

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Involvement in student leadership provides opportunities for student development (Foubert and Grainger, 2006) and is linked with higher rates of persistence (Astin, 1984), making leadership programs an important tool for increasing the retention and success of students of color. Unfortunately, traditional leadership paradigms often used in student leadership programs are incongruent with the values and experiences of many students of color, leading to under-participation of these students (LaVant & Terrell, 1994).

As mentoring has been identified as one potential tool for improving the leadership experiences of this population (e.g., Komives, Longersbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006), this qualitative research project explores the mentoring experiences of student leaders from underrepresented racial or ethnic backgrounds. Themes emerged from the data in three headings: leadership, mentoring experiences, and race and ethnicity. These themes reflect the stories and values of the participants and provide valuable insight for student affairs professionals seeking to better serve student leaders of color.

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Mentoring Student Leaders of Color

by  
Leann E. White

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Leann E. White, Author

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# Mentoring Student Leaders of Color

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Mentoring is frequently used in American higher education as a tool for promoting the development and success of individuals. Traditionally, both formal (intentionally facilitated) and informal (spontaneous or unplanned) mentoring occurred between faculty members as a means of supporting new and developing faculty in their career development and pursuit of tenure (Angelique, Kyle, & Taylor, 2002). Over time, mentoring of graduate students emerged with a similar goal of promoting the success of new participants in the complex world of academia (Jacobi, 1991). Overall, interest in mentoring in higher education has increased in the last 35 years because of the perceived benefits to both mentors and mentees (Angelique et al.). This has led to the development of more extensive and formal programs that foster mentoring between various different constituents on campus.

More recently, mentoring programs for undergraduates have been implemented across the country, largely with a focus on increasing academic achievement, preventing attrition, and giving students more personal attention (Jacobi, 1991). Some studies have suggested that mentoring of undergraduate students by staff and faculty creates a greater likelihood of student academic success and integration into the higher education environment (Jacobi). Because of this perceived connection between mentoring and academic success, mentoring programs that focus on retaining students of color have appeared in the last few decades. Primarily, these programs seek to increase the retention and academic success of students of color by creating

connections between students and faculty or staff members (Smith, 2007; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007; Terrell, Hassell, & Duggar, 1992). Additionally, mentoring relationships help to acculturate students to academic life and alleviate some of the cultural isolation student may feel as underrepresented minorities at predominantly white institutions of higher education (Smith; Strayhorn & Terrell; Terrell et al.).

Literature on mentoring college students of color focuses almost exclusively on the academic benefits of mentoring, such as acculturation to academic life and connections between students and faculty, while neglecting to discuss any other outcomes associated with these relationships. If mentoring appears to have a positive impact on the retention of students of color, then one might ask whether mentoring might influence any non-academic indicators of student retention. For example, Astin's (1984) research indicates a positive correlation between student involvement and persistence in higher education. In the context of his research, involvement may be in areas such as academic, co-curricular, or employment settings that increase the student's integration into the institution. In other words, academic integration may not be the only positive indicator of student success.

In support of this conclusion, we see numerous benefits to students who participate in leadership development activities or hold leadership positions. Some of the most noted outcomes include increased civic responsibility (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, & Burkhardt, 2001; Dugan, 2006), increased multicultural awareness (Cress et al.), increased understanding of personal and society values (Cress et al.), richer interpersonal relationships (Foubert & Grainger, 2006; Logue, Hutchens, & Hector, 2005), academic enhancement (Cooper, Healy, & Simpson, 1994), and a

link with higher rates of persistence (Astin, 1984). It makes some sense, therefore, to examine the potential impact of mentoring on involvement, leadership, and co-curricular activity to determine whether mentoring may benefit other areas of student life that increase student retention beyond simply those academic advantages already examined in research. A search for mentoring programs with a specific focus on mentoring and student leadership, however, yields few results.

This research begins to address this possible connection by exploring the mentoring experiences of student leaders from underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds. In addition to the academic motivations for this research, I found this topic personally appealing. When I began developing my research question in spring of 2007, I was immediately drawn to the topic of student leadership, and in particular to the practice of mentoring student leaders in both formal and informal relationships. In my experiences as both a professional and as a student leader myself, I observed the importance of mentoring relationships in student development. It seemed to me, at least anecdotally, that mentoring relationships provide an opportunity for students to think both deeply and analytically about their experiences, and that through these processes of critical analysis, students developed a strong sense of identity, purpose, and belonging in the university. I welcomed the opportunity to explore my observations from a researcher's perspective through this thesis.

The outcome of this research is a rich description of the meaning that leadership and mentoring has held for the participants in this study and descriptions of some of the key themes that ran through all four of the students' experiences. It took the form of a phenomenological investigation in which I conducted one-on-one

interviews with student leaders of color to investigate both their understanding and definitions of leadership and their lived experiences with mentors in the context of their leadership development. This research should not be looked to as a way to generalize about all students of color or all mentoring relationships, but rather provides a glimpse into the meaning of mentoring experiences for this set of students. With the results in mind, we may then be prepared to ask more specific questions for further research and explore the ways that university administrators and student affairs professionals can better understand the experiences of students of color.

#### *Definition of Key Terms*

In order to be clear in my discussion of the data I am seeking through this research, a few terms must be defined. I will clarify here the parameters for the terms (a) students of color, (b) student leader, (c) student leadership development, (d) student leadership program, and (e) mentoring so as to best define the population and phenomenon that will be studied during this project.

*Students of color.* The research question presented here seeks to explore the experiences of student leaders from underrepresented racial or ethnic backgrounds. This population was chosen because of the many disparities that exist between their experiences in higher education and those of their white counterparts. My hope is that with greater knowledge of their experiences, more steps can be taken to reduce these disparities. Participants in this study could include, but were not limited to, Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and multiracial individuals. Rather than making an attempt to label my participants, each participant defined their racial or ethnic identity as they so chose. My goal was to make every effort possible to

honor the individuals, their identities, and their experiences in the context in which each student exists.

In order to simplify the language used in this proposal and the resulting thesis, I have chosen to use the term “students of color” to encompass students who include any racial or ethnic identity other than white when self-identifying. Previous researchers including Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, and Osteen (2005), Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, and Osteen (2006), Arminio et al. (2000), and LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs (1997) have used the term “students of color” to discuss the population I wish to study, lending some validity to its use in this paper. While this term provides needed simplicity to my writing, more specific language will be used to describe the participants and the target population whenever necessary or appropriate in order to ensure clarity and respect.

*Student leader.* Student leader is a somewhat nebulous and difficult term to define, as evidenced by the variety of definitions chosen by researchers in past studies (e.g. Arminio et al., 2000; Komives et al., 2005; Shertzer and Schuh, 2004). For the purposes of this research, I chose a broad definition of student leader in order to allow for the inclusion of students who may not fit into the traditional paradigm that classifies leadership as an individualistic, managerial quality, existing in formal group settings (Shertzer & Schuh). This industrial paradigm neglects the experiences and values of underrepresented cultures which often view leadership in collectivist and relational terms.

Instead, student leaders are identified as those who hold formal (elected, appointed, or paid) positions in campus organizations, or have informal leadership

experiences in groups or communities which lead to their identification as a leader (either by themselves or by others). While there is some importance in students self-identifying as leaders, this label may be viewed negatively by students of color (Arminio et al., 2000), and requiring self-identification as a leader may exclude some students who are actually engaging in leadership activities and behaviors.

*Student leadership development.* The term “leadership development” is often used to describe a goal many student affairs professionals hold in working with students in co-curricular settings. The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2006) highlights the importance of helping students “enhance their self-efficacy as leaders” (p. 320) and provides the following description of leadership development: “Leadership development involves self-awareness and understanding of others, values and diverse perspectives, organizations, and change” (p. 320). When used in this research, the term student leadership development will incorporate these meanings. I define it as the increase in a student’s understanding of self and others, the building of knowledge and skills useful in leadership settings, and the development of greater self-efficacy as a leader.

*Student leadership programs.* Many colleges and universities use intentional methods to encourage and facilitate the leadership development for students on their campus. Haber (2006) provides a clear definition of the term “student leadership program” that I will adopt for the purposes of this research: “[A] student leadership program [is] any program or activity intentionally designed with the purpose of developing or enhancing leadership skills, such as a workshop on delegation” (p. 29). When referring to a collection of various student leadership programs and services for

facilitating leadership development, I will use the term “student leadership programming.”

*Mentoring.* For the purpose of this thesis, the definition of mentoring will utilize elements of several definitions found in previous research (Shandley, 1989; Collins-Shapiro, 2006; Lee, 1999; and Walker, 2006). I feel that important information in this research emerged by allowing students to discuss individuals with whom they feel they have developed the most beneficial relationships but who may not otherwise fit the classic definition of a mentor. Therefore, mentoring in this study will be understood to mean an interactive partnership between two individuals in which an individual with more experience in a community or organization provides guidance, support, nurturing, advice, and other forms of assistance which aid the development of a less experienced individual. Use of the word partnership is meant to indicate contributions made to the relationship by both parties so that each benefits from the experience (Lee, 1999). It should be noted that this definition allowed students to identify as mentors fellow students, individuals outside the university setting, and family members, in addition to staff or faculty members.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter I will summarize some of the current literature and materials that are relevant to the topic of mentoring student leaders from underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds. The chapter is broken down into several sections which review specific topics that are related to the overall research question. Those sections are (a) Retaining Students of Color, (b) Leadership and Students of Color, (c) Defining Mentoring, (d) Mentoring and Students of Color, (e) Mentoring and Leadership Development, and (f) Cross-Cultural Mentoring. Each section provides information which can inform one's understanding of the overall experience of student leaders of color involved in mentoring relationships.

### *Retaining Students of Color*

Despite a steady increase in the number of students of color enrolling in institutions of higher education over the last several decades, there are still clear issues of inequity for this population. In 2004, Renner and Moore documented some of these issues, pointing out the greater gains made by white students relative to students of color in the last 50 years and the “de facto segregation” (p. 230) of students of color to lower-quality, urban schools. Using U.S. Department of Census Data, the authors show that although the gap between high school graduation rates of white students and students of color is narrowing, the gap between college graduation rates of these groups is actually increasing. While the overall rate of college graduation for students of color has increased, the relative size of their gains compared to the gains made by white students is actually zero. The authors use this to data to highlight the failure of affirmative action and other policies designed to increase higher education access for

minority populations. Although the total number of students of color participating in and graduating from college is increasing, it appears likely this population is still not enjoying the same success rates seen in the population of white students.

Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2007) supports the finding that students of color are not being retained in higher education at the same rate as white students. In the 2004-2005 school-year (the most recent year from which data is available), students of color comprised 34.3% of the total undergraduate enrollment at American degree-granting institutions of higher education, but earned only 27.1% of the total bachelor's degrees. Similar disparities exist in the data for all previous years, indicating that students of color simply aren't being retained as successfully in higher education as white students.

Many colleges and universities have implemented programs or services to address retention concerns and to promote the success of this population in higher education, but clearly more must be done to address this continuing problem. A number of researchers have found that involvement on campus is positively linked with retention and degree completion (e.g. Astin, 1984), suggesting the importance that leadership programs and involvement opportunities may hold in addressing retention issues for students of color. The following section provides further information about this topic, but also provides further support for the concern that students of color aren't having experiences equitable to those of white students in higher education, specifically in leadership and involvement opportunities.

*Leadership and Students of Color*

A wealth of literature exists on the subject of student leadership, with many recent studies examining the emerging leadership paradigms which are slowly replacing traditional leadership models at colleges and universities (Arminio et al., 2000; Dugan, 2006; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Komives et al., 2005, 2006; Shertzer & Schuh, 2004). Traditional leadership models (typically referred to as the industrial paradigm) focus on management, individual accomplishment, and specific traits and behaviors associated with “good” leaders. Leadership development in higher education has been firmly grounded in this paradigm since the beginning of American higher education, as most early colleges and universities were tasked with preparing the nation’s political and professional leaders (Shertzer & Schuh). Models and definitions of leadership in the industrial paradigm were developed using mostly Caucasian male students and emphasize hierarchy, power, competition, and positional leaders separated from followers (Kezar & Moriarty).

