at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (a mid-sized, research intensive university) with an eye toward improving student-learning outcomes and service-learning program administration. The name and mission statement of the university's Office of Leadership and Service-Learning attest to the intentional integration of academic service-learning experiences with leadership development:

> The Office of Leadership and Service-Learning (OLSL) at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro serves as a catalyst for the development of experiential curricular and co-curricular leadership and service-learning initiatives. Through civic engagement, community partner collaboration, and personal reflection, we prepare students for a life of active citizenship. OLSL assists students in developing a personal philosophy of leadership while gaining valuable and diverse experiences, empowering them to effect positive change and serve as citizen-leaders in a global community. *(University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2007a)*

Leadership positions in student organizations and university governance committees, both co-curricular initiatives, are traditionally seen as providing formative experiences for individuals interested in developing their leadership skills. The present investigation was designed to explore whether participation in thoughtfully organized service-learning experiences might also provide fertile ground for leadership formation, and if so, in what ways.

Leadership and service-learning programs and policies are also designed to provide students with multiple pathways to become engaged leaders. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro cultivates leadership courses across campus and offers the Leadership Challenge Program, a co-curricular program for students interested in learning more about personal leadership development. Courses that enhance the eight competencies of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Leadership Framework (self-awareness/self-management, relationship/group development, task management, creative visioning and problem-solving, effective communication, valuing diversity, community engagement, and ethical decision making) and that students in the Leadership Challenge Program are encouraged but not required to take are noted on lists for students and advisors *(University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2007b)*. Similarly, all service-learning courses are designated with an "SVL" attribute in the schedule of classes, and must meet criteria for best practices, including linking course content with meaningful service and reflection *(University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2007c)*.

Rationale for Student Leadership Development

Two trends speak to the urgency of higher education's need to foster leadership more effectively. The first trend is found in the realm of career preparation. Results from Association of American Colleges and Universities' National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) surveys indicate that of 305 employers interviewed, 63% believe college graduates lacked the skills needed for a global economy and for promotion *(Kuh, 2008)*. Moreover, as baby boomers retire, communities are faced with marked gaps in nonprofit leadership *(Tierney, 2006)*, a trend mirrored in the corporate world as well *(Druker, 1998; Lombardo & Euchinger, 2000 as cited in Yarborough, 2011)*.

A second trend that speaks to the need for student leadership development stems from an awareness that today's citizenry

needs skills to confront the challenges of a rapidly changing, knowledge-based, global economy and environment. Complex societal issues require interdisciplinary approaches to address them. *UNC Tomorrow*, a commissioned report in 2007 by the University of North Carolina System, focused on a mandate for public institutions to become proactive in response to quality of life and economic needs of the state and region *(UNC Tomorrow Commission, 2007)*. To address the trend, a growing number of civic and academic leaders are calling on universities to nurture future leaders *(Yarborough, 2011)*. In *Leadership Reconsidered*, Astin and Astin *(2000)* posit that "an important 'leadership development' challenge for higher education is to *empower* students, by helping them develop those special talents and attitudes that will enable them to become effective social change agents" *(p. 2)*.

Literature Review: Student Leadership Development

Prior research suggests that involvement in leadership opportunities during the college years has positive impacts on students: It enhances conflict resolution and commitment to civic responsibility, inspires a greater sense of efficacy in shaping the world around them, and enables active learning through collaboration and improved social adjustment *(Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, & Burkhardt, 2001; Tomlinson-Clarke & Clarke, 1994)*. Creating space for students to develop leadership skills within service-learning courses not only helps students implement university-community projects, but also provides substantive opportunities for the students to shape the nature of the service-learning project *(Chesler, Kellman-Fritz, & Knife-Gould, 2003)*. Thus, service-learning projects are uniquely positioned to foster leadership skills because they encourage students to become co-producers of knowledge.

It is interesting to note that although service-learning has gained widespread acceptance in higher education as a faculty-led initiative, the movement began with grassroots organizing by students and community activists in the 1960s *(Zlotkowski, Longo, & Williams, 2006)*. Considering this history, the editors and contributing authors for *Students as Colleagues (Zlotkowski et al., 2006)* argue that service-learning must find new ways to inspire student leadership in the future if the movement is to continue to grow. "Just as the service movement once needed resources that students alone could not contribute, so the movement has now reached a point where it needs the resources that students alone can supply" *(Zlotkowski et al., 2006, p. 3)*.

