Efforts and Courage Are Not Enough Without Purpose and Direction: A Phenomenological Study on How Mid-level Administrators Learn and Acquire Leadership Skills in Higher Education

Melissa Brunson
Brandman University, reyes.melissa427@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.brandman.edu/edd_dissertations

Part of the Educational Leadership Commons, and the Higher Education Administration Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.brandman.edu/edd_dissertations/311

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Brandman Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Brandman Digital Repository. For more information, please contact jlee1@brandman.edu.
Efforts and Courage Are Not Enough Without Purpose and Direction: A Phenomenological Study on How Mid-level Administrators Learn and Acquire Leadership Skills in Higher Education

A Dissertation by

Melissa Brunson

Brandman University
Irvine, California
School of Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

February 2020

Committee in charge:

Dr. Jeffrey Lee, Ed.D. Committee Chair
Dr. Andrew Barton, Ed.D. Committee Member
Dr. Cheryl-Marie Osborne Hansberger, Ed.D. Committee Member
BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY
Chapman University System
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

The dissertation of Melissa Brunson is approved.

______________________________________________, Dissertation Chair
Dr. Jeffrey Lee, Ed.D.

______________________________________________, Committee Member
Dr. Andrew Barton, Ed.D.

______________________________________________, Committee Member
Dr. Cheryl-Marie Osborne Hansberger, Ed.D.

______________________________________________, Associate Dean
Dr. Douglas DeVore

February 2020
Efforts and Courage Are Not Enough Without Purpose and Direction: A Phenomenological Study on How Mid-level Administrators Learn and Acquire Leadership Skills in Higher Education

Copyright © 2020

by Melissa Brunson
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The last three years have been a whirlwind. This journey would not have been possible without the support of a few key individuals who sustained me while I pursued this dream.

First, I would like to thank my family. My parents Maria, and Leo, have been a constant source of strength throughout my journey, and I am very thankful to have wonderful parents who always helped me achieve my goals. I would also like to thank my children Patrick, Raelene, and Michael for cheering me on and standing by me no matter what direction our lives have taken over the last few years.

Secondly, I would like to thank my committee for challenging me to find a topic that I am passionate about. I was fortunate to have all three of my committee members with me from the beginning to lend an ear, make suggestions, and give me the gift of feedback. To my chair, Dr. Jeffrey Lee, thank you for being my rock as I navigated the dissertation journey. I leaned on you more times than I can count, and you were steady each and every time. To Dr. Cheryl-Marie Osborn Hansberger, thank you for believing in me when I did not believe in myself. Dr. Andrew Barton, thank you for having impeccable timing with your encouraging emails and messages as they always seemed to arrive when I needed them most.

An enormous thank you to Dr. Marcia Hamilton and Dr. Elizabeth Camy-Blackwell for being my partners in crime over the last three years. Thank you for the belly laughs and for talking me off a ledge, countless times. This journey would have been much less interesting without the two of you.
Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues, and friends Dr. Christine Zeppos, Dr. Lamija Basic, Dr. Donald Scott, Dr. Diana Cabori, Dr. Michael Moodian, and Maris Alaniz for checking in on me and cheering me on throughout this process, from start to finish.
ABSTRACT

Efforts and Courage Are Not Enough Without Purpose and Direction: A Phenomenological Study on How Mid-level Administrators Learn and Acquire Leadership Skills in Higher Education

by Melissa Brunson

Purpose: The purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify and describe the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it relates to leadership development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education in both formal and informal settings.

Methodology: This study was a phenomenological study that identified and described the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it relates to the leadership development for 18 mid-level administrators in both formal and informal settings in Private Non-Profit higher education.

Findings: Examination of the qualitative data from 18 mid-level administrators who work in Nonprofit Private higher education yielded 10 major findings. The findings were divided into three categories; formal learning, informal learning, and unexpected findings. The findings included important revelations about marginalized populations and their access to leadership development programs in Private Non-Profit Higher Education, as well as how leaders develop their leadership skills both formally and informally through organic mentoring relationships, communities of practice, professional development, and formalized degree programs.

Conclusions: Ten conclusions were drawn in this study, based on data. These conclusions focused on leadership development of mid-level leaders in Private Non-
Profit Higher Education, specifically in the areas of leadership development in formal and informal settings.

**Recommendations:** Further research is recommended on the topics related to leadership development in higher education. Recommendations include the exploration of university practices with regard to the development of marginalized populations within institutions, the inclusion of leadership development time in faculty and staff workload, and the creation of policy that addresses the deficiencies in university culture that contribute to a lack of development for leaders.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Background ......................................................................................................................... 3  
Brief History of Higher Education ................................................................................ 3  
Leadership Development .............................................................................................. 5  
Higher Education Leadership in the 21st Century ......................................................... 6  
Leadership Development in Higher Education ............................................................. 7  
Leadership Development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education .............................. 7  
Mid-level Administrators and Leadership Development in Private Non-Profit Higher  
Education ...................................................................................................................... 8  

Purpose Statement ............................................................................................................. 11  
Research Questions ........................................................................................................... 11  
Significance of the Problem .............................................................................................. 11  
Definitions......................................................................................................................... 13  
Delimitations ..................................................................................................................... 15  
Organization of the Study ................................................................................................. 15  

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Types of Higher Education Institutions ............................................................................ 18  
For-Profit Universities ................................................................................................. 19  
Public Four-Year Universities .................................................................................... 21  
Private Non-Profit Four Year Universities ................................................................ 22  
Faith-Based institutions. ............................................................................................... 23  

Types of Leadership Development ................................................................................... 23  
Formal Leadership Development ................................................................................ 24  
Degree programs. ........................................................................................................ 25  
Leadership certificates. ............................................................................................... 26  
Informal Leadership Development ............................................................................... 26  
Communities of practice. ......................................................................................... 27  
Mentoring. ................................................................................................................ 28  
Formal mentoring .................................................................................................... 30  
Informal mentoring. ................................................................................................. 30  
Benefits of mentoring in leadership development. ............................................... 32  
Barriers to mentoring in higher education. ........................................................... 33  

Leadership Development in Higher Education ................................................................. 34  
Leadership Development in Christian Higher Education ........................................... 35  
Leadership Development in Public Higher Education ................................................. 36  
Leadership Development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education ............................ 38  
Mid-level Leadership in Higher Education ....................................................................... 39  
The Role of Mid-level Administrators in Private Non-Profit Higher Education...... 40  
Leadership Development for Mid-level Administrators ............................................. 42  
Competencies ............................................................................................................. 42  
Acquiring leadership skills. ..................................................................................... 43  
Summary .................................................................................................................... 44
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. 2018 IPEDS Reporting: 4-year Title IV Institutions Located in California...........................................................................................................................18

Table 2. 2018 IPEDS Reporting: 4-year Title IV Private Non-Profit Institutions in California...........................................................................................................................49

Table 3. Interview Alignment Table........................................................................................................53

Table 4. Participant Demographics........................................................................................................66

Table 5. Theme, Sources, and Frequency – Highest to Lowest....................................................................70

Table 6. Theme, Source, and Frequency – Formal Learning........................................................................73

Table 7. Theme, Source, Frequency – Valuing Formal Education................................................................73

Table 8. Theme, Source, Frequency – Key that Opens Doors.......................................................................75

Table 9. Theme, Source, Frequency – Informal Learning............................................................................77

Table 10. Theme, Source, Frequency – Seeking informal opportunities due to development need......................78

Table 11. Theme, Source, Frequency – Mentoring relationships formed organically....................................81

Table 12. Theme, Source, Frequency – Relying on Mentoring........................................................................85

Table 13. Theme, Source, Frequency – Seeking Support from COP to Build Networks..............................86

Table 14. Theme, Source, Frequency – Seeking Support from COP to Stay Current....................................88

Table 15. Theme, Source, Frequency – Creating Working Groups to Build Leadership Skills.........................90

Table 16. Theme, Source, Frequency – Unexpected Findings........................................................................92

Table 17. Theme, Source, Frequency – Motivation.......................................................................................92

Table 18. Theme, Source, Frequency – Access to Mentoring.........................................................................95
Table 19. Theme, Source, Frequency – Seeks Positive Opportunities for Learning........99
Table 20. Theme, Source, Frequency – Leadership Experience before Seeking a Formal Degree..................................................................................................................................................101
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Regional versus National Accreditation.........................................................21
Figure 2. Lifewide and Lifelong Learning.......................................................................25
Figure 3. Marsick and Watkins Informal and Incidental Learning...............................32
Figure 4. Knipplemeyer Proposed Model of Mentoring in Higher Education...............34
Figure 5. Population, Target Population, and Sample Alignment of Study...............50
Figure 6. Percentage of Data in Each Learning Type.....................................................72
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

“Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.” (Kennedy, 1963)

The year 1492 marked a significant benchmark in the Western world as Christopher Columbus discovered that the world was not flat. Such a discovery revolutionized how the world functioned. It can be argued that there has not been such a dramatic shifting of world views until recent times. In the globalized world, a world that Thomas Friedman (2015) described in his book about the brief history of the 21st century as being a flattened world, major shifts are taking place at exponential rates. Effects of globalization can be felt in the public and private sectors, as well as in the educational arena. As such, the state of the traditional university system is changing.

Many institutions are looking to not only accommodate the traditional college student, but also the non-traditional college student who has different needs. At the same time, technology continues to rapidly evolve. The primary change driver in the higher education arena relates to who the 21st century learner and how they learn. Additionally, colleges and universities who utilize a distributed campus model are impacted even more by globalization. In the face of this changing landscape with distributed campus systems and the increasing complexity of student needs, it is more difficult to lead complex systems. While much focus has been on leadership at the top of the organization, there appears to be a need to investigate the role and development of mid-level administrators.

At its core, institutions of higher learning focus on providing quality education to students, but do little to develop those who are employed within its walls. Many employees choose to move to another college or university for promotion opportunities would be happy to stay within their institutions if there was an opportunity for them to
grow within their organization (Swanson, 2018). As a result of these collective
dynamics, higher education is facing a talent crisis. Turnover rates are at an all-time high
and are expected to worsen over the next decade as aging populations continue down the
path to retirement (Mallard, 2017). Research suggests that within the next decade, 50%
of senior leaders within institutions of higher education will either retire or leave their
current institutions for posts at other institutions (Klein & Salk, 2013). In the next decade
Klein and Salk (2013) suggested that higher education leaders are largely ill-prepared to
take on new roles due to a lack of professional development opportunities within
institutions of higher education (Luna, 2012). High turnover and lack of preparation are
two of the many factors that impact higher education leadership today.

Heraclitus of Ephesus was a well-known pre-Socratic Greek philosopher whose
writings focused on how to embrace change. He once wrote, “Change is the only
constant in life” (Mark, 2010, para.1). Such profound words have endured time and
change is even more prevalent in the 21st century. With more than 50 colleges or
universities closing since 2016 in the United States (Busta, 2019), the current volatility of
higher education is alarming. Further, leading institutions of higher learning requires
leaders who are equipped for the challenge of serving multifaceted institutions in the
modern world. Developing senior and mid-level leaders who are qualified to lead the
changes of today and prepare for the changes of tomorrow, has quickly become an area of
interest in higher education (Barton, 2016; Coleman, 2013; Davis, 2016; Karavedas,
2019).

Understanding how mid-level administrators gain the knowledge and experience
to lead their teams effectively is important to the university landscape. Formal and
informal learning has long been the primary means through which leaders gain the skills needed to navigate the complexities of their roles. In the landscape of higher education, it is crucial that mid-level administrators couple leadership and learning to not only propel their careers, but their organizations.

**Background**

In business and industry, leadership development and training has a long and successful history (Stone, 2012). Conversely, academia has had difficulties building a stronghold of leadership development programs within institutions of higher learning (Garza & Eddy, 2008). It is a widely held belief within the field of higher education that this lack of leadership development could have a major impact on the sector over the next several years as individuals who have long held high-level leadership positions begin to retire. Birnbaum (2017) supports this notion and further suggests, leadership development, whether it be at the executive level or mid-level management level, has not been a priority in higher education.

**Brief History of Higher Education**

The roots of higher education in the United States can be traced back to European traditions. Early settlers in the Americas brought with them the ideals that placed great emphasis on the importance of higher education. Eight years after the country received its first settlers, the first institutions of higher education were born. Institutions of Higher Education in America were founded as Faith-Based institutions that served a primarily male population. These institutions’ purpose was to prepare young men for deployment into fields that were ministry related (Smith & Jackson, 2004). With a primarily liberal
arts foundation, these institutions focused on building the foundations of faith and learning (Woodrow, 2006).

In 1961, Brown University President, Francis Wayland, remarked, that the existing collegiate system was not serving the needs of the community with regard to curriculum, and advanced study (Hofstadter, 1961). Similar to Waylan’s claim that curriculum and scale of operation was no longer meeting the needs of society, Glycer and Weeks (1998) remarked on the idea that societal changes placed increasing demands on higher education systems, a demand that has continued to evolve over the past 400 years. Societal pressures on higher education are more impacted recently with the introduction of technology; thus, the learning environment and the changing needs of the institutions now require leaders to be adept at leading complex systems and teams. While these institutions have adapted to societal needs that have impacted their curriculum and operations, there has been little progress with regards to leadership development (Richards, 2009). This will leave universities to face large staff turnover from retirements without an appropriately trained workforce of middle managers to lead these operational challenges.

The academic environment that prioritizes the funding of academic positions over all other areas of operations further compounds this problem. On average, 80% of college funding is personnel and 80% of personnel funding is dedicated to the academic team. This leaves very little room to build out formal leadership development processes in the human resources functions. Garza and Eddy (2008), suggest that in the absence of a formal leadership development process, individuals who desire promotions within academia often assume additional tasks in an effort to demonstrate the possession of
skills, which allows them to move fluidly into leadership responsibilities without the possibility of a formal promotion. This academic focus combined with operational realities make for an environment that is difficult to foster discussions centered on leadership development (Adams, 2014).

**Leadership Development**

Thomas Carlyle is widely known as the first modern theorist on leadership theory (Bryman, 2011). During the late 1940s and early 1950s, his theory was used as the base for emerging trends, and to erudite new theorists in leadership development (Humphreys & Einstein, 2003). As new theories on leadership development emerged, there became a strong delineation between those theories that were deemed transactional, and those that were transformational (Humphreys & Einstein, 2003). Many of today’s organizations utilize transformational approaches to leadership and leader development as transformational approaches tend to take the health of the entire organization into consideration.

Despite these operational deficits, research on leadership development in higher education has increased in recent times, bringing attention to the needs to operationalize these concepts. Penner’s (2001) work affirmed that leadership development programs and leader training techniques vary across higher learning organizations. Fountain and Newcomer (2016) highlighted the diversity of leadership development, bringing attention to a need for structured succession planning, leadership development courses, and mentoring programs.
Higher Education Leadership in the 21st Century

In 2005, Thomas Friedman illustrated that the emergence of globalization through the world of technology has given us all equal opportunity to conquer the world in a fast paced technology driven society. As our capacity to connect more quickly with those around the world has grown, so have our expectations about the speed at which people respond to others, the ability to work at a faster pace, and the way in which organizations expect leaders across all industries to adapt to these changes. Institutions of higher learning are no exception to these evolving demands.

This changing landscape is requiring employees to take on additional responsibilities without being formally and in many cases informally prepared (Luna, 2012). Faculty are largely hired based on their knowledge of subject matter and their ability to execute content delivery in the classroom (Bisbee, 2007). However, faculty in the 21st century need to expand their skill set to successfully integrate the most recent technologies into their teaching, and in some cases they need to teach in online or distributed settings.

Such demands make it more difficult for senior leaders to recognize and develop talent, simply because the demands are always changing. For example, leaders who have mastered the traditional skills of leading meetings may not possess the necessary skills to successfully lead a virtual team in the 21st century. Accordingly, the strict focus on hard skills rather than leadership skills often leaves gaps in leadership abilities and fosters a culture that values teaching over higher-level administrative roles (Selingo, 2017).

Karavedas (2019) suggests that this laser focus creates a mindset that does not include long term strategic planning to move leadership development forward within
universities. While leadership institutes such as the Leadership Development Institute have taken on the responsibility of leadership development for its member universities in an attempt to foster and create interest in leadership development in the 21st century, this has not been enough and higher educational institutions are still left with sizable gaps.

Garza and Eddy (2008) elucidated the costs of this gap and suggested higher education’s inability to formalize mentoring and leadership development programs has resulted in an environment wherein individuals who are placed in new administrative roles are often left to figure out the intricacies of their new role on their own. Karavedas (2019) suggested that it is necessary to make a shift in the way that leaders are prepared to take on expanding roles.

**Leadership Development in Higher Education**

Among the existing literature on academia, there are few studies that examine the development of the leaders within higher education (Swanson, 2018). As stated prior, curricular and community needs push institutions to focus primarily on academic functions as a means of survival and make it exceedingly difficult for universities to focus on leadership development in a formalized fashion, thus relying on individuals’ abilities to take on additional workload without appropriate leadership preparation (Garza & Eddy, 2008). Consequently, many leaders have difficulties assuming additional workloads and assimilating into new roles within their organizations (Penner, 2001).

**Leadership Development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education**

Private Non-Profit Higher Education institutions are not immune from these leadership development voids. Clements (2015) conducted a study on leadership in private non-profit organizations which revealed that while most senior level leaders
agreed that they are unhappy with the skills of their mid-level administrators, they were unable to reach agreement as to which leadership skills are most important.

This leads to the logical question, if academia cannot agree on what skills are paramount, how will they ever be able to develop successful leadership development programs? While there is not much in the literature about leadership development in private non-profit higher education, closely related are studies that pertain to private Christian universities. On the Christian university side, Bornstein (2010) noted that while there is a lack of formal succession planning processes, there is a long-standing tradition of leadership selection.

Bennet (2015) agreed that there are long-standing traditions around leadership selection; however, he concluded that the traditions cannot be considered a formal process, as they do not fit into any conceptual framework, and they fail to develop new leadership within universities. Educational institutions must continue to adapt to the needs of their workforce, and put leadership development practices in place to fill necessary roles. Without these types of programs in place, institutions of all kinds face the inability to sustain their organizations and effectively support stakeholders (Stewart, 2016).

**Mid-level Administrators and Leadership Development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education**

Leadership development, regardless of the sector, is essential to the way in which an organization responds to change. As such, mid-level administrators within Private Non-Profit Higher Education must be adaptable, possess the ability to manage processes, and lead teams (Parish, 2015). Increasing demands of senior leadership, driven from both
internal and external stakeholders, requires mid-level administrators to evolve to meet dynamic challenges (McDermott, 1995). Much like their counterparts in the for-profit sector, mid-level administrators in Private Non-Profit Higher Education are being expected to meet these demands even though there have been significant difficulties within this sector in developing and implementing leadership education.

There are many differing views as to why leadership development has had difficulties developing a strong hold in higher education. While many individuals have showed the ability to assume leadership roles, they often found themselves as “accidental leaders” taking on roles that were outside of the scope of their normal job roles and training (Garza & Eddy, 2008). Leadership in any capacity is a struggle, but assuming a leadership role when you are unprepared is even more difficult (Bernthal, 2006). The landscape of the workforce is changing within the higher education sector, and the industry is requiring its leaders to competently navigate complex systems (Luna, 2012). The lack of skilled individuals who are ready to assume higher level roles within the organization are making it more difficult for institutions to sustain high quality leaders (Bernthal, 2006).