Increasingly, our emphasis is shifting to postindustrial paradigms of leadership that focus on collaboration, ethical action, social change, and relationships (Komives et al., 2005). Leadership pedagogies that embrace these values are becoming common in higher education and additional attention is being paid to the differing developmental and philosophical orientations to leadership that exist along gender and ethnic identity lines ( Kezar and Moriarty, 2000). This shift in focus has revealed the striking racial and ethnic disparities that exist in leadership programming. Leadership styles in underrepresented racial and ethnic groups do not appear to parallel traditional

theories of leadership, nor are the values of the industrial paradigm typically reflected in these groups (Arminio et al., 2000; Kezar and Moriarty).

To explore this phenomenon, Kezar and Moriarty (2000) conducted research on the experiences of African American student leaders. Using data from the Freshman Survey administered annually by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) and the Follow-Up Survey administered to college seniors, the researchers compared various types of involvement with outcomes in student leadership development (as defined by changes in students' self-rating of leadership skills and abilities). They determined that different types of involvement have differential influences on leadership development based on student gender and ethnic identity. For example, holding positional leadership roles (e.g., elected positions) was a strong indicator of leadership development for white men and African American women, while non-positional leadership experiences (e.g., involvement in clubs) were significant predictors of leadership development for white women and African American men.

In general, conclusions reached from this study indicate that leadership programs and definitions that are traditionally used at universities may not resonate with white women and African American men and women. In reality, these students' "self-perception of leadership ability is being gained through [activities that are] not sometimes associated with leadership development" (Kezar and Moriarty, 2000, p. 65). By and large, women and African American students did not indicate positional leadership positions were important in the development of leadership-related skills and they tended to benefit more from collaborative or shared-leadership environments.

Other studies support this finding that students of color develop leadership qualities such as effective communication, self-awareness, and problem-solving skills in venues that reflect their culture and values rather than in traditional leadership programs. LaVant and Terrell (1994) surveyed African American, Hispanic American, and Asian American students at four predominantly white institutions. Their results indicate that these students were primarily involved in organizations that reflected their ethnic background and value systems, and though these students were not particularly likely to participate in formal leadership programs at their institutions, they did value the development of leadership skills.

Additionally, Hill (2000) determined that many minority students at a predominantly white Christian college felt that leadership positions at their institution were not open to them unless they conformed to the traditional leadership value system. One student stated that “minorities that do not fit the mold of acceptability to the majority do not receive leadership positions” (p. 21). The results of both LaVant and Terrell’s (1994) study and Hill’s study support the conclusion that there are gaps between leadership development programs at many universities and the definition of leadership held by many students of color. The result of this gap is the under-representation of these students in campus leadership positions.

Another important implication of Kezar and Moriarty’s (2000), LaVant and Terrell’s (1994), and Hill’s (2000) studies is the need for a broader definition of leadership development activities that would include service learning and culturally-based activities. These are existing forums where students of color already experience important growth as leaders. Inclusion of these activities in comprehensive leadership

development programs may lead to increased involvement of underrepresented groups and increased self-identification of these students as leaders.

Arminio et al. (2000) explored the under-representation of students of color in leadership positions as well as the discontent felt by many students of color who do hold leadership positions. Their phenomenological study of student leaders of color revealed six salient themes: “disdain for the label of leader; the personal costs of holding leadership positions; the different experiences in predominantly White, multiracial, or same-race groups; group loyalty over individual needs; gender differences in leadership experiences; and lack of on-campus staff and faculty role models” (p. 497). The researchers use these themes to highlight significant incongruities between the value orientations and leadership experiences of students of color and the leadership programs at their universities.

Throughout Arminio et al.’s (2000) study, participants indicated a distinct emphasis on group orientation in leadership rather than on individual success, highlighting the difficulty that students of color often have fitting into traditional leadership programs. Unlike many of their white counterparts, these students assumed leadership roles for the benefit of their groups, not for their personal gain, and often they did not consider themselves leaders. “In fact, some resented the term ‘leader’ being used to describe them. They felt it separated them from other students in their racial group” (Arminio et al., p. 500). For these students, being identified as a leader indicated a rejection of their own culture, as “leadership” was not defined in a way that was congruent with their value systems.

One positive method these students found for coping with the difficulties associated with student leadership was to identify and interact with role models. It was important for these students to see members of their own culture succeeding in leadership positions. Regrettably, most of those interviewed expressed difficulty identifying a role model on their campus. The lack of faculty and staff members with whom they shared a racial or ethnic identity made it difficult to find role models with whom they could directly interact (Arminio et al., 2000).

Unfortunately, the researchers in this study fail to elucidate the origins of their conclusion regarding the importance of role models. No quotes or summaries were given from students concerning the value of role models and mentors; it was unclear what specific benefits students reaped from relationships with these figures. Two questions naturally arise from this study: (a) Why are role models and mentors important for student leaders of color? and (b) Do relationships with role models or mentors help alleviate the incongruities between traditional leadership programs and the students' values and experiences?

Additional emphasis on the importance of role models and mentors to student leaders of color is given by Komives et al. (2005, 2006). Their research aimed to "understand the processes a person experiences in creating a leadership identity" (Komives et al., 2005, p. 594). Through grounded theory research with 13 student leaders, the researchers identified five categories influencing leadership identity development over six stages of time. One of the primary categories identified was titled "developmental influences" and refers to the people and activities that impact students' leadership identity development. The role of adult influences, in particular,

was highlighted as important in every stage of leadership identity development. The role of adult influencers evolves from encouragers, to role models, and finally to mentors. Student leaders benefited immensely from the presence of adult mentors with whom they could reflect on experiences, gain support and encouragement, and make meaning out of their experiences as leaders.

This research on leadership identity highlights the importance of close adult mentors for all students, and in particular the researchers emphasize the impact mentors have on students of color (Komives et al., 2005, 2006). Evidence supporting this finding or reasons for the importance of mentoring to student leaders of color, however, is noticeably lacking. In both the 2005 and 2006 articles, assertions are made regarding the particular importance of mentoring for student leaders of color without quotes from participants in the study to explain those statements. While it seems likely that mentoring relationships play a significant role in the leadership identity development of all of the participants in this research, more specific information is needed on this phenomenon, the particular emphasis that is placed on students of color by the researchers, and the overall mentoring experiences of student leaders.

As a whole, literature on the topic of leadership and students of colors suggests that traditional leadership paradigms do not reflect the values of this population, and in particular conflict with that collectivistic orientation of many minority cultures. While many colleges and universities are beginning to use leadership paradigms that focus more on relationships and collaboration than traditional leadership models, students of color may still be underrepresented in leadership positions and programs around our campuses. As these opportunities may be a useful tool for improving the retention of

this population, these results are concerning. A few studies have alluded to the possibility that leadership experiences of students of color may be improved through the use of role models and mentors, but this possible connection needs further investigation.

### *Mentoring as Defined in Literature*

Mentoring provides a somewhat difficult concept to define. A wealth of research on mentoring exists currently, with nearly every study using a definition for the term that varies slightly from every previous study. The most classic use of the term mentor stems from Greek mythology: Homer tells of the warrior Odysseus leaving for the Trojan War and entrusting his son to the care of his friend, Mentor. From this ancient story, the term mentor took on the meaning of wise teacher, guide and friend (LaVant et al., 1997; Shandley, 1989). More recently, Frierson, Hargrove, and Lewis (1994) used a definition derived from earlier research in higher education that highlighted the reciprocal nature of mentoring relationships with a focus on the career development of both mentor and protégé. Other researchers have chosen to provide further emphasis on the importance of mutuality by using words like “partner” and “relational” as critical elements of the definition of mentoring (Lee, 1999; Walker, 2006).

Perhaps the most comprehensive summary of the term mentoring is given by Shandley (1989) who identifies five characteristics of mentoring relationships: (a) intentional interaction between at least two individuals, (b) nurturing of the protégé that fosters development, (c) the transmittal of wisdom from mentor to protégé, (d) the

presence of support from the mentor for the protégé, and (e) role modeling by the mentor.

In her review of literature on mentoring, Collins-Shapiro (2006) establishes a definition for mentoring that reflects the themes of teaching, learning, and growth. Her definition also draws on the relational aspect of mentoring highlighted by other studies: “Mentoring will be defined here as a reciprocal teaching process where an experienced person in an organization or community helps a less experienced person grow and develop in some way” (p. 2).

All of these studies helped to inform my definition of the term mentoring and my understanding of how mentoring might be experienced by the participants in my research. I chose to use elements of the above definitions while still leaving room for students to discuss individuals whom they personally defined as mentors and who had made the most impact on their lives.

### *Mentoring Students of Color*

Mentoring is one popular form of assistance for students of color within higher education. The primary goal of most student mentoring programs is to increase the retention and academic success of students of color by creating connections with faculty members and the campus community (Smith, 2007; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007; Terrell, Hassell, & Duggar, 1992). Mentoring functions as an effective method for increasing student contact with faculty members in both structured academic settings and informal settings, which has important, positive implications for retaining students (Lee, 1999). Additionally, these relationships serve to acculturate students to academic life and alleviate some of the cultural isolation students may feel as underrepresented

minorities at predominantly white institutions of higher education (Smith; Strayhorn & Terrell; Terrell et al.).

Results of a study conducted by Terrell et al. in 1992 reveal some of the common themes and goals of mentoring programs for students in higher education. “By far the largest number [of programs] were designed to promote retention, especially for minority students” (p. 201). Typical programs used a combination of faculty, staff, and peers to serve as mentors. Although some personal, social, and career topics were addressed, the primary focus of most programs was academic survival. Unfortunately, little data existed demonstrating how successful most of the programs were at increasing retention of their students. Many of the programs were less than five years old at the time they were surveyed and had not begun to collect data on program effectiveness or had too little data to provide conclusive results.

Smith (2007) examined student-staff mentoring relationships by studying the processes used by mentors and mentees to create and maintain social capital which was deemed important for promoting the success of students of color. Smith postulated that the difficulty in isolating mentoring from other academic support services makes it quite challenging to measure the effect of mentoring relationships on academic success. She therefore emphasized studying the effectiveness of social capital-building processes in mentoring relationships. Her results “indicate that mentors and mentees enter into these relationships because they believe they can either provide or receive important academic knowledge and resources during the mentoring process (p. 44). Mentors and mentees both hoped that their relationships would provide the opportunity for the students to access information about how to

navigate their university's culture and break down cultural barriers to motivate mentees in achieving academic success. While Smith found that the mentor-mentee pairs in her study were successful in building trust, establishing norms, and creating social capital, she also determined that mentor programs could be significantly stronger if more emphasis was placed on fostering relationships and networking between mentors so as to help mentees access university networks.

Strayhorn and Terrell (2007) explored the extent to which faculty-student mentoring relationships impact the satisfaction of Black students with college. The researchers believed that as "satisfaction is one of the strongest predictors of intent to leave college," (p. 73), satisfaction could then be correlated with persistence and retention. Data was collected using secondary analysis of the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) data collected in 2004. The results clearly suggest that the establishment of a mentoring relationship, and in particular a research-focused relationship, with a faculty member was positively related to Black students' satisfaction with college. Reasons for this correlation were not easily elucidated using the quantitative methods employed in this study, but the researchers do provide a strong argument for the importance of mentoring in retaining students of color.

In 1997, LaVant et al. further explored the mentoring experiences of Black men by examining some of the mentoring initiatives in use at institutions around the country that were directed at retaining African American men. Again, an emphasis on connecting students with the campus and faculty was identified in most programs. Many also focused on providing the students with both one-on-one relationships and safe, small-group settings where they could talk about concerns and frustrations they

faced regularly as college students. Additionally, many programs emphasized the importance of mentors as role models. The opportunity to observe other successful individuals and to begin to identify their own potential for success was critical.

Only one of the programs described in LaVant et al.'s (1997) paper focused specifically on leadership development; it emphasized involvement and citizenship as methods for encouraging leadership development. All four studies summarized above mention incongruities between the values and experiences of students of color and the campus cultures of most predominantly white institutions. Mentoring was viewed by mentors and mentees as an effective means for bridging this gap since mentoring relationships provided both a setting where students felt safe to "be themselves" and an opportunity for student to experience some acculturation to higher education.

As discussed above, leadership programs are likely a microcosm of the larger university settings in which they exist, and typically students of color struggle to find a place for themselves in these programs just as they do in their universities. A question then arises concerning the potential effectiveness of mentoring for leadership development and involvement. As mentoring students of color generally serves to provide acculturation to university settings, perhaps similar results might occur in mentoring students for participation in leadership activities.