A growing number of studies point to the efficacy of promoting leadership development through service-learning projects. The convergence of data from both student leadership development studies *(Astin, 1993; Astin & Astin, 2000; Astin & Cress, 1998; Dugan, 2006a, 2006b; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Kirlin, 2003; Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005; Komives, Longeream, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006; Kouzes & Posner, 2003)* and service-learning research *(Astin & Astin, 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, 1997; Kuh, 2008; Moely, McFarland, Miron, Mercer, & Ilustre, 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005)* not only supports the claim that leadership skills can be taught, but also that leadership programs positively affect a wide range of personal and social learning outcomes, including personal efficacy and interpersonal communication skills.

Even the most current and widely acclaimed evidence-based research on student leadership development, however, draws almost exclusively on co-curricular experiences such as residence life, Greek life, student government, and student organizations *(Kouzes & Posner, 2008)*. The authors believe that intentional leadership development within course-based service-learning projects remains underutilized by faculty members.

One reason for this, Des Marais, Yang, and Farzanehkia *(2000)* suggest, is the traditional views of leadership held by some faculty members. Drawing on Burns' *(1978)* distinction between transactional and transformational leadership models, the authors suggest that too many faculty members subscribe to traditional "transactional" leadership models, which emphasize leader-centric views of leadership (e.g., leadership is vested in a position or a single leader), rather than more complex leadership models *(Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Kouzes & Posner, 2003)* that favor collaborative, values-centered transformational approaches.

> [M]ost often, students are assigned to do a particular task rather than being allowed to determine each and every step of a service-learning experience, from community assessment, to evaluation, to celebration. Simply assigning students tasks in teacher-designed service-learning projects denies them the opportunity for decision making and action planning. It limits their understanding of the interconnectedness of tasks and gives them no sense of the complexity of project management and leadership. *(Des Marais et al., 2000, p. 679)*

Writing as student authors and leaders, Des Marais et al. *(2000)* argue persuasively that students are capable of engaging in transformational service-learning projects where decision-making and responsibilities are shared among all participants. *Students as Colleagues (Zlotkowski et al., 2006)* recognizes this potential by describing ways to identify, recruit, and train student leaders in service-learning projects. With 24 chapters edited or authored by student-faculty teams, *Students as Colleagues* describes best practices for service-learning leadership development. Reading these works, the authors of the present investigation were convinced that students could play an instrumental role in the national service-learning movement if, and when, their professors provided them with the resources and space to emerge as leaders.

The investigation presented in this article was also informed by leadership identity development theory *(Komives et al. 2005; Komives et al. 2006)*, which was used to frame the study's findings, and Dugan and Komives' *(2007)* Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership, which was used to support the discussion and implications of findings. In 2006, the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership surveyed over 50,000 college students from 52 campuses nationwide about their experiences as students and leaders. The findings led Dugan and Komives to offer 10 recommendations to enrich campus leadership programs. The Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership recommendations are explored in relation to the present investigation's findings in the Discussion section. Although service-learning is not explicitly mentioned as a component of programs considered in the survey, the authors of the present investigation believe service-learning provides an effective framework for the majority of practices that Dugan and Komives recommend.

Assessing Leadership Development in Service-Learning Projects at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro

The authors share an interest in service-learning research focused on enhancing student learning and development. At the time of the study, the lead author was a full-time English faculty member who also served as a service-learning faculty fellow for the university; the other author serves as University of North Carolina at Greensboro director of the Office of Leadership and Service-Learning, the office that has worked to institutionalize service-learning as well as provide faculty development for engaged teaching, learning, and research. Wurr now directs the service-learning program at the University of Idaho. The purpose of this

investigation was (1) to understand how students at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro perceive their space to emerge as leaders in service-learning activities and (2) to gain insight into how universities create that space. Grounded theory was selected as the method for the investigation. The goal was to generate a schema of a phenomenon "grounded" in the experience and perceptions of the participants *(Brown, Stevens, Troiano, & Schneider, 2002; Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).*

The Sample

Institutional Review Board (IRB) human subjects approval was secured for the study. The sample was determined using "intensity sampling" that included "information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely, but not extremely" *(Patton, 2002, p. 243)* representing three groups: (1) current (2006) student leaders in fall semester service-learning projects, (2) former student leaders in a service-learning project, and (3) faculty members who taught and supported service-learning classes. As an exploratory investigation, the research design did not include control groups. The objective was to learn as much as possible from good examples of leaders on campus.

In 2005, faculty members teaching service-learning courses were asked to submit names of students exhibiting leadership skills in their service-learning classes. Selection of six student participants was based on the demonstrated leadership abilities and interests of the students as identified by their professors. The faculty members teaching service-learning also provided names of recent graduates from their classes who had exhibited leadership. Only one student responded to an interview request. One faculty member also participated. She was a faculty fellow for the Office of Leadership and Service-Learning. The office's service-learning faculty fellow program, which promotes faculty leadership and advocacy for service-learning, is a 1-year program offered to experienced service-learning faculty members who work with the office to advance institutional change to increase understanding of and reward for service-learning and community service endeavors.