Recent studies by Barton (2016) and Swanson (2018) suggest that while most studies on leadership development focus on succession planning at the university president or chancellor level, it would be beneficial to conduct research that is focused on other levels of the university structure to understand the mindset of frontline employees with respect to leadership development and succession planning.

There has been a multitude of research, both inside the higher education space as well as in private industry, on the effects of leadership development and succession
planning in organizations. Barton (2016), Bornstein (2010), Klein and Salk (2013), and Richards (2009) have conducted studies related to leadership development in higher education and agree that leadership development, if implemented consistently, has a profound effect of the way in which employees navigate their organizations. McKenna (2014), Luna (2012), and Luzbetak (2010) claim that for organizations to function in a sustainable manner, they need to focus on developing their core talent as a means to backfill leaders who will be retiring over the next several years.

A common theme within the education sector includes the belief that institutions of higher learning have been slow to adopt leadership development practices. As a result, there is a need for strategic analysis of each institution, and this presents itself in a manner that feels abrasive or counter intuitive to academia (Adams, 2013; Gigliotti, 2017; Luzbetak, 2010). Many of the studies that have been conducted in universities focus on the way leaders are chosen at the highest levels. Birnbaum (1987) deduced that while the development of leaders is often ambiguous, most of the measurable attributes of leaders in higher education fall into five major categories which include trait theories, power and influence theories, behavior theories, contingency theories, and symbolic theories. Growing interest in leadership development in higher education continues to grow and this trend points to a need to explore how leaders in higher education are acquiring their leadership skills.

Recently, studies in higher education with regards to leadership development and succession planning point to a strategic need for institutions to utilize development programs as a means to meet organizational, values based goals (Barton, 2016; Karavedas, 2019; Swanson, 2017). While the central focus of these studies have been on
leadership development and succession planning in higher education institutions and programs, little focus has been placed on the means through which leadership skills are fostered within these institutions or how it affects the perceptions of those who work within these institutions, especially in mid-level management (Karavedas, 2019). Furthermore, while Barton (2016), Karavedas (2019), and Swanson (2018) have conducted extensive research on the topic of leadership development, no studies have been found to address the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it relates to leadership development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education in both formal and informal settings.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify and describe the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it related to leadership development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education in both formal and informal settings.

**Research Questions**

What are the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it related to leadership development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education in both formal and informal settings?

**Significance of the Problem**

Recent trends in leadership suggested that the state of leadership development in higher education is in desperate need of an overhaul (McKenna, 2014; Luna, 2012; Luzbetak, 2010). This study focused on the lived experiences of mid-level administrators within Private Non-Profit higher education and contributed to the current body of work
by exploring their perceptions as it related to leadership development in their current role. Results of this study were significant in the following four ways.

First, findings from this study will extend the work of Garza and Eddy (2008) who identified that a lack of leadership development produces skills gaps that prevent individuals from being successful or effective in their new roles (Garza & Eddy, 2008). By investigating the leadership development of mid-level administrators in Private Non-Profit universities, a deeper understanding of the lived experiences can be gleaned. Findings from this study can also shed light on why leadership skills development is important to be successful in these roles and how they can be developed within institutions of higher education.

Second, the findings from this study are significant in extending the work of Barton (2016) who surmised that additional work should be conducted to understand how individuals who are not included as part of succession planning or leadership development programs, navigate their organizations. Furthering this research is significant because it is important to gain insights into how individuals who work within these organizations feel about not being included in these types of programs. It is through the understanding of their experiences that leaders can begin to recognize how this lack of focus may be a barrier to success for both the individual and the organization.

Third, Karavedas (2019) suggested that a study which examined the effects of leadership development and succession planning in Private Non-Profit higher education could have a significant impact with regards to understanding how leader development propelled organizations forward. Advancing this body of work, with a specific focus on private nonprofit higher education, would allow for the comparison of data across
different types of institutions and this comparison would allow conclusions to be drawn across the higher education sector. These conclusions may assist in creating a significant shift in how institutions of higher learning approach and implement leadership development.

Lastly, by investigating both formal and informal ways leadership skills are learned and developed, the data can illuminate the various types of experiences of mid-level administrators. Unseen in previous studies, data may reveal leadership development through mentoring, informal learning in communities of practice, and formal classes and workshops. By focusing on the lived experiences of mid-level administrators, findings from this study could significantly highlight some common practices in Private Non-Profit higher education in the area of leadership development.

**Definitions**

This section provides definitions of the relevant terms in this study.

*Faith-Based Private Non-Profit University.* Faith-based Private Non-Profit Universities are institutions with religious affiliations.

*Formal Learning.* Formal learning is defined as structured learning in an education program that is offered on leadership development through an organization or university in a classroom setting.

*Informal Learning.* Informal Learning refers to learning that in non-structured and does not take place in formal environments such as classrooms. Examples of informal learning are: Learning from peers, joining list serves, being mentored by experts, or participating communities of practices.
Leadership Development. This term refers to the activities that are associated with the improvement of a leader’s confidence, skills, and management abilities (HRZONE, n.d.)

Leadership Skills. Innate and developed abilities, knowledge, and skills that make an individual effective at leading a team (Bernthal, 2006).

Mentoring. Many definitions of mentoring exist and in some cases it can be difficult to come to a consensus on the true meaning of this term. This study will use the term mentoring as a social method through which an experienced individual imparts knowledge or serves as a guide to someone within an organization who is less experienced (Lechung, 2014). It is important to note that the operational definition of mentoring for this study falls under both informal and formal learning. For example, mentoring in formal settings could be structured mentoring as part of the on-boarding process for new employees. Informal mentoring, can consist of non-required mentoring outside of the employee’s organization.

Mid-level Administrator. The title mid-level administrator within colleges and universities varies depending on the institution. For the purposes of this study, a mid-level administrator is defined as an individual who holds the title associate dean or dean, but could also hold the title manager, associate director, or director.

Private Non-Profit Higher Education. Colleges and universities that receive funding from endowments, grants, and the government. Leaders report directly to the Board of Trustees or Regents. These institutions typically put money back into curriculum, instruction, and operational support.
Private Non-Profit University. For purposes of this study, Private Non-Profit Universities are defined as institutions that grant four-year undergraduate and graduate degrees that carry the designation of Private Non-Profit and are not part of the state college or university system.

Senior Leader. While the title of senior leader within colleges and universities varies depending on the institution, for the purposes of this study, a senior leader is defined as anyone who is presently in a role of vice chancellor, executive vice chancellor, provost, or chancellor.

Delimitations

Roberts (2010), defined the delimitations of a study as the factors that are created by the researcher that have an effect on the confines of the study. The population of the study is limited to mid-level administrators who are employed by Private Non-Profit Universities that are not faith based universities, and have been in a mid-level administrator role for more than one year.

Organization of the Study

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter I provided an overview of the study. This overview included the background and history of the topic, the problem statement, research question, significance of the study, definitions, and delimitations of the study. Chapter II offered an in depth description of the literature on higher education, leadership development, leadership development in the Private Non-Profit sector, and leadership development of mid-level administrators in Private Non-Profit higher education. Chapter III focused on the methodology of the study, research design, sample population, data collection and analysis procedures, as well as the limitations of the
study. Chapter IV of this study concentrated on a detailed analysis of the findings of this study, while Chapter V concluded the study and provided an in-depth explanation of the data and offered conclusions based on the findings as well as implications and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter begins with an overview of the higher education sector. It examines the differences in structure between For-Profit Higher Education, and Private Non-Profit Higher Education. Next, it offered a comprehensive overview of formal leadership development, which includes university degree programs and formalized leadership development that is delivered within the university or from an outside entity such as a professional organization. It addressed the complexities of mentorship, how these relationships are formed, and how it impacts a leader’s rise within the organization. Additionally, the impact of communities of practice is examined as it relates to informal leadership development, along with the details of the learning path of individuals over time, and its impact on a leader’s trajectory within four-year universities.

This chapter then considers how leadership development is practiced in higher education as well as the unique challenges that Private Non-Profit Higher Education faces with developing its leaders. Further examination is offered regarding the increasingly difficult job requirements that mid-level administrators face within the sector, and how 21st century technology is impacting the development of leaders in Private Non-Profit higher education. Finally, this chapter discussed the intricacies of leadership development for mid-level administrators, and the competencies that are required of leaders who excel in their roles. The themes within this literature review are illustrated utilizing a synthesis matrix (Appendix A). This synthesis matrix was compiled by the researcher and includes important elements of the study.
Types of Higher Education Institutions

The purpose of this review of literature was to explore the research that surrounds higher education, leadership development, mid-level administrators in higher education, and the way in which successful leaders are developed to assume higher level leadership roles. To accomplish this, an initial investigation on the various types of higher education institutions was conducted. Higher education is comprised of a variety of sectors that include For-Profit, Public and Private Non-Profit institutions. Each of these sectors of educational institutions foster leadership development in a different way.

Table 1 below is from the United States Department of Education, which illustrates the number of institutions of higher education within the state of California.

Table 1

2018 IPEDS Reporting: 4-Year Title IV Institutions Located in California

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-Year Institution Type</th>
<th># Institutions</th>
<th>% of All CA Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private Non-Profit</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>58.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Year Private For-Profit</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>27.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>14.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“In most of the world, higher education has long been understood overwhelmingly or even exclusively as public” (Kinser & Levy, 2007, p. 107).

However, private institutions, Private Non-Profit, and Private For-Profit institutions are prominent in higher education, despite the stereotype Kinser & Levy (2007) described.

In the context of this literature review, it is important to understand the structure of each
of these organizations. Highlighting the similarities and differences sheds light on the manner in which they operate as well as the way in which they develop their leaders.

The United States Department of Education defines each of these institutions in the context of their financial models and governing bodies, which gives us an important understanding as to why Faith-Based institutions are listed with private not-For-Profit institutions in the data table. In the state of California, Private Non-Profit institutions make up 58.51% of the university population (nces.ed.gov/ipeds, 2019). In breaking down the institutions further, 27.39% are not Faith-Based, and the remaining 34.44% are Faith-Based (nces.ed.gov/ipeds, 2019). Structurally, these institutions have many similarities, but the way in which they either do, or do not, implement leadership development is directly related to the way in which the institutions function both financially and culturally. Due to the nature of the differences in the various sectors of higher education, a deeper investigation into these sectors was warranted.

For-Profit Universities

The data presented in Table 1 illustrates that 27.39% of the four-year degree granting institutions in the state of California are Private For-Profit institutions (nces.ed.gov/ipeds, 2019). For profit-institutions are run in the same way as any other For-Profit business which allows revenue to be distributed in a manner the agency or board of the institution believes is relevant (Arbeit & Horn, 2017). Although For-Profit institutions range in size, type, and program offering, for the purposes of this literature review, the focus remains on four-year, For-Profit degree granting institutions.

Similar to its Private Non-Profit counterparts, For-Profit degree granting institutions offer federal student loans through Title VI funding. Additionally, the student
demographics within For-Profit institutions are much the same as the demographics for Private Non-Profit universities that cater to the working adult. It is important to note that in terms of organizational structure, these institutions function in much the same way as their Private Non-Profit and Public counterparts with the organizations being divided by upper level management, mid-level management, and front-line employees.

Faculty expectations in these institutions are different than those within the traditional university sector. It is commonly known that For-Profit universities do not have a tenure track for faculty, but rather steps that faculty move through as they gain experience within the institution. Another difference is that faculty are not required to publish in order to gain tenure, creating a much different dynamic that drives promotion within the organization.

The literature suggests that another important dissimilarity that is seen in some For-Profit universities includes the use of national accreditation, instead of regional accreditation. National accreditation is not widely accepted within the academic world and requires institutions to focus on different outcomes than those that are regionally accredited. Figure 1 illustrates some of the widely held beliefs about the differences between the types of institutions that are nationally and regionally accredited:
**Figure 1.** Drexel University Regional versus National Accreditation

All of these dynamics are important when examining the literature, and the way in which For-Profit institutions approach leadership development, and succession planning. Even though the literature suggests that For-Profit universities reflect the same complications or succession planning as their private sector counterparts, they still face the same difficulties that all institutions in higher education face concerning the challenges of implementation (Bennett, 2015).

**Public Four-Year Universities**

Four-year Public universities, are institutions that offer undergraduate and graduate degrees that are funded by local and state governments (Velasco, 2019). Four-year Public universities offer a broad array of degree pathways, as do the For-Profit, and Private Non-Profit organizations within the sector. In recent years, there has been a rise in performance-based funding models within Public institutions (Miao, 2012).
The emergence of performance-based funding models has changed the way in which Public four year universities navigate academic program development, recruitment, as well as faculty and staff development (Hillman, Tandberg, & Fryar, 2015). These funding models greatly affect the way in which Public institutions approach the business and academic aspects of higher education through an increased focus on degree completion and financing. This increased pressure has made significant shifts in leaders who focus on financial responsibilities rather than the development of leaders within these organizations (Black, 2015).

Aside from differing financial models, there are few other differences that can be made within public four-year universities. Many state systems include more than one type of public institution. For example, the state of California boasts two different types of state institutions within its system. These include University of California Schools and State Universities. Nationally, there are institutions whose focus is primarily research driven, and also those such as historically black colleges and universities that initially focused on providing education to marginalized populations, but now possess robust research departments as well. These differences drive the development of leaders across the organization as their mission and values change from institution to institution.

**Private Non-Profit Four Year Universities**

It is often difficult to delineate between Public, Private Non-Profit, and For-Profit universities as they share accreditation agencies and organizational structures. It is even more difficult to substantiate the differences between Private Non-Profit and For-Profit institutions because while their funding models are different, the way in which the universities operate within their distributed campus systems is very similar (Levy, 2015).
The determination between Private Non-Profit universities and For-Profit universities is attributed to the way in which they invest their revenue.

The revenue from For-Profit institutions are remanded to stakeholders, whereas the revenue from Private Non-Profit institutions is invested back into the organization by way of infrastructure, facilities, and academic program development. However, a dearth of leadership development persists concerning Private Non-Profit higher education despite a growing knowledge base regarding Faith-Based institutions, which are also part of this sector. Interestingly, there is a large number of universities that are providing leadership development certificates through extension centers for external clients, thus recognizing the significance in the larger marketplace, but continue to lack leadership development programs within their own organizations (Ruben & De Lisi, 2017).

**Faith-Based institutions.** Faith-Based institutions are categorized under Private Non-Profit universities that offer four-year degrees. The United States Department of Education requires that universities report statistical information through the Integrated Postsecondary Data System (nces.ed.gov/ipeds, 2019). Faith-Based institutions are reported under the category of Private Non-Profit Universities, but are not included as part of the target population for this study. However, different from their non-faith based counterparts, there has been a recent insurgence of literature regarding leadership development in Faith-Based institutions.

**Types of Leadership Development**

Leaders in higher education acquire leadership skills in a variety of ways. Some of these include formal leadership development training, informal leadership development, and mentoring. Each of these learning types of leadership development
allow for mid-level administrators to gain leadership skills that are important in navigating roles that are continually evolving.

**Formal Leadership Development**

Stevens, Bransford, and Stevens (2005) examined the number of hours an individual spends learning in a formal setting. While this examination applied to a typical Western adult, the findings on the figure below are noteworthy and relevant to this study. Stevens, Bransford, and Stevens (2005) identified that while children are in Public education, which is required in America, K-12 students spend 18.5% of their waking hours learning in a formal setting. This percentage declined to 7.7% for a student attaining an undergraduate degree and declined to 8.1% in graduate educational settings.

What is most significant in relation to this study is the number of hours spent learning in a formal setting once the individual starts working. As evidenced by the chart below, it is sporadic and minimal. In the work setting, these infrequent opportunities to learn in formal settings might include opportunities such as company sponsored one-day workshops, guest speakers at occasional staff meetings, government mandates training such as sexual harassment or cyber bullying, or structured memos with learning materials.

While formal learning as a means for leadership development does sometimes occur, Stevens, Bransford, and Stevens (2005) identified these opportunities as minimal and cursory. The image below from the Learning in Informal and Formal Environments (LIFE) Center illustrates how the formal learning environment occupies less than 20% of a learner’s time from kindergarten to adulthood (Stevens, Bransford, & Stevens 2005).
Formalized leadership development comes in different forms. It can be categorized as a formal educational degree program, or as a leadership development program that is offered through one’s organization, or a program through an external vendor, or attended outside one’s organization. In addition to formalized degree programs, partnerships with organizations such as the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities, and the Association of California Community Colleges, offer formal leadership development institutes for employees who are eligible to participate.

**Degree programs.** Leadership skills acquired through formal means is typically done through degree programs at universities. Traditionally leadership programs fall under schools of business and schools of education. For example, a university might offer a Doctorate in Organizational Leadership through the School of Business, while another might offer a Doctorate in Business Leadership through the School of Business. These institutions typically will offer a master’s level degree to accompany the doctorate degree.
For many of these institutions, there is an internal purpose that these degree programs also serve. Degree programs that focus on leadership allow for employees to learn and grow, while still working at the institution. As a result, many institutions that offer degree programs in leadership incentivize their employees. Tuition remission is a benefit that many organizations offer employees. Even though this benefit is offered to employees who work-for certain organizations, there are often organizational requirements that limit reimbursement to courses that benefit the employee in a way that also benefits the organization.

Leadership certificates. Some of the more popular leadership institutes known for their leadership skills development include the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, Harvard Institute for Higher Education, Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, and the Center for Creative Leadership. For some, leadership development in the formal setting is beneficial as it helps to build and reinforce existing leadership skills in a classroom setting. These interactive and retreat-like seminars help administrators assess their institutions, identify new strategies, and deepen their understanding of how team dynamics affect their institutions (Harvard Institutes for Higher Education Programs, 2019). Certificate programs in leadership have become a popular alternative to formal leadership development.

Informal Leadership Development

Informal learning has been researched and adopted as an alternative means of learning in the workplace. In 2010, Eraut conducted a research study on the various experiences of employees learning in an informal setting at work. In this study, he investigated various aspects of informal learning such as participating in group activities
and working alongside others. It was discovered that mid-career employees viewed confidence as an important aspect of informal learning. Eraut (2010) further explored the unique dependency of three attributes to informal learning; specifically the relationship between challenge, support, and confidence.

The extent of informal learning as a critical aspect of employee skills development can be seen in the book *The Necessity of Informal Learning* by Corrield (2000), where it was documented that informal learning in a more social setting is a critical aspect of learning in the workplace. In fact, Corrield (2002) noted that, “the degree of importance attached to informal learning as opposed to formal learning, has changed (p. 79). The increased importance on the need for informal learning is directly attributed and is a critical characteristic of what is known in the literature as a “life-long learner.”

**Communities of practice.** The use of informal learning as a piece of the overall learning is referenced in the work of Etienne Wenger, who conducted extensive work on communities of practice. In his book, *Communities of Practice*, Wenger (1998) argues that apprenticeship moves from peripheral participation to more central participation in a group as members become engaged with those who are more skilled in the practice. Gray (2004) extends Wenger’s notion of communities of practice by stating, “Communities of practice are self-organized systems of informal learning” (p. 23). The growing body of literature on the importance of social learning in informal settings is an important aspect of skills development in the 21st century. The notion of online communities is a new trend in the literature and demonstrates an evolving trajectory of
how employees learn in informal settings, in addition to the formal learning they are required to take part in.

Traditionally, great focus has been placed on the structure of higher education institutions as a basis for understanding the leadership skills that are necessary for the development of mid-level administrators. In recent years, this has been illustrated in both on-ground learning seminars as well as online learning. Gray, Kruse, and Tarter (2015) suggest that while formalized learning is an integral part of leadership skills development, it is through professional learning communities that leaders learn to effectively influence culture, climate, and student outcomes. In the same way that professional learning communities (communities of practice) allow for groups of people to come together to affect change and to develop leadership skills, so do the components of mentorship, and its effects on leadership development.