#### *Mentoring and Leadership Development*

Very little literature exists that explicitly examines the connection between mentoring and leadership development. In 1989, Shandley reviewed the EXCEL program at the University of Minnesota which matched student leaders at the school with a mentor sharing similar personal or career interests. Students participated in a

series of workshops and an ongoing mentoring relationship which allowed them to reflect on lived experiences in leadership and gather advice, support, and feedback. Although only required to last the duration of the school year, many relationships continued beyond the conclusion of the formal program.

Assessments of this program revealed that students who participated in the EXCEL program had “significantly higher self-perceptions of their leadership than students who had not participated” (Shandley, 1989, p. 65). While this is significant evidence in support of mentoring student leaders, there is no distinction between the impact of the mentoring relationships and the impact of other program components (e.g., leadership workshops) on the students’ leadership development. Further study would be required to conclude that mentoring had been instrumental in leadership development.

In 2006, Collins-Sharpapiro summarized the current literature on mentoring and argued that mentoring has the potential to be a strong tool for encouraging leadership development in college students. Specifically, she demonstrated the congruence between the values inherent in mentoring and two popular models of leadership used in higher education today: The Relational Leadership Model (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998) and the Leadership Identity Development Model (Komives, et al., 2005). Further, Collin-Sharpapiro outlined elements of a successful mentoring program for college student leaders (as motivated by her review of mentoring literature), focusing on the potential for mentoring relationships to help increase retention and help “indoctrinate” (p. 12) students into campus culture. While acknowledging a significant lack of research on the effectiveness of mentoring for student leadership

development, Collins-Shapiro made a strong argument for the “transferability of mentoring concepts from business and youth development fields to a college student model” (p. 17).

### *Cross-Cultural Mentoring*

A final element of mentoring, namely cross-cultural mentoring, also deserves review for the research topic pursued in this study. Cross-Cultural mentoring can be defined as a mentoring relationship between two or more individuals with differing racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds. Because race, ethnicity, culture may contribute significantly to personality characteristics, communication styles, and behavior (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004), cross-cultural mentoring may require a “delicate dance” (p. 7) to avoid hurtful or harmful outcomes for all involved parties. A variety of studies contribute to our understanding of cross-cultural mentoring.

Studies examining the importance of race and ethnic identity in mentoring relationships have resulted in mixed outcomes. Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2004) discuss their 13-year cross-cultural mentoring relationship that began as student-teacher relationship and has evolved to a junior faculty-senior faculty relationship. As co-authors, they discuss the risks and rewards of cross-cultural mentorship and point to the critical importance of creating trust and acknowledging racism and power in order to give such relationships a chance for success.

Lee (1999) further probed the importance of race in mentoring relationships when she conducted a series of focus groups with African American students participating in a mentoring program at a large research university. The purpose of the program was to help under-prepared students transition successfully into the academic

setting of the university and to enhance students' self-esteem and motivation.

Although the literature review of this study indicated the importance of matching mentor and mentee backgrounds, the researchers found different results. Students indicated that "having an African American faculty mentor was less important than having a mentor in their career field" (p. 37). In fact, students indicated that African American faculty members at their institution were often viewed as impatient and uninterested in the students, leading to ineffective mentoring relationships. Though certain regional and cultural reasons were suggested for this perception, the results of the study nonetheless indicate that for these participants, the race of the mentor was of secondary importance to mentees; most important appeared to be the overall quality of the interaction between mentor and mentee.

Beyene, Anglin, Sanchez, and Ballou (2002) provide similar findings. Their study surveyed students of color attending a summer training program; a diverse range of racial and ethnic backgrounds were represented. These students were asked questions regarding their current mentoring experiences to determine their opinions regarding the importance of a mentoring relationship characterized by mutuality and the importance of race and gender of the mentor. Responses in regards to race were not particularly compelling numerically (54% of the participants found racial matches with mentors important) while other characteristics of mentoring relationships (e.g., the existence of mutual learning experiences) were more conclusively preferred. These results seem to contradict previous literature as reviewed by the authors and some commonly held assumptions the mentoring relationships are most successful when mentor and mentee share the same race (Beyene et al.)

In my review of the literature on cross-cultural mentoring, the most significant piece of research found supporting the importance of same-race mentors was Frierson Jr. et al.'s (1994) study on African American summer research students. Using qualitative investigation, the researchers' examined the students' expectations of mentoring relationships and the effects of the mentor's race or gender on students' perceptions and attitudes. The results of this study did indicate that the mentor's race was associated with different students' perceptions and attitudes. While in general, most students had positive experiences, "students with Black mentors perceived their research environment and interactions with their mentors more positively than students with White mentors" (p. 478). This seems to contradict some of the earlier findings by Lee (1999) and Beyene et al. (2002). With inconclusive findings regarding the importance of shared mentor-mentee race or ethnicity, this aspect of mentoring relationships warranted some investigation in my research.

Studies that directly investigate mentoring students of color and leadership development seem absent from the literature. While the evidence cited in above sections indicates that mentoring has a significant impact on the retention and success of students of color, further research is important to increase understanding of the mentoring experiences of student *leaders* of color. With the apparent incongruities between industrial leadership paradigms and the values and experiences of students of color, mentoring may be one mechanism for increasing positive leadership experiences and consequently retention of students of color, making my research presented here a valuable addition to current literature.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will detail the methodology chosen for this research project including (a) the research question; (b) my perspective as a researcher; (c) methods for participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis; and (d) assumptions and limitations pertaining to the research methodology.

#### *Research Question*

Given my personal passion for leadership development and mentoring, and my extensive review of the literature related to these areas, I formed the following research question: “What are the mentoring experiences of student leaders from underrepresented racial or ethnic backgrounds?” Of principal concern was the impact of mentoring on students’ development of leadership skills, abilities, and identity (i.e. leadership identity as constructed in Komives et al.’s 2005 and 2006 research), not on the retention and academic outcomes of mentoring that have been previously explored in research. As leadership and involvement are linked with student development and success in higher education (Cooper et al., 1994; Cress et al., 2001), the exploration of the impact of mentoring on leadership development is likely to contribute to a broader understanding of how student success may be increased.

Specific elements of mentoring that were explored include: (a) the impact of the mentor’s racial or ethnic identity on the mentoring relationship (examined from the perspective of the student), (b) methods with which students seek out and find mentors, (c) resources available to students seeking mentoring in their leadership development, (d) support systems, either formal or informal, that exist to encourage these mentoring relationships, and (e) activities and experiences within mentoring

relationships that are viewed by students as beneficial or detrimental to their leadership development.

After meeting with my thesis committee, I recognized the need to include in my research a secondary research question: “How do students of color define and experience leadership?” This question emerged from both my review of relevant literature above and the professional experiences of my committee members which lead us to wonder whether or not commonly held leadership definitions resonate with students in my target population. It was agreed that a portion of my research should investigate each participant’s understanding of leadership before I could explore the impact of mentoring on the leadership development.

In summary, this research explored the question, “What are the mentoring experiences of student leaders from underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds,” and included specific interview questions pertaining to mentoring as well as to the participants’ views on leadership.

### *Research Perspective*

I approached this research with the goal of increasing the understanding of the experiences of student leaders of color and the meaning which they ascribe to their mentoring relationships. Inherent in this pursuit is the belief that “truth” is not necessarily the same for everyone but that each individual and group constructs their reality given the context and culture in which they exist. This belief is represented in Manning and Stage’s (2003) description of the constructivist paradigm: “The constructivist paradigm is a highly effective perspective on which to rest research when individual, idiosyncratic meaning and depth are the goals of the effort” (p. 20).

In this perspective, the discovery of meaning in the “specific context of the research setting” (p. 21) is more important than making predictions, answering questions, or breaking the phenomenon down into individual parts. My goal was not to predict outcomes of mentoring relationships or answer questions about the effectiveness of those relationships, but rather to gain a holistic understanding of the importance of this phenomenon through the eyes of the participants (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005).

In order to appropriately represent the voices and lived experiences of student leaders of color, this research was conducted using qualitative research design (Creswell, 2005). The intention of this design is not to determine hypotheses prior to data collection, but rather to allow for themes and patterns to emerge throughout the course of the study, and to allow for the revising or forming of new questions over the course of data collection so as to best find an understanding of the central phenomenon.

Specifically, this study was structured as a phenomenological exploration of the mentoring experiences of students of color. Wiersma and Jurs (2005) described this research design as one that “stresses the careful description of phenomena from the perspective of those experiencing the phenomena” (p. 243). Attempts are made not merely to describe behavior or words, but to elucidate the meaning of those things *to* the participants being studied (Van Manen, 1990). Therefore, the focus is on understanding “how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness” (Patton, 2002, p.104). This understanding comes from gathering participants’ reflections on their experiences and the process of making meaning in which they engage.

It is also critical in this research design that *a priori* assumptions are avoided and that the phenomena be viewed holistically rather than broken into a few variables.

The problem of phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate, but that we know too much. Or, more, accurately, the problem is that our ‘common sense’ pre-understandings, our suppositions, assumptions, and the existing bodies of scientific knowledge, predispose us to interpret the nature of the phenomenon. (Van Manen, 1990, p.46)

In using this method, I sought to understand what meaning mentoring relationships have to student leaders of color and what experiences the students have in those relationships. Although a review of the literature suggests certain characteristics and outcomes concerning the phenomena, significant effort has been made to allow the participants’ stories to emerge and guide the outcomes of this research.

### *Methods*

Approval for this research (including recruitment materials, research methods, and interview questions) was obtained from the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) during summer 2007. The IRB approval letter is included in Appendix A.

*Setting.* This research was conducted at a large, public, research university in the Pacific Northwest. While I initially considered conducting my research at several institutions in order to provide some opportunity for comparative data, I eventually concluded that I was more likely to reach a deep understanding of the lived experiences of students if I chose to limit my study to one site. I also believe that this

choice increased the likelihood of identifying key themes in the research. Because participants were all attending the same institution, the potential that their experiences would have some similarities and that themes in their stories would be more apparent was higher than if participants were taken from a variety of institutions.

A large public university was chosen based on the relatively large target population that could be sampled at such an institution. In addition, I included the criteria that the university should have an enrollment rate for students of color that was above the state average in which it resides. Not only does this criterion indicate the existence of a large target population, it may also suggest a climate at the university which encourages and supports the participation of students of color. Data for determining student of color enrollment rates at public universities is readily available on most websites for state departments of higher education.

The final factor used to determine a setting was access. I chose to limit my search to the Pacific Northwest because of my research budget and ability to travel for face-to-face interviews. Additionally, I considered my knowledge of campuses and my ability to make contact with the necessary professionals who might assist me in recruiting participants. The subjectivity of this criterion certainly impacted my choice of setting and in all likelihood the success I had in recruiting participants. In the end, I was forced to admit that my limited time and resources as a master's student required me to look for some of the more easy routes to completing my research.

*Participant recruitment.* Criteria for selecting participants were rather broad. Using the definitions provided above, the target population was specifically defined as student leaders of color who have engaged in one or more mentoring relationships.

Although important and compelling stories would certainly emerge, I chose not to study international students in this research project. The experiences of international students and American students from underrepresented racial or ethnic backgrounds cover an enormous range. While the purpose of this study was not necessarily to generalize findings to the population being sampled, the hope was that some themes and similarities would emerge from the data. By combining international students with American students from underrepresented racial or ethnic backgrounds, the risk of “losing” important voices becomes too great.

Purposeful sampling was employed allowing me to “select people...that [could] best help [me] understand the central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2005, p. 204). In qualitative research design, this purposeful sampling allows for the selection of “data rich” participants and sites which results in a better and deeper understanding of the central phenomenon. The specific type of purposeful sampling used was typical sampling which implies that participants represented a “normal” or “typical” example of the phenomenon being studied. In this study, “typical” student leaders of color were identified and invited to participate using multiple methods.

In order to recruit participants, I contacted 17 faculty and staff members at the selected university. I chose individuals who worked in general student activities or leadership offices, as well as those from offices or organizations that were more likely than the average to have contact with students of color (e.g., offices promoting campus diversity, cultural offices and centers, advisors of ethnic or cultural student organizations). Emails to each professional explained the nature of my research and requested the names and contact information of any students that they thought might

be potential participants. I received responses and referrals from four professionals totaling 18 potential participants. I also received a request from two individuals that I send them an email directed towards potential participants that they could send to students themselves, rather than giving me the names of students.