Profile of the participants.

Of the six student participants, two were African American men (one graduate and one undergraduate), two were undergraduate African American women, and two were Caucasian women (one graduate and one undergraduate). The alumna representative

was a Caucasian woman, as was the faculty member. The sample profile reflected the diversity of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro student population, though African American students represented a greater proportion of participants (50%) than they do in the overall student population at University of North Carolina, at Greensboro. At the time of the study, the total University of North Carolina at Greensboro student population was 15,920, including 12,689 undergraduates and 3,231 graduate students. Of the under-graduate population, 68% were female and 20% African-American. Seventy-eight percent of undergraduate African-Americans were female. Fourteen percent of the graduate student population was African-American and 81% of those were female.

Data Collection

The eight participants engaged in semi-structured interviews lasting about an hour each. The interview questions were open-ended and focused on the personal and institutional qualities that enhanced or hindered the participants' growth as leaders. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Data analysis.

The data were analyzed using constant comparative analysis *(Patton, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998)* to identify themes and sub-themes. As shown in Table 1, items were coded independently by the authors and then organized into generative themes, recurring threads of thought that document a pervasive sentiment expressed by the majority of participants in a study *(Freire, 1970, p. 97; Marshall & Rossman, 1999, pp. 152–153; Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 131; Patton, 2002, pp. 475–477)*.

Table 1. Coding Strength and Inter-Rater Reliability (IRR)

Category	Same	Different or Missed	IRR
Leadership Identity Formation	42	7	83%
Provided Space	36	12	66%
Part of Something Larger	34	4	88%

The Findings

Three themes emerged from 112 data items: (1) "leadership identity formation," in which the participants described how they came to think and act like leaders; (2) "provided space"—the

institutional structures, pedagogical practices, and curricular or co-curricular activities that provided participants with the space needed to realize their full potential as leaders; and (3) "part of something larger," which focused on the participants' social identity, including personal and civic agency development. In the sections that follow, each category is described further.

The authors will report the findings of the data related to the theme "leadership identity formation" using the leadership identity development model described by Komives et al. *(2005)*. The six-stage process of leadership identity development they describe was a useful framework to structure reporting the findings of the data. This model identifies six sequential stages of leadership development.

> Stage 1. Awareness: Recognizing that leadership is happening around you
>
> Stage 2. Exploration/engagement: Intentional involvements in groups and meaningful experiences; taking on responsibilities
>
> Stage 3. Leader identified: Trying on new roles and responsibilities; managing others
>
> Stage 4. Leadership differentiated: Awareness that leadership can be non-positional—that leadership is a group process
>
> Stage 5. Generativity: Accepting the responsibility for the development of others and for sustaining organizations
>
> Stage 6. Integration/synthesis: Continued self-development and lifelong learning; striving for congruence and internal confidence *(Komives et al., 2005, pp. 606–607)*

Each stage of leadership identity development ends with a transition signaling leaving one stage and beginning the next. In this way, the stages describe an individual developmental process heavily influenced by group interactions.

Leadership Identity Formation

About a third of the comments coded by the authors fell into the "leadership identity formation" category. Of these, none was coded as Stage 1 or 2 of the leadership identity development model; 10 were coded as Stage 3, 16 as Stage 4, 14 as Stage 5, and two as Stage 6. Representative statements classified by corresponding stage include

- Stage 3 (leader identified): "I was in student government all through high school, and I have always been . . . a natural leader."

- Stage 4 (leadership differentiated): "I really wasn't aware that leadership wasn't just about one person. I think that is the main thing I got out of the [service-learning] class."

- Stage 5 (generativity): "Being a leader is just knowing that being the person you are makes a difference, just being aware of your actions."

- Stage 6 (integration/synthesis): "I think some people have a one-or-two sentence definition of leadership, and they just kind of put the pen down and everything fits in that box. But it's so much more than two sentences: It's life! I think that's one of the things I've learned—your whole life can be leading people and serving them; it's not just a departmental opportunity or [something you do] one Saturday morning."

Provided Space

The data that were categorized as "provided space" referenced curricular and co-curricular structures or classroom initiatives which reflect the democratic spaces described by Zlotkowski, Longo, and Williams *(2006)* whereby students "develop, use, and own their voices on a host of public issues" *(p. 7)*. In the case of our study, the students' recognition of these democratic spaces supports the process of leadership development. These included comments on course and assignment requirements, and the development of personal networks and relationships that built student interpersonal efficacy and self-confidence working in and leading groups. Thus, the concept of providing space is roughly equivalent to that of liberty and the antithesis of micromanagement. Comments indicated whether the initial motivation for students to adopt leadership roles was curricular or co-curricular, and whether the participants were "chosen" to be leaders (i.e., positional leadership) or leadership emerged from within ("emergent"). Representative comments for each category are below.