**Mentoring.** Formal and informal mentorship is an invaluable part of the leadership development process. Whether by formal or informal means, mentorship provides individualized feedback for those who choose to engage. One important aspect of informal learning as Wenger (1998) points out, is the use of apprenticeship. When one is mentored by a master tradesman in a particular profession, knowledge and skills are acquired through a learning by doing approach, with guidance from the master.

In the same vein, Knipplemeyer, and Torraco (2007) suggest that mentoring fosters a relationship between a mentor and protégé that supports leadership development within higher education institutions. However, little is known about how these relationships work within the higher education community. Astin, Astin, and Kellogg (2000) described the importance of mentorship in the higher education community,
arguing that these interactions have a lasting impact on both faculty and staff. Understanding the different forms in which mentorship presents itself is important to the way that it is manifested in higher education.

Traditionally, mentoring relationships are considered informal, but can also manifest as formal development. Formal mentoring in higher education typically occurs when a seasoned faculty member or administrator is paired with a new addition to the university, and they work through a process that ensures the new team member understands university processes and culture. Formal mentoring is defined by the institutions, supporting university process, and it allows the institution to define the relationship, timeframe, and content of learnings (Foster, Pool, & Coulson-Clark, 2001). Even though formalized mentoring is a valuable part of the learning process, this literature review will more closely address the informal aspects of mentoring and leadership development.

“Informal mentoring is a relationship that occurs that is unplanned, and, in most cases, not expected. A certain ‘chemistry’ emerges drawing two individuals together for the purpose of professional, personal, and psychological growth and development” (Galbraith, 2001, p.32). Inside the higher education environment, staff and faculty at all levels work in heavily compartmentalized divisions that often leave them with little interaction or guidance. New faculty leadership and administrators are often expected to be independent, yet struggle with understanding organizational culture, along with the complex demands of their new positions (Wright, and Wright, 1987). This systemic issue often leaves new leaders to struggle in their new roles.
The impact of the struggles that new leaders face can be seen across the university. “By the time a new faculty member reaches the point of receiving or being denied tenure, the institution has invested anywhere between $500,000 to $1,000,000” (Foster, Poole, and Coulson-Clark, 2000-2001, p. 2). Minimizing the cost of employee turn-over through leadership development is important to the sector. Formal and informal mentoring can both have a significant impact on the way in which new leaders approach their roles within the universities.

**Formal mentoring.** Many higher education institutions offer, and sometimes require, formal mentoring for new faculty. As part of the onboarding process, the formal mentoring experience can last upwards of two to three years. Universities will often assign a veteran professor to mentor a new professor in areas of curriculum design, instruction, and alignment of teaching to state and federal standards. Moreover, veteran professors act as a gateway to university resources and can direct a new faculty to appropriate divisions of the university, when needed.

**Informal mentoring.** Mentoring can take place in both a formal or informal environment within higher education. Most often these relationships form by happenstance, through a shared experience that presents the need for the mentee to seek guidance surrounding a work event. Knipplemeyer (2007) states that even though there are two different types of mentoring relationships, they often follow four distinct phases which include the formation of the mentoring relationship, testing of the mentoring relationship and the support that can be provided, separation and autonomy, and redefining the mentoring relationship under different circumstances.
Formal mentoring often occurs when an organization has a formalized mentoring program in place that requires a lockstep approach to determining the goals of the mentoring sessions. Formal mentoring allows the university to define the course of the mentoring process, including the length of the relationship, and the skills that are to be worked on during each mentoring session (Foster et al., 2000-2001). These relationships are beneficial at all levels of the organization within higher education. Most often, formal mentoring relationships are seen at the faculty or front-line employee level, and are used as a means to inculcate new individuals into the organization (Gibb, 1999).

Informal mentoring relationships frequently formed through the development of mentoring relationships with more senior individuals within the university. Oftentimes, informal mentoring relationships are unplanned as a need typically arises for the mentee to explore their growth in an established skillset within the university (Gibb, 199). It is through these informal relationships that individuals are able to develop their leadership potential within an organization.

Marsick and Watkins (2001) indicate that the everyday occurrences of the interactions with mentees and mentors centered on the context of the lived experiences that are shared within the career environment. Figure 3 demonstrates this phenomena through illustrating the context of the situation in the middle and the processing of the learning around the outside of the figure.
Benefits of mentoring in leadership development. “Young faculty are supposed to be independent; a lot of times they don’t know what they are doing—teaching, committees, supervision of students, sole authorships—there is very little support. It’s sink or swim” (Wright & Wright, 1987, p. 207). The complexities of jobs within higher education benefit from formal and informal mentoring relationships. Mentoring in higher education addresses many of the same aspects of mentoring within other industries. The benefits of mentoring include career coaching or progression, increased job satisfaction, confidence building, and a likelihood that the mentee will become a mentor in the future (Wright & Wright, 1997).

Although, as evidenced by this traditional belief that the mentee is the one who is in receipt of the benefits of a mentoring relationship, research suggested the benefits are reciprocal (Law, 2013; Muir, 2014). Rawlings (2002) suggested mentors showed a renewed sense of the role within the organization, a rejuvenation of scholarly thinking, enhanced job satisfaction, renewed relationships within the organization, and peer
recognition. Through mentoring relationships, mid-level administrators garner valuable skills and lessons in navigating the landscape of their institution.

**Barriers to mentoring in higher education.** Many agreed that mentoring in higher education would be a beneficial way to develop future leaders, and also agreed that one of the difficulties is that mentoring is only available to a select few, causing some doubt about its benefits (Bynum, 2015; Hill & Wheat, 2017; Searby, Ballenger, & Tripses, 2015). Additionally, some felt there was preferential treatment during the mentoring process as only those who were on the fast track for promotion had been the focus of formal mentoring relationships, leaving little opportunity for others who had potential, but were not close with the mentor, and may not have benefited from targeted mentoring relationships (Knipplemeyer, 2007). In exploring barriers to mentoring in higher education, the impact that mentoring had on the mentor was often overlooked.

The interactions that are required to develop good mentoring relationships often require the mentor to add more tasks and meetings into their workload (Hill & Wheat, 2017). The addition of meetings and other time consuming activities leave some feeling as though the effort outweighed the reward when it came to mentoring within higher education (Muir, 2014). The fear of being replaced by a mentee was often a strong concern for the mentor as well (Thomas & Linsford, 2015). Wright and Wright (1987) suggested that there are five distinct barriers to the development of mentoring relationships within higher education, which included the mentor may lose power or influence, the protégé may be limited to one person’s perspective, the mentor could leave the organization, and the protégé could be attached to a poor mentor. Contrarily, some agreed that the benefits could far outweigh the barriers, as it put the mentors in a position
to develop their own leadership skills through a reciprocal relationship (Knipplemeyer, 2007). Figure 4 illustrates the potential feedback loop that can be created in a healthy mentoring relationship.

Figure 4. Knipplemeyer Proposed Model of Mentoring in Higher Education

In this model, the mentor and mentee engage in a learning cycle that allows for deep reflection within the academic context. There is a conceptualization within this model that the mentoring relationship revolves around the context of higher education, which makes it relevant and beneficial for both the mentor and the mentee. Additional, content within this mentoring model allowed there to be importance placed on this model while engaging in department or university activities (Knipplemeyer, 2007). This model could help alleviate the additional work that the mentor may perceive as a barrier to mentoring with regard to the impression of an imposed workload.

Leadership Development in Higher Education

Leadership skills development has been researched and documented as early as the 20th century. Theorists such as Winslow-Taylor, Bass, Weber, Blanchard, and Burns have been developing lenses through which leadership is viewed across industries for over a century. For the purpose of this research, leadership development in the context of
higher education is examined through several key sub-contexts: For-Profit, Faith-Based, Private Non-Profit, and Public universities. While these different types of institutions shared significant similarities, there were distinct differences between them, especially in the area of leadership development. The following sections will delineate the similarities, differences, and inconsistencies across the sector. It also explores how leadership development has been implemented within higher education, whether by formal or informal means. The most prevalent forms of succession planning and leadership development can be found in Faith-Based institutions and Public four-year universities.

**Leadership Development in Christian Higher Education**

In recent years, there has been an increase in research that has been conducted on leadership development in private, Faith-Based institutions. These institutions not only carry the weight of formalized education, but also focus on developing Faith-Based skills within its leaders. Klein and Salk (2013), and Cliburn and Alleman (2017) were in agreement that great importance is placed on the communication of the mission of the institution within Faith-Based organizations, and this has an impact on the way in which they approached leadership development. By the very nature of the mission of these organizations, the talent pool was smaller than the larger market as they search to find faculty and leaders who aligned with their core Christian values at a time when interest in organized religion was dropping (Kinneman & Lyons, 2007).

According to Barton (2016), Faith-Based institutions carried additional burdens as it related to finance, culture, and a talent pool of leaders that continued to decrease. Faith-Based institutions have often considered these aspects while looking to create sustainable organizations, but it has only been within the last few years that the
examination of leadership development and succession planning across these institutions has come to the forefront. Karavedas (2019) stated that private Christian institutions have always strived to be in the forefront of the cultural issues of the day, but in recent years this has begun to impact institutions financially, and organizations were looking for creative solutions to lessen the financial burden.

One of the ways these institutions have been able to lessen the financial burden was through the examination of turnover, and understanding how it impacted the stability and finances of the university. Specifically, within private Faith-Based institutions, this meant fostering a set of ideals that differentiated them from other institutions (Morgan, 2012). According to Karavedas (2019), institutions should strongly consider the impact that leadership development has on building the culture and future of the organization. It is because of these challenges that it becomes increasingly apparent that leadership development in this sector of higher education is driven by the specific need for Faith-Based institutions to survive the ever growing challenges they are faced with.

The Council on Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) offers a range of professional development opportunities for employees of its membership roster (cccu.org, 2019). These conferences and formal learning opportunities are broken down by job category, as well as leadership level. The CCCU (2019) offers a year-long leadership institute, which requires an application to participate, and only 20-25 individuals from member institutions are chosen from the group of applicants.

**Leadership Development in Public Higher Education**

An exhaustive examination of the literature revealed that community colleges have identified the need to develop leaders at all levels to engender more effective and
equitable institutions (Asera & RO Group 2019; Ullman, 2010). Conversely, the literature did not provide the same urgency for leadership development for private, Private Non-Profit, and state institutions of higher learning. Although community colleges are categorized as two-year degree granting institutions rather than four-year degree granting institutions, the majority of research on leadership development in Public Higher Education is found within the Community College system and specifically focuses on the president level.

Like many colleges and universities, community colleges also struggle with filling important leadership roles. As seen in many other sectors of higher education, there is a growing concern that both internal and external candidates are not prepared to take on complex leadership roles in higher education (Smith, 2018). There is a growing belief that looking for non-traditional methods of recruiting for leadership roles may be necessary in order to fill these important roles.

"Right now, we face a crisis in the leadership of our community colleges. Far too many of our leaders are leaving and, unfortunately, far too few stand ready to take their place" (Anaya, 2018, p. 10). It is largely believed that other higher education partners are experiencing the same talent crisis that is clearly documented at the Community College level. Despite the recognition of an urgent need, the lack of leadership development within the Community College systems, and burgeoning need for leaders to assume higher-level roles, Anaya (2018) suggested that Community Colleges need to look at non-traditional routes for acquiring leaders who can run these organizations.
Leadership Development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education

Leaders develop their skills through mentorship, as well as formal and informal learning. The literature proposed that to effectively tackle the complexities of the roles within higher education, skills development is not the only way in which leaders can learn to navigate the changing complexities of their roles as re-skilling in today’s technological age is also necessary (Volini, Schwartz, & Roy, 2019). Research showed the workforce requires future-ready leaders who can effectively navigate challenges, such as the rate at which the speed of technology changes, as well as social and economic changes (Titus & Deloitte, 2019).

Part of the difficulty in understanding the landscape of leadership development in Private Non-Profit higher education exists in its inability to promote an environment where mid-level administrators are encouraged or required to participate in formal or informal leadership development opportunities. In private industry, research suggested that even though organizations are expecting leaders to adapt to these new skills, they are still operating under the same traditional models and mindsets, which are not conducive to the needs of today’s market (Volini, Schwartz, & Roy, 2019).

In 2010, Bornstein spoke of the difficulties that higher education would have in the development of its leaders as old traditions within academia are difficult to break through, suggesting the rigidity of the systems that are embedded in the culture of higher education are entrenched in all areas.

In summary, leadership development has been documented in literature across the various sectors of higher education. It is important to note that while literature denoted a trend in an increase in interest of higher education leadership development, the most
prominent sector where research has been published is in community college and Private Non-Profit Universities, specifically Faith-Based institutions. It is important to note that in faith-based institutions, and historically black colleges and universities, the institution’s identity and values are major variables in developing the leadership skills of leaders.

**Mid-level Leadership in Higher Education**

There are varying titles within the field of higher education that encompassed mid-level leadership. For the purposes of this study, mid-level administrators have been identified as directors, associate directors, deans, Associate Deans, and Program Chairs. Each of these roles required the management of metrics driven processes that allowed for the overall health of the department or the campus in a distributed campus system.

Much of the literature that is situated in higher education and leadership development was focused on succession planning for the university presidency, and only a few focused on the development of mid-level administrators. Because there are many difficulties with the ability of the higher education sector to implement either succession planning or leadership development programs that become part of the fabric of the institution, it was difficult to truly understand whether formal or informal leadership development existed within these organizations, in a meaningful way. There was a lack of literature, which explained the manner in which formal and informal leadership development manifested itself in the experiences of mid-level administrators in Private Non-Profit Higher Education.
The Role of Mid-level Administrators in Private Non-Profit Higher Education

The role of mid-level administrators within higher education has been expansive, and research postulated that even though it has not been studied as extensively as it should be, there is merit in understanding how individuals within these roles were most successful. One of the difficulties in understanding how mid-level administrators were developed within institutions of higher education laid within the culture of the organizations. Universities are steeped in traditions that often prohibited them from being able to effectively develop their leaders or being able to sustain their leadership development pipelines (Chelf, 2018). Additionally, because there were so few studies on the development of mid-level administrators in higher education, it was difficult to determine how many institutions were utilizing some type of development for mid-level administrators (Amey, VanDerlinden, & Brown, 2002; Davis, 2016; Flanders, 2008; Johnsrud & Rosser, 1998; Johnsrud, Heck & Rosser 2000; Karavedas, 2019; Rosser, 2002, 2004).

Mid-level administrators in higher education institutions comprised roughly 28% of the full-time staff in postsecondary institutions (Rosser, 2000). The positions within mid-level administration in four-year universities included both academic and non-academic staff. It is important to note that leadership and the ways in which mid-level administrators navigated their organizations, regardless of whether or not they lived within the academic or non-academic vertices, often reflected a hierarchy of power within the organization (Davis, 2016; Rosser, 2000). This illustrated the complexity of the role of a mid-level administrator and the skills necessary to navigate their roles, not only with great job related skills, but also with regard to leadership skills.
Davis (2016) also reported that within the complex role of mid-level administrators in higher education, these individuals impacted the development of implementation of strategic plans, development of curriculum, and were responsible for student learning outcomes, and often responsible for the advancement of diversity and inclusion initiatives across their organizations. Mid-level administrators played a significant role within their institutions driving toward institutional goals within their functional areas. For mid-level administrators to be effective in their positions, they must work across departments to advance the universities objectives. Huy (2001) and Flanders (2008) agreed that mid-level administrators must have the skills to build robust networks within, as well as outside of their organizations to influence those around them in an already complicated job within an even more complex organization.

Mid-level administrators played an integral role within their organizations, not just leading their own team, but also across teams to reach important university goals. Flanders (2008) suggested mid-level administrators in higher education were expected to enforce, monitor, and regulate policies and procedures that they had little influence in creating, adjusting, or developing. As is the nature of the role and higher education in general, mid-level administrators were also dealing with constant change (Lees, 2007). This dynamic further illustrated the intricacies of the role of mid-level administrators within higher education.

As a result of the ever changing landscape of higher education, and the complexities of their roles within their universities, mid-level administrators often felt as though there was a gap between the skills necessary to perform their previous jobs, and those that were necessary for their new roles (Inman, 2009; Rosser, 2000). This gap in
skills engendered one of the largest areas of frustration for mid-level administrators who believed that without proper leadership development and recognition for the work that was done within their roles, they were unable to properly impact the institution in a global manner (Johnsrud & Heck, 2000). Even though little research has been conducted on the way in which mid-level administrators were being developed within universities, there was some research that addressed the competencies that were necessary for mid-level leaders to be successful within their roles.

Leadership Development for Mid-level Administrators

“Simply being named leader neither made them leaders, nor gave them credibility as leaders” (Davis, 2016, p. 93). This sentiment permeated the thoughts of those who worked in roles in mid-level administration in Private Non-Profit higher education. A 2009 study conducted by Margaret Inman on mid-level administrators in higher education in England and Whales found that mid-level administrators often felt unprepared moving from faculty roles into administration. Much of this frustration pointed to a lack of leadership development, understanding of the competencies that were deemed necessary in their new positions, and an insufficient introduction to their new positions.

Competencies. To understand how mid-level administrators acquired their leadership skills, it was important to understand the competencies necessary to be successful in their positions. Flanders (2008), and Lombardo and Eichinger (2006) agreed that the most important leadership skills for mid-level administrators in higher education were encompassed in those areas that fell under personal and interpersonal skills. In 2008, Flanders conducted a study that sought to understand what characteristics
were essential to mid-level administrators within higher education. Through her study, Flanders (2008) was able to narrow it down to five critical characteristics of effective mid-level administrators. These characteristics included integrity and trust, ethics and values, customer focus, composure, and dealing with ambiguity. Most consistently ranked at the top of the list of effective characteristics of mid-level administrators was integrity and trust, followed by ethics and values.

An important outcome of Flanders’ (2008) study showed that two of the three focus groups that participated in the study agreed that integrity and trust, and ethics and values were the most important characteristics of effective mid-level administrators. When examining the data, mid-level administrators and their supervisors reported a different set of competencies that each of them believed to be more important. This difference of opinion also pointed to the perception that mid-level administrators were not receiving valuable formal or informal development for their roles, as each group viewed the necessary competencies differently.

**Acquiring leadership skills.** Even though there were only a few studies that addressed the way in which mid-level administrators in higher education perceived leadership development, the results of these studies were congruent with one another. Inman (2009), and Kezar and Lester (2009) agreed that their study participants reported a lack of professional development associated with mid-level administrator roles in higher education. Inman (2009) added that most mid-level administrators in higher education relied on informal means of developing their leadership skills. Additional studies on faculty leadership in particular agreed that the use of mentors as a means to develop their leadership skills was invaluable to their success in navigating critical job responsibilities.
(Davis, 2016; Flanders, 2008; Inman, 2009). Study participants agreed that an eclectic approach of formal and informal learning was necessary to navigate the complex role of a mid-level administrator in higher education (Flanders, 2008).