I emailed each student who had been referred to me a detailed letter describing my research, the students I was hoping to recruit, and the process for becoming a participant. Four students self-identified as members of my target population, and interviews were scheduled with each. No participants were identified via the emails that the two staff members sent out directly to students they thought might be interested in my research. I made follow-up attempts to recruit more participants by contacting three more professionals on the campus who I believed might know students in the target population. Two of those individuals did not respond to my emails; one did contact me with the name of a student who she believed would participate, but two emails to that student went unanswered. In the end, I was not able to reach my target of interviewing five to eight participants.

*Participants.* Participant A is an African American woman. She is 19 and a sophomore majoring in English, and she has been involved in a number of leadership activities on and off campus. She currently works as a at the campus women's resource office and is acting in a campus theater production. She has also worked at an outdoor school during the summer as a counselor for younger children and volunteers to work with individuals with special needs. She identified several mentors that have impacted her leadership experiences. One is a mentor that she was assigned to through the campus' office providing support services for first-generation students. She is

required to meet with the mentor several times each term. She also spoke extensively about a mentor with whom she developed a relationship during her work at the outdoor school and her supervisor at the women's resource office. Neither of these relationships originated as mentoring relationships but rather developed into such over the course of time.

Participant B is a Vietnamese man. He is 20 and a sophomore majoring in Business Administration, and has primarily been involved with the community of Asian students on campus. He works in the campus cultural office for Asian and Pacific Islander students and participates in several related student organizations. He spoke at length about his mentoring relationship with an older student who had impacted his leadership experiences dramatically. He also discussed his relationship with a staff member at the university who he counted as a mentor although the relationship was not initiated as a mentoring relationship.

Participant C identifies as a Filipino-Caucasian woman. She is 31 and a senior majoring in Psychology and pre-med. She has held a number of positions across campus including a student job at the campus women's resource office, a student government position, and role on a panel which provides education and advocacy around LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and ally) issues. She is interested in music and is pursuing a career in medicine. Her thesis mentor, with whom she is required to meet regularly, has played an important role in her experiences on campus, beyond simply influencing her academic pursuits. She also talked extensively about her supervisor in the women's resource office whom she considers one of the most important mentors in her life.

Participant D is African-American man. He is 22 and a fifth-year senior majoring in Human Services. He has worked for several years at the campus cultural center for Black students in a variety of roles including office assistant and coordinator. He has also worked as a student orientation leader and held an internship through a campus program for students of color. His mentors include several staff members on campus who are specifically involved with multicultural student services.

*Data Collection.* The primary method of data collection used in this study was semi-structured, one-on-one interviews consisting of open- and closed-ended questions. One of the primary benefits provided by the one-on-one interview method is that the researcher poses open-ended questions and allows the “participants [to] best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings” (Creswell, 2005, p. 214). This preserves the perspective and voice of the participants, a critical component of qualitative research design.

I developed a list of interview questions (see Appendix B) designed to probe each participant’s definition of leadership and their experiences with mentors. Prior to beginning interviews with participants, I reviewed the interview questions with a few students in order to test the clarity and applicability of each question. Only a few minor changes were made in the form of re-wording.

Each participant in the study was interviewed once for 30 to 60 minutes. Questions were provided to participants prior to their interviews so they could choose to review the content of the conversation ahead of time if they so chose. At the beginning of the interview, participants were asked to complete the Informed Consent Document (Appendix C) as required by the IRB and to complete a brief demographic

questionnaire (Appendix D) to provide me with basic data that might not emerge naturally during the interview. Each interview was recorded with a digital audio and a tape recorder with permission from the participant in advance. I chose to use two methods of recording to prepare for a potential malfunction of either device. Interviews took place in private or semi-private locations as mutually agreed upon by the participant and myself. Two participants chose to meet with me in private library study rooms, while the other two both invited me to meet with them at the respective cultural resource offices at which they worked.

Although a consistent set of questions was developed to guide the interviews, there was some flexibility to allow for exploration of emerging themes and topics that related to the research questions. I chose to ask follow-up questions and inquire about additional topics that were relevant to the research when participants alluded to important topics. I also chose to ask for further descriptions of their experiences and perceptions when appropriate.

As a secondary method of data collection, participants were emailed two open-ended questions after the completion of our interview that I requested they answer in writing if they felt comfortable doing so (See Appendix E). This was an optional activity for participants and thus a response was received from only one participant. In phenomenological research, interviews allow the researcher to acquire stories and anecdotes which demonstrate meaning, while “writing forces the [participant] into a reflective attitude – in contrast to face-to-face conversation in which people are much more immediately involved” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 64). My hope in inviting participants to write about their experiences was that I might gather another piece of

their stories and provide another opportunity for them to reflect on the meaning of their experiences beyond simply the information gathered through the interviews. Additionally, adding another method of data collection increases the credibility of the data and therefore the trustworthiness of the study as a whole.

*Data Analysis.* After the interviews were complete, they were transcribed by a professional transcription service to which I submitted digital copies of the interviews via email. Transcripts were then provided to each participant for their review as another method of increasing the credibility of the research and increasing the accuracy of the data interpretation. No changes were requested or suggested by the participants following their review of their transcripts. I then analyzed each transcript and the written submission from one participant to identify themes or patterns as outlined in Creswell's (2005) method of data analysis. This process involved reading each transcript multiple times, utilizing codes to identify common topics and relevant quotes. Codes with overlapping ideas or redundancies were then combined to reduce the total number of codes used. Finally, themes were identified by aggregating similar codes and identifying those that "participants most frequently discuss, are unique or surprising, [or] have the most evidence to support them" (p. 239). These themes were then described with a "detailed rendering of people, places, or events in [the research] setting" (p. 239) in order to provide answers to the research questions and to appropriately represent the voices and stories of the participants.

#### *Assumptions and Limitations*

Throughout this research, I have had to acknowledge and adjust for my personal belief that mentoring is a beneficial and positive experience. The topic of

leadership and mentoring was initially interesting to me because of my personal experiences as described above, and thus my bias towards the view that mentoring is inherently “good” had to be addressed regularly. Whenever possible, I tried to take a neutral but inquisitive stance towards the topic, seeking the stories and reactions of my participants. My assumption that mentoring is general a positive activity, however, has likely informed much of my methodology.

My assumption that leadership and involvement create positive outcomes for students has shaped this project in similar ways. This assumption is certainly shaped by previous research pointing to the importance of involvement (e.g. Astin, 1984), but again, required my constant acknowledgement and attention as I attempted to employ a neutral methodology.

It must also be acknowledged that my interaction with participants and analysis of the data have an impact on the results of the research. By the very nature of research on human phenomena, isolating myself from the participants is impossible and in fact, unwanted. Manning and Stage (2003) point out that “it is specifically the human interaction that results in high-quality data, findings, and interpretations” (p. 21). Through these interactions, my goal was not only to gain understanding and information from participants that will benefit this research project, but also to grow personally and professionally in my understanding of students from backgrounds different than my own.

Thus, the personal values and privileges that I possess as a white woman have certainly impacted the way in which I conducted data collection, data analysis, and the reporting of the findings. My values and experiences have shaped then lens through

which I view and evaluate information, and have required my ongoing examination and consideration as I made decisions in research design and analyzed results.

## Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

This chapter will combine descriptions of the themes that were identified in the data analysis process and discussion of the meaning and relevance of the themes. The choice to provide both descriptions and discussion in one chapter was made to aid the continuity and flow of the report as well as in an attempt to present a more holistic description of the participants' stories.

The data collected during this research yielded a wealth of information around the leadership and mentoring experiences of the participants, as well as the impact of race and ethnicity on those experiences. I chose to cluster the themes developed during data analysis into the three headings: leadership, mentoring experiences, and race and ethnicity in leadership and mentoring.

Two themes associated with leadership were identified; they are as follows: (a) leadership activities have personal meaning to the student, and (b) relationships are central to leadership experiences.

There are five themes associated with mentoring experiences: (a) mentoring relationships evolve from an initial sense of comfort between participants, (b) mentors make students feel like they matter, (c) mentors role model leadership and other qualities that contribute to the students' learning, (d) mentors help students find direction and develop leadership identity, (e) and mentors have knowledge and experience that help student leaders succeed.

Finally, two themes associated with racial and ethnic identity emerged: (a) student leaders of color believe they have a different experience than white student

leaders, and (b) shared race or ethnicity, while helpful, is not a requirement for successful mentoring relationships.

Each of these themes will be described in detail in this chapter with evidence from the data that led to the identification of the chosen theme, and a discussion at the end of each of the three categories will connect the themes to the literature review above and to possible reasons for, or meanings, of the themes.

### *Leadership Themes*

Through my literature review and meeting with my thesis committee in the spring of 2007, I concluded that leadership is a very complex concept to define, particularly in relation to the experiences of students of color. The central research question in this thesis probes the mentoring experiences of students *as they pertain to the students' leadership experiences and leadership development*. It is essential, therefore, to first understand how students define and experience leadership before one can ascertain the meaning that their mentoring relationships have in the context of their identity as student leaders. Because many traditional definitions of leadership are incongruent with the experiences and values of students of color (e.g. Arminio et al., 2000 and Hill, 2000), I could not simply choose a definition or description of leadership from the literature. I chose instead to include foundational questions in my interviews pertaining to the participants' perceptions and experiences of being student leaders. The leadership themes that were identified in the participants' responses are presented in this section.

*Leadership Theme 1: Leadership activities have personal meaning to the student.* In describing their leadership experiences, each participant emphasized the

personal passions and motivations that led to their involvement in particular activities. None of the activities discussed were simply groups in which they participated out of a sense of obligation or requirement, but rather activities that drew on the students' interests or were characterized by an important value held by the students. For example, Participant A spoke about her highly personal reasons for choosing to volunteer with a summer camp for inner-city youth with special needs: "I knew I wanted to work with kids with disabilities because I have three younger sisters with autism...with that comes a lot of learning how to sort of deal with that." The student later added that one of her sisters has a mentor who helps her learn interpersonal and communication skills, and seeing the impact that relationship has on her sister has motivated Participant A to work with kids with disabilities. Because of her family experiences, the act of assisting other children is personally rewarding and important.

Participant A also spoke about her motivation for working in the campus' women's resource office:

When I came to campus I saw a flyer for the Vagina Monologues and I was like, I need to do that. So I auditioned, I got my part, and I did [one of the monologues], and that was an amazing, amazing experience. And I was like, no, I just need to be a feminist, I need to take all these women's studies classes... [and my mentor told me] the [women's resource office] is hiring. I was like, that's perfect because I just ended the Vagina Monologues a week before. So that's how I got involved with that.

Her passion for feminism and activism were clearly reflected in the activities with which she got involved and she found personal satisfaction and meaning in her work with both the Vagina Monologues production and the women's resource office position.

Additionally, leadership activities allowed students to raise public awareness around the topics that were particularly important and meaningful to them, and the chosen activities also increased the students' understanding of their personal values. Participant B asserted that the most rewarding or memorable elements of his leadership experiences included "just getting other people involved" and helping to increase the participation of students in the various Asian and Pacific-Islander (APA) organizations which he helps lead. He found that helping increase the size and outsider-awareness of the APA community was particularly meaningful to him. Participant A also remarked on the importance of raising awareness: "I'm in charge of planning programs across campus that promote issues about women, and it's about inviting anybody from campus, not just women, and getting them involved and aware of issues that I think are interesting." It was clear in the way the participants described their various leadership experiences that these activities helped them to gain clarity and insight into their personal passions and allowed them to engage others in those issues, giving the activities significant personal meaning to the students.

*Leadership Theme 2: Relationships are central to the leadership experience.*

The importance of relationships formed a central theme to all of the participants' discussions of leadership. Students emphasized the desire to help others, the importance of collaboration and community, the opportunity to influence *other*

developing leaders, and the desire for social interaction and fun during leadership activities. All of these indicate the relational nature of leadership from these students' perspective.

Participant C described her decision to get involved at the campus' women's resource office as being strongly based on the feeling of community she experienced there:

I had originally started hanging out there and I really liked the environment. I liked the energy there. I really liked the people that went through the doors. I just – it felt very like-minded to me and that this was the kind of people that I wanted to be around.

Clearly the positive feelings that she experienced being around people with whom she felt comfortable were strong motivators in her decision to stay involved at the center. In a similar fashion, Participant D cited the fact that he “met people [and] it felt good” as reasons for getting involved at the university's center for African-American students, while Participant B discussed the importance of making friends and networking at the institution's center for Asian and Pacific Islander students.