- Curricular, chosen: "Our main project for the class is each graduate student was assigned a group of undergraduate students to lead in a service-learning project."

- Curricular, emergent: "I think that is why everyone needs service-learning because you learn that leadership is not just about one person. . . . It's about everyone. You know everyone makes things happen."

- Co-Curricular, chosen: "The staff don't necessarily want to make you feel as if you're the student and they're the older adult. . . . They are constantly engaging you in what they're doing. . . . They're not lecturing; they're engaging you in dialogue. I think that really shows a respect they have for you as an adult and as a fellow participant in leadership and service-learning."

- Co-Curricular, emergent: "I think that's why people keep coming back to leadership and service-learning and why students love participating in it because it's something where you make it your own and when you walk away from it, it's different for you than for the other person, but you're grateful for having done it yourself."

Part of Something Larger

The respondents in this investigation reflected on their motivations for becoming involved in service-learning and leadership activities. Although the eight were inspired by the thought of making a small contribution to the larger good of the community, some expressed these sentiments in relation to societal issues such as racism, literacy, or poverty, while others focused on personal motivations such as changes in beliefs, social agency, and career choices. For example, one student reported that "the service-learning experience gave a whole broader view of what I could do because I was always business oriented and assumed I would go back into the corporate world. I have no desire to go back to the corporate world. I would much rather deal in non-profits or as an advocate." Another student commented,

> I was in the Air Force for a while and I volunteered as a youth center at my base. There I saw a lot of under-served kids, their parents were away a lot, and the kids were affected. So I became like a male mentor to the kids. I saw that I could have a huge effect on these kids. Like some of the ones that would never go to college, went. So I got out of the Air Force and started wanting to work with kids full time.

For another student, the motivation to become involved in service-learning and leadership activities was personally motivated by a commitment to social change; service-learning provided this student with a clearer sense of purpose in life, as shown in the following quote:

> Since 1968 the poverty level has been the same as it is today, nothing has changed, and that's what I'm going to do. The FBI has a secret blacklist that they put activists on and I'm going to be on that list 'cause I'm going to say something that's going to upset somebody in very many ways. First thing I'm stopping is gang violence, after that it is poverty, and after that I'm going for something else. I've always been a very passionate person, but I can say this class has definitely helped me focus in some ways where I have a lot clearer example of what I should be, I guess you could say.

In several instances students noted shifting into advocacy roles, prompting the authors to consider advocacy as a separate category. Ultimately, however, it was decided that advocacy connected to "part of something larger," and was a subset of leadership development as a process *(Althaus, 1997)*.

Leadership as a Process: A Conceptual Framework

As illustrated in Figure 1, a conceptual framework of leadership as a process indicates a relationship among the three themes.
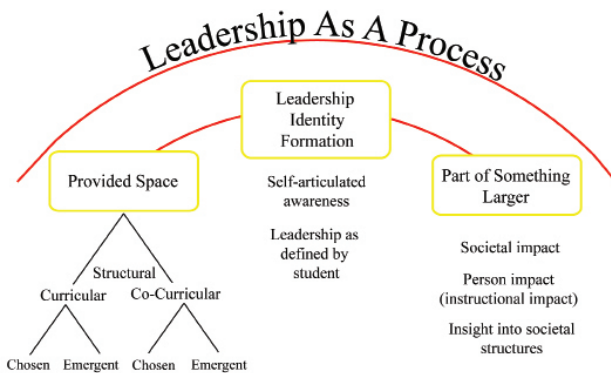

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework: Leadership as Process

The overarching theme that emerged from the data was a view of leadership as a process. This meta-narrative explains the relationships between the other themes and subthemes in the data. Leadership as identity formation is a central theme in this meta-narrative and closely parallels the six stages of leadership identity development described by Komives et al. *(2005)*.

Discussion

Table 2 lists the three themes that emerged from the data, recommendations for improving student leadership development *(Dugan & Komives, 2007)*, and the potential outcomes.