**Summary**

This review of literature focused on shedding light on the condition of leadership development within the higher education sector. It addressed the differences in the structure of institutions within higher education, and defined the role of mid-level administrators within these institutions. It also discussed the difficulties that mid-level administrators faced in organizations with the ever-growing complexities of their roles, and examined the literature as it related to the development of these leaders within the scope of higher education. Next, Chapter II explored the importance of leadership development in the universities within higher education, and considered how formal and informal learning environments shaped leadership development within the system. Lastly, this review of literature examined the intricacies of leadership development for mid-level administrators in Private Non-Profit Higher Education, and the experiences of those in these roles as was seen in the literature.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This study focused on exploring the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it related to leadership development in Private Non-Profit higher education. Chapter I of this dissertation gave a brief overview of the organization of the study, background of each of the variables that are associated with this study, problem that arose in literature, and presented the purpose statement and research question. Also, Chapter I discussed the significance the study.

Chapter II of this study focused on a review of literature. The review of literature outlined each of the variables associated with this study. It explored the history of Private Non-Profit higher education in America as well as the development of formalized leadership training in both the private and academic sectors. Finally, it examined the literature associated with mid-level administration development in Private Non-Profit higher education, and specifically, roles and responsibilities of mid-level administrators, and leadership development.

The focus of Chapter III is on the research methodology that was used for this study. There will be a purpose statement and research questions for this study, as well as an exploration of the research design, population, and sample populations. Additional attention has been placed on the instrumentation, researcher bias, validity, reliability, and data collection procedures for this study.
Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify and describe the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it related to leadership development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education in both formal and informal settings.

Research Question

What are the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it related to leadership development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education in both formal and informal settings?

Research Design

This study sought to identify and describe the lived experiences of mid-level administrators in Private Non-Profit higher education in an effort to understand the phenomena associated with leadership development activities within these institutions.

Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research is descriptive in nature and attempts to relay information through stories and descriptions of the environment that is being studied (Patton, 2015). The researcher aimed to glean rich stories about the lived experiences of mid-level administrators in Private Non-Profit higher education from the participants in the study. Because the central focus of this study was on the lived experiences of mid-level administrators, a qualitative approach was best suited to meet the needs of this study. For example, to understand the essence of their lived experiences, open-ended interview questions allow respondents to deeply describe their personal experiences and was determined to be the most appropriate approach. The needs of this study, coupled with the experiential phenomena that qualitative research offers, is also seen in the work of
McMillan and Schumacher (2010), who explained that interviews, naturalistic observation, and the examination of artifacts are used as a means to collect data about the phenomena that is being studied. The most common method of capturing qualitative inquiry was through the use of structured interviewing questions (Patton, 2015).

**Phenomenological**

After careful consideration of the different qualitative research frameworks that most closely fit the goal of this study, it was determined that utilizing a phenomenological framework would work best as the methodology for this study. Phenomenological studies aim to make sense of an experience, and understand how that experience shapes the consciousness of the individual who experienced it (Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) also explained that phenomenological studies focus on the lived experiences of a group of people who have experienced a particular phenomenon. For this study, the phenomenon that was investigated was how mid-level leaders in the Private Non-Profit sector of higher education learned and acquired their leadership skills.

To address the primary research question that is at the core of this study, it is important to understand that phenomenological studies look to elucidate the emotions that are associated with certain experiences (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The phenomenological framework was appropriate for this study, as it helped the researcher gain an understanding of how leadership development affected the success, consciousness, and experiences of mid-level administrators in Private Non-Profit higher education.
Population

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described a research population as a large
generalized group of individuals who are the subject of scientific inquiry. The population
for this study was all mid-level administrators in California’s 141 Private Non-Profit
Universities. These individuals must hold a role with the title of dean or below in the
academic functions of the university, or director and below in the operational functions of
the university. Additionally, to ensure that participants of this study had critical
experience in their positions, they also must have been in a mid-level management
position for a minimum of three years, and in the field of higher education for a minimum
of five years. Of the mid-level administrators in California, it is estimated that there are
approximately 100-150 mid-level administrators in each institution. This amounted to
approximately 14,100 to 21,150 mid-level leaders in California, which is an estimate of
the population for this study.

Target Population

Creswell (2012) defined a target population as a smaller subset of the larger group
population that embodies the same characteristics of the larger grouping. The target
population for this study was mid-level administrators in California’s Private Non Faith
Based, Non-Profit Universities. There were 83 Non-Faith Based, Non-Profit universities,
and approximately 100-150 mid-level administrators at each university. It was estimated
that there were 8,300 to 12,450 mid-level administrators in Non-Faith Based, Non-Profit
universities. As such, the target population for this study was estimated to be 8,300 to
12,450 mid-level administrators who worked in Private Non-Faith Based, Non-Profit
Higher Education in California. See Table 2 below for a breakdown of how the subset of 83 were derived from the 114 universities in California.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-Year Institution Type</th>
<th># Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private Non-Faith Based, Non-Profit</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Faith Based, Non-Profit</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample

Sample size in qualitative studies tend to be smaller than studies in quantitative inquiry (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Based on the target population, a sample of 18 will be taken. These 18 individuals consisted of mid-level administrators from non-profit universities, excluding faith-based universities, in California. Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommended the concept of saturation for achieving an appropriate sample size in qualitative studies. For phenomenological studies, Creswell (1998) suggested five to 25 and Morse (1994) suggested at least six. There were no specific rules when determining an appropriate sample size in qualitative research. Qualitative sample sizes may best be determined by the time allotted, resources available, and study objectives (Patton, 1990). Figure 3 below illustrates a summary of the breakdown of population, target population, and sample for this study.
Sampling Procedures

Criterion sampling was used for this study as a means to identify qualified individuals within the field of Private Non-Faith Based, Non-Profit universities. Patton (2015) illustrated the importance of criterion sampling by stating, “The logic of criterion sampling is to review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance, thereby explicitly (or implicitly) comparing the criterion cases with those that do not manifest the criterion” (p. 281). The criterion for this study included mid-level administrators in Private Non-Faith Based, Non-Profit universities who have held a mid-level management position for three years or more, and have worked in a Private Non-Faith Based, Non-Profit Higher Education for five years or more.

The following steps were utilized to recruit participants for this study:

1. Upon BU IRB approval, the researcher contacted the sponsor of the study.
2. The sponsor agreed to help the researcher recruit participants for the study by reaching out to their extensive network of individuals who met the study selection criteria via phone, email, or requesting an in-person meeting with them.

3. The sponsor reached out to a minimum of 30 individuals who met the selection criteria, had a minimum of five years of experience in Private Non-Profit Higher Education, and a minimum of three years of experience in a mid-level administrator role.

4. The researcher verified that the potential study participants who were sent to the researcher by the sponsor met the criteria of the study.

5. The researcher sent an email to potential participants that included the informational letter (Appendix D), the participant bill of rights (Appendix E), and the informed consent form (Appendix F).

6. The researcher offered to address any questions potential participants may have via a face to face meeting or phone call.

Of the participants who agreed to participate in the study, the researcher then used convenience sampling to reduce the pool of participants down to the 18 who were sampled. Convenience sampling was defined as, “…a sample in which research participants are selected based on their ease of availability” (Saumure & Given, 2008, p. 124). While it can be contested that this method alone may be problematic if used as a means to identify the sample of a study, in this instance it was used as a secondary method to obtain the sample based on geographic location.

Upon BU IRB approval, the researcher reached out to a potential sponsor of the study. The sponsor was recognized as an exemplary leader within the field of higher
education, had over 10 years of leadership experience in the field, had extensive experience with developing pathways for leadership development of mid-level administrators, and had published literature on the topic. Once the sponsor agreed to endorse this study, the sponsor helped the researcher contact 20-30 potential participants.

**Instrumentation**

For the purposes of this study, the researcher was considered the primary instrument that was utilized to gather data for the study. It was important that the researcher be able to demonstrate the ability to accurately represent the data that was collected for the study. Patton (2002) submitted that the goal of the researcher must be to focus on the authenticity of the data that is being collected. It was determined that this could be done through the appropriate use of interviewing questions and techniques.

**Researcher as Instrument of the Study**

The researcher is a vital part of the process within a qualitative study. Due to this phenomena, Pezalla, Pettigrew, and Miller-Day (2012) believed that the unique attributes of the researcher had the potential to influence the study. Because qualitative research is rooted in its ability to engender rich stories from quality interviews, the researcher as an instrumentation of study means that the researcher needs to build in safeguards to prevent their bias from permeating the study.

**Interview Questions**

Scripted interview questions were designed prior to meeting with the participants so that each respondent would be directed to respond to the same prompts. These interview questions were carefully crafted, and rooted in the literature. The table below addresses the foundation for these interview questions:
### Table 3

**Interview Questions Alignment Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Learning</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal Learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Informal and Incidental Learning (Marsick &amp; Watkins, 2001)</td>
<td>1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formall Learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lifewide and Lifelong Learning (Stevens, Bransford, &amp; Stevens, 2005)</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring (Both Informal and Formal)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Proposed Model of Mentoring in Higher Education (Knipplemeyer, 2007)</td>
<td>6-7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of the 10 interview questions and interview protocol (Appendix B) were reviewed by an expert panel to establish validity based on the alignment of the interview questions with the literature. The experts who were utilized for this study met a minimum of three of the seven criteria listed below:

1. A minimum of 10 years of experience in the field of higher education
2. Were currently or previously employed within in a Private Non-Profit University
3. Possessed a graduate degree in Organizational Leadership or Higher Education Leadership
4. Were a published author in Organizational Leadership or Higher Education
5. Had delivered workshops on the topic of Organizational Leadership or Higher Education
6. Had worked as a leader in higher education management for a minimum of five years
7. Had more than 10 years of experience with research design

The expert panel provided feedback regarding the validity of the interview questions as well as how appropriate the follow up interview questions were. The researcher was able to adjust the interview protocol under the guidance of the expert panel.
Additionally, the researcher conducted a pilot interview to ensure that the researcher’s interview skills were attested. The researcher received direct feedback from the pilot interview from an identified expert. For criteria on the credentials of the pilot interview expert, see Pilot Interview section below, under Validity.

**Validity**

“Validity, in qualitative research, refers to the degree of congruence between the explanations of the phenomena and the realities of the world” (Patton, 2016, p. 330). For purposes of the study, validity was addressed through the formation of an expert panel and through field testing, both of which are described below. The steps that lead to establishing the validity of a study ensure that the findings from the study are factual (Roberts, 2010). This process helps to ensure that researcher bias does not prejudice the study and influence the data.

**Expert Panel Validity**

An expert panel was employed to assist with reviewing the interview questions for consistency, continuity, and alignment with the primary research question of the study. Three individuals were employed as experts for the purposes of validating the instrument of this study. It is important to note that these individuals were not interviewed as part of the data collection procedures for this study, but rather provided insight and feedback to the researcher regarding the interview questions. Each of the experts who were utilized for this study met a minimum of three of the seven criteria listed below:

1. A minimum of 10 years of experience in the field of higher education
2. Was currently or previously employed within a Private Non-Profit University
3. Possessed a graduate degree in Organizational Leadership or Higher Education Leadership
4. Was a published author in Organizational Leadership or Higher Education
5. Had delivered workshops on the topic of Organizational Leadership or Higher Education
6. Had worked as a leader in higher education management for a minimum of five years
7. Had more than 10 years of experience with research design

**Pilot Interview (Field Test)**

A pilot interview was conducted prior to data collection for the research study to obtain feedback on the researcher’s interview skills. An expert was identified for the pilot interview as someone who had qualitative research experience, had taken coursework on qualitative research at the doctorate level, and had coached or mentored others in the field of qualitative research. This expert watched the researcher conduct the pilot interview and provided feedback on the researcher’s interview skills. In essence, the expert validated the researcher’s interview skills. For example, the expert provided feedback on interview skills such as pacing and eye contact.

**Reliability**

Reliability is an important factor in developing a research study. Joppe (2000) defined reliability as, “… the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and
if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable” (p.1). In the context of this study, reliability was deemed as the ability for another researcher to replicate this study through the methodology and data collection procedures.

**External Reliability**

External reliability of data is scrutinized when there needs to be a generalization of the results or conclusions due to the reproduction of a study (Lecompte & Goetz, 1982). For the purposes of qualitative research, it is not a significant factor as this study does not require the use of complex systems that will need duplication. Additionally, the lack of generalization of this data indicated the external reliability of this data did not present a concern for this study.

**Internal Reliability**

Creswell (2013) defined internal reliability as the ability for another researcher to recognize the data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of this study. The researcher utilized structured interviews, artifacts, and observations as a means to strengthen the study. It was through the triangulation of data and the use of multiple collection methods that the researcher was able to strengthen the findings of the study.

For the purposes of this study, data was triangulated from interview questions to define themes throughout the research data. In the event that artifacts were unable to be obtained, the researcher would expand the participant pool to encompass additional mid-level administrators so the information could be triangulated across additional interviewees to draw conclusions about the themes that were present within the data. Convergent data across multimethod strategies permits the research to utilize
triangulation as a method to add credibility to research findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

**Inter-Coder Reliability**

Lombard, Snyder-Dutch, and Bracken (2002) asserted that, “Inter-coder reliability is a widely used term for the extent to which independent coders evaluate a characteristic of a message or artifact and reach the same conclusion” (p. 2). For purposes of this study, another researcher participated in a coding exercise to verify that the data collected for this research project was reliable. Further, the independent coder reviewed and coded 10% of the data from the research study to ensure that the initial analysis of the data was congruent with the researcher’s assertions. Through an independent coding process it was determined that the data was reliable up to 90%, which is considered the acceptable rate for determining the accuracy of the data for this study.

**Data Collection**

In an effort to yield an authentic view of the lived experiences of mid-level administrators in Private Non-Profit higher education, data was obtained through structured interviews and artifacts. Prior to inviting individuals to participate in the study, an application was submitted to the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (BUIRB) for review and approval. Following BUIRB approval (Appendix C), an email was sent to each of the 18 study participants. This email was sent in December of 2019 and included an informational letter (Appendix D), the participant bill of rights (Appendix E), and the informed consent form (Appendix F). As an additional precautionary measure, the researcher completed a training course in Protecting Research Participants. Evidence of this training is attached as Appendix G.
Types of Data

**Interviews.** Before conducting the interviews, the researcher worked with an expert panel who specialized in leadership development and collectively have 30 years of experience in higher education. While many research studies adapt a theoretical or conceptual framework as a lens to investigate the data, some studies are more open-ended and frameworks are not used. For this particular study, a framework has not been used because there has yet to be a framework developed that strictly focused on formal and informal leadership development. Given this, a more open-ended approach was utilized.

The researcher created open-ended interview questions that focused on each of the three areas that were pertinent to this study, which included formal leadership training, informal leadership training methods, and mentorship. It is also important to note that the interviews were semi-structured in nature, which allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions when appropriate. Semi-structured interviews strike a balance between both processes and allow the researcher the flexibility to ask appropriate follow-up questions when necessary (Patton, 2015).

**Artifacts.** The researcher collected artifacts that pertained to formalized leadership development programs if the participants had been part of such a program. The names, titles, and organizations of the individuals who chose to furnish these artifacts were redacted for anonymity.

**Participant Recruitment**

The primary research question associated with this study sought to understand the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it related to formal and informal leadership development in Private Non-Profit higher education. Participants of this study
must have worked in higher education for a minimum of five years and have spent a minimum of three years in a mid-level administrator role in Private Non-Profit Higher Education. A sponsor who worked within the field of higher education was chosen and an email was sent asking if they were willing to sponsor the study (Appendix H). The researcher understood that utilizing the sponsor’s network was a powerful way to find a deep cross-section of individuals who worked as mid-level administrators in Private Non-Profit Higher Education fit these criteria.

Attention to detail was paramount in the selection of participants for this study. The researcher met with the potential sponsor of the study. During this discussion, the researcher explained the scope of the study, and furnished the informational letter, informed consent form, and Participant’s Bill of Rights for the sponsor’s review. Following the meeting, the researcher sent an email to the sponsor seeking endorsement for the study (Appendix I). Once endorsement was obtained from the sponsor of the study, an additional email was sent to potential participants of the study that included the informational letter, the participant bill of rights, and the informed consent form.

Data Collection Procedures

The following sections of this document will review the data collection procedures for the study. It will outline the manner in which interviews were conducted, and also the way in which artifacts were obtained for the study for ease of replication, and to gain an understanding of data handling procedures.

Interviews. The following steps were taken to collect interview data from study participants:
1. Participants were identified based on their tenure, and the positions held in a Private Non-Profit university

2. A mutually agreed upon meeting place was chosen to ensure that the interview participant was in comfortable surroundings, and was free from work or personal distractions

3. Prior to the interview, the scope of the study was explained to the participant as well as the three domains of leadership development that would be discussed in the interview

4. The participant was provided the Participant’s Bill of Rights both by email prior to the study, and again before the interview took place (Appendix E)

5. The participant was offered the opportunity to ask questions about the study

6. The researcher provided the participant with the informed consent form, and the participant signed the informed consent form (Appendix F)

7. Once all of the above was completed and consent was given, the researcher began the interview

**Data Analysis**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) illustrated the steps to data collection in a linear fashion that included data organization, transcription, coding of the data, describing the data, categorizing the data, and then developing patterns. The researcher followed this pattern of data analysis to ensure that there was an accurate representation of the data that was collected by the researcher for the study.

To ensure fidelity of the process of data analysis, the researcher first scanned the data to see if the researcher was able to identify any themes within the data. McMillian
and Schumacher (2010) stated that the researcher should look for individual occurrences, behaviors, or participant perspectives that lend themselves to the development of themes within the data. The researcher followed the steps below to ensure consistency in this process:

1. The researcher scanned the data for relevant themes that addressed the research question for the study
2. The researcher identified themes that answered the research question for the study
3. The researcher coded the data using NVivo® software, and examined the frequency of the themes to see how they helped to answer the research question for the study
4. After the researcher coded the data, the researcher worked with an expert who understood qualitative research and the coding of qualitative data to verify through inter-coder reliability that the data had been coded appropriately

Limitations

Qualitative research involves limitations that can present itself within the study. This may be by way of the researcher’s personal opinions, time, geography, and self-reported data (Patton, 2002). The researcher employed deliberate strategies within each of the areas above to minimize the impact that these limitations would have on the study. Listed below are each of these limitations, and the way in which the limitations were addressed by the researcher:

1. Researcher is an instrument of the study: In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument of the study, in much the same way that surveys would be in quantitative research. Through the use of structured interview questions, the
researcher was able to limit potential bias that is associated with the researcher being the primary instrument of the study. The researcher was careful not to inject follow-up questions during the interviews by ensuring that open-ended, and non-leading questions were employed during the interview process.

2. Time constraints: Due to the nature of the data collection process in qualitative research, and the time that it takes to travel to each participant, along with the appropriate analysis of the data for the study, time constraints present a limitation in this study. To address this limitation, the researcher used both criterion sampling, and then convenience sampling to narrow down the participant pool and minimize travel time. Additionally, qualitative data takes a significant amount of time to collect so the researcher was sure to allot enough time to accurately code the data and put it into themes to report the findings of the study.

3. Self-reported data: In qualitative research, the participants self-report their experiences during structured interviews. The researcher minimized the impact that this phenomena had on the study by triangulating the data with the artifacts that the participants provided to the researcher, as well as the responses from other interviewees.