All of these examples help illustrate the importance the participants placed on forming positive relationships in the settings and groups in which they assumed leadership positions. Feeling comfortable, making friends, and being with people who were similar to them in some way helped motivate participants to not only stay involved, but take on responsibility and leadership in their respective groups. When asked about the things they had gained or felt were the most rewarding aspects of their leadership positions, three of the four participants discussed some aspect of the

relationships they had formed. Participant B answered quite generally that he had “definitely [learned] how to build people relationships,” while Participant A discussed the rewards of forming relationships with low-income children during her summer work and learning about people who had different experiences than herself. Participant C was more specific in her answer, highlighting her experience learning to empathize with others: “I think my time here and just the work that I’ve done has helped me to become more empathetic and to even really appreciate where everybody’s coming from.”

Also connected to the theme of relationships, participants discussed the importance of helping others in their leadership positions. This “help” took many forms, from creating access to opportunities (Participant A) to helping students plan activities (Participant B) to helping people with personal development (Participant C). In general, this desire to help seemed to be based on a care and concern for those in the communities in which the participants were involved. At times, “help” also implied working to build new leaders in the community. Participant B shared his desire to continue his work in the APA community:

I really want to stay connected with the APA community because there’s always incoming freshmen, new students who are like myself last year – just newly exposed to this culture. And you know as long as we kind of keep that going and start building new leaders each and every year, you know people will step up and continue this community.

Participant B’s own positive experiences in the community motivated him to form relationships with younger students and help foster new leaders.

Other comments concerning the importance of relationships highlighted the opportunity to be around and work with people from a variety of backgrounds. Participant D said, “It was fun, just working with all these cool people from different backgrounds and I just loved it...it allowed me to broaden and be more comfortable around different people.” Through this experience of establishing relationships with a variety of people, Participant D also realized that leadership can look different and be defined differently for every person. This realization helped him articulate his personal definition of leadership while still acknowledging the characteristics or skills that make others leaders as well.

*Discussion of leadership themes.* In general, the leadership themes that emerged in this research correlated strongly with the description of leadership provided by previous literature. LaVant and Terrell (1994) found that students of color were primarily involved in organizations that reflected their ethnic background or value system, which appears to be true of the participants in this research. The reason that Participant C gave for getting involved at the women’s resource office was essentially that she felt she shared similar values with the other students there – that it “felt very like-minded” to her. While this situation may potentially reflect more of a gender than ethnicity issue, it does demonstrate an overall desire and need for the student to find her personal values and passions reflected in her leadership work. Similarly, Participant B’s heavy involvement in the APA community aligns with the findings from LaVant and Terrell. He emphasized the relationships that he formed in the APA community and the importance of working with others who shared his background and culture.

Overall, the literature review revealed a preference for collectivistic leadership and group collaboration in students of color, which is clearly seen in the themes that emerged in this research (e.g. Arminio et al., 2000). The “relationship” theme demonstrates the priority that the participants placed on communities and group development, rather than holding a specific position of leadership. When asked whether or not he wanted to be described as a leader, Participant B answered, “Not necessarily. No, I just kind of want to just make sure I can help out as much as possible. Whether it's in the leadership role or just you know someone who is willing to do...just help out groups.” This appears to demonstrate a collectivistic orientation rather than an individualistic orientation and a rejection of the label leader as discussed by Arminio et al. While the other participants felt more comfortable being identified as a leader, they all identified the priority of working with and helping others, rather than gaining personal power or operating as a “dictator” (Participant A).

This emphasis on collectivism was visible too in the importance several participants placed on providing synthesis of information and opinions in group settings. The students emphasized positive interactions with others and the importance for leaders not to act as “dictators” (a word used by Participant A to describe negative leadership qualities). Instead, communities and relationships took precedent over actions and outcomes. The role of the “leader” in this context, then, was to take in a variety of pieces of information and the opinions of various group members to help facilitate group unity around a central goal. One participant emphasized throughout his discussion of leadership that listening to others is a critical role of leaders because it helps the leader to define how he can help the group unite and work collaboratively.

The leadership themes that emerged in this research appear to be closely in line with post-industrial paradigms of leadership, as expected from the literature review, and reveal the importance that leadership experiences may have in the lives of students of color. For the participants in this research, leadership offered the opportunity to explore and focus on their values and passions, as well build relationships with students of similar backgrounds or interests. These students did not appear to get involved in their leadership roles out of a desire to add things to their resumes or even because it was just somewhat interesting. All of the experiences that they chose to discuss with me had a high level of meaning and had a large impact on their lives. Participant C credited her leadership experiences with increasing her understanding of diversity and her ability to empathize with others, while Participant D felt he had gained a great deal of confidence and the ability to be comfortable and speak in front of large groups. Overall, it seems safe to say that the participants in this study had experienced valuable personal growth and development through their leadership experiences, and that they were better able to identify their values, work with others, and think critically about or synthesize information due to their involvement.

One finding from previous research that seems unsupported by results in this project is the assertion from Hill (2000) that leadership positions are unavailable to students of color who don't conform to the majority's value system or definition of leadership. The participants in this research seemed satisfied with their opportunities to engage in leadership on campus and did not indicate that any venues were perceived as closed to them because of their minority status. While this area wasn't specifically

probed, discussions of how participants' identified potential leadership or involvement opportunities reflected generally positive experiences.

This research also seems to indicate a theme in leadership that was not explicitly identified in the literature review. The importance of participating in personally meaningful activities or groups was mentioned by all participants (see leadership theme one). Although a few studies indicated that students participate in activities that reflect their value systems or backgrounds (e.g. LaVant and Terrell, 1994; Hill, 2000), none highlighted with the specificity seen in this research the importance students place on finding meaning in their leadership activities. Rather than discussing activities which gave them experience for future careers, added to their resumes, or were simply opportunities to have fun, all of the participants emphasized leadership activities which they found fulfilling and rewarding on a personal level, and which led to personal development in some way. While this may not be a wholly unexpected outcome, it is not discussed at length in any research that I was able to locate, and therefore contributes to the overall understanding of student leadership in higher education.

### *Mentoring Themes*

My central research question examines the lived experiences of student leaders of color who have been previously or are currently mentored and the impact that mentoring may have on leadership experiences. The themes presented in this section relate to the experiences of the participants in their mentoring relationships and seek to describe the most meaningful or salient aspects of those relationships.

*Mentoring Theme 1: Mentoring relationships evolve from an initial sense of comfort between participants.* Despite the fact that two of the four participants had been assigned to or required to meet with mentors, all of the students agreed that successful mentoring relationships developed from a natural connection or initial level of comfort. Most participants discussed characteristics such as shared interests, backgrounds, or experiences, or simply a general sense of familiarity, as the most important aspects of developing a strong relationship. Overwhelmingly, the participants felt the mentoring relationships “just happen” or evolve over time and can’t be pre-engineered. Participant B said that mentoring is “something that kind of happens naturally,” while Participant C felt that “when it comes down to developing relationships whether they’re friendships or working relationships or mentoring relationships, I like to keep it open.” She didn’t feel it was possible to force it to happen or to identify the perfect person based on certain qualities.

Participants A and C who were both involved in required mentoring relationships stressed the natural comfort they felt with their mentors when they first began working together and indicated that without such a feeling the relationships would not have been as beneficial as they turned out to be. Participant A used the word “blossomed” to describe the way her mentoring relationship with a former supervisor had evolved over time because of their initial comfort with each other. She discussed being able to just “hang out” with the person and feel comfortable discussing whatever concerns or questions she had. Participant C also emphasized her initial connection with the mentor she is required to meet with for her work on an undergraduate thesis. Their mutual interest in music and feminism, and a shared

positive attitude in life helped lay the foundation for a successful relationship. The importance of naturally evolving relationships rather than contrived connections or forced relationships was clear in all participants' discussion of mentoring and was a clear theme for the overall mentoring experiences of these students.

*Mentoring Theme 2: Mentors make students feel like they matter.* One of the fundamental experiences mentioned by each of the participants was the feeling that their mentors really cared and that the students' lives mattered to mentor. The experiences of mattering ranged from feeling the support of the mentor to knowing the mentor was proud to experiencing the mentor advocating for the student in various settings.

Participant D included the supportive aspect of mentoring in his initial definition of the term: "How I define mentor is a person is just always there. If you have questions, you can get answers and support." This support was felt through the mentor's demonstration of care and willingness to listen:

Supportive is a great thing [for a mentor]. Also, just caring. Some professors you go up to and are like 'this and this happened' and they're like 'ok, you can do this and do that,' but some mentors, they really sit down and talk to you about it. They seem like they really care...They really listen.

Similarly, Participant A described her relationship with a mentor as basically a "support system" and felt that the mentor really cared and listened when she spoke: "She just sort of says, 'how are you?' And then that's kind of it. I'm a talker so I get to start...I like to lead the conversation and she sort of let's me...She is an amazing listener."

Other participants alluded to the sense of mattering they have when their mentor shows pride in them. Participant C described the experience of feeling affirmation and pride from a mentor:

I might mention things in passing to her like what I'm doing and she'll say things like, 'You're so awesome. I'm so happy you're doing this. You're a really good person for whatever you're doing.' So I would always get that support from her and you know whether we want to admit it or not it's nice to get support from people that we look up to...She thought I was doing a really good job and she was really proud of me when last spring I was actually named one of the 25 most influential undergrads at [my institution]. So she was really proud of that.

Clearly, Participant C felt important because her mentor cared enough about her activities and successes to explicitly express pride in her. Participant A also commented on the impact her mentor's pride had on her: "We talk about all of the leadership roles I do. And I can definitely tell that she's proud of me, so that helps a lot. That pushes me to go farther." Because of her mentor's pride, Participant A pushed herself to do more and develop more in her leadership activities.

This existence of pride and caring often manifests in the mentor's willingness to advocate for or promote the student to other people. Again, Participant C described this experience: "She'll write spectacular letters of recommendation for you. If somebody's coming to her looking for something in particular, she's more than happy to drop your name...She's a huge advocate." Participant C felt that her mentor played a huge role in acknowledging her successes and accomplishments and letting others

know about those things. She described her mentor as her “biggest fan” and really appreciated knowing that someone cared.

The students in this research overwhelmingly received the message that they mattered to their mentors through the attitudes and behavior of the mentors when interacting with the students. This sense of mattering reinforced the bond between mentor and student, helped to strengthen the level of trust and commitment that students felt in their mentoring relationships, and in some cases encouraged the participants to grow and develop.

*Mentoring Theme 3: Mentors role model leadership and other qualities that contribute to the students' learning.* Three of the participants in this study discussed the ways that their mentors role-modeled leadership qualities that the students wanted to emulate, or generally role-modeled successful lives that the students admired and hoped to achieve. The opportunity for the students to see successful leaders in action appears to have made a significant impact on the participants' own goals and actions. For Participant A, this was clearly the case: “My mentors have qualities that I definitely want in life, that I strive towards. I see them as somebody that I would like to be.” Additionally, Participant C discussed her thesis mentor as someone she generally admires and in both academic settings and life in general:

I like her style. I like how humorous she is. She teaches through a feminist lens which to me is really important because I identify as a feminist and I always want that. And I just look up to her because she's accomplished so much yet she's still young and hip and has a good time, is funny. And ultimately, that's where I would like to be. Not necessarily being a philosophy professor, but to

just have accomplished things, but to maintain a youthfulness and to still be in good spirits and not take everything too seriously.

Her mentor's general success and attitude towards life were clearly appealing to Participant C and she observed qualities role-modeled by her mentor that she would like to achieve herself. Later in our interview, this participant also mentioned specifically that she tries to role-model her own accomplishments through her words and actions, and views this type of role-modeling as a way of mentoring others. She believed that in many ways, this simply let other people know that they are "not alone" in the challenges they face.

Participant D mentioned specifically that he admires leadership skills role-modeled by his mentors: "Usually mentors have the skills that you want to have to be a leader – you want a mentor to be open, flexible, caring, committed – all those types of different leadership qualities." This participant observed qualities in his mentor that he viewed as important leadership skills and qualities that enhanced the development of his own leadership style. In a similar fashion, Participant A talked about mimicking the skills demonstrated by her mentor in order to improve herself:

I would see her work with kids and see how incredibly successful she was in working with children, and then I would just sort of mimic that because I really wanted that same relationship. And I knew I could always go to her if I had any questions and I wouldn't feel embarrassed about a question or anything. She definitely led me in a very, very important way and showed me what my job was and how I was supposed to do it and didn't make me feel like I was dumb for not knowing.