Table 2. The Study's Three Themes, Recommendations for Enhancing Leadership Development, and Potential Outcomes

Present Study's Findings (Leadership as a Process)	Dugan & Komives' (2007) Recommendations for Effective Leadership Development	Potential Outcomes
Leadership Identity Formation	• Engage students in conversations that matter (sociocultural issues) • Encourage depth of involvement vs. breadth in group experiences • Foster mentoring relationships with faculty and staff	• Service-learning can provide students with structured opportunities to explore diversity • Civic engagement offices can serve as the administrative hub for students to explore leadership in increasingly complex contexts • Service-learning and community-based research can engage students and faculty in meaningful relations and knowledge production
Provided Space	• Diffuse leadership programs across the institution	• Service-learning can cross disciplines and content • Leadership development can be embedded in service-learning
Part of Something Larger	• Enhance campus involvement in clubs • Encourage participation in leadership programs • Align students' self-perception of leadership confidence and competence	• Service-learning can provide alternate pathways to campus and community engagement • Critical reflection on community engagement can heighten understanding of self and society • Service-learning and community-based research projects can promote both skills and perceptions of efficacy

Leadership Identity Formation

Stages 3 and 4 in Komives et al.'s *(2006)* leadership identity development model are "leader identified" and "leadership differentiated," respectively, and are most significant to the present investigation's conceptual framework of leadership as a process because they represent a paradigm shift from a transactional to a transformational concept of leadership *(Burns, 1978; HERI, 1996)*. Komives et al. describe Stage 3 "leader identified" thinking as "leadership seen largely as positional roles held by self or others. Leaders do leadership" *(2006, p. 405)*.

In Stage 4, "leadership differentiated," there is a "new belief that leadership can come from anywhere in the group" *(Komives et al., 2006, p. 405)*. Although it is estimated that only 50–66% of the adult population ever advances to Stage 4 consciousness, the shift is most likely to occur around the age of 20 *("Kegan's Orders," 1999)*. The authors conclude from the data analysis that Stage 4 can be facilitated by participation in service-learning leadership experiences. In later stages of leadership development, students begin to accept more responsibility for engaging and supporting others (Stage 5) and internalize their identity as leaders (Stage 6).

It is important to note, however, that while the leadership identity development stages are linear, they are also recursive in that Stage 4 must precede Stage 5 but does not exclude occasional steps back to Stage 2 as students try out new ideas and roles *(Komives et al., 2006, p. 404)*. Data from the present investigation present numerous examples of the same student expressing ideas consistent with adjacent leadership identity development levels. For example, the student in the following quote shifts from "we" to "I," a change in voice and perspective that is consistent with the shift from "leadership differentiated," with its focus on interdependency and the collective responsibilities of the group, to "generativity" and thinking about personal commitments to developing others and sustaining groups: "We were scared, you know; I really wanted to kind of motivate them and inspire them to push through that and to really be a voice for change even in the face [of] such an obstacle."

Provided Space

The key element of "space," whether curricular or co-curricular, is providing enough space for students to take ownership of a project, assignment, or their responsibilities to themselves and others. Des Marais et al. *(2000)* observe that "Simply assigning

students tasks in teacher-designed service-learning projects denies them the opportunity for decision making and action planning" *(p. 679)*.

Although the authors experienced some challenges coding comments in the "provided space" category – differing most often on coding comments as either Leadership Development (a student-learning outcome) or Provided Space (a structural and programmatic outcome) – the results indicate that the curricular versus co-curricular distinction is less important than the space students have for shaping their own learning experiences. Space, whether curricular or co-curricular, encourages leadership development: Students will develop their leadership skills in programs designed to help them do this, and conversely, may not develop their leadership skills as much as they might when opportunities to do so are absent on campus. The authors conclude that both co-curricular student leadership development initiatives and curricular service-learning programs are viable, effective, and mutually supporting ways to enhance student leadership skills. The potential contribution of service-learning in developing leadership capacity in students deserves further exploration.

Part of Something Larger

In this study, being part of something larger often motivated the participants to service and leadership. The data in this study are consistent with Komives et al.'s *(2005)* findings, in which they noted that students' "passions were explicitly connected to the beliefs and values they identified as important in their lives. . . . Service was seen as a form of leadership activism, a way of making a difference and working towards change" *(p. 607)*.

In the present study, however, there were limits to the students' awareness of their own power as change agents. Because theories of service-learning and leadership development often describe each as a transformational pedagogy, the authors expected to see evidence of students as institutional change agents. The investigation's interview protocol directly asked, "On a scale of 1 – 10, with 1 = not at all and 10 = very much, to what extent do/did you feel able to shape the broader institution (University of North Carolina, at Greensboro)?" This question was most often met with blank looks and calls for clarification such as, "Shape the institution. What do you mean?" Students interpreted "support" differently (cf: Interview Protocol, question #3 in Appendix A). Some noted material or administrative support that was or was not provided to them while

others considered emotional support primarily. Regardless of how support was interpreted, it was not uncommon for participants to rate "support" highly on a 10-point scale, but follow with comments suggesting a lower level of support, as in the following example: "I would say again about maybe like a 7, maybe an 8. When I first had the idea to do a performance . . . I tried to contact a woman here, a teacher here [for whom the student] had written the play, here in her class, and I never heard back from either of them." Overall, however, students rated their ability to impact the institution lower than any other aspect on the survey.