4. Study sponsorship: Having a single sponsor whether expert or not can be a limitation of the study. In an effort to minimize this limitation, the researcher ensured that the participants that were referred by the sponsor came from a cross section of the industry and not just from one organization.
Summary

In Chapter III, the researcher addressed the purpose of the study, research methodology, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, and the limitations of the study. Throughout this chapter, the researcher’s goals were to guide the reader through the steps that were taken during the data collection and analysis process, and addressed concerns with the limitations of the study. Careful attention was paid to ensure that the research question was addressed by the data that was collected during the study, and that the data detailed the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it related to leadership development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education.
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

Chapter I provided an introduction to the study and the background of the research. Chapter II outlined the literature associated with higher education, leadership, formal learning, and informal learning. Chapter III highlighted the methodology of the phenomenological study, providing a thorough explanation of the methodology used in collecting data for the study. This chapter presents the findings of the study, including the participants who were involved in the study, the data collection methods, and a detailed analysis of the findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify and describe the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it related to leadership development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education in both formal and informal settings.

Research Question

What are the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it related to leadership development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education in both formal and informal settings?

Population

The population for this study was all mid-level administrators in California’s 141 Private Non-Profit Universities. These individuals were required to hold a role of dean or below in the academic functions of the university, or director and below in the operational functions of the university. Additionally, to ensure that participants of this study had critical experience in their positions, they were also required have been in a
mid-level management position for a minimum of three years, and in the field of higher education for a minimum of five years. Of the mid-level administrators in California, it is estimated that there were approximately 100-150 mid-level administrators in each institution. This amounted to approximately 14,100 to 21,150 mid-level leaders, which was an estimate of the population for this study.

**Target Population**

The target population for this study was mid-level administrators in California’s Private Non Faith Based, Non-Profit Universities. There were 83 Non-Faith Based, Non-Profit universities, and approximately 100-150 mid-level administrators at each university. It was estimated that there were 8,300 to 12,450 mid-level administrators in Non-Faith Based, Non-Profit universities. As such, the target population for this study was estimated at 8,300 to 12,450 mid-level administrators who worked in Private Non-Faith Based, Non-Profit Higher Education in California.

**Sample**

Based on the target population, a sample of 18 participants were taken. These 18 individuals consisted of mid-level administrators from non-profit universities, excluding faith-based universities, in California.

**Demographic Data**

A sample of 18 participants who met the study criteria were interviewed for this study. Each participant signed the informed consent form. Demographic information that is relevant to the study was collected from each participant, including gender, race or ethnicity, years as a mid-level administrator in Private Non-Profit Higher Education, and
types of positions held. Participants were identified using numbers from 1-18. Table 4 shows the demographic data for each participant.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity/Race</th>
<th>Years in Mid-level Administration</th>
<th>Positions Held</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Director, Assistant Director, Program Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Associate Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Director, Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Dean, Associate Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Dean, Associate Dean, Assistant Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Dean, Director, Assistant Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Associate Dean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participant 11  Male  Asian  4  Director
Participant 12  Female  White  15  Director
Participant 13  Male  White  8  Dean
Participant 14  Female  Hispanic  17  Director
Participant 15  Female  Hispanic  18  Dean
  Associate Dean
  Program Chair
Participant 16  Male  White  6  Dean
Participant 17  Female  White  6  Program Chair
Participant 18  Male  Hispanic  10  Director

**Presentation and Analysis of Data**

The findings that are presented in this chapter are the outcome of 20 hours of interviews. Data was analyzed in an attempt to answer the research question: *What are the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it relates to leadership development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education in both formal and informal settings?* As a result of the study not having a formal framework, the 12 themes that emerged from the data were divided into two different categories that addressed the ways in which mid-level administrators developed leadership skills, as well as unexpected findings:

- Formal Learning
- Informal Learning
- Unexpected Findings
The participants of this study were individuals who have worked in Private Non-Profit Higher Education for a minimum of five years and have held a mid-level administrative role for at least three years. The following themes emerged from the data and are presented in order from highest frequency to lowest frequency and reflect the areas in which mid-level administrators developed leadership skills. Below are the themes that emerged from the data:

1. Participants sought informal opportunities to develop their leadership skills because formal opportunities did not exactly fit their needs.

2. Participants organically formed mentoring relationships based on participants’ ongoing and changing leadership needs.

3. Participants relied on mentoring to build leadership skills.

4. Participants sought support from communities of practice to build networks across organizations.

5. Participants sought support from communities of practice to stay current in their discipline.

6. Participants created working groups as a means to build leadership skills and content knowledge outside of formalized settings.

7. A degree only goes so far; good leaders are lifelong learners and are intrinsically motivated to seek new knowledge and skills.

8. Marginalized populations feel frustrated because there are less opportunities and access to develop their leadership skills.

9. Valuing formal education as the key to opening the door to leadership opportunities.
10. Participants sought positive opportunities to learn both formally and informally due to poor experiences with bosses and colleagues.

11. Experiences with formal leadership development gave leaders exposure to leadership theory, but lacked practical application.

12. Having leadership experience before seeking a terminal degree helped mid-level administrators contextualize what they learned.

The data were organized by type of learning, formal or informal, and also included unexpected findings that emerged from the data. There are 12 themes presented in the data, eight of which are divided into formal learning and informal learning. The remaining four themes are presented as unexpected findings.

**Data Analysis**

The researcher collected data from 18 participant interviews in an attempt to understand how mid-level administrators have experienced leadership development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education. The data were collected through individual, face-to-face, and virtual interviews. The researcher utilized semi-structured interviews with open ended questions that guided the participants through a series of questions that helped them explore their experiences with formal learning and informal learning. The data was triangulated across participant interviews, and separated into experiences that were categorized as either formal learning, informal learning, or unexpected findings.

After collecting, transcribing, reviewing, and coding the interview data, the researcher asked another researcher to code 10% of the data from the interviews as a means to verify the themes associated with the study were in alignment with the research question. The data that were double coded resulted in over 80% accuracy, which met the
inter-coder reliability criteria set forth by Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Bracken (2004). The other researcher verified the themes and frequency counts that were presented in the data and verified the themes associated with the study answered the research question.

Upon completion of the analysis of the data, the researcher concluded that there were 12 major themes related to the study’s research question. Table 5 illustrates the frequencies and sources for each of the 12 themes in order from highest to lowest and also include the type of learning that each theme is coded to:

**Table 5**

*Theme, Sources, and Frequency – Highest to Lowest*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Learning</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Participants sought informal opportunities to develop their leadership skills because formal opportunities did not fit their needs</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Participants organically formed mentoring relationships based on participants’ ongoing and changing leadership needs</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Participants relied on mentoring to build leadership skills</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Participants sought support from communities of practice to build networks across organizations</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Participants sought support from communities of practice to stay current in their discipline</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Participants created working groups as a means to build leadership skills and content knowledge outside of formalized settings</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexpected</td>
<td>A degree only goes so far; good leaders are lifelong learners and are intrinsically motivated to seek new knowledge and skills</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unexpected Marginalized populations feel frustrated because there are less opportunities and access to develop their leadership skills 11 43

Formal Valuing formal education as the key to opening the door to leadership opportunities 11 25

Unexpected Participants sought positive opportunities for learning both formally and informally due to poor experiences with bosses and colleagues 11 25

Formal Experiences with education gave leaders exposure to leadership theory, but lacked practical application 10 22

Unexpected Having leadership experience before seeking terminal degree helped mid-level administrators contextualize what they learned 9 22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes Based on Type of Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The following data are presented based on whether the participant’s experiences were delineated as formal learning, informal learning, or unexpected findings. During the interviews, the participants were asked how their experiences with regard to leadership development were shaped by each of these two areas. Participants often shared how they felt that these experiences shaped their career trajectory, and the way in which they navigated through the workplace. After carefully collecting and coding the data, the researcher concluded that there are two emergent themes with regard to formal learning that are discussed in this chapter. There are six themes discussed regarding informal learning. There are also four themes that will be presented as unexpected findings. Each section is organized from highest frequency count to lowest frequency count, and present the researcher’s findings from the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
interviews that were conducted with the 18 research participants. Figure 5 illustrates the breakdown of the total data for the study:

![Figure 5: Breakdown of Total Data](image)

*Figure 5: Breakdown of Total Data for the Study*

**Figure 6: Percentage of Data in Each Learning Type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal Learning</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Learning</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexpected Findings</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Formal Learning**

For purposes of this study, formal learning is defined as structured learning in an education program that is offered on leadership development through an organization or university in a classroom setting. Each participant was asked a series of questions about their experiences as it related to formal leadership development, and how these experiences helped them build their leadership skills. The interview questions attempted to address the research question of the study: *What are the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it relates to leadership development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education in both formal and informal settings?*

Participants spoke about the importance of education and how it opened doors to leadership opportunities for them, as well as their belief that while formal education gave them exposure to leadership theory, it lacked practical application. The total frequency count for the study is 639, and the total frequency count for formal learning is 47. This
represented over 7% of the findings for the study. Table 6 illustrates the themes that emerged from the data with regard to formal learning:

**Table 6**

*Theme, Source, and Frequency – Formal learning*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Valuing formal education as the key to opening the door to leadership opportunities</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Experiences with formal education gave leaders exposure to leadership theory, but lacked practical application</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Frequency Count** | 47

**Formal Learning Theme 1: Valuing formal education as the key to opening the door to leadership opportunities.** Participants spoke about valuing their educational experiences and how their experiences led to opening the door to leadership opportunities. During interviews it became clear to the researcher that participants felt that formal education was essential to their development, but more importantly, it was a means through which they were able to qualify for higher level opportunities within their organizations. There are 11 sources associated with this theme, and 25 frequencies that emerged from the data (Table 7).

**Table 7**

*Theme, Source, Frequency – Valuing formal education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Valuing formal education as the key to opening the door to leadership opportunities</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the interviews, it was apparent that participants felt very strongly about their formal education and its ability to qualify them for next level positions. Participant 11 was particularly emphatic about this sentiment and also shared that successful individuals knew how to leverage connections after finishing their degrees to open pathways to opportunities,

So unless you have somebody to speak to, to kind of make sense of your ideas and to also learn from other people's pathways, a higher education degree is not going to be useful unless you're lucky because the degree gives you, it qualifies you for a job. I feel like the more successful people are able to leverage their connections to get the interview or to practice interviews.

Along with sharing the idea that education is the key to opening career opportunities Participant 8 shared,

They're not, they don't train you to, they train you to do the work of an academic and they don't train you to do the work of a manager or a leader. So it's a key that gets you positioned for whatever might be an opportunity for you.

Many participants felt having access to formal degree programs was a benefit to working in higher education, in addition to being a key that unlocks opportunities for growth. Participants shared that it is one of the only ways that employees have access to leadership development because resources across universities are often put toward initiatives that take precedence over leadership development.

**Formal Learning Theme 2: Experiences with formal leadership development gave leaders exposure to leadership theory, but lacked practical application.**

Participant responses when speaking about their formal education often included the
notion that they found their education valuable, but more so as a means to qualify them for next level positions. Of the 10 sources who noted this experience, each shared their formal education lacked the practical application needed to be good leaders. In some instances, participants shared that their early formal education was in an area other than organizational leadership, and that may have influenced their reflection on how their formalized education built their leadership skills. Table 8 illustrates the sources and frequencies associated with this theme:

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Experiences with formal education gave leaders exposure to leadership theory, but lacked practical application</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examination of the data showed that participants believe their experiences with their formal education were heavily theory-based across undergraduate and graduate programs. This discovery led to meaningful discussions during the interviews where participants shared their belief that just because they had the theoretical knowledge necessary to be credible subject matter experts did not mean that they had the necessary skills to be good leaders. Participant 13 shared,

I applied all that I learned in my first full time job and I kept applying this stuff over and over again and it really helped all the years I was in student affairs and in a really a lot of, a lot of ways. The PhD program was, you know, theory and research based and that's what I wanted because that's what I felt like would give me the greatest overarching platform from which to live out my potential role as a
leader and manager and higher education. So, you know, I went to Claremont did the PhD and I also did an inner field study that lets you combine studies. So I studied in a school psychology management and education and I learned a theory of a whole bunch of stuff, which actually helps immensely in a big picture, but I didn't learn anything practical about or change or politics and that kind of stuff.

Participant 15 further explained that in her experience, being a good academician, researcher, or writer, has little to do with being a good mid-level administrator,

Part of it may be a little bit of arrogance in that we all think because we are academic leaders that we are leaders and those are two different things. And the skills you need to be a good mid-level administrator have not, not as much overlap as you'd think with being an academician or a good researcher or a good writer. I mean there are some, but there's, there's one skill in particular that I think we just overlook. We think people come with it is the ability to organize one and then follow up on meetings. Like when do you really need a meeting and when is an announcement pair and when you do have a meeting, how do you keep it moving? How do you make sure that you've addressed all the issues you wanted to address? How do you know who's going to follow up? Those kinds of things. So that's a, that's one discrete skill that a mid-level administrator really needs that nobody teaches you that in a PhD program.

During the semi-structured interviews, the researcher noted that participants initially had difficulties separating their leadership skills from their formalized educational programs. Some admitting after deep reflection they believed their difficulties in separating the two
were rooted in the belief that working in academia initially influenced their thoughts on the topic.

**Informal Learning**

Informal learning as defined by this study explored the ways in which mid-level administrators experienced leadership development that did not take place in structured formats. This included mentoring relationships that formed out of a need to fill a skills gap, as well as communities of practice that participants engaged in to further their leadership expertise. The data showed that all of the participants of this study participated in informal learning in one way or another. Many of them participated in multiple types of informal learning. The total frequency count for this study is 639, and of the 639 frequencies, 451 of them occurred during informal learning. This equals 70% of the total frequency count for the entire study. Table 9 shows the themes, frequencies, and sources from the study that are associated with informal learning.

**Table 9**

*Theme, Source, Frequency – Informal learning*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Participants sought informal opportunities to develop their leadership skills because formal opportunities did not exactly fit their needs</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Participants organically formed mentoring relationships based on participants’ ongoing and changing leadership needs</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Participants relied Relying on mentoring to build leadership skills</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Participants sought support from communities of practice to build networks across organizations</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Informal Learning Theme 1: Participants sought informal opportunities to develop their leadership skills because formal opportunities did not fit their needs.

The participants of this study agreed that seeking informal opportunities to develop their leadership skills and tackle tough leadership decisions was best accomplished through seeking experiences that allowed them to engage in important dialog with colleagues in informal settings. This theme boasted the largest frequency count in the study. Each participant shared multiple times as evidenced by a frequency count of 96 or 14% of the total responses for the study, that informal opportunities for development was most effective at building their leadership skills. Table 10 displays the frequency and source count for this theme:

**Table 10**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Participants sought informal opportunities to develop their leadership skills because formal opportunities did not fit their needs</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the semi-structured interviews, participants shared numerous examples that illuminated the importance of seeking informal opportunities for the development of
their leadership skills when formal opportunities were either not available or did not fit
their specific needs. Participant 10 shared an experience wherein he needed to seek out
answers for a deficiency that he was trying to fix so that a delicate leadership related
situation could be handled appropriately,

   But I, I had to manage teams of people now, groups of people widely dispersed
and I didn't have a course to tell me how to do that. I had a couple of people who
had managed similar kinds of processes. Yeah. Who I spend time interviewing to
get the benefit of their experience, both in terms of success stories but also lessons
learned. What are mistakes, what are decisions that they made that if they could
go back in time they would handle differently. And so that was one on one
tutoring, mentoring, if you will, me as a protégé in order to try and become as
well prepared as I could be.

Participant 10 continued to illustrate the necessity for this same type of interaction when
the need arose for him to facilitate a reduction in force and the importance of leaning into
his community to help him navigate this difficult situation,

   So when I knew we had to go through this reduction in force, I reached out to that
community and, and said, when you've gone through challenging business times,
which career transition assistance firm, if any, did you use? And what were your
experiences? It's the only unanimous recommendation for more than 20
organizations that responded. It's the same firm. I didn't need an RFP for that.
So that's a value add.
Participant 11 echoed the same sentiment as Participant 10, but further shared that informal learning differs from formal learning because it helped leaders create a pathway and framed ideas because you are able to share ideas with one another,

So where it differs with communities of practice and with mentorship, you've got people giving you advice, helping you to frame or helping you to create a pathway for yourself because you're bouncing ideas off of each other.

Participant 17 further explained that while she had the formal degree to help build her leadership skills, it did not prepare her enough to take on the role as a programs chair so she needed to reach out to other program chairs within her organization to be successful,

And I think another, another piece that's important is when I was put into the position as program chair, I had never done anything like that before. Every, all the administrative work I'd done in the past was at a lower level. I didn't have a lot of supervisory responsibility, so it was kind of learn as I go. And I picked up on a lot of things just by modeling after colleagues who are in the same position, in the same type of chair position and, and also monthly meetings that we would have with all the chairs. And we were able to share experiences, concerns, you know, kind of troubleshoot issues that we had because even though we have different programs underneath us, we all have the same job responsibilities in terms of sharing the programs. So I would say the professional development piece, not so much, but, but the actual practical everyday doing the job really has, has helped, helped me become a better leader and has also taught me a lot of things that even I didn't learn in the doctoral program.
Throughout the interviews it was evident participants felt it was necessary to seek out informal opportunities to assist with their understanding of specific leadership related responsibilities. These skills included both leadership and managerial responsibilities. Additionally, participants agree that these informal opportunities to connect with others is driven by the need to confer about situations that require the navigation of political and power dynamics within their organization.

Informal Learning Theme 2: Participants organically formed mentoring relationships based on participants’ ongoing and changing leadership needs. In exploring the participants’ responses to the research question for the study, participants shared that mentoring relationships were extremely important to the development of their leadership skills. Participants explored the importance of allowing these relationships to form organically with trusted individuals who could give participants valuable insights into areas where growth could be obtained. There was a total of 16 participants who shared this idea and a frequency count of 78 associated with this theme, which is the second largest for the study. This theme accounts for over 12% of participant responses for the entire study. Table 11 illustrates the sources and frequency counts associated with this theme.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Participants organically formed mentoring relationships based on participants’ ongoing and changing leadership needs</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Politics, organization structure, personnel dynamics, leadership, and managerial skills are just a few of the topics that were discussed with mentors. Participants all discussed experiences that differed with regard to the frequency and timing of their mentoring conversations. However, they all agreed that these relationships formed over a common bond which was either based on job profile, organization, or something personal that participants shared with their mentors. Participant 1 shared that he has never had a formal mentoring relationship even though these relationships were formed in the workplace,

I've never had a formal mentorship. I can think of three individuals that I think informally I would call my mentors.

Participant 14 stated that these relationships have formed through a strong connection with the individuals who have mentored them,

I'm to say they were organic in that I'm either drawn to people or people are either drawn to me and I think that just happens organically.

Additionally, Participant 5 shared that none of her relationships were formalized, even though some of her mentors were individuals who she worked with,

I think mine have all been organic, informal to say, I never came up to somebody and said, Mike, will you mentor me? You know Susan will you mentor me? You know, but I think that it was, again, through relationship building through my supervisors. And I think that two mentors that I had the, the most, and I say this is that they've been men which, and, and, and I think, and I don't know if it, I said I'm … so is it age? Is it because of there weren't as many women above me, you know?
During his semi-structured interview, Participant 16 spoke of the many ways that he formed relationships with his mentors. Relationships that were built over a common love for knowledge, sports, and innovation,

Yeah, I've never spent assigned a mentor that worked and it's, I can't remember being assigned a mentor. And you know, I'm an intellectual, so I'm drawn to people who want to talk about ideas and find someone who wants to talk about ideas. I talk about ideas with them and, and so it's, I think that's always been the connection. And, you know, so if I'm playing basketball one day, and I remember vividly when I met, you know, [anonymous] and we were on the basketball court and he was shorter than I was and I was blocking his shot and he got mad at me and, and we, we, we stepped off the court and, you know, and we started, what do you do? And I told them, and what are you interested in? And he told me, and you know, next thing you know, we realized we have a lot of common interests and you know, and so then when I want to go to graduate school, it was really easy to say, Oh, you're, you know, you're someone who have common interests with, I want to study with you. Mmm, I take it back. I have had one, I take that back because it is going to be a question that you have communities of practice question. Okay. So like, so I'm maybe jumping ahead, but like years ago I was a Dean's fellow for gains for impact and education national education group and we, you know, is it a yearlong fellowship? And it was about, and we had a community, right? So there's a group of deans and then we had, we had mentors and I had [anonymous] who's a Dean now at the university of Louisville and she was my assigned mentor and we get along fad famously. And most often that
doesn't happen through assignments. It happens in my experience, right. Other people are gonna experience it differently. And that's, that's the thing to know. I understand where people are experiencing differently. And so I just found it through, you know, the things I was interested in and who I was engaging.