The example set by the mentors helped both Participant D and Participant A to perfect their own skills and grow as leaders.

While role-modeling is often a component mentioned in studies in mentoring relationships, it is important to note the theme discussed here provides important information from the *mentees* perspective regarding the impact that role-modeling has on their development. The participants in this study highlighted this as a particularly important element of their relationships, and further, three of them explicitly indicated that the role-modeling they observed had directly impacted their own behaviors and decisions as leaders.

*Mentoring Theme 4: Mentors help students find direction and develop leadership identity.* One of the key experiences mentioned by each participant was their mentors helping them to identify their interests, their strengths, and the potential places in which they could get involved, as well as helping them gain clarity on who they are and where they are going in life. This theme reflects the identity development and meaning-making processes that seemed to occur in mentoring relationships.

Participant A mentioned that she has “no idea” what she wants to do with her life, but that her mentors have helped her find her direction and identify areas where she can explore her interests. Several of her mentors have said something to her such as, ““You seem like you’re very interested in this, why don’t you try going here,”” and she uses all of that information to make meaning of her interests: “I think I just take certain things from all of them to sort of decide what I want to do.” Similarly, Participant D likes the different perspectives he gets his mentors that help him really figure out what he wants to do: “I just like to talk to a lot of different people. It gives

me a chance to not really compare but...I like different points of view.” The input from mentors and suggestions for exploring interests and ideas seemed to create a process for the participants to figure out who they are or what they want to do as leaders. Participant A described this as helping “provide direction” but still allowing her to make the decisions. This “direction-giving” was also characterized by help from the mentor in organizing her work. Participant A:

I didn't have a lot of direction before college, I was just kind of all over the place and everything was a big mess, and then coming here, she was like, 'college is serious.' She explained to me that it was something I really needed to be very prioritized about and very organized about or else I'm going to get lost.

Participant B described much of his development as happening in conversation with his mentor during which he was able to solidify his thoughts:

So with mentoring, I take it as you have a problem or you're kind of contemplating – you're kind of on the borderline between something – and you go to a person and ask them what they think their opinion is. And from there you have a better sense of...they kind of solidify your thoughts.

Participant B discussed multiple times in our interview the clarity he achieved through such conversations, not simply from his mentor telling him what to do, but through conversation and analysis of certain situations. For all of the participants, mentors seemed to provide advice, perspectives, and an opportunity for the participants to come to their own decisions or conclusions. Participant D chose the phrase “personal development” to sum up this experience, while Participant C

described it this way: “I think a mentor is someone that an individual looks up to help them stay true to their path or to find a path that perhaps they weren’t aware of.”

This mentoring theme ties directly into the previously discussed leadership theme one, leadership activities have personal meaning. The participants described the assistance and impact of their mentoring relationships on their processes of identifying their core values and interests and in locating rewarding leadership opportunities. Through listening and discussing, mentors provided an important outlet for students to work on narrowing down their interests and choosing the activities that would eventually lead to the meaningful leadership experiences that the participants discussed.

*Mentoring Theme 5: Mentors have knowledge and experience that help student leaders succeed.* One of the mentor characteristics viewed as most important by the participants was the extensive amount of knowledge and experience their mentors possessed. It appeared that the students benefited immensely from the information that their mentors were able to share about their campuses and about how to lead successfully in the university setting. Participant B even responded with the single word “experience” when asked what specific qualities he felt made his mentors “good” mentors for him. It was clear that the students felt they were more successful in their leadership activities by having access to the expertise of their mentors, and that they therefore accessed those resources often.

Participant D described one specific way that his mentors’ experiences were beneficial to him; he explained how important it is to have someone who can tell him how things have worked in the past:

I would say one of the good characteristics [in mentors] is helpful because they've been on campus longer than all of the students...they know, they're very wise, they've seen the different events that have gone on, they've seen issues that have happened before at [my institution]. I can always ask for them to be helpful and they have advice because they've been through those kinds of experiences that a lot of students may not have been.

This student knew he could rely on his mentors to assist him when he was unfamiliar with a situation because the mentors had been through it before and would be able to provide some help. This was particularly relevant as he navigated his leadership position in the campus center for African-American students. He was able to access information about past activities and the atmosphere on campus by speaking with his mentors, and therefore serve as a leader more effectively. Additionally, his mentors' knowledge was useful in more personal situations: Participant D reached out to a mentor who had recently applied to graduate school, when he himself began thinking about his future. In that situation the mentor was able to provide information and assistance because "he just knows what to do." Participant B also commented on this theme in reference to an older student who mentors him:

He got involved with a lot of the groups. And from there he just kind of saw everything...Whenever I had an issue or was just borderline between stuff I go straight to [my friend] and if he understands or has experienced it before he'll tell me what he thinks of it.

A few of the participants commented that the precise knowledge possessed by their mentors was important. Primarily, this took the form of the mentor acting as a

resource or a guide in navigating the university. Participant A tied this into the direction one of her mentor helps provide: “She provides so much direction in my life because I feel like she has so much knowledge to offer.” Referring to another mentor, she says, “they’re there to provide any resource that I need at all, and if she doesn’t know the answer she’ll find somebody that does know the answer.” The mentor’s connections to the campus allowed her to provide both specific information and direction for how to access information she didn’t possess, an important tool for the student who was unsure of how to work in the university context. This was important in the students’ leadership activities, as being successful may mean completing tasks or networking with campus staff members, both easier to do with the information or knowledge provided by a mentor.

Participant D also commented on his mentors' wealth of knowledge in discussing a brief relationship with Upward Bound counselors who assisted him in the process of applying to college. According to the student, those people “help you do all the things you need to know to get into college.” Their knowledge of the application process made a dramatic impact on the student and his future.

*Discussion of mentoring themes.* A number of the themes in this section support previous research findings. While not addressed in the literature review for this project, the concept of mattering as presented in mentoring theme two is not unexplored in prior research. Nancy Schlossberg (1989) contrasted the experiences of students who experienced feelings of marginality versus mattering and suggested that mattering “refers to our belief, whether right or wrong, that we matter to someone else. This belief acts as a motivator” (p. 9). This feeling proved important to student

involvement and success: In a study conducted by the author, for example, adult learners were more engaged in their learning when they felt they mattered to their faculty adviser or to the school they attended.

According to Schlossberg (1989), mattering occurs on five levels. Attention is the most basic form of mattering and refers to the belief one has that he is noticed by another person. The author notes how the lack of attention may be particularly noticeable to a person who is new to a city, knows nobody, and believes they could simply disappear without anyone noticing. The next level of mattering, importance, is the belief that another person cares about our actions and is “concerned for our fate” (p. 10). This goes beyond simply being noticed, as in attention, and indicates that another person actually reacts to and cares about the person’s life. Participants in this research experienced this level of mattering, as they discussed the care and support they received from mentors. The third level is ego-extension. This level represents the belief one has that another person will experience pride or sadness in relation to his successes or failures. This level of mattering was clearly experienced by participants who described the pleasure they felt when mentors expressed pride in their accomplishments. Dependence is the fourth level of mattering; this is the feeling one has that he is needed by others or that others depend on his presence. The final stage of mattering, appreciation, refers to the “importance of feeling that [one’s] efforts were appreciated” (p. 10).

The experiences described by participants in this research support the conclusion that feelings of mattering may lead to greater student success. Students described their pleasure over the pride expressed by their mentors and their awareness

that their mentors would help and guide them however they requested. Participant A explicitly stated that she was “pushed to go further” because of her feelings of mattering to her mentor, which indicates the significant impact that mattering to a mentor may have on a student leader’s development. The sense that I received in listening to the participants discuss their mentors was that they felt more confident and important due to the fact that they mattered to their mentors and that those feelings led them to take greater risks or tackle bigger challenges in their leadership experiences than they might have otherwise.

This research also supports some findings in LaVant et al.’s (1997) survey of mentoring programs which found that there was a common emphasis on role-modeling. The focus in their article was on a passive experience of role-modeling in which students observed successful mentors and began to achieve self-efficacy around their own academic success; this is slightly different from the experiences seen in this research. As described above, role-modeling by mentors seemed to create active response in the students who emulated or mimicked behaviors and decisions seen in their role models. While some of the role-modeling discussed by participants in this research tracked the discussion in LaVant et al. (i.e. role models are an example of what you can achieve or become), it is significant to note that some mentors here provided examples of behaviors, skills, and decisions that students chose to actively tryout and which directly impacted their growth as leaders.

Another aspect of the results from this research that connects with findings in previous studies was the importance of the mentors’ knowledge and experience (theme five). Smith’s (2007) research on the social capital created and shared in mentoring

relationships was one of the primary reasons that mentors and mentees entered into relationships. The participants in her research viewed the sharing of knowledge and resources as a means for assisting students of color in navigating their university's cultures and achieving academic success. While my research did not probe the academic outcomes for students in mentoring relationships, it did find similar results in relation to leadership success. The participants indicated that the knowledge and resources provide by their mentors were important to their development and their ability to be affective in their leadership positions.

These findings have significant implications for the theory that mentoring may be one means of bridging the gap between traditional leadership paradigms and the values and experiences of students of color. By providing information and engaging in the social capital building process as discussed by Smith (2007), mentors helped students to both locate and succeed in meaningful leadership experiences, as well as navigate the complex world of the university. This certainly involved a certain level of passive role-modeling, but beyond that it provided students with specific tools and resources that made it possible for them to complete tasks and lead their respective groups in creating positive change.

Finally, the findings in theme one, the participants' overall feeling that mentoring relationships "just happen," make a strong argument against institutional-run mentoring programs in which mentors and students are matched by a third party. It seems unlikely from the comments made by the participants in this study that an outsider would be able to successfully identify or predict the general sense of comfort that formed the foundation for the mentoring relationships that these students

preferred. Even with information about potential mentor and mentee interests, characteristics, and race, it may not be possible to guarantee two individuals will connect successfully and experience a beneficial mentoring relationship. This is important information for institutions to keep in mind as they consider the creation of formal mentoring programs. Possible ideas for fostering strong mentoring relationships will be explored in chapter five.

I can't help but connect the importance of mattering in mentoring theme two with the organic development of mentoring relationships indicated by theme one. It seems unlikely that any of the participants would have placed as much importance on their mentors' opinions or pride had the relationships not been built on the natural comfort with one another and genuine enjoyment of each other that was described by the students. It seems that a strong foundation in the mentoring relationship, based on mutual interest and care, may give rise to an aspect of the relationship that has a strong impact on the mentee's growth and development.

#### *Race and Ethnicity Themes*

The participants in this research had varying experiences and opinions related to race and ethnicity, specifically in regards to leadership and mentoring. While I specifically chose to study students of color with the hopes of better understanding the experiences of this population, it was surprisingly difficult to sift out clear themes from the data collected. I believe this points to the complex and very personal nature of racial or ethnic identity, and the difficult in making generalizations about the experiences of students of color. The two themes below attempt to describe the perspective of the participants in this research with regards to this topic.

*Race and Ethnicity Theme 1: Student leaders of color believe they have a different experience than white student leaders.* All of the participants spoke in some way about the difference their race or ethnicity made on their experience as student leaders. Whether it was dealing with judgments from outsiders, viewing situations through a unique lens, or seeking leadership experiences that allowed them to interact with others from their culture, these students seemed to believe that some of their experiences were not the same as those of white students.

Participant A explicitly stated that she viewed herself as unique and believed that she brought her unique viewpoint to her work as a leader:

I come from a different view than anybody else unlike me...I think I provide a different view than a lot of my co-workers or people I work with in the community because I do come from a different background and have a different family dynamic than other people.

This student believed that her experiences as a multi-racial woman gave her a different view on situations but also felt that in general, her work as a leader was generally unaffected by other people's perceptions of her race. She believed that in her leadership positions she was judged by her work and what she "has to offer and what she can do." So, while she did not perceive negative implications in her leadership experiences from her racial identity, she did believe she had a unique view to share.

Similarly, Participant C believed that her experiences and her lens through which she viewed the world and her leadership experiences were affected by her racial identity. She described her feelings about the intersection of race and leadership: "I have great pride in the leadership work I have done because I have overcome many of

the cycles that have a tendency to suppress minorities.” This student clearly felt her leadership opportunities were impacted because she is not white and because of the systems of power and privilege at work in our society. She said later, “I have a different set of tools working for me than maybe somebody else would,” and spoke about her experience feeling like she had to prove herself to others to avoid being stereotyped or labeled. While Participant C refrained from giving specific examples of this situation, she clearly felt that her overall journey through leadership had been at least somewhat impacted by her Filipino identity and that her experiences were different than those of other students.