Students come to college with the expectation that they will learn and change; they also hope to make a positive impact on society. But they do not expect to change the institution. Thus the authors found evidence of personal and societal transformations, but not (as hoped) of students transforming the university.

The distinction between "chosen" and "emergent" leaders indicates that the students did not see themselves as leaders because "chosen" leaders are selected by others, and "emergent" leaders are only beginning to realize they can be a leader; their leadership potential isn't fully developed yet. The literature suggests that such students respond well to invitations and suggestions from peers and mentors to take on leadership roles on campus and in the community. For example, Komives et al. *(2005)* studied the influences of parents, teachers, coaches, or religious leaders and concluded that they were key to fostering leadership development in adolescents. The authors of the present investigation saw many instances in the data of students responding positively to suggestions from faculty, staff, and peers to become more involved in a given project, program, or club. These suggestions could be called "social influences."

In sum then, the present study found service-learning and leadership development to be complementary, with the greatest potential contribution to student leadership development occurring between Stage 3 and 4 of Komives et al.'s *(2005)* Leadership Identity Development Theory. Space was also found to be an essential ingredient in student leadership development; as the popular message in *Field of Dreams* states, "build it and they will come" *(Frankish, Levin, & Robinson, 1989)*. Finally, the present study found students were motivated to service and leadership by the desire to be "part of something larger," but the resulting personal and social transformations they experienced did not, as service-learning theory suggests, extend to seeing themselves as institutional change agents.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations in the study make generalizing findings to other settings and populations difficult. First, the investigation was conducted with only eight participants who were not randomly selected, but rather were identified as leaders by others. Their views on leadership development are likely different from those of the general population of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Added to this, students of color represented a greater proportion of participants than they do in the overall student population at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. What effect these differences might have on the results obtained is not known, so researchers and practitioners must decide for themselves the extent to which they think the findings might resonate on their campuses.

How the University of North Carolina Greensboro Is Using the Results of the Investigation

The findings of this investigation have had an impact on the design and administration of service-learning and leadership development activities at University of North Carolina at Greensboro. They have also informed actions to bridge the gap between academic affairs and student affairs, such as new engagement initiatives, enhancement of existing civic engagement, and the strengthening of interdisciplinary initiatives supporting community-based research. Examples of how the findings have had an impact on programming are provided in the sections below.

Enhancing Service-Learning Leadership Across Campus

One way the Office of Leadership and Service-Learning has strengthened service-learning leadership initiatives that bridge academic affairs and student affairs is by revising its student reflection leader program. This program provides faculty members with undergraduate and graduate students who have prior experience in service-learning to serve as site coordinators and discussion leaders. Although the program was launched in 2007, it is similar in many respects to the more mature "peer facilitator" program at the University of Michigan that Chesler et al. *(2003)* describe. Essentially, student reflection leaders in the University of North Carolina at Greensboro program work closely with their faculty members to design and facilitate reflection activities that help students connect and learn from experiences in the classroom

and community. By helping students make connections to the course material, these reflection leaders are actively crafting the course content, which Zlotkowski et al. *(2006)* suggest as a next step in service-learning-based student leadership development.

Initially, some faculty misunderstood the purpose of the reflection leader program, seeing the student-reflection leaders more as clerks to record and supervise volunteer hours. To help faculty better understand and appreciate their roles as mentors, Office of Leadership and Service-Learning staff are continually working to improve descriptions and support structures for the program. Regular communication between faculty and student reflection leaders is encouraged: Teams are required to jointly draft goals and responsibilities for each partner in the project before the semester begins, and then they complete mid- and end-of-term assessments of their work together. The Office of Leadership and Service-Learning has also revised and expanded the training materials and workshops it provides student reflection leaders.

The saliency of students developing meaningful relationships with faculty and peers on campus appears consistently in studies on student retention. For example, Dugan and Komives' *(2007)* Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership found "Faculty mentoring was one of the top three predictors across all Social Change Model values" *(p. 15)*. At the University of North Carolina at Greensboro mentoring relationships are intentionally built into leadership and service-learning programs (e.g., the service-learning reflection leader initiative and the provision of seed money for community-based research grants).