Although, participants formed relationships with their mentors in very different ways, it was evident that each of these relationships profoundly impacted their development as leaders. So much so, that when asked whether formal or informal learning was most instrumental in their development, all participants pointed to informal learning. Many explaining that the mentoring relationships formed early on in their careers were most significant.

**Informal Learning Theme 3: Participants relied on mentoring to build leadership skills.** This theme revealed the third highest frequency count in the study. It had a frequency count of 76, from 17 sources, and comprised 12% of the data for the study. All participants felt their mentoring relationships played a major role in shaping their skills as a leader; most often relying on mentors to help them gain important insights into leadership regarding politics, team and organizational dynamics, as well as managing organizational process or policy. An important aspect of mentoring relationships as relayed by the participants was the feeling that they were often put into leadership positions out of necessity and were not necessarily ready to assume these roles. It was quickest for them to gain valuable insight by leaning on a mentor to help them quickly fill in the gaps. Table 12 illustrates the frequency and sources associated with this theme.
Participant 15 believed that her rise into a leadership role was a matter of convenience based on the need of the organization. She also shared that she believed we take capable individuals who are subject matter experts in a particular field, but may not be prepared to lead, and ask them to rise to the occasion with few leadership skills, and that without the help of mentors, she would not have been successful in her role,

Dean, you know, but I was, but part of it was because they needed somebody to get us through accreditation. Right. It's a matter of convenience as well. And so we, we take capable individuals who are proficient in a certain discipline or area of study and move them into administrator roles because we see that they're capable. Right. But also that, that, that there's a need for that role. What so particularly as well, no, both of us director of graduate education and definitely is Dean. I was working with a provost that I really, I enjoyed working with them. He's a, he's a visionary as well as very personable. So for example, one of the deans, he was amazing on detail. There was no detail that was too small and it was important to see them. And I am more of a big picture thinker. So I really appreciated learning that from him. From, from another Dean, I learned the importance of long-term relationships and allowing those to build before as you moved your departments, your departments forward, but, but knowing that not
everybody was going to move at the same speed. So that was, that was really helpful.

Participant 15 went on to share that leaning into her mentoring relationships, as well as her informal community of practice, allowed her to gain valuable insights when she needed them most. Many participants described their mentors as visionaries with deep insights into organizational dynamics. They also mentioned that receiving immediate feedback from these informal relationships allowed them to navigate difficult situations quickly and proficiently.

**Informal Learning Theme 4: Participants sought support from communities of practice to build networks across organizations.** Brainstorming, gaining mentoring relationships, and thinking about different ways to navigate delicate situations were just a few of the benefits that participants shared with regard to this theme. The data showed 17 sources and a frequency count of 70 for this theme that illustrated the majority of the individuals associated with this study used communities of practice to build networks across organizations, and learned valuable information from networking across organizations. Table 13 illustrates the frequency count and sources for this theme.

**Table 13**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme, Source, Frequency – Sought support from COP to build networks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participant 16 shared that while he believed his leadership abilities were informed by his experiences in higher education, he also believed there is learning that can only happen through an informal, relational dynamic,

Certain things you can get from an institutional support structure and there's other things you're going to get from an informal relational dynamic. And occasionally, you know, a relationship evolves. Like the relationship I have with [anonymous] our relationship evolves out of a formal structure, but you know, but that's not guaranteed it's hit or miss. I think that my experience with Deans for impact was really important, was well done training. I think it was the best professional development week I've ever spent in this structured follow up. Super beneficial. But it was the, it was the community, right? It was the dialogue we got to have with someone who faced more challenges and then that builds a network of people you can relate to. Guys. Super important. I think that my community of practice as a graduate student, as a faculty member and now as a Dean was all about the relationships I've built with my colleagues. That became my community of practice.

In response to the interview questions about communities of practice, participants also point to formal working groups that become informal working groups and to a mid-level administrator's ability to gain insight from other individuals who work within higher education and are in similar jobs. Additionally, participants shared that this exponentially increases their ability to do well in their roles, especially when they feel they have been moved into a leadership role without having the appropriate skill set to be successful.
Informal Learning Theme 5: Participants sought support from communities of practice to stay current in their discipline. The participants in this study believed the ongoing support they received from communities of practice to stay current in their discipline was instrumental in their success as leaders. Participants were adamant that all mid-level administrators should be able to regularly attend events through communities of practice to gain valuable insights from their colleagues. The frequency count associated with this theme encompassed over 10% of the data for the study. Table 14 illustrates the frequency count and sources for this theme.

Table 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Participants sought support from communities of practice to stay current in their discipline</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In discussing this topic with Participant 1, he shared that learning from the people who came before him and who were well respected in the field gave context to the evolution of the profession over time,

Because, you know, when you go to conferences and you realize there are, you know, 4,000 people around the world doing the work that you do. And you know, I think of some of the people who are in the leadership roles within the NACADA and they're really inspiring because they have, especially the guy who's the president right now, he has, he has lived through the evolution of academic advising as a profession. And so he really talks from experience in terms of how
this profession has had to and continues to have to sort of identify and carve out what does it do within the university setting.

Participant 18 shared that he felt fortunate to have had these experiences regularly as a leader, and noted that when he left the organization he was with for 12 years, he noticed his colleagues at his new university had not be afforded the same opportunities,

You know, in that sense I've been, I'm very fortunate enough to be able to go to every national conference and, and mission since 2003. And that, that's a luxury cause he, you know, the organization is that you should have met now just this last year one of my colleagues has been 14 years, just went to his first manager.

Participants’ experiences varied in connection with communities of practice, yet they all agreed their participation with other individuals across organizations helped them to stay current in their field. Participants wanted to be absolutely clear that these relationships spanned beyond conferences and networking situations, and the individuals they interacted with in organized communities of practice became trusted individuals who the participants relied on long after these event were over.

**Informal Learning Theme 6: Participants created working groups as a means to build leadership skills and content knowledge outside of formalized settings.** Informal learning in casual settings through which mid-level administrators could explore topics such as politics was an important theme that emerged from the data. Study participants often created these informal working groups, especially when they were new to their roles to help gain valuable insights that allowed them to navigate their roles successfully. The frequency count for this theme was 60, which was almost 10% of
the total data for the study. Table 15 shows the coded data that is associated with this theme.

**Table 15**

*Theme, Source, Frequency – Created working groups to build leadership skills*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Participants created working groups as a means to build leadership skills and content knowledge outside of formalized settings</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant 2 was extremely passionate when sharing about this aspect of informal learning. She firmly believed that there is value in informal working groups that create safe spaces for leaders to ask questions about organizational dynamics, politics, and compliance related topics,

Everybody assumes that you have a base of knowledge. And sometimes I'm like, can we just start with where the bathroom is full? The paper just need to find the toilet paper. Cause that's of course. And they're like already gone. Like, well, we're painting the bathroom and we're doing this. And I'm like, I just needed the toilet paper. You know, there's a lot of that happens, but that's, that's a community of practice area that I think another area would probably be, I have regular meetings and they're not formal, but we don't have it on the calendar. But I probably talked to our Dean five times a week. Where he's just, he's got something he wants to run by me or, or I call him because I have a couple of things that I need to run by him and I really don't know where to begin. And that happens all the time. That's how much, I don't know. I'm learning all the time. And so my meetings with him are very impromptu. Very rarely do we set up a
meeting on the calendar or we're going to talk about something unless we're going to pull other folks into the meeting. But sometimes I'll be on the phone with him and we'll, you know, we'll patch in one of our associate deans or we'll patch it another person. A lot of that happened, very impromptu, nothing really formalized.

Of importance to this theme is the idea that once you get promoted into a mid-level administrator role, the assumption is made that you automatically have the knowledge to be successful in your new position. However, many study participants shared that in higher education, these positions are born out of an organizational objective, which is not always congruent with the new administrator’s skill set. This left administrators to lean on informal working groups to gain valuable skills.

**Unexpected Findings**

The aim of this study was to understand the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it related to leadership development in both formal and informal settings. Interestingly, the unexpected findings associated with this study comprised over 22% of the total frequency count for each of the 12 themes. This placement of the unexpected findings was second to informal learning, which yielded the largest frequency count for the study. The unexpected findings are also spread across four themes, which was a total of 33% of the total study results. Although, the themes discussed in this section were anticipated by the researcher, they were not directly aligned with the research question. Nevertheless, because these themes were important to the overall topic, they were reported in the following section as unexpected findings.

The themes associated with these unexpected findings are listed below in Table 16.
Table 16

*Theme, Source, Frequency – Unexpected findings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unexpected</td>
<td>A degree only goes so far; good leaders are lifelong learners and are intrinsically motivated to seek new knowledge and skills</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexpected</td>
<td>Marginalized populations feel frustrated because there are less opportunities and access to develop their leadership skills</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexpected</td>
<td>Participants sought positive opportunities for learning both formally and informally due to poor experiences with bosses and colleagues</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexpected</td>
<td>Having leadership experience before seeking terminal degree helped mid-level administrators contextualize what they learn</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total Frequency Count</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>141</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Unexpected Findings Theme 1:** A degree only goes so far; good leaders are lifelong learners and are intrinsically motivated to seek new knowledge and skills.

This theme has the largest frequency count of all of the themes associated with the unexpected findings in this study. In describing their experiences with their formal education, many stated that even though they had positive experiences with formal development, they were very animated when sharing that they were motivated to seek new knowledge and skills. The frequency count associated with this them is 44. Table 17 illustrates the frequencies and sources associated with this theme.

Table 17

*Theme, Source, Frequency – Intrinsic motivation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unexpected</td>
<td>A degree only goes so far; good leaders are lifelong learners and are intrinsically motivated to seek new knowledge and skills</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the semi-structured interview, Participant 3 was adamant that he believed the responsibility for his development and for gaining additional leadership skills laid solely on his shoulders,

I think it, it falls completely on my shoulders or the individual participating. I'm a big believer in you only get as much from it as you put into it. And so you have to do all the readings, you have to do your own research and you have to figure out how it applies to you. You lead from who you are. And so you need to understand how you are as a person, how do you, are you going to focus on improving your weaknesses, moderating them or are you going to focus on significantly increasing your strengths and doing better there. You know, and some are a low cost leader early depends upon the situation, but I think it really falls to the individual to own that material and then take it their own way and then practice it and then share it.

Participant 10 further echoed this sentiment by sharing that he had to seek additional technical education in a field that he was not familiar with to be effective in his job,

I had several formal professional development experiences on the technical side just because I didn't have exposure to it. And because I still did have some technical responsibilities. I took a course at the University of Colorado in Boulder in multivariate analysis. That was one thing missing from my doctoral degree coursework.

In sharing his experiences, Participant 13 felt that it was necessary for him to admit that he made mistakes along the way, but was motivated to seek solutions on his own,
But I mean, the deans, I work to come the academic side and also student affairs. No one had actually any formal management training and made mistakes all the time as managers. And so did I. I mean, so part of what I, I taught myself and I spent a lot of time really digging into this thing called management by objectives. This is a long time ago, it'd be a program and I, and I was a really good, I actually can read, I can understand, I can conceptualize and I can go make it happen. 

Participant 15 furthered this point by sharing that you have to be motivated to fill in the gaps when you know that you are lacking information in order to be successful, 

You fill in the gaps when you, when you know that you're there skills that you need to beef up on in any particular role or you know, a piece of information that you need to gain to do, to be better at what you're doing. 

The data clearly illustrated that the mid-level administrators who participated in this study all showed an incredible ability for self-reflection that gave them the ability to anticipate their development needs. The data further illustrated these leaders’ desire to seek solutions to their deficiencies, and implement these solutions to better serve their institutions. 

**Unexpected Findings Theme 2: Marginalized populations feel frustrated because there are less opportunities and access to develop their leadership skills.**

During the semi-structured interviews, participants were asked about the significance of mentoring relationships to their development as leaders. In examining the data, the researcher found that there were 11 sources and 43 instances of participants in the study who shared that they had either experienced a lack of access to leadership development based on race, ethnicity, or gender in higher education. Additionally, there was one
participant who firmly believed he had access to many mentors and leadership
development opportunities because of his race and gender. Table 18 illustrated the
frequencies and sources associated with this theme.

Table 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unexpected</td>
<td>Marginalized populations feel frustrated because there are less opportunities and access to develop their leadership skills</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the interviews, each of the participants were extremely passionate and
thoughtful about their responses, carefully noting that their perspectives were most
certainly rooted in their own experiences, as well as the position in which they found
themselves within the organization.

Participant 11 shared his perceptions on how leaders choose others to mentor:

I think heterosexual CIS white males are at the top of the food chain and have the
easiest access to mentors because heterosexual CIS white males are already in
powers of leadership. So if the image of a leader, if you've got an image of a
leader in your mind and you're thinking about succession planning, the automatic
person that you would turn to take your spot. If you're a senior leader, somebody
that looks like you, and that might be subconscious. And the reason why I think
that heterosexual CIS white men have an easier time getting mentors is because
the people in power are looking for them.

Participant 8 furthered this same idea and went on to share that recruiting practices also
needed to be examined because of this phenomena,
Mentoring practices that women and minority candidates don't have access to. I'll give you an example. So when I was a junior faculty member it was obvious that male counterparts were informally mentored in ways that supported their tenure and promotion that connected them to the community that allowed other people to know who they were and to advocate for them. And if you look at the system it’s broken, you know, when I talked to you know, search firms, they'll tell you we have the same pool of male applicants that we literally just shuffle around from university to university. Yeah. And unless the clients who are hiring them, push them to diversify the pool, there really is no incentive to do so. When universities talk about wanting seasoned deans or seasoned provost or seasoned president that means you want somebody who's had the job previously. Right? How did they get the job previously? There's a lot of work to be done.

After a long dialog in which Participant 16 shared the numerous and fruitful experiences that he had with the mentors who helped shape his leadership skills, he affirmed the sentiments of the other participants, and is the only white male in the study to share the following experiences,

… I had an older faculty member who I played tennis with once a week and we would talk about what was going on in the organization and you know, so by the way, I can be critical of all that because I absolutely have benefited from being a white man. And that happened because I'm a white guy and I'm not saying for a second that I'm not capable, but I had a series of advantages because of who I interacted with and how they treated me. And you know, I observe women who have the same type of skillset and work ethic and ability and they either don't
have mentors or their experience with women is sometimes different than the 
experience that men have in terms of mentorship roles. I was a part of a big study 
of, of mentoring doctoral students at the institution I was at. And that was a big 
part of that study was to really think about the role that gender and race and 
ethnicity have. So I've been really conscious of, you know, who do I mentor? I 
would actually say that I mentor more women and individuals of color than I have 
men. I'm probably harder to access as a man in that case. I think about like my 
mentees and if I was sort of listing them off, there are lots of women mentees 
more so than male mentees. It could be because I'm an education and you know, 
there's a disproportion of population. But I've worked and mentored a lot of 
students of color in terms of functioning as one of their mentors. That can be 
whole study in and of itself. So we did a big study a few years ago about 
mentoring of graduate students. And you know, one of the things that's talked 
about so much in the literature is, how valuable representation is and how students 
of color and women want to have women or students of color as their mentors. 
And you know, that's what we anticipated finding and we did not find that. What 
we found is that the students wanted people who care about them. And yes they 
would love that person to be a faculty member of color, or a woman but what they 
wanted most was someone who cared about them and brokered opportunities for 
them. I've been profoundly impacted by that. People have brokered 
opportunities for me, and I’ve brokered opportunities for individuals, and I also 
have a responsibility to attend to who I am brokering opportunities for. Because 
it can be too easy to broker things for people who for whatever reason look like
me, act like me… I straight out said it, I mean, there's no question that I've benefited from a system. As you know, there's someone who said, I'm a white male. I was a dean early. I mean, that just wouldn't happen. It just doesn't happen. You know, I have a fantastic colleague who's a Dean here who I think in many ways we're similar. He just happens to be 10 years older and then he's African American. His career trajectory is the same as mine, you know? But I don't think he had the same brokered opportunities that I had. You know, I’ve read about white fragility, you know, I think part of this, I'm not fragile. Like I don't think, I haven't worked hard and I don't think I don't have the ability and I don't think it's that I wasn't prepared. So I can simultaneously tell you that I've met at an advantage of this system and I also have served in my role very well. So there's tensions here, right. You know, there's tensions. But I can acknowledge that it's a benefit of the system.

Of particular importance to this theme was the knowledge that two of the participants quoted in this section were part of marginalized populations and one who was a white male. Yet all noted that this is a phenomena occurring in higher education that needed to be more closely examined. In further discussion with each of the participants about this topic, each noted that examining this phenomena would lead to more comprehensive leader development within higher education, and an ability for universities to sustain change in an environment that required continual innovation to serve students in a meaningful way.
Unexpected Findings Theme 3: Participants sought positive opportunities for learning both formally and informally due to poor experiences with bosses and colleagues. The data associated with this study suggested that mid-level administrators looked for positive opportunities to learn in both formal and informal settings due to poor experiences with bosses or colleagues. This sentiment was expressed while participants were being asked about their learning experiences. Many said they learned just as much about leadership from the poor experiences as they did from the great experiences.

Below is the frequency table (Table 19) for this theme illustrating that this frequency occurred 25 times in the data, and came from 11 different sources.

**Table 19**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unexpected</td>
<td>Participants sought positive opportunities for learning both formally and informally due to poor experiences with bosses and colleagues</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants shared that their poor experiences informed their leadership decisions in a way that would steer them away from the behaviors they believed would negatively impact their teams. Participant 3 shared that as you learn to define the type of leadership style that you wish to embody, reflection is an important part of deciding whether or not to incorporate what has been seen in other leaders into your own style,

Some of them have been great, some of them have been terrible. And I think that as you progress as a leader, you have to pick and choose across life what's going to impact you. So when I've reflected back on my past experience, I'll look at a leader and say, oh my gosh, you know, at the time I thought this might be good.
But now with hindsight, it's very clear that this was a very poor leader. More on the management, maybe more even a laissez Faire type management. Just kind of go off and do whatever you want. And you learn something from that. So sometimes it's an exercise in what not to do and other times it's an exercise to say, wow, I can emulate that. I really want to model the way that he or she is doing this because that really clicks and connects with me.

Participant 6 also explained that as you take courses and learn from others, part of the reflection process encompassed learning what not to do based on your personal experiences,

I mean, in leadership or education, a lot of what you're learning is what not to do. Right? It's true. And so when you take these classes or you have a particular boss or a series of people that you work with, you, you're constantly looking and evaluating and processing from my perspective on what are the deficits that I would look for in myself to compliment my strengths. Leadership is as much about policy as much about personalities, about policy, right?