When asked whether or not he thought that his racial identity impacted his leadership experiences, Participant D responded more directly than any other student, saying that race “always plays in” when he is on campus. Without being specific, this student indicated that the African-American students in general have a different experience on campus and that this identity impacts the way that he interacts with people and works as a leader. Participant D also discussed the fact that African-Americans on campus shared similar struggles and that relating with other African-Americans might at times be easier than with a white student or staff member because of their familiarity and experience in similar situations.

Participant B discussed his frustration at times with having to defend or justify the actions of his APA groups simply because they are Asian. While he felt that most of the time he was able to “just do [his] work” and operate as any other typical student leader, there had been situations where he has had to confront stereotypes of Asian people. In some situations he or his group has been accused of being “too sensitive” or

has been forced to defend themselves against the stereotypes believed by outsiders.

This was described as an experience that was different from those of other non-Asian student leaders and Participant B did feel this was an issue that was still common his campus.

*Race and Ethnicity Theme 2: Shared race or ethnicity, while helpful, is not a requirement for successful mentoring relationships.* Generally, participants in this research felt that shared race or ethnicity was not a requirement in successful mentoring relationships. Instead, all of the students emphasized their belief that successful mentoring relationships developed from a natural connection or initial level of comfort. They felt that their relationships would not have been successful without some personal connection between the mentor and the student that need not be based on race or ethnicity. Participant A was assigned to a mentor through a university program for first-generation students and though she was initially concerned that it would not be comfortable it turned out successfully:

I was like, ‘oh I have to be with her five times a term, this is going to be really awkward,’ but it turned into more of a support system and not something I absolutely had to do, it was something I wanted to do.

This participant credited the laid-back approach her mentor took to their interactions and level of comfort she felt talking to her mentor about her life:

I’m just going to talk about whatever I want to talk about regarding college...She is understanding and she’s very laid-back and not so much like it’s really a business to her. It’s more like a personal relationship and I really enjoy that.

Participant C credited shared interests and a natural sense of familiarity with making her required mentoring relationship work so well: “When I started focusing on what I wanted to do I was like, ‘This is a perfect person to help guide me through this experience.’” Although this participant does see a clear line between being a mentor and being a friend, she appreciated the fact that she shared an interest in music and feminism with her mentor and said, “we also can talk about most anything,” which helped her to trust and feel comfortable with her mentor. She mentioned that she “gravitate[s] towards individuals that [she] has similar interest to” which helps the relationships to grow and evolve.

Other participants alluded to a more nebulous sense of familiarity or shared identity with their mentors that helped the relationships to work. Participant D commented on this when I asked about the elements that might make mentors easier to relate to:

Usually somebody who has a shared background, shared experiences is just like, ‘I’ve been through something like that,’ or ‘this is what I did with something like that.’ When you see familiar faces and have familiarity with your own race and identity it’s just like you know people are going through the same struggles. It may be a different story but it’s going to be the same struggles anyway. It does make things a lot more comfortable.

While some participants (like Participant D above) commented specifically on shared racial identity as being potentially helpful to mentoring relationships, none felt it was necessarily a requirement. When asked specifically about whether or not shared race or ethnic identity was important in their mentoring relationships, participants said that

it might be helpful but it was by no means a requirement. For example, Participant A responded to that shared race or ethnicity “definitely can [be important in a mentoring relationship] because it’s easier to relate to somebody if you have a shared experience, but I think it’s also incredibly important to bring different experiences to the table and learn from each other’s experiences.”

*Discussion of Race and Ethnicity Themes:* Race and ethnicity seemed to be a somewhat salient identity for these students as all were able to discuss some ways it had impacted their experiences either at their university or in another setting. Few gave specific examples or stories to illustrate their ideas and opinions which may have occurred for a variety of reasons. First, as a first time researcher and as a white woman, I may not have probed deeply enough or phrased questions thoughtfully enough to evoke the details for which I hoped. Another possibility lies in the overall feeling from three of the four participants that their race or ethnicity was not exceedingly salient at their university. These participants expressed the belief that issues of race did not frequently impact their experiences on campus. Although theme one illustrates the participants’ ability to see differences in their experiences from those of other students, this appeared to be more of an observation of their overall experiences rather than something they took note of on a regular basis.

As discussion in some of the research from my literature review noted the negative experiences of students of color, I had unconsciously anticipated discussions with participants concerning race and ethnicity to be of a generally negative nature. In actuality, while some participants noted vague and occasional negative experiences related to their racial or ethnic identities, discussion on this topic did not indicate

strong positive or negative experiences overall. Instead, race seemed to be only somewhat or occasionally relevant to their leadership and mentoring experiences. And, despite the findings in the literature review, none of the participants stated *explicitly* that their leadership experiences were incongruent with the overall leadership values at their institution.

The results in theme two of this section do show some congruence with prior research findings. Studies regarding the importance of shared racial or ethnic background in mentoring relationships (e.g. Lee, 1999; Beyene et al., 2002; Frierson Jr. et al., 1994) were not conclusive in their results, but taken as a whole seemed to indicate that this was only one aspect that might indicate successful mentoring relationships. This research showed similar results, with the emphasis from the participants being on an amorphous sense of comfort with their mentor rather than a specific set of shared qualities. Some of the students indicated that when they shared the same race or ethnic background with their mentors, it *did* make it somewhat easier to relate to the person in certain situations (Participant D said that “they just know how you feel”) but that this had never been a pre-requisite or a guarantee of a successful mentoring relationship in their experience. As in Lee and Beyene et al., all of the students indicated the strength of other shared interests and characteristics in determining the success of their mentoring relationships.

### *Chapter Summary*

The themes above demonstrate some of the complexities involved with understanding the mentoring experiences of student leaders of color. Capturing the essence of this phenomenon first required seeking an understanding of the students’

definitions of leadership. Once the leadership themes emerged, the mentoring experiences were more easily analyzed for their meaning in the students' lives and for their influence on the students' involvement and leadership experiences. It also became clear that while racial identity was relevant in some ways to the participants' leadership and mentoring experiences, it did not appear to be the most salient aspect of the phenomenon or even something that the impact of which could be easily explained by these students.

This complex investigative process was necessary because of the nature of phenomenological research which requires not only seeking a description of the phenomenon but an attempt at elucidating the meaning of the experiences. This research was relatively successful in achieving this aim, as can be seen by the themes above which describe the elements of leadership, mentoring, and racial identity which were most important to the participants and the meaning that those elements have to the students.

In chapter five, I will present some of the more clear implications of these results along with some of the remaining questions from the results that may indicate the need for further research.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

This chapter will examine implications of the results presented above, recommendations for further research, and limitations of the research. I will also provide some concluding thoughts on my experiences as a first-time researcher and the lessons learned from the research process.

### *Implications*

There are a variety of implications from the results of this research project for student affairs professionals and other administrators in higher education. First, it should be noted that the participants in this research were universally positive about their mentoring experiences and felt that their mentors positively impacted their involvement on campus and development as leaders. Mentors helped these students feel as if they were important and subsequently provided resources, examples, and information that led to success in leadership settings. Administrators in higher education should take note of the powerful nature of mentoring relationships elucidated in this project. All participants expressed their pleasure with having mentors who listened, guided, and advocated in order to help the student succeed at the university. They felt that mentoring had contributed to their involvement on campus and their ability to successfully navigate leadership experiences. Interviews did not touch on whether or not the students believed they would have been involved in leadership and other activities were they *not* involved in mentoring relationships, but the themes developed from the interviews seem to indicate implicitly that mentoring *helped* create positive leadership experiences for these students.

With these positive results in mind, student affairs professionals and other administrators should consider the usefulness of mentoring as a means of encouraging the campus involvement of students of color. The development of mentoring programs may be considered as an important tool for improving the experiences of students of color on campus. Programs that support mentoring relationships by providing resources and information for mentors and mentees may be helpful. Administrators should consider providing information for mentors concerning the aspects of mentoring relationships that students find helpful or important. For instance, the emphasis that the participants placed on their feelings of mattering to mentors might be important for mentors to know. With the knowledge that students were grateful for the support, pride, and attention of their mentors, mentors can be explicit in providing this assistance.

Additionally, it is important to note that the participants expressed the significance of finding leadership opportunities that had personal meaning and that allowed them to be in relationship with other people, and they also indicated the mentors were helpful in identifying personal values and opportunities around campus. Administrators who are helping to foster mentoring programs or relationships on campus should keep these results in mind and emphasize to mentors the role they may play in helping students connect with the campus. Mentors who are intentionally listening for information about their mentees' interests and values will be better able to provide information and assistance to the students in getting involved with personally appropriate activities.

It is also critical to note the emphasis from the participants in this research on mentoring relationships that evolve naturally. I believe this is an important caution to administrators regarding mentoring programs in which mentors and students are matched arbitrarily by a third party. While mentoring seems to be a powerful and positive tool for promoting student success, it does not seem likely that simply matching two people together will automatically result in positive outcomes. Rather, administrators should consider ways in which they can facilitate opportunities for students and potential mentors to interact and get to know each other so that relationships can develop from mutual interest and comfort with one another. They may also want to consider the ways that the institution can support and encourage mentoring relationships by providing information or training to mentors and mentees concerning beneficial aspects of mentoring relationships (such as the results obtained from this research), and by creating incentives programs to encourage faculty and staff to get involved in mentoring relationships.

#### *Recommendations for Further Research*

A number of recommendations for further research emerged from this project, both from data collected that was not related to the research question at hand and from questions that were left unanswered in the process of data collection and analysis. Two themes were noted during the data analysis phase that were interesting but not specifically relevant to the mentoring experiences of student leaders of color. First, all of the participants defined one function of leadership as helping synthesize group opinions and ideas into a clear direction or plan. Rather than operating as a director or boss, the participants described leaders as people who listen, take in information from

others, give their own opinions when appropriate, and facilitate group unity around a central goal. This view of leaders as “synthesizers” was clear in all of the participants’ interviews. Future research into student leadership in general or student leaders of color specifically may want to probe this idea further to create a broader picture of the ways that students define and experience leadership. Understanding the meaning and functions of leadership from the perspective of students will help administrators to create more effective leadership programs and support structures for student leaders.

Another theme that emerged from the research that was not described above was the overlap of mentoring and leadership discussed explicitly by several of the participants. Three of the students commented about the connection between the two roles or compared the roles at some point during our interview. A few participants described their mentors as leaders first before naming them as mentors. Participant B was one of these; he described there being a “blurry line between leadership and mentoring” several times during the interview and clearly felt that his primary mentor (an older student) was equal parts mentor and leader to him. The primary overlap in leadership and mentoring descriptions was the possession of knowledge and experience. Both leaders and mentors were described as having these important tools multiple times throughout the interviews. While some of the participants did clarify mentoring relationships as being “more personal” than leadership relationships, distinguishing between the two roles seemed difficult for a few of the students. It would be interesting in future research to explore this overlap more clearly and investigate students’ perceptions of the roles of mentors versus leaders. As several of

the participants also commented that they are becoming mentors to other students through their leadership roles, it would be interesting to explore further the significance that these roles hold for students.

While this research provided important insight into the participants' perspectives on their mentoring relationships further details could be explored at length to clarify the impact of mentoring. For example, participants were rather vague in their explanations of the shared characteristics or identities that they believed helped positive mentoring relationships evolve (see racial and ethnic identity theme two). Further research into the specific qualities or characteristics the students believe are helpful in a mentor could assist administrators who are hoping to facilitate mentoring programs on their campuses, as would additional research concerning the importance students place on being similar to or different from their mentor. Also, while one participant discussed the role that a peer mentor had played in his development, the participants primarily discussed mentors that were staff, faculty, or other adults (i.e. non-students). An investigation into the impact of peer mentoring and the similarities or differences these types of relationships have to mentoring relationships with non-students may provide valuable insight for the developing campus mentoring programs.

### *Limitations*

One of the primary limitations of this research is the low number of participants. With only four students agreeing to be interviewed, the results presented above represent a limited view of the phenomenon being studied. Attempts to recruit the targeted five to eight participants were not successful, although the reasons for this

being the case are unclear. It is possible that students who were contacted did not feel they met all three of the criteria for participation in the research (identifying as a student leader, being from an underrepresented racial or ethnic background, and having a mentor), or for whatever reason were not interested in contributing to the project. Had I been successful in recruiting a few more participants, I may have been able to reach a greater understanding of the mentoring experiences of these students or I may have observed additional themes and areas of importance that were not part of the conclusions presented above.

Regardless of the number of participants, the themes and conclusions discussed in this paper should not be generalized to all student leaders of color involved in mentoring relationships. While there were clear similarities in the stories shared by the participants, it cannot be assumed that other students outside this research would have also share these experiences. Rather, these themes provide an insight into the some of the *possible* experiences of other student leaders of color and suggest further questions and research concerning mentoring and supporting this population of students. The research provides important information about the aspects of leadership which students of color might find most rewarding and ways in which university administrators could considering shaping leadership programs that appeal to as well as provide support for student leaders of color. The research also provides support for the premise that mentoring helps students of color connect with meaningful involvement and leadership opportunities and suggests that this may be an effective tool for supporting students of color in the higher education setting. While none of the conclusions reached in this research should be taken as certainties about all students of

color, they do provide insights that should be explored further with larger participant populations and in other settings to better clarify this phenomenon.

As a preliminary study into the phenomenon of mentoring student leaders of color, this research project could have been altered in a number of ways – geographic setting, institution type, data collection methods – to potentially obtain different or additional results. While the results do provide important insight into the experiences of some students, they should not be viewed as a definite prediction of other students' experiences.

Related closely to the previous point, I believe the results of this research are limited due to the fact that all of the students were highly active in the community of cultural resource offices on the campus they attend. Although recruitment targeted student leaders from a variety of settings, all of the respondents were leaders in at least one of the cultural resource offices on campus and there is a significant amount of interaction and cooperation between these offices. Hence, the students had relatively similar leadership experiences in many respects and probably even know each other to some extent (although there was no way for me or them to know this was the case). It is distinctly possible that students from the target population who are involved in other leadership activities (e.g. Greek Life, athletics, ROTC) may have different mentoring and leadership experiences than the participants in this research who were all heavily involved in the cultural resource offices.

As mentioned briefly above, this research is also limited by the methodology that was chosen. Because of time and scope constraints, I chose to use interviews as my primary data collection tool. As a phenomenological study, I could have

considered using observations, journals, focus groups, and other methods of collecting data to provide further insights into the phenomenon. Adding these additional pieces of data would have increased the trustworthiness of the results.

Although the four interviews and one written contribution provided rich descriptions of the students' experiences, they were only one way of studying the phenomenon.

Viewing the mentoring experiences of student leaders of color through observations, focus group conversations, or document analysis may have provided alternative perspectives on or identified additional themes in the participants' experiences.

### *Concluding Thoughts*

This research project developed out of my personal observations of the power of mentoring student leaders and my curiosity about the meaning of mentoring relationships. I am so pleased to have had the opportunity to investigate this topic deeply to both validate and challenge my assumptions regarding mentoring. While none of the results found in this research were particularly shocking or unexpected, I do believe they provide important insight into the overall phenomena of mentoring student leaders of color and they may lead to further research that helps strengthen the support and guidance universities provide to students of color.

My own experience of the research process has been generally positive, though there are certainly elements that I would do differently were I given the opportunity to start over. The development of a strong research question is fundamental to a successful project and while I generally enjoyed my question, I would consider altering it slightly to provide more specific or narrow guidelines to the research. The topics of leadership, mentoring, and students of color are all quite huge and at times I

had difficulty focusing on the specific phenomenon I was hoping to investigate. The concept of student leaders of color could stand alone as a rich and interesting research topic and I believe it warrants further investigation to strengthen leadership programming in higher education. With so many broad topics at play in my research, I would consider altering my original research question slightly to provide a more manageable topic for a master's thesis. This would undoubtedly lead to more specific interview questions and more in-depth interviews that address some of the areas for further research discussed above.

The results of this research project are not intended to be generalized to all student leaders of color or all mentoring relationships, but rather provide insight from a few students at a single university who have clearly had positive and beneficial experiences. Their stories and the themes that ran through all of their experiences provide important information about some of the things student affairs administrators may want to promote in mentoring relationships or programs on their campuses. Mentoring may be one tool that can help students of color get involved on campus, identify leadership opportunities, and succeed in the higher education setting, and mentoring should therefore be explored further to reap the most benefits possible from this practice.

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APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



**Institutional Review Board • Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Compliance**  
 Oregon State University, 312 Kerr Administration Building, Corvallis, Oregon 97331-2140  
 Tel 541-737-4933 | Fax 541-737-3093 |  
<http://oregonstate.edu/research/osprc/rc/humansubjects.htm>  
[IRB@oregonstate.edu](mailto:IRB@oregonstate.edu)

TO: Jessica White  
 Adult Education & Higher Education Leadership

IRB #: 3736 – Mentoring Student Leaders of Color

Level of Review: Expedited

Expiration Date: 10-21-08

Approved Number of Participants: 8

The referenced project was reviewed under the guidelines of Oregon State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has **approved** the:

Initial Application       Continuing Review       Project Revision  
with a (if applicable):     Waiver of documentation of Informed Consent       Waiver of Consent

A copy of this information will be provided to the full IRB committee.

- **CONSENT FORM:** All participants must receive the IRB-stamped informed consent document. If the consent is in a format that could not have stamp placement (i.e. web site language, email language, etc), then the language must be **exactly** as the IRB approved it.
- **PROJECT REVISION REQUEST:** Any changes to the approved protocol (e.g. protocol, informed consent form(s), testing instrument(s), research staff, recruitment material, or increase in the number of participants) must be submitted for approval before implementation.
- **ADVERSE EVENTS:** Must be reported within three days of occurrence. This includes any outcome that is not expected, routine and that result in bodily injury and/or psychological, emotional, or physical harm or stress.
- **CONTINUING REVIEW:** A courtesy notice will be sent to remind researchers to complete the continuing review form to renew this project, however – it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that continuing review occurs prior to the expiration date. Material must be submitted with adequate time for the office to process paperwork. If there is a lapse in approval, suspension of all activity including data analysis, will occur.
- **DEVIATION/EXCEPTIONS:** Any departure from the approved protocol must be reported within 10 business days of occurrence or when discovered.

Forms are available at: <http://oregonstate.edu/research/osprc/rc/humansubjects.htm>.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Human Protections Administrator at [IRB@oregonstate.edu](mailto:IRB@oregonstate.edu) or by phone at (541) 737-8008.

*Elisa Espinoza Fallows*

Elisa Espinoza Fallows  
 IRB Human Protections Administrator

Date: 10-22-07

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What activities and/or leadership experiences have you been involved during your time as a college student?  
Follow-up Questions: How did you become involved in these activities? Did any person or people play a role in your decision to participate in these activities?
2. When you hear the word “leadership” what does it mean to you?
3. Do you consider yourself a leader? Why or why not?
4. How have you developed leadership skills as a student, in either formal or informal settings?
5. What do you consider your most rewarding “leadership” experiences?
6. What racial or ethnic categories do you identify with? Do you feel your racial or ethnic identity impacts your experiences as a student leader?
7. How do you define a mentor?
8. Could you tell me about someone or some people that you consider mentors to you as a student leader (either currently or in the recent past)?  
Follow-up Questions: How long have you been involved in your mentoring relationship? How did you identify and begin a relationship with your mentor(s)? Did anyone or any campus office assist you in finding a mentor?
9. What kinds of conversations or experiences have you had with your mentor that have been helpful to you in your development as a student leader? What kinds of conversations or experiences have you had with your mentor that have been detrimental to you in your development as a student leader?
10. As you think about your mentor, what are some of the qualities or characteristics that make this person a good mentor specifically to you, not simply in general?
11. Do you feel you or your mentor take more responsibility in maintaining or keeping your relationship going?
12. If you have had a mentoring relationship end, how did you know or decide that it was time for the relationship to dissolve?
13. Do you think having a mentor has made a significant impact, either positive or negative, on your development as a leader?

## Appendix C: Informed Consent Document

**Adult Education & Higher Education Leadership**

Oregon State University, College of Education, 403 Education Hall, Corvallis, OR 97331-3502

Phone 541-737-4317 Fax 541-737-3655 [www.oregonstate.edu/education](http://www.oregonstate.edu/education)

## INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: Mentoring Student Leaders of Color  
 Principal Investigator: Jessica White, Adult Education & Higher Education Leadership  
 Co-Investigator(s): Leann White, Adult Education & Higher Education Leadership

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?**

You are being invited to take part in a research study designed to investigate the mentoring experiences of student leaders from underrepresented racial or ethnic backgrounds. Specifically, an understanding of how mentoring relationships form, the impact of mentoring on students' leadership development, and students' personal definitions of leadership and mentoring will be sought. Data will be collected through interviews with student leaders of color at an Oregon university who are involved in a mentoring relationship with a staff or faculty member, fellow student, or individual outside of the campus community. The results of this research will be used towards the completion of a Master of Science thesis, professional conference proposals or presentations, and submission for publication in professional journals. We are studying this because of the need to better understand the experiences of students of color who serve as student leaders on college campuses and to better determine the impact that mentoring relationships have on student development and success.

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?**

This consent form gives you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask any questions about the research, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else that is not clear. When all of your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in this study or not.

**WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

You are being invited to take part in this study because you were identified as a student leader from an underrepresented racial or ethnic background by a campus staff or faculty member, or because you self-identified as a member of this population with an interest in participating in this research project. As a participant, you should be able to identify at least one individual whom you currently or previously considered a mentor.

### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY AND HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?**

You will receive the interview questions in written format several days before the interview is conducted, allowing you the opportunity to think about your mentoring experiences and make notes prior to our discussion, if so desired. One of the researchers will conduct an in-person interview with you which will be audio-recorded with your consent. The interview will be semi-structured with both open and closed-ended questions and conducted in a private location chosen in conjunction with you.

If you agree to take part in this study, your involvement will last for approximately 3.5 to 5 hours. The interview is expected to last 1.5 to 2 hours and an additional 2 to 3 hours will be spent on correspondence and with your consent, a brief follow-up review of the interview transcript.

### **WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS STUDY?**

The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the procedures described in this study are minimal. Possible discomfort may arise in describing any mentoring or leadership experiences you have had that were negative or distressing, however a strong effort will be made to avoid deeply personal topics that are not imperative in addressing the research topic.

### **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?**

We do not know if you will directly benefit from being in this study. However, we hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study because the data collected will aid college staff and faculty in supporting and encouraging student leaders from underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds.

### **WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?**

You will not be paid for being in this research study.

### **WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?**

The information you provide during this research study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. To help protect your confidentiality, we will use only participant identification code numbers to refer to you in documents, presentations, and publications. One aspect of this study involves making audio recordings of you. These recordings will be used to ensure your comments are recorded accurately, and only the research team and audio transcribers will have access to the recordings. All informed consent documents, recordings, and transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet throughout the duration of the study and will be destroyed at the completion of the study or after a period of no more than one year from the date of the interview. No identifying information about yourself or the campus being studied will be made public at any time; this information

will be shared only with the research team, the OSU Institutional Review Board, and the transcribers of the audio tapes.

### **DO I HAVE A CHOICE TO BE IN THE STUDY?**

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering. If you decide not to take part in this study, your decision will have no effect on the quality of services and support you receive.

You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. You are free to skip any interview questions that you would prefer not to answer. If you choose to withdraw from this project before it ends, the researchers may keep information collected about you and this information may be included in study reports.

### **WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?**

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact:  
Jessica White at (541) 737-8576, [jessica.white@oregonstate.edu](mailto:jessica.white@oregonstate.edu)  
or Leann White at (541) 737-5669, [leann.white@oregonstate.edu](mailto:leann.white@oregonstate.edu)

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator, at (541) 737-4933 or by email at [IRB@oregonstate.edu](mailto:IRB@oregonstate.edu).

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Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

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(Signature of Participant)

(Date)

Appendix D: Demographic Questionnaire

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Year in school: \_\_\_\_\_

When will you graduate? \_\_\_\_\_

Major: \_\_\_\_\_

Race/Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

What activities have you been involved in while you've been a college student?\_\_

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## Appendix E: Questions for Written Responses

1. What, if any, impact does your race or ethnicity have on your experiences as a student leader? Are there any specific stories you could share that would illustrate your experiences?
  
2. What, if any, impact has being involved with a mentor had on your development as a student leader? Again, are there any specific stories that relate to your mentoring experiences that might help explain the impact of mentoring in your life?