Community-Based Research

The Office of Leadership and Service-Learning has strengthened interdisciplinary initiatives supporting community-based research in which faculty members mentor students conducting research with and for community partners. Although graduate students are included in the research teams, the high impact practice of undergraduate research linked with meaningful civic engagement is a deliberate attempt to engage students through their disciplines as change agents. Students who have learned to succeed as engaged scholars contribute high quality research that forms the bedrock of higher education while also experiencing the challenges and satisfactions of emerging as public intellectuals *(Zlotkowski et al., 2006)*. In 2008, the Office of Leadership and Service-Learning began offering about ten $1,000 grants annually to research teams consisting of

at least one faculty member, student, and community partner. The Office of Undergraduate Research and the Graduate School offer matching grants to the students on the teams. Community partners must participate in all stages of the research process to ensure that the research addresses real needs in the community. Input and proposals are sought for projects from faculty and community member collaborations formally and informally through regular meetings and communication. With support from faculty members, students analyze the causes of social problems and offer solutions and strategies for change. Since the authors believe in seeing students as colleagues and as co-producers of knowledge, a central goal of the community-based-research grants is to provide students with opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills for active civic engagement. Grant proposals must clearly specify research foci and methods as well as plans for sharing insights gained from the project among stakeholders and the communities they serve.

Provided Space

Similarly, findings from the present investigation suggest students will avail themselves of opportunities to develop their leadership skills on campus, so the Office of Leadership and Service-Learning strives to provide them with multiple pathways—curricular and co-curricular—to leadership development. As noted earlier, the Leadership Challenge Program is a curricular and co-curricular self-directed leadership development program designed to guide students in their personal and professional development for lifelong leadership. Using eight competencies of leadership as a basis, students engage in approved curricular and co-curricular activities that prepare them to serve as citizen-leaders in a global community.

Co-curricular and Curricular Activities

The data in the present investigation supporting the benefits of providing students space to develop leadership skills did not show any difference in effectiveness between curricular and co-curricular efforts. These results reinforce Vogelgesang and Astin's *(2000)* findings that participation in service-learning or generic community service has similar impacts on all measures of leadership ability and activity *(p. 31)*. Future research might explore intentional integration of curricular and co-curricular leadership development, such as learning communities, a university-wide

thematic focus, or common readings with connected experiential activities.

As noted previously, student demographics in the present investigation are similar to those of University of North Carolina, at Greensboro as a whole. Students at the university come from largely working and middle-class backgrounds and communities. Since the average University of North Carolina at Greensboro freshman probably would not rate cultural capital very highly on a list of his or her personal attributes, the authors also take to heart Kuh's *(2008)* findings that community-based learning offers effective learning outcomes for all populations, but especially for those students who might never have thought of themselves as leaders. With greater numbers of diverse students in our schools today, a business-as-usual approach to leadership development will not be sufficient to equip students with the 21st century skills needed to take leadership positions within our communities.

Student affairs and academic affairs need to work together more to provide students with multiple avenues across campus to develop their leadership abilities. Although the faculty member who participated in the present investigation was identified by students as exceptionally effective in nurturing and supporting emergent student leaders, she was not aware of this side of her work prior to the investigation. "I have to admit, prior to understanding a little bit of the research direction . . . I don't think I focused on leadership and I [now] see it as an area that I need to think about and focus on." While it would be unwise to jump to conclusions based on information provided by a single informant, the authors' own experiences as both faculty and student affairs professionals lead us to concur with Astin and Astin's *(2000)* observation that "One seldom hears mention of . . . 'leadership' or 'leadership skills' in faculty discussions of curricular reform, even though goals such as 'producing future leaders' are often found in the catalogues and mission statements of colleges and universities" *(p. 3)*. Discussions of leadership are now included in faculty workshops and meetings on service-learning at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Faculty and staff who may never have previously considered student leadership development part of their job description now have more opportunities to view their pedagogical practices as an essential element in preparing the community leaders of tomorrow today.

Systemic support for leadership beyond the official service-learning course designation at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro includes ongoing efforts by the Office of Leadership

and Service-Learning to work with department heads and faculty across campus to identify courses that have significant content corresponding to one or more of the eight competencies recognized within the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Leadership Framework.

Part of Something Larger

The Office of Leadership and Service-Learning offers students the unique opportunity to learn the skills that make for positive change in our society. By working together, academic affairs and student affairs can bring "integration and coherence to a traditionally fragmented, compartmentalized, and often random approach to achieving important undergraduate education outcomes" *(Schroeder, 1996, p. 2).*

Conclusion

Entities like the Office of Leadership and Service-Learning can serve as administrative hubs for students to explore a personal philosophy of leadership, engage with other leaders on campus and in the community, and develop the skills necessary to effect lasting social change. The goal is to create multiple avenues for student leadership that provide differential and increasingly complex opportunities not only to learn about leadership but to practice leadership competencies within a supportive and challenging framework.

Whether a student is serving with a community partner to fulfill learning objectives for a course or choosing to volunteer at a local after-school program, the skills for lifelong leadership are honed. Students should have the opportunity to choose from a variety of programs that enable them to experience leadership through meaningful civic engagement. Students should be able to engage in issues that matter to them, and in which their work has real outcomes for themselves and the community. A lifelong ethic of civic engagement is most likely to develop when students have the opportunity to practice the necessary skills and see the results of their efforts. Practicing the skills of effective citizenship builds students' comprehension of their own efficacy. As students choose to engage in leadership and service on campus and in the local community, they develop the skills, knowledge, and commitment needed to accomplish public purposes. The present investigation suggests the saliency of providing support, resources, and space for students to integrate their studies, values, and civic commitment in a systematic and logical fashion to prepare for leadership roles in their professions and communities.

Endnote

1. Raters differed most often in coding comments as either leadership development (a student-learning outcome) or provided space (a structural and programmatic outcome). The authors view these categories as two sides of the same coin and further posit that students will develop their leadership skills in programs designed to help them do this, and, conversely, may not develop their leadership skills as much as they might when opportunities to do so are absent on campus.

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Appendix A
Leadership in Service-Learning
Interview Questions

"You have been chosen for this interview because of your leadership in service-learning at our institution as an undergraduate (or if interviewing context resources, "your work with undergraduates in leadership and service-learning"). We are interested in learning from your experiences as a student leader in service-learning, through a fairly open-ended conversation that will be guided by a few questions. In particular, we want to learn about the specific kinds of services, support mechanisms, barriers, etc. that you encountered (provided) in that capacity. Also, we are interested in your perception of the roles you undertake/undertook as a leader and the extent to which you feel/felt empowered to shape and define your relationships with your institution in general and with other students, faculty, staff, administrators, and members of the broader community. We hope to be able to share the insights of students about student leadership in service-learning with people who are planning programs, so we want to explore your process in some detail."

1. Please describe your experience with student leadership in service-learning.

2. How and why did you become involved as a student leader in service-learning? (If not discussed above.) For context resources: How and why did you become involved with student leadership in service-learning?

3. On a scale of 1 – 10, with 1 = not at all and 10 = very much, to what extent do/did you feel:

   a. supported in your capacity as a student leader in service-learning? Talk to me about what that number represents to you. FOLLOW UP: What specific resources/ mechanisms/people/relationships/etc. provided the most important support? How might you have been provided with better support? For context resources: What resources/mechanisms etc. did you provide student leaders?

   b. challenged by your involvement as a student leader in service-learning? Talk to me about what that number represents to you.

FOLLOW UP: In what specific ways do you believe serving as a student in service-learning push you beyond what otherwise might have been your experience as an undergraduate?

For context resources: What differences, if any, did you observe in student leaders of service-learning and those who do not accept leadership positions in service-learning classes?

c. like a true colleague of faculty/staff/administrators at our institution? Talk to me about what that number represents to you.

FOLLOW UP: With what particular individuals do/did you most feel like a true colleague? In what specific ways are/were your relationships with these individuals different from your relationships with other people with who you felt less like a colleague?

For context resources: In general, what factors do you believe most influence whether a student feels like a true colleague of faculty/staff/administrators?

d. able to shape your own experience as a student leader in service-learning? Talk to me about what that number represents to you.

FOLLOW UP: In what specific ways are/were your leadership functions defined in advance and what specific ways are/were you able to define them? Can you give some concrete examples of ways in which you are/were able to define what "student leadership in service-learning" means?For context resources: Can you give some concrete examples of ways that students defined for themselves "student leadership in service-learning?"

e. able to shape the broader institution (UNCG)? Talk to me about what that number represents to you.

FOLLOW UP: In what specific ways did

your actions help to change the institution? Can you give some concrete examples of ways in which UNCG is different because of your service as a student leader in service-learning?

For context resources: In what specific ways do you believe actions of student leaders in service learning shape undergraduate education at UNCG?

4. What institutional barriers, if any, did you encounter in your capacity as a student leader (administrator) in service-learning?

5. What changes do you believe need to take place at the institutional level to prevent or minimize the effects of these barriers to better support student leadership in service-learning?

6. What did you take with you from your experience with student leadership in service-learning? What did you leave behind?

7. How has your experience with student leadership in service-learning influenced your identity as a _____ (reference whatever has been emphasized in the conversation)? As a citizen?