In examining the data for this theme, it is clear that each of the mid-level administrators who participated in the study were able to reflect on what they learned in difficult situations with their bosses and colleagues. It was also apparent that each of these leaders used reflection to determine whether or not they wanted to model themselves after the leaders in their lives. The data also suggested that participants in this study were able to separate the good and bad behaviors they witnessed in other leaders, both formally and informally, to make decisions on adopting these behaviors themselves.
Unexpected Findings Theme 4: Having leadership experience before seeking terminal degree helped mid-level administrators contextualize what they learn. The final theme associated with this study illuminated the participants’ belief that formal education was beneficial, especially in instances when their education followed professional experience. Education that is preceded by life experience was important to the participants of this study when answering the semi-structured interview question, which intended to understand the experiences of mid-level administrators as it related to their formal education. Table 20 shows the frequency and source count for this theme.

Table 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unexpected</td>
<td>Having leadership experience before seeking terminal degree helped mid-level administrators contextualize what they learn</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In sharing her experiences with her formal education, Participant 9 talked about the importance of her education. She took a moment to reflect on her response before sharing that her experiences helped to shape her educational experiences,

Fast forward 10 years into my career as a campus director, I realized that I really lacked the formal education or training. So I decided to go back to school and I enrolled at Claremont graduate university, Peter Drucker, School of Management. So I wanted to learn from the best, changed my life as a leader. It change everything the way I think because of two things. First, I was so prepared mentally to learn and I had tons of experience under my belt. 10 years of doing stuff and testing it. Second, the focus was on leadership and the strategic thinking
and organizational culture and conflict management negotiation. So it was all about the executive skills. So it was the, the fit between, I, I think that's important. It's not one or two things, but rather the fit between what the leader needs at the end what is being offered have to do match that has to be an alignment and a good fit. And I think to me at that time in my life, it was the perfect fit. So I ended up earning an advanced executive MBA from Claremont in and, and so that combined with my 10, 15 years of experience in managing was, it was a very great help.

The sentiment of this participant is shared by many of her colleagues across organizations who participated in this study. The ability to absorb concepts based on the participants’ experiences was valuable to them as they attempted to utilize what they learned during their formalized class time to benefit their careers.

**Summary**

This chapter provided a detailed overview of the purpose statement and research questions of this study, as well as the study methodology. It explored the data that was collected in an attempt to understand the lived experiences of mid-level administrators in Private Non-Profit Higher Education related to leadership development in both formal and informal settings. The data were presented in 12 themes that were categorized as formal learning, informal learning, and unexpected findings. The total data collected from the study is delineated as follows: Formal learning 7%, informal learning 71%, and unexpected findings 22%. Each of these categories added depth to the results of the study and shared specific experiences the participants expressed during the semi-structured interviews.
Chapter V is the final chapter of this study. It will explore the major findings of the study, as well as the conclusions that were drawn from those findings. Next, the implications for action are discussed based on the findings, followed by the conclusions of the study. Finally, Chapter V addresses recommendations for future research, and the researcher’s conclusions and reflections.
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify and describe the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it related to leadership development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education in formal and informal settings. The researcher utilized the terms formal and informal learning to characterize mid-level administrator’s experiences as it related to the development of their leadership skills. The semi-structured interviews attempted to answer the research question: What are the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it relates to leadership development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education in both formal and informal settings?

The target population for this study included all mid-level administrators who worked in Non-Faith Based, Private Non-profit universities in California. There were approximately 100-150 mid-level leaders at each of the 83 Private Non-Profit universities in California. Based on the target population, the sample population was narrowed to 18, mid-level administrators from Private Non-Profit universities in Southern California. Interviews with each of study’s participants took place in January, 2020.

**Major Findings**

After the completion of data collection, the researcher transcribed and coded the data into themes. Based on the data collected during the interviews, the researcher made the following findings:

- Mentoring relationships formed based on participants’ ongoing and changing leadership needs
- Mid-level leaders sought informal opportunities to develop their leadership skills because formal opportunities did not fit their needs
• Mid-level leaders sought support from communities of practice to build networks across organizations and stay current in their field

• Outside formal settings, mid-level leaders created working groups as a means to develop leadership skills and acquire content knowledge

• Experiences with education gave leaders exposure to leadership theory, but lacked practical application

Each of the major findings of the study was categorized as either formal or informal learning. It should be noted that of the five major findings of this study, only one was categorized under formal learning, while the other four fall under informal learning. Additionally, there were also five findings with significant frequency counts that are included in the unexpected findings.

**Unexpected Findings**

In addition to the major findings associated with this study, there were also four unexpected findings that comprised 22% of the total data for the study. The unexpected findings for this study are listed below in order of importance:

• Marginalized populations feel frustrated because there are less opportunities and access to develop their leadership skills

• Mid-level leaders sought positive opportunities for learning both formally and informally, due to poor experiences with bosses and colleagues

• A degree only goes so far; good leaders are lifelong learners and are intrinsically motivated to seek new knowledge and skills

• Valued formal education as the key to opening up the door to leadership opportunities
• Having leadership experience before seeking a terminal degree helped mid-level administrators contextualize what they learn.

The major findings of the study were distilled from the 12 themes that were present in the data. Conclusions and recommendations for this study were carefully constructed based on the major findings of the study and accurately represent the experiences that were shared during semi-structured interviews that aimed to answer the research question for the study.

Conclusions

The study explored the lived experiences of mid-level administrators in Private Non-Profit Higher Education as it related to leadership development. Based on the research findings of the study, the researcher drew 10 conclusions that illuminated the findings of the study.

Conclusion 1: In order for marginalized populations within higher education to persevere as leaders, they must be aware of the challenges they face and seek alternative means of support.

This study explored how mid-level administrators acquired leadership skills through informal and formal learning. During the interviews, several participants shared that marginalized populations have a more difficult time seeking opportunities for growth. During the semi-structured interviews, 11 of the 18 participants shared that they felt the lack of access to development opportunities left them at a disadvantage with regard to their white male counterparts. Further, participants believed that this phenomena was created through the selection of successors, as many looked to find individuals who mirrored their own likeness and experiences. This created a dynamic
within higher education that required mid-level administrators to understand that they needed to seek alternative methods of support to be successful. Based on the finding, marginalized populations felt frustrated because there were less opportunities and access to develop their leadership skills; therefore, it can be concluded that in order for marginalized populations within higher education to persevere as leaders, they must be aware of the challenges they face and seek alternative means of support.

**Conclusion 2: Mid-level administrators are successful in their careers when mentoring relationships are organically formed and interactions are ongoing**

In answering the research question of the study which aimed to identify the lived experiences of mid-level administrators in Private Non-Profit Higher Education, participants shared that mentoring relationships are often formed due the need to improve their leadership skills in areas such as politics, organizational dynamics, and team building. This is further evidenced through the work of Knipplemeyer (2007), who suggested that the reasons these relationships were so valuable was because they are born out of a need to develop specific leadership skills. Mentoring was a very important relationship suited to building leadership skills that were based on the mentees’ specific needs. Based on the finding, mentoring relationships formed organically based on participants’ ongoing and changing leadership needs, it can be concluded that mid-level administrators were successful in their careers when mentoring relationships were organically formed and interactions were ongoing.
Conclusion 3: Mid-level administrators were more driven to succeed when they recognized both positive and negative experiences as learning opportunities and used both as a way to shape their leadership skills

At the heart of this study was the research question that sought to answer what the lived experiences were of mid-level leaders as it related to their leadership development in formal and informal settings. During semi-structured interviews it could not be ignored that all of the study participants shared that they learned just as much about leadership when they were exposed to uncomfortable situations as they did when they were exposed to good examples of leadership. Many shared that they chose to turn terrible displays of leadership into positive opportunities to understand the impact of bad leadership and vowed not to participate in those types of behaviors. Based on the finding that mid-level administrators sought positive opportunities for learning both formally and informally due to poor experiences with bosses and colleagues, it can be concluded that mid-level administrators are more driven to succeed when they recognized both positive and negative experiences as learning opportunities and used both as a way to shape their own leadership skills.

Conclusion 4: Mid-level administrators who sought informal learning opportunities to develop their leadership skills were better able to adapt to diverse leadership needs

Study participants were asked a series of questions during semi-structured interviews that were designed to deepen the researcher’s understanding of the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it pertained to leadership development in formal and informal settings in higher education. In expanding upon their experiences
with regard to formal and informal learning, the administrators who were interviewed for the study shared that they often searched for informal methods of development because they were unable to do so through formal methods. The data collected regarding this finding represented over 15% of the data from the study, which was the highest frequency count for the study. Based on the finding that mid-level administrators sought informal opportunities to develop leadership skills because formal opportunities did not fit their needs, it can be concluded that mid-level administrators who sought informal learning opportunities to develop their leadership skills are better able to adapt to diverse leadership needs.

**Conclusion 5: Mid-level administrators felt valued and motivated when they interacted in communities of practice representative of individuals who shared similar job profiles and similar experiences**

This study sought to understand how mid-level leaders in higher education experienced leadership development in formal and informal settings. Wenger (2004) suggested, “Communities of practice are self-organized systems of informal learning” (p. 23). The literature supported the sentiment expressed by study participants who conveyed that informal learning through communities of practice allowed them to build strong relationships across organizations with colleagues, as well as stay current in their field. Based on the finding, seeking support from communities of practice to build networks across organizations and stay current in their field, it can be concluded that mid-level administrators felt valued and motivated when they interact in communities of practice representative of individuals who shared similar job profiles and similar experiences.
Conclusion 6: Mid-level administrators thrived when there were opportunities to engage with informal working groups where there was a safe environment for risk-taking

This study attempted to understand the lived experiences of mid-level leaders with both formal and informal development of their leadership skills. Participants of this study shared that they felt it was important to seek out informal working groups as a means to develop leadership skills in an environment that allowed them to gain content knowledge in a setting that was conducive to their learning. Steven, Bransford, and Stevens (2005), further iterated this point by sharing that by the time an individual reached adulthood, their opportunities for formal development were minimal. Based on the finding that creating working groups as a means to build leadership skills and content knowledge outside of formalized settings, it can be concluded that mid-level administrators thrived when there were opportunities to engage with informal working groups where there was a safe environment for risk-taking.

Conclusion 7: Mid-level administrators who carved out intentional time to become a lifelong learner were more likely to have a fruitful and sustainable career in an environment where leaders were appointed based on organizational needs

In answering the research questions at the center of this study: What are the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it relates to leadership development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education in both formal and informal settings? In particular, the semi-structured interview questions that directly correlated to formal learning, participants shared that their formal degree programs only helped them to develop their leadership skills in a limited way. Most participants emphatically stated they felt they
would not have been successful in their roles as mid-level administrators if they were not intrinsically motivated to seek development opportunities. Based on the finding that a degree only goes so far; good leaders are lifelong learners and are intrinsically motivated to seek new knowledge and skills, it can be concluded that mid-level administrators who carved out intentional time to become lifelong learners were more likely to have a fruitful and sustainable career in an environment where leaders were appointed based on organizational needs.

**Conclusion 8: Mid-level administrators felt motivated and connected when they built networks and stayed current in their field through communities of practice**

At the center of this study was the desire for the researcher to understand the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it pertained to leadership development through both formal and informal learning. Most study participants shared that being part of a community of practice helped them gain valuable leadership skills. Even though their experiences differed because of their personal development needs, participants agreed that intentionally spending time within their community of practice helped build confidence through connection with those in their community. Based on the finding that seeking support from communities of practice to build networks across organizations and stay current in their field, it can be concluded that mid-level administrators felt motivated and connected when they built networks and stayed current in their field through communities of practice.
Conclusion 9: Mid-level administrators have more context to solve problems when leadership theories were extended through practical applications of the theories

To gain a deeper understand of how mid-level administrators experienced leadership development in both formal and informal settings, the participants shared their experiences through semi-structured interviews. Participants shared that even though they felt their education was valuable, it was deeply rooted in theoretical frameworks that lacked practical application, leaving many feeling that the degree was primarily a way for them to qualify for leadership roles. Based on the finding that experiences with education gave leaders exposure to leadership theory, but lacked practical application, it can be concluded that mid-level administrators had more context to solve problems when leadership theories were extended through practical applications of the theories.

Conclusion 10: Mid-level administrators were better able to understand leadership theories if they entered a leadership program with leadership experience

In exploring the lived experiences of mid-level administrators in Private Non-Profit higher education, it was noted that there were a few unexpected findings with regard to formalized education and leadership development. Participants believed that having experiences with their careers helped to give context to the theoretical principles that were being shared in formalized classrooms. They felt that classroom lessons came to life and were more easily relatable when they had personal experiences to compare them to. Based on the finding that having leadership experience before seeking a terminal degree helped mid-level administrators contextualize what they learned, it can be concluded that mid-level administrators are better able to understand leadership theories if they entered a leadership program with leadership experience.
Implications for Action

Mid-level administrators were the largest group of leaders within the university system. Their job requirements continued to increase as the university environment shifted, based on student expectations, yet institutions did very little to formally prepare mid-level administrators for the challenges of their jobs. The recommendations for this study were aimed to support mid-level administrators in their leadership journey as well as recommendations for university board of regents, chancellors, presidents, executive leadership, and mid-level administrators to improve the experiences that mid-level leaders had with the development of their leadership skills.

Implication for Action 1: The board of regents approves an outside agency to conduct an equity and inclusion study to examine the formal and informal mentoring practices across the institution

The evidence in the data was overwhelming. There was an issue with equity with regard to leadership development for mid-level administrators in higher education. Mid-level administrators in higher education who were part of a marginalized population did not believe they were getting the same opportunities to develop their leadership skills as their white male counterparts. This was further evidenced by a participant who is a white male, who shared that he knew he would not have been afforded the same opportunities if he was not a white male. He asserted that even though he knew that he was capable, smart, and worked hard to gain his position at a young age, he had seen female colleagues and people of color who were equally as capable and worked just as hard, yet were not be afforded the same opportunities. Based on these experiences that marginalized populations felt frustrated because opportunities and access to develop their leadership
skills were not readily available, it can be concluded that in order for marginalized populations within higher education to persevere as leaders, they must be aware of the challenges they faced and seek alternative means of support. It is recommended that the board of regents approves an outside agency to conduct an equity and inclusion study to examine formal and informal mentoring practices across institution.

Findings from this study suggested that the board of regents for universities needed to take this phenomena seriously and examine the leadership practices that were occurring whether intentional or unintentional across their institutions with regard to leadership development. It would be incumbent upon the board of regents for each institution to shift the culture of higher education, and create an environment that is inclusive. Without the support of executive leadership, these trends are likely to continue.

Of equal importance is the notion that mid-level administrators must understand the dynamics within their institutions, and take responsibility for their own growth as leaders. The fast paced changing environment in higher education was requiring more from mid-level administrators. This, coupled with the lack of formal development opportunities, necessitated the importance of taking responsibility for one’s own leadership development.

**Implication for Action 2: University executive leadership invests a minimum of $50,000 per year in the development and implementation of sustainable mentoring programs for all mid-level administrators within the organization**

Organic mentoring relationships were at the heart of this study. Participants consistently shared that their informal mentoring relationships were at the core of their
success as leaders. Each participant felt that these relationships helped them succeed in their role, and to fill in their knowledge base with meaningful information that helped them to navigate difficult situations within their organization. Based on the finding that mentoring relationships formed organically based on participants’ ongoing and changing leadership needs, it can be concluded that mid-level administrators were successful in their careers when mentoring relationships were formed organically—and interactions were ongoing. It is recommended that university executive leadership invests a minimum of $50,000 per year in the development and implementation of sustainable mentoring programs for all mid-level administrators within the organization. It is estimated that there are approximately 100-150 mid-level administrators in the organization, which equated to approximately $333 to $500 per mid-level leader. These programs should be offered to mid-level administrators early in their tenure, as these organizational behaviors led to lower turnover rates and increased organizational stability through leader tenure.

It is further recommended that leadership development programs cultivate mentoring goals that are aligned to a university’s annual performance evaluation process. Programs such as these in private industry were most successful when they were tied to the annual performance review process. This ensured that both the organization and the employee were woven into the program and produced outcomes based on organizational expectations as well as employee need.

Mid-level administrators who took responsibility for their own leadership development and sought out trusted mentors were more agile in their roles as they navigated their teams and organizations. Additional recommendations for mid-level administrators included intentionally seeking informal mentoring relationships that were
needs-based and long term. It is important to note that these relationships were generally formed with trusted individuals who were either connected to the organization, or had a firm grasp on important leadership concepts.

Implication for Action 3: University presidents, chancellors, and executive leadership create an informal working group for each department that creates a university culture that values informal skills building, and allows for teams to explore learning through informal working group meetings

Creating a culture that values leadership development was at the center of this study. It was impossible to create sustainable programs that benefited leaders in higher education without the support of executive leadership. Informal learning as evidenced by this study was at the forefront of leadership development in these institutions, and while it is incumbent upon executive leadership to create a culture that valued leadership development, it was also the responsibility of mid-level administrators to voice their opinions to those who had the power to shift the way higher education worked.

Based on the finding that creating working groups as a means to build leadership skills and content knowledge outside of formalized settings, it can be concluded that mid-level leaders thrived when there were opportunities to engage with informal working groups where there was a safe environment for risk-taking, it is recommended that university presidents, chancellors, and executive leadership create an informal working group for each department that creates a university culture that values informal skills building, and allows for teams to explore learning through informal working group meetings. It is further recommended that executive leadership intentionally help employees build collaboration and leadership skills throughout the organization by using
informal skills building and informal working group meetings. By encouraging informal working groups to exist alongside formal meetings, university executive leadership outwardly displays the value that leadership development is an important aspect of university culture.

**Implication for Action 4: Universities recognize the urgent need for informal learning opportunities and create a taskforce to examine and modify the university’s vision and mission statements to be inclusive of both formal and informal learning opportunities through ongoing collaboration**

Collaboration is the central focus of informal learning. This concept allows leaders to build their skills in a manner that closely fit their needs. Communities of practice through conferences, networking opportunities, and informal conversations allowed leaders to share information across organizations. The creation of an inclusive university culture that examines the need for informal learning opportunities is important to the sustainability of universities as institutions continue to adapt to the changing needs of both staff and students. Based on the finding that seeking support from communities of practice to build networks across organizations and stay current in their field, it is concluded that:

- Mid-level administrators felt motivated and connected when they built networks and stayed current in their fields through communities of practice
- Mid-level administrators felt valued and motivated when they interacted in communities of practice with colleagues who shared the same job profile and similar experiences
• Mid-level administrators were more likely to be innovative when they stayed current in their fields and regularly collaborated with teams within the university.

As a result of these three conclusions, it is recommended that universities recognize the urgent need for informal learning opportunities and create a taskforce to examine and modify the vision and mission statements to be inclusive of both formal and informal learning opportunities through ongoing collaboration.

Implication for Action 5: University policies are created that require mid-level administrators in both student services and academics the allotment of five hours per week to dedicate to developing leadership skills as part of their regular workload.

Leadership and lifelong learning are synonymous with one another. All participants of this study agreed that in order to be a good leader one must consistently reflect upon how they can improve their skills and stay on top of growing trends in higher education. Traditionally, formalized education programs minimally prepared leaders for growth during their career. As a result, good leaders were constantly seeking ways to improve upon their leadership skills. Based on the finding that a degree only goes so far; good leaders were deemed lifelong learners who were intrinsically motivated to seek new knowledge and skills, it can be concluded that mid-level administrators who carved out intentional time to become a lifelong learner were more likely to have a fruitful and sustainable career in an environment where leaders are appointed based on organizational needs, it is recommended that university policies are created that require mid-level administrators in both student services and academics the allotment of five hours per
week to dedicate to developing leadership skills as part of their regular workload. It is further recommended that mid-level leaders in academics be eligible for a sabbatical every five years to seek leadership development outside of the university, and mid-level administrators be allotted $10,000 every five years to attend leadership institutes outside the university. As mid-level administrators take on larger workloads based on the scope of their jobs, it becomes increasingly important that time is intentionally set aside during the course of a normal work week to focus on development.

**Implication for Action 6: Mid-level leaders intentionally carve out at least 60% of their professional development time for networking and engaging in informal learning settings**

Informal opportunities for learning fit the personal needs of each leader in a way that formal classroom development could not. Participants all agreed that as leaders matured in their roles, informal learning through communities of practice should more closely align with their development goals. Based on the finding that mid-level administrators sought informal opportunities to develop leadership skills because formal opportunities did not fit their needs, it can be concluded that mid-level administrators who sought informal learning opportunities to develop their leadership skills were better able to adapt to diverse leadership needs, it is recommended that mid-level leaders intentionally carve out at least 60% of their professional development time for networking and engaging in informal learning settings. Focusing on development in communities of practice and engaging with colleagues, assisted leaders with staying focused on the development of their leadership skills.
Implication for Action 7: University leadership programs include a practicum and mentoring component to the coursework

Feedback from the participants in this study indicated that having experiences as a leader within an organization prior to entering into a degree program helped solidify theoretical ideas presented in formal learning. Based on the finding, having leadership experience before seeking a terminal degree helped mid-level administrators contextualize what they learned, it can be concluded that mid-level administrators are better able to understand leadership theories if they entered a leadership program with leadership experience, and university academics departments recognized that theoretical concepts without application are detrimental to student experiences. As a result, programs should build in experiential components that allow students to apply their learning in real world scenarios. It is recommended that university leadership programs include a practicum and mentoring component to the coursework.

Implication for Action 8: University hiring leadership positions intentionally include elements of informal learning and participation in communities of practice during the hiring process

Several findings and conclusions have pointed to the need for leadership development to take place in informal settings. For example, it was concluded that mid-level administrators who sought informal learning opportunities to develop their leadership skills were better able to adapt to diverse leadership needs. Additionally, it was concluded that mid-level administrators thrived when there were opportunities to engage with informal working groups where there was a safe environment for risk-taking.
Additionally, this study concluded that leadership development was optimized when leaders participated in communities of practice. It was concluded that mid-level administrators felt motivated and connected when they built networks and stayed current in their field through communities of practice. Moreover, it was concluded that mid-level administrators felt valued and motivated when they interacted in communities of practice representative of individuals who shared similar job profiles and similar experiences.

Due to the overwhelming evidence that pointed to the need for leadership development to occur in informal settings and in communities of practice, it is recommended that universities hiring leadership positions intentionally include elements of informal learning and participation in communities of practice during the hiring process. It is further recommended that human resources directors work alongside hiring managers to integrate elements of informal learning and participation in communities of practice in the interview questions.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

This study explored the lived experiences of mid-level administrators as it related to leadership development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education in both formal and informal settings. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher has recommended that further research be conducted on leadership development in higher education in the following ways:

1. Conduct a case study of executive leaders in higher education who are part of marginalized populations to understand the behaviors they have employed to successfully reach the top of their organizations
2. Conduct a phenomenological study that explores the challenges that mid-level administrators in marginalized populations face with regard to promotion in higher education

3. Conduct a study on successful community college presidents who utilize emotional intelligence and political intelligence to inform their decision making processes in the California college system; including public, private, non-profit, for-profit, and community college institutions

4. Conduct an ethnographic case study in a university that utilizes formalized mentoring programs across all leadership levels to see how the culture of the organization impacts the way in which leadership development is executed within the institution

5. Investigate the skills of successful mentors in higher education to gain a deeper understanding of the behaviors that these individuals possess, and how this makes them successful

6. Replicate this study in public universities to see if the data that is presented in this study is shared in other facets of Private Non-Profit Higher Education

7. Investigate motivation and self-efficacy for mid-level administrators who have been successful as leaders

8. Investigate attributes of highly successful formal learning programs, such as doctoral programs in leadership, to identify and describe the positive learning attributes to leadership development

9. Conduct a grounded theory study on the pathway to success of mid-level leaders in higher education
10. Conduct a phenomenological study that explores how degree preparation programs helped higher education professionals in shaping their leadership skills

**Concluding Remarks and Reflections**

Early on in my doctoral journey I was asked on numerous occasions by the individuals who would later serve on my committee, whether or not I would be able to take the topic of my dissertation, and make it part of my identity. At the time, I had no idea how profoundly this question would impact my journey. I also had no idea the degree to which my own experiences would be reflected in the experiences of the participants in this study.

Over the last 20 years, higher education has made great strides in adapting the ways in which course content has been delivered based on the changing demands of the 21st century learner. We have also become more adept at serving the non-traditional student through the development of programs that are flexible enough to allow the working adults to pursue their educational goals. Even though we have made much progress in these areas, what we have failed to address the developmental needs of mid-level administrators like myself who are being required to take on additional job responsibilities without the support to develop their own leadership skills. Mid-level administrators are in desperate need of support so they can adequately support their students. This is especially true for mid-level administrators who are minorities, people of color, and women. Not only do universities have a responsibility to investigate their own practices, but it is also the responsibility of those of us who fill these roles to expect more from the institutions we work for, and to ask them to address these issues with earnest.
I would argue that the participants in this study are far from the norm. They courageously defied obstacles that came their way and for them, the road less traveled made all the difference. While on one hand, the celebration of their success in their leadership journey is one that needs to be noted, on other hand, many participants emphatically shared that marginalized populations faced systemic barriers that limit potentials as leaders. My dream is that marginalized populations would never be in a position to pick the “road less traveled.” My dream is that all leaders can be supported and grow to their fullest potential, despite their age, gender, race, or sexual orientation. I have faith that higher education institutions can break through stereotypes and norms. I also have faith that there would not need to be further studies on marginalized leadership positions in higher education. It can happen, it has to happen.

My hope is that the ideas presented in this dissertation will help inspire those who choose to be champions of this cause. It is also my hope that executive leaders within our nation’s universities will utilize the concepts that are presented in this study to inform future decisions with regard to the development of the future leaders of our institutions.
REFERENCES


*People & Strategy, 29*(2), 31-40.


Davis, L.K. (2016). *Boundary spanning, networking, and sensemaking/sensegiving: how career services directors enact Mid-level leadership*. University of Massachusetts Boston.


Friedman, T.L., & Mandelbaum, M. (2012). *That used to be us: How America fell behind in the world it invented and how we can come back*. Macmillan.


Harvard Institutes for Higher Education. (nd). Retrieved from https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ppe/harvard-institutes-higher-education-programs


Roberts, C.M. (2010). *The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive guide*
to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation. Corwin Press.


Velasco, J. (2019). 10 reasons to attend a historically black college/university (HBCU) or Hispanic Serving Institution (HIS) Retrieved


*evollution.com*


### APPENDIX A

#### Synthesis Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Higher Education</th>
<th>Leadership Development</th>
<th>Informal Learning</th>
<th>Formal Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anaya, V. J. (2018). Closing the Leadership Gap at Community Colleges Traditional Route vs. Non-traditional Route to the Presidency.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astin, A. W., Astin, H. S., &amp; Kellogg Foundation, B.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Relevant Attributes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barton, A. (2016).</td>
<td>Preparing future leaders: an ethnographic study exploring the culture of succession planning and leader development in Christian higher education.</td>
<td>X X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, S. A. (2015).</td>
<td>Qualities of effective leadership in higher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title/Description</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bornstein, R.</td>
<td>Succession planning for the higher education presidency. AGB Press.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryman, A.</td>
<td>The SAGE handbook of leadership. Sage Publications.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busta, H.</td>
<td>(2019, February 20) How many colleges and universities have closed since 2016?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council for Christina Colleges &amp; Universities (n.d.)</td>
<td>Leadership Development Programs.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clements, V. L.</td>
<td>The essential leadership and management skills of Mid-level managers in non-profit organizations. Pepperdine University.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis, L. K.</td>
<td>Boundary spanning, networking, and sensemaking/sensegiving: how career services directors enact Mid-level leadership. University of Massachusetts Boston.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Journal/Media</td>
<td>Page(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flanders, M.</td>
<td>Characteristics of effective Mid-level leaders in higher education.</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster, W. R., Poole, J. H, &amp; Coulson-Clark, M. M.</td>
<td>Faculty mentoring in higher education: Hype or help. Leadership Advance Online.</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gibb, S.</td>
<td>The usefulness of theory: A case study in evaluating formal mentoring schemes. Human Relations, 52(8), 1055-1075.</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Citations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education: A documentary history.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational leadership from a historical perspective. Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision, 41(1), 85.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79(8), 72-79.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in higher education in England and Wales. Professional Development in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (n.d.). Retrieved from</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/">https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midlevel administrators and their intent to leave. Journal of Higher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, 71(1), 34-59.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>administrators: Explaining and improving their morale. Review of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education. 22(2) 121-141.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how Mid-level leaders develop leadership skills.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Title and Publication Details</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy, J. (1963, November 22)</td>
<td>Remarks prepared for delivery at the trade mart in Dallas Texas.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark, J. (2010, July 14) Heraclitus of Epheseus.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Journal/Reference</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McKenna, D. L.</td>
<td>The succession principle: How leaders make leaders.</td>
<td>Wipf and Stock Publishers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan, T. C.</td>
<td>Sailing into the storm: College presidents Philip Ryken and D. Michael Lindsay discuss the challenges in Christian higher education today. Christianity Today, 56(3). 24-27.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parrish, Y.</td>
<td>Evaluating the effects of a leadership development program on professional development of Mid-level leaders at a nonprofit organization: An action research study</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penner, R.</td>
<td>Mentoring in higher education. Direction, 30(1), 45-52.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rawlings, M.</td>
<td>What is mentoring?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richards, C. L.</td>
<td>A new paradigm: Strategies for succession planning in higher education.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberts, C. M.</td>
<td>The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Reference Details</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation.</td>
<td>Corwin Press.</td>
<td>X X X X X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>X Count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Directions for Institutional Research, Winter (124), 18.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swanson, M.</td>
<td>(2018). Employee Perceptions of Succession Planning within Higher Education: A Qualitative Case Study.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weiss, E. L.</td>
<td>(2016). Rethinking leadership development in higher education. evolution.com</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
development of young professionals. Family Relations, 36(2), 204-208.
APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol

Interview Date:

Cohort Participation Year:

Interviewee Pseudonym:

Introduction

“My name is Melissa Brunson and I am a doctoral candidate at Brandman University in the area of Organizational Leadership. I am currently conducting my dissertation research in the area of leadership development in higher education. I am interested in learning about the pathways of individuals like you who have had a successful career in higher education leadership. More specifically, I am interested in a) how you have learned leadership skills in formal settings, b) developed leadership skills through mentoring and c) how you have learned and developed leadership skills through interactions with others like you.

I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview and share your insights, as I believe that what you share will be beneficial to the leadership development for others like you. I hope to conduct 15 interviews with leaders like yourself. The information you share, along with the others, will hopefully provide a clear picture of how your leadership experiences were developed.

Informed Consent

I want to remind you any information that is obtained in connection to this study will remain confidential. All of the data will be reported without reference to any individual(s) or any institution(s). For ease of our discussion and accuracy, I will record
our conversation as indicated in the Informed Consent sent to you via email. I will have
the recording transcribed to a Word document and will send it to you via electronic mail
so that you can check to make sure that I have accurately captured your thoughts and
ideas. The digital recording will be erased following review and approval of the
transcription.

1) Did you receive the Informed Consent and Brandman Bill of Rights I sent you via
email?

2) Do you have any questions or need clarification about either document? If so,
would you be so kind as to sign the hard copy of the IRB requirements for me to
collect?

We have scheduled an hour for the interview. At any point during the interview, you
may ask that I skip a particular question or stop the conversation altogether.

1) Do you have any questions before we begin? Okay, let’s get started, and thanks so
much for your time.

Interview Questions

I have developed some questions for this interview that are organized in three categories.
They are: a) how you have learned leadership skills in formal settings, b) developed
leadership skills through mentoring and c) how you have learned and developed
leadership skills through interactions with others like you.

Leadership Development in Formal Settings

1) Leadership development can happen in formal settings. For example, there are
leadership training programs or workshops, institutes? What’s your experience?
What was that experience like for you?
2) Leadership development can also happen formally in college and university programs that focus on leadership. Can you share with me your leadership development through your formal education? What’s your experience? What was that experience like for you?

3) How has formal trainings helped you in developing your leadership skills, and in shaping your career trajectory?

Leadership Development Through Interactions With Others in a Community of Practice (Informal Learning)

4) Etienne Wenger (2011) defines communities of practice as those who gather together to engage in a process of collective learning. Leadership development can happen through interactions with others in a community of practice. For example, leaders attend conferences, have interactions in informal communities of practice and participate in organizations and committees related to leadership. Can you share with me your leadership development in formal settings? What’s your experience? What was that experience like for you?

5) How has your interactions in communities of practice helped in developing your leadership skills, and in shaping your career trajectory?

Leadership Development Through Mentoring

6) Leadership development can happen through mentoring. Can you share with me your leadership development through mentoring? What’s your experience? What was that experience like for you?

7) How has being mentored helped you in developing your leadership skills, and in shaping your career trajectory?
Wrap-up Questions

8) Which of these three areas (formal leadership training and education, mentoring, or communities of practice) has been the most influential in shaping your career trajectory?

9) What challenges have you faced as it relates to leadership development in your career in higher education?

10) Do you think higher education is preparing leaders sufficiently?
APPENDIX C

Brandman University IRB Approval

BUIRB Application Approved As Submitted: Melissa Reyes

MyBrandman<br>mmy@brandman.edu> to me, Jeffrey, burno, Vikki<br>

Thu, Dec 19, 2019, 3:33 PM

Dear Melissa Reyes,

Congratulations, your IRB application to conduct research has been approved by the Brandman University Institutional Review Board. This approval grants permission for you to proceed with data collection for your research. Please keep this email for your records, as it will need to be included in your research appendix.

If any issues should arise that are pertinent to your IRB approval, please contact the IRB immediately at<b>buirb@brandman.edu</b>. If you need to modify your BUIRB application for any reason, please fill out the "Application Modification Form" before proceeding with your research. The Modification form can be found at the following link: <a>https://ir.brandman.edu/Approvals/Modification.pdf</a>

Best wishes for a successful completion of your study.

Thank you,

Doug DeVore, Ed.D.
Professor
Organizational Leadership
BUIRB Chair
<devore@brandman.edu>
www.brandman.edu
APPENDIX D

Informational Letter

Date

Dear (Study Participant):

My name is Melissa Brunson and I am a doctoral candidate at Brandman University in the area of Organizational Leadership. I am also a staff member at Brandman University. I am the Campus Director at the Irvine campus, and also an adjunct faculty member for the School of Business and Professional Studies. I manage a staff of 10 and am responsible for all of the Irvine campus operations. My research interest includes leadership development for Mid-level administrators in higher education. More specifically I would like to understand the experiences that Mid-level administrators have with regard to leadership development in formal and informal settings.

I am asking your assistance in the study by participating in an interview which will take from which will take from 45-60 minutes and will be set up at a time that is convenient for you. If you agree to participate in an interview, you may be assured that it will be completely confidential. No names will be attached to any notes or records from the interview. All information will remain in locked files accessible only to the researchers. No other person from your university will have access to the interview information. You will be free to stop the interview/discussion and withdraw from the study at any time. Further, you may be assured that the researchers is not affiliated in any way with your institution.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at mreyes4@brandman.edu, or 951-218-8027.

Sincerely,

Melissa Brunson
APPENDIX E

Research Participant Bill of Rights

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.

2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.

3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.

4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.

5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.

6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.

7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.

8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.

9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.

10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.
APPENDIX F

Informed Consent Form

INFORMATION ABOUT: Efforts and Courage Are Not Enough Without Purpose and Direction: A Phenomenological Study on How Mid-level Administrators Learn and Acquire Leadership Skills in Higher Education

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Melissa Brunson, MBA

PURPOSE OF STUDY: You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Melissa Brunson, MBA, a doctoral candidate from the School of Education at Brandman University. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to identify and describe the lived experiences of Mid-level administrators as it relates to leadership development in Private Non-Profit Higher Education in both formal and informal settings. By investigating both formal and informal ways leadership skills are learned and developed, the data can potentially delve deeper into the various types of experiences of Mid-level administrators. Unseen in previous studies, data may reveal leadership development through mentoring, informal learning in communities of practice, formal classes and workshops, and the like. By focusing on the lived experiences of Mid-level administrators, findings from this study can significantly highlight some common practices in Private Non-Profit higher education in the area of leadership development.

By participating in this study, I agree to participate in an individual interview. The interview will last approximately 45 – 60 minutes and will be conducted in person. Completion of the in person interview will take place December 2019 through January 2020.

I understand that:

There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research. I understand that the Investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher.

I understand that the interview will be audio recorded. The recordings will be available only to the researcher and the professional transcriptionist. The audio recordings will be used to capture the interview dialogue and to ensure the accuracy of the information collected during the interview. All information will be identifier-redacted and my confidentiality will be maintained. Upon completion of the study all recordings will be destroyed. All other data and consents will be securely stored for three years after completion of data collection and confidentially shredded or fully deleted.

The possible benefit of this study to me is that my input may help add to the research regarding the formal and informal leadership development of Mid-level administrators in Private Non-Profit higher education. I understand that I will not be compensated for my participation.
If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Melissa Brunson mreyes4@brandman.edu or by phone at 951-218-8027; or Dr. Jeffrey Lee (Dissertation Chair) at jlee1@brandman.edu.

My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide to not participate in the study and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer particular questions during the interview if I so choose. I understand that I may refuse to participate or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the Investigator may stop the study at any time.

No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent re-obtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the “Research Participant’s Bill of Rights.” I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure set forth.

________________________________________
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party

________________________________________
Signature of Principal Investigator

________________________________________
Date
The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Melissa Reyes successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants."

Date of Completion: 05/14/2018

Certification Number: 2818821
APPENDIX H

Email to Sponsor

From: Magen, Melissa <mam@stjohns.edu>
Sent: Monday, December 03, 2019 1:23 PM

Subject: [INTERNAL] Dissertation Interview Participants

Thank you so much for talking with me this morning, and for agreeing to connect me with some of the folks in your network that fit the sample criteria for my dissertation.

Through participation in this study, mid-level administrators will have the opportunity to share their personal experiences as it relates to both formal and informal leadership development in private non-profit higher education. Additionally, through their participation in this study the participants are able to contribute to an existing body of work on leadership development in higher education, as well as filling a gap in the literature that pertains directly to our sector of the higher education.

I am looking for participants that are willing to do a 1-1.5 hour interview, and who fit the sample criteria listed below:

1. 3 or more years of Private Non-Profit Higher Education experience
2. 3 or more years as a mid-level administrator. For the purposes of this study, a mid-level administrator would be a Dean, Associate Dean, or Program Chair on the academic side of the university. They could also be a director, associate director, or manager on the operations side of the university.

Have a great week,
Mellisa
APPENDIX I

Endorsement Email from Sponsor

Hi Melissa,

So far five people confirmed, I am expecting more today. As soon as I have the list, I will send it to you.

Best,

Hi Melissa,

I will be out of the office, and wanted to send you this list before I leave. Good luck!

Here is the list: