

Master's Thesis:
Exploring the “White Space” Between Leadership Training and Leadership Development
Outcomes in the British Columbia Public Sector

by

Han Na Kim
B.A., University of Victoria, 2020

A Master's Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Abstract

Many public sector employees take leadership training to become better leaders. However, employing the knowledge learned to produce real-life outcomes does not happen automatically. A developmental space exists between acquiring leadership knowledge and the desired leadership outcomes, also called the “white-space.” This study explored this space between post-training and desired leadership outcomes to investigate how British Columbia public sector employees draw from leadership training and other experiences to become better leaders. This study conducted in-depth one-hour-long interviews with 21 public sector employees in leadership roles across various organizations in B.C. The study addressed how individuals attempt to achieve multidimensional, zero, first, and second-order leadership learning outcomes, what individual, group, and organizational attributes affect the “white-space,” and how individuals learn from their daily life experiences to further their leadership.

Significant findings from the interviews include several ways in which B.C. public sector employees attempt to achieve multidimensional and/or zero, first, and second-order learning outcomes in the ‘white space’ post-leadership training. Individuals strive to attain these learning outcomes by supporting team members, nurturing others’ personal development, actively seeking avenues to augment leadership competencies, developing confidence, actively utilizing acquired skills and more. Findings also reveal the intrinsic motivators that drive public sector employees to pursue leadership development, such as the desire to grow and develop others, achieve tangible positive changes for the public, and foster positive relationships within their teams and organizations. Another key finding is the interplay between individual traits and interpersonal dynamics in shaping leader identity, particularly in the B.C. public sector context. While all participants viewed themselves as leaders, their perceptions of leadership and leader identity were influenced by their perception of their individual traits and who they are in relation to others.

Some crucial findings related to individual, team, and organizational attributes that impact the public sector leadership development post-training have also emerged. For example, positive team attributes were supervisory support and peer support, successful collaboration on team projects and ideas, and clarity in roles and responsibilities within the team. Some of the critical negative team factors included uncollaborative team environment, “bad leaders/supervisor,” and lack of social interactions. Concerning organizational attributes, being provided with a mentor or a coach, organizational commitment to leadership development, and opportunities to practice leadership skills were deemed vital, such as opportunities for jobs, new projects, and tasks critical for leadership development. Key findings related to the negative organizational attributes in the public sector included factors such as lack of follow-up discussions or further training, public sector’s hiring and talent management culture that discourages leadership development process and disconnect between training and real-life situations.

The last part of the study explored how participants develop leadership through daily life activities through participating in external committees or groups, coaching or volunteering, seeking out leadership training outside of work, reading books or listening to podcasts on leadership, and engaging in self-care activities.

Overall, the study demonstrates a complex interplay between these factors that ultimately

shape B.C public sector employees' leader identities and the leadership development process post-training and ends with practical recommendations for public sector leadership development, particularly in the Canadian context.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis will examine the developmental space that occurs between leadership training and real-life outcomes, focusing on the B.C. public sector. In the *Introduction* chapter, the thesis will first outline the main research question and its purpose and scope. Then, it will state research gaps that currently exist in the leadership development literature along with the significance of the contribution of this research. Next, in the *Literature Review* chapter, this paper will further define leadership development, leadership development outcomes, and leadership developmental stages to provide a framework for the better understanding of the study. Then, the *Theoretical Framework* chapter will discuss the theoretical framework that has been developed for this research. Afterwards, in the *Methodology/Analysis/Limitations* chapter, the paper will describe the methodology and the analysis used for the study as well as their limitations. Following this, the paper will present the *Findings* chapter followed by the *Discussion and Analysis* chapter. Finally, this thesis will end with the *Conclusion* chapter that includes summary, recommendations for public sector leadership development, and limitations and areas for further research.

Purpose/Scope/Research Questions

Many public sector employees attend leadership training and interventions designed to develop their leadership. Often set in a classroom, trainees hope to pick up a certain amount of knowledge in these types of interventions that will help them become better leaders. However, several steps often need to be taken between acquiring leadership knowledge and the actual performance of particular leadership competencies in real-life workplaces. For example, an individual attends a leadership program or training and learns how to motivate their employees and strengthen teamwork to increase productivity. They come out of the program with an understanding and knowledge of motivating and enhancing teamwork. In the workplace, however, the individual faces real-life situations, which may or may not resemble the hypothetical situations provided in the training program, and these real-life situations require them to leverage that knowledge gained in the classroom and produce positive leadership outcomes. The present study focused on a better understanding of the developmental process that occurs when moving from post-training to maturity in leadership ability. Ultimately, the study investigated how public sector employees draw from leadership training and other experiences after the training to become better leaders.

This research study posed the following main question:

How do public sector employees further develop their leadership post-training? In other words, how might they continue to develop micro-level leadership skills as well as further develop other “higher-level system” leadership attributes (Lord and Hall, 2005; Wallace et al., 2021) that eventually lead to positive cognitive, behavioral, and motivational leadership outcomes? What may be some of the organizational and personal factors that affect this in-between stage?

To answer this question, I studied how Canadian public sector employees who have attended leadership development training strive to become better leaders post-training. Wallace et al.’s leadership development learning outcomes (2021), other relevant literature, and B.C. Leadership Competencies, were used to develop a more fulsome framework of leadership outcomes to achieve,

and I investigated how individuals are trying to obtain these outcomes.

This study's purpose was not to evaluate public sector employees on whether they attained these leadership competencies or leadership learning outcomes. Its goal was to understand how these people are striving to meet these goals by asking them in-depth questions about their experiences and some of the factors that may have impacted their leadership development after training (for example, how often did they have opportunities to practice competencies, what motivated them to develop further their leadership, what types of organizational support did they have in their development, what were the obstacles, etc.).

For example, I asked public sector employees to reflect on their experiences of when they had to motivate employees/co-workers after taking the leadership training. I also inquired whether they self-identify as leaders post-training and what personal, team, and organizational factors may have contributed to this. These types of exploratory questions allowed the study to investigate how these public servants are moving towards achieving desired results and, ultimately, leadership development learning outcomes, what they are doing during this space, and the possible variables that may be affecting the process.

There are several factors that individuals should focus on when developing leadership. Scholars such as Wallace et al. (2021) and Lord and Hall (2005) have discussed leadership development learning outcomes and other important factors to be mindful of in one's journey to become a better leader. These outcomes and factors include the development of a strong leader identity, the result of a compilation of behaviour outcomes, and the development of motivation to become a better leader. Achieving greater expertise in leadership competencies is another clear goal in leadership development. Therefore, leadership competencies also serve as part of the outcomes public servants would ideally want to develop.

Summarizing, the goal of the study was not to measure whether individuals have attained these competencies or other leadership attributes in the space between post-training and the accomplishment of their leadership goals but rather *to explore how public sector individuals are working towards developing these competencies and other leadership attributes, what developmental behaviours and activities often occur in this stage, and what factors might affect this developmental process.*

Problem Statement and Significance of Contribution

In their 25-year review of leadership development, Day et al. (2014) point out the importance of studying the everyday lives of leaders, as well as the practicality of leadership theories as they are applied. While many leadership development theories and instructional designs are available, Day et al. (2014) note that more attention needs to be paid to what leaders do in their everyday lives *after* training to develop more effective and efficient leadership.

Similar to Day et al.'s (2014) comments, Marcy illustrates some gaps identified in the public sector leadership development approaches, one of them being the mismatch between the training provided and the real-world challenges leaders face, leading to ineffective application of learned skills in practical scenarios (2023). He calls for future studies that examine the long-term effects of leadership training on public sector organizations that consider factors such as organizational

culture, policy changes, and external political and social influences.

In addition, there is a need for studies that further provide a better understanding of the leadership development process and aid in developing a comprehensive framework that can guide the creation of more effective leadership development programs (Elangovan et al., 1999). Elangovan et al. note that considering the significant investments and costs that are associated with leadership training, effectiveness of training transfer is a critical concern for organizations. They highlight the importance of developing leadership programs and work environment that focus on ensuring skills learned are applied in the workplace. Hence, Elangovan et al. (1990) asks for studies that investigate factors that most significantly impact transfer success, such as motivation, organizational culture, and support.

Lord and Hall (2005) have also commented on the importance of studying what happens after leadership training. They argue that leadership development happens over time and not just during training. They state that development “occurs over an extended period, with multiple loosely connected skills first effortfully (although not necessarily completely consciously) attempted” (p. 611). These efforts are then guided by leaders’ desires and motivation to achieve their leadership development goals, referred to as leadership development *outcomes*. As leaders try to match their behaviors to leadership competencies, these efforts become increasingly proceduralized, contextualized, and internalized. Hence, according to Lord et al. (2005), the process that occurs post-leadership training is of high importance to one’s development as a leader. And yet, there is much that we still do not know about this time post-training; more research is needed regarding developing leadership qualities during the post-training process, which may involve months or years.

McCall (2004) directly speaks to this need for future research on “better understanding of the learning process ... and of how to help people make the most of the experiences they have” (p.130). He argues that as much as training programs play an essential part in leadership development by providing initial knowledge and task-oriented skills, actual development occurs through leaders’ subsequent experience. McCall further notes that leadership development is a long-term, career-long process, emphasizing the significance of the learning process outside of formal training. He states that future studies on leadership development should focus on “what can be done to shift learning from performance-specific mastery to the growth of new and larger skills that move such mastery ... toward expertise” (2004, p.130). Hezlett (2010) supports McCall’s argument regarding the importance of learning from experience for leaders and adds that further examination is needed on how self-reflection, goal setting, and other contextual and situational factors impact the leadership development process.

This brief overview of the literature suggests a need to understand better what public sector individuals go through post-training to become better leaders and uncover some of the best practices applied in this space. As the work of the above scholars suggests, leadership development often happens in the “white space” between leader development training and actual leadership improvements. The ongoing practice of day-to-day leadership activities is the core of the story. Hence, in addition to better instructional design or developmental interventions as per leadership training, more attention needs to be paid to what happens in the everyday lives of individuals as they practice leadership behaviors and develop after training. For example, Hezlett (2010) states that supervisory support has been linked to improving developmental activities. What support do

employees often get in their organization that helps them further develop their leadership? How do they use this support? Are there advocates for this support? The answers to these questions remain unclear, and the field would benefit from further research.

This issue is arguably even more prominent in public sectors where there is less research on leadership development post-training interventions. Research on this “white space” between post-training and improved leadership development outcomes is very limited in the public sector, demonstrating the need for this type of study to be conducted. While there are several essential reasons why research on the “white space” in public sector leadership development is needed, I will detail two critical ones here.

First, most studies on leadership development have been done within a private sector context, which is a problem since public and private sector leadership development have significant differences that require their investigations. Researchers such as Anderson (2010), Pinnington (2011), and others have noted that leadership development can be markedly different between the public and private sectors, suggesting that more leadership development studies grounded in the public sector must be done. Anderson (2010) argues that people in the public and private sectors show significant differences in leadership behaviors, which inevitably impacts the leadership development process. For example, motivation for public servants to become better leaders may rely on more intrinsic factors – based on their inherent desire to serve the social good (Deci, 2004) – than extrinsic ones – based on their willingness to receive an external reward, such as praise, payment, or approval. (Thompson et al., 2017). In other words, intrinsic motivational factors, such as helping the general public and desiring to influence society, may be more inspiring to public servants. In contrast, private sector leaders may be more motivated by extrinsic motivation, such as increasing profit and expanding businesses.

Pinnington (2011) also states that those in the public sector are less convinced by the importance of some private sectors’ leadership goals – such as facilitating the power of a leader or increasing financial gains – and concludes that this distinction requires future leadership development studies to be mindful of different contexts between public and private sectors. Mau (2007) suggests that public sector leadership development emphasizes ethical values such as integrity, fairness, equity, honesty, and civility more than is sometimes found within the private sector. In addition, leadership competencies deemed essential in the public sector may differ from those in the private sector. For example, Darling and Cunningham (2016) suggest that core public sector competencies include interpersonal motivational skills, adding service value for clients, and effectively managing in a highly political environment. In other words, for individuals working in the public sector, the ability to work under changing politics, the ability to manage and lead under higher public scrutiny, and the ability to remain accountable to the public may be more important, while individual working in the private sector will often emphasize skills related to marketing communication, business acumen, and timely decision making. Hence, as Anderson (2010) and others suggest, there is a need for leadership development research that accounts explicitly for these differences in the leadership context.

A second reason why research on the “white space” in public sector leadership development is needed would be the shortage of studies explicitly devoted to a Canadian context. Mau (2007) states that the Canadian government increasingly recognizes the importance of identifying and developing public servants who will become future public service leaders, thereby emphasizing the

importance of more leadership development studies focusing on the Canadian public sector. McGurk (2009) asks for further qualitative research on public sector leadership development, including investigating how organizational and situational factors, such as organizational support, work environment, and daily experiences, influence leadership outcomes. Lastly, Allard et al. (1990) work, which details a broad overview of factors that impact the managerial competence of Canadian provincial government executives, also suggests the need for further research that dives into investigating what public sector leaders learn from experience and how they apply these learnings. In other words, they further suggest the importance of supporting research that explores what happens in the leadership development process after formal education or training.

This study contributes to work on these calls by exploring what public sector employees do post-training to become better leaders. More specifically, how do B.C. public sector employees further develop their leadership post-training, and what are some of the best practices applied in this space? Overall, this study intended to investigate the space between the post-training and successful or unsuccessful leadership outcomes to learn more about factors impacting this process, using the B.C. Public Service as a case study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides a review of academic literature that are important to understand regarding leadership development. The chapter will first provide a brief definition of leadership development defined by scholars such as Wallace et al. (2021) and Day et al. (2004). Then the chapter will discuss leadership development outcomes including zero, first, and second-order learning outcomes, cognitive learning outcomes, behavioral learning outcomes, and affective/motivational learning outcomes, and their significances as defined by scholars such as Wallace et al. (2021) and others. Next, the chapter will review literature on leadership development stages from scholars, including Lord and Hall (2005), Mumford (2000), and others. This chapter aims to provide a solid understanding of key concepts in leadership development and highlight their importance as suggested by existing literature, while noting research gaps as they relate to understand the “white space,” particularly in the public sector.

Definition of Leadership Development

Leadership development as defined by researchers such as Wallace et al. (2021), and Day et al. (2004), indicates an intentional process aimed at enhancing the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes of individuals in positions of leadership or aspiring to be in leadership positions. The leadership development process aims to improve leadership competencies, behaviors, and qualities, encouraging individuals to guide and influence others. Furthermore, according to Day et al. (2004), leadership development is a multifaceted process that involves various factors such as formal training, mentoring, and learning from experiences.

Leadership Development Outcomes

In the space between post-leadership development training and leadership development outcomes, individuals work toward becoming better leaders and further developing their leadership. Hence, to study *how* these individuals work to become better leaders, we must first understand *what* it means to be a better leader. One common approach to becoming a better leader is gaining expertise in public sector leadership competencies. For example, researchers such as Rainey (2009) and Frederickson (2018) highlight the importance of developing public sector leadership competencies in delivering quality services and ensuring accountability to the public. Bryson (2011) also argues that gaining expertise in leadership competencies allows individuals to be better equipped to deal with a public sector environment that is subject to constant change and political pressures.

Particularly for the B.C. public sector, the B.C. Public Service has created a set of competencies for the B.C. public sector that it urges its leaders to develop and obtain expertise in. The B.C. Public Service Agency defines competencies as the “meeting of knowledge, a skill, or a mindset, and how you apply this knowledge and demonstrate these skills, attitudes, and behaviours in the workplace” (2018). The B.C. Public Service Agency has created BC Public Service Competencies to provide core competencies for general and strategic leaders in the B.C. public sector. The competencies include Behavioural Competencies and Competencies for Strategic

Leaders. Behavioural Competencies¹ are general leadership skills that apply to “all supervisors, managers, and staffs” (B.C. Government, n.d.) and include four primary areas – leading people, achieving business results, personal effectiveness, and interpersonal relationships. Competencies for Strategic Leaders constitute Core Competencies that are “common to strategic leadership positions” and Role-Specific Competencies that apply to “specific job profiles” (B.C. Government, n.d.).

Expertise in leadership competencies, however, is only one of several developmental pathways to good leadership and is not all one needs to be a good leader. For example, a desire to become a leader – a leadership identity – is also needed to become a good leader (Wallace et al., 2021). Given the general complexity of public sector leadership development, and the many factors that are important to consider when trying to improve as a leader, it becomes clear that what is needed is a more comprehensive framework that more fully accounts for what it means to be a better leader (i.e., more than just accounting for competency development). To begin to address this need, Wallace et al. (2021) have developed leadership development learning outcomes to bring “greater clarity and conceptual refinement in leader and leadership development learning criteria” (p.2) and to function as the ideal leadership development goals that individuals should strive to achieve.

Zero, First, Second-Order Leadership Learning Outcomes

Regarding potential leadership outcomes that researchers and practitioners should aim to define and strive for, Wallace et al. suggest zero, first, and second-order learning outcomes – also referred to as skill acquisition, leader maturation, and motivation to develop leadership. Wallace et al. base this on the idea that leadership development is more than acquiring knowledge and skills and also involves incorporation into one’s mindset as a leader through a process of growth and exploration. The zero, first, and second-order leader learning outcomes are categorized as follows:

Table 1

Wallace et al. (2021) Zero, First, and Second-order Leader Learning Outcomes

<i>Zero-order learning outcomes examples</i>	<i>First-order learning outcome domains and examples</i>	<i>Second-order learning outcome domains and examples</i>
Learning agility		
Motivation to develop as a leader	<u>Intrapersonal Competencies</u>	
Metacognitive ability	Creative thinking	<u>Leader Identity</u>
Self-awareness	Problem-solving	Leader identity strength
Implicit theories of leader development	Decision making	Leader identity centrality
Developmental self-efficacy	Personal courage	Leader identity integration
	Resilience	
	Proactivity	

¹ See BC Government, (n.d.), Competencies List for the full list of competencies and descriptions.

<i>Zero-order learning outcomes examples</i>	<i>First-order learning outcome domains and examples</i>	<i>Second-order learning outcome domains and examples</i>
	<p><u>Interpersonal Competencies</u> Emotional intelligence Social Intelligence Extraverted behaviors Warmth</p>	<p><u>Level of leader self-concept</u> Individual, relational, collective identity</p>
	<p><u>Management Competencies</u> Planning Delegating Monitoring Developing others Motivating others Empowering others Collecting, interpreting, and disseminating information Building networks Boundary spanning Advocating for change</p>	<p><u>Abstractions of leadership</u> Leadership Philosophy Transformational leadership Authentic leadership Servant leadership</p>

Note: Adapted from Wallace D. M., Torres E. M., & Zaccaro S. J. (2021). Just what do we think we are doing? Learning outcomes of leader and leadership development. *The Leadership Quarterly* 32(5).

According to Wallace et al. (2021), *zero-order learning outcomes* – also referred to as the motivation and ability to develop – are core to leadership development and provide the foundation for first and second-order outcomes. These outcomes include “[1] the ability to develop as a leader (e.g., metacognitive ability and self-awareness), and (2) the motivation to develop as a leader (e.g., learning orientation, implicit theories of leader development, and developmental self-efficacy” (p. 4). One’s self-awareness as a leader and motivation to become one may influence the development of their leader identity (second-order learning outcomes). This may cause an individual to actively seek out leadership activities and training, which could reinforce their leader identity and further improve leadership competencies (first-order learning outcomes). As Wallace et al. described, this “positive spiral” of zero-order learning outcomes connects first and second-order learning outcomes in leader development.

First-order learning outcomes include intrapersonal, interpersonal, management, and technical competencies. Intrapersonal competencies are combinations of knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes that enable leaders to recognize and engage in behaviors demanded or afforded by the leadership context. Interpersonal competencies are social competencies that promote effective interactions with others. Management competencies are knowledge, skills, and abilities required to enact effective management behaviors across various leadership situations. Finally, technical competencies involve the knowledge, skills, and abilities particular to a specialized field and expected of senior leaders.

Finally, Wallace et al. (2021) define *second-order learning outcomes* - also referred to as the leader maturation outcomes – as “the development of a growing complexity in leadership identities, conceptualizations, and mindsets” (p. 3). Examples of these outcomes include leader identity, leader identity level, and abstractions of leadership. Leader identity refers to the self-conceptualization of oneself as a leader, which involves “an often-intensive process of crafting, experimenting with, negotiating, and revising stories of the self that provide interpretive meaning to observed events” (p. 8). Leader identity level refers to three levels of leader self conceptualizations that occur along with increasing leadership expertise. Wallace et al. (2021) cite Lord and Hall’s (2005) categorization of leaders into novice, intermediate, and expert to explain the three levels of leaders. Novice leaders adopt an individual leader self-concept, viewing themselves as occupying a particular role, distinct from followers and other leaders. Intermediate leaders are more relational in that they are leaders of others and understand their identity through their relationships with followers. Expert leaders come to see themselves “as cogs in the wheel of the team – a person with certain roles that we call “leadership” – with or without formal distinctions – and their leader identity is as part of the collective” (Wallace et al., 2021, p. 8). Abstractions of leadership refer to different types of leadership theories/philosophies an individual may follow, such as authentic leadership or servant leadership.

Wallace et al. (2021) also categorize leader development learning outcomes into cognitive, behavioral, and affective/motivational outcomes, as the following sub-section demonstrates.

Table 2

Wallace et al. (2021) Multidimensional learning outcomes of leader and leadership development.

Learning level	Cognitive learning outcomes/	Behavioral learning outcomes	Affective/motivational learning outcomes
Leader development	Declarative Knowledge Knowledge Organization Cognitive Strategies	Compilation Proceduralization Composition Automaticity	Attitudinal Motivational Self-efficacy Goal Setting/Commitment

Note: Adapted from Wallace D. M., Torres E. M., & Zaccaro S. J. (2021). Just what do we think we are doing? Learning outcomes of leader and leadership development. *The Leadership Quarterly* 32(5).

Cognitive Learning Outcomes

Cognitive learning outcomes involve “both the knowledge acquired through training and the organization’s increasingly complex cognitive structures” (Wallace et al., 2021, p. 5). The specific outcomes outlined by Wallace et al. include declarative knowledge, knowledge organization, and cognitive strategies. Kraiger et al. (1993) support these outcomes, stating that cognitive learning involves verbal knowledge, knowledge organization, and cognitive strategies. Declarative

knowledge indicates an individual's ability to verbalize the elements of specific knowledge or skills, and knowledge organization "support analogical reasoning ... the application of knowledge to unique situations while also supporting the acquisition of related knowledge" (Gentner & Gentner, 1982 as cited in Wallace et al. 2021, p. 5).

Wallace et al. (2021) provide examples of possible ways to assess cognitive learning, including an individual's ability to explain a specific competency or skill (declarative knowledge), ability to rank how similar concepts are to one another (knowledge organization), and ability to self-assess the likelihood of success before applying the learning (cognitive strategies). Applying these assessments to research would involve asking participants to self-assess their own confidence and understanding of learned competencies post-training; for example, how comfortable are they explaining the definition or importance of specific Public Service competencies post-training? Are they able to use the knowledge learned during the training to create strategies to apply in their work situations? If yes, what type of factors (ability to self-reflect, being confident, ability to learn new things and adapt to changes, etc.) have helped them?

Behavioral Learning Outcomes

Behavioral learning outcomes connect knowledge with behaviors and compile them into situational-specific behavioral procedures. Kraiger et al. (1993) note that achieving these outcomes involves "a goal orientation and linking behaviors in a sequentially and hierarchically organized manner" (316). The specific outcomes under Wallace et al.'s (2021) model include compilation, proceduralization, composition, and automaticity.

Proceduralization refers to building smaller and discrete behaviors and learning how to apply different strategies to domain-specific problems. Composition refers to linking previously learned procedures into more complex and broad issues. These outcomes are not always separate from each other. For example, the compilation is the result of proceduralization and composition. The compilation is also the ability to modify learned skills into new task settings and generalize the skills learned. An example would be a salesperson trained to use certain skills in customer service settings, recognizing similarities between various situations and applying learned skills accordingly. Lastly, automaticity refers to the behaviors becoming automatic, thus requiring less attention and becoming less vulnerable to other demands – distracting thoughts, situational pressures, secondary tasks – that require cognitive resources.

Applying these outcomes to research would include asking participants how they attempted to achieve behavior learning outcomes and what factors contributed to this process. For example, do they become automatic when performing certain leadership tasks? Do they develop a particular behavioral procedure they can rely on when performing the same job? What type of factors (such as frequency of performing the task, supervisory feedback, etc.) impact this stage?

Affective/Motivation Learning Outcomes

Motivation Learning Outcomes are "changes in the internal state that drive behaviors, which include both changes in affective attitudes (e.g., diversity training) and motivations, goals, and intentions around a learned behavior" (p. 6). There may be changes in self-efficacy, performance, learning goals, or even knowledge self-assessments because of training. The specific outcomes

under Wallace et al.'s model include attitudinal, motivational, self-efficacy, and goal setting.

Kraiger et al. (1993), as stated by Wallace et al. (2021), note that attitudinal outcome refers to an individual's realization of the value of new and practical learned skills that lead to inner growth, organizational commitment, etc. For example, the tolerance for diversity and concern for public safety may change after receiving certain training (Kraiger et al. 1993). Questions kept in mind when studying attitudinal outcomes included how deeply an individual held onto previous feelings before the training and how the feelings changed. Motivation outcome refers to changes in motivational disposition. Kraiger et al. (1993) categorize motivation into mastery or performance orientation. Mastery orientation is a concern for increasing competence regarding a specific task. Performance orientation refers to one's intention to do well and gain a positive acknowledgment from others. Self-efficacy outcome refers to one's perceived performance capabilities for a specific activity. Kraiger et al. and Wallace et al. both argue that one's perceptions of self-efficacy can be the factor that determines whether an individual actively learns and uses skills. Lastly, goal setting refers to setting specific, attainable goals for the training. In other words, it indicates the importance of realizing the goal for taking a particular training. Wallace et al. (2021) suggest that a possible assessment of affective/motivational learning outcomes may include a leader's evaluation of their self-efficacy for effective performance.

Applying these outcomes to research would involve asking participants what factors impacted their motivation to develop as a leader and in what ways. For example, what individual, team, or organizational factors have influenced their motivation to become a better leader? How have these factors influenced their motivation to develop as a leader? For example, do these factors motivate them by encouraging them to perform more leadership competencies, or by holding them accountable?

Leadership Development Stages

Lord and Hall's (2005) explanation of leadership development stages is another critical piece of research that guided my study to help me explore the space between post-training and leadership development outcomes. These authors state that leader and leadership skills develop from micro-level skills –first learned through problem-related experiences or observational learning/training – and then they develop into a higher-level system that guides behavior, knowledge, and social perceptions. This higher-level system also allows leadership roles and skills to become central to one's identity. Lord and Hall also note that leadership skills and knowledge become inseparable from developing one's self-perception as a leader.

Lord and Hall further argue that leadership development “occurs over an extended period, with multiple loosely connected skills first effortfully (although not necessarily completely consciously) attempted” (p. 611). These efforts are then guided by leaders' desires and motivation to achieve desired leadership outcomes. As leaders try to match their behaviors to leadership competencies, these efforts become “increasingly proceduralized and contextualized” and internal. Lord and Hall's framework correlates highly with Wallace et al.'s taxonomy, emphasizing cognitive, behavioral, and motivational aspects of leadership development. It also shows how variables under these categories impact leadership development outcomes immediately and over time after training. This period between a leader's transition from micro-level skills to a higher-level system – the stage where loosely connected skills become increasingly proceduralized and

contextualized, guided by a leader's identity motivation to achieve leadership development outcomes – is the focus of this study.

Lastly, Mumford et al.'s (2000) article "Development of Leadership Skills: Experience and Timing" provides helpful information when considering the space between post-training and leadership development outcomes. Mumford et al. suggest that leadership skill development is a long-term process through an individual's interaction with the environment. They argue that leadership skill development in an organization is a process that happens over time, becoming more complex as individuals develop their careers. Mumford et al. (2000) organize leadership skill development into three main steps.

The first step in leadership skill acquisition is understanding task performance requirements, which indicates learning basic concepts and conditions and applying them in "relatively concrete situations" (p. 89). Most people enter organizations with limited knowledge of organizational contexts and leadership roles. Thus, the training they need should be geared towards providing education on organizational norms, contexts, structured activities, and guiding visions. This step is highly relevant to Wallace et al.'s (2021) cognitive learning outcomes, which refer to an individual's ability to understand and comprehend the knowledge acquired through training and the ability to use that knowledge to create cognitive strategies applicable to real life situations.

The second step is learning how to apply these concepts to more complex and different situations and develop independent problem-solving skills as leaders, which correlate with behavioral learning outcomes. The final step is where leaders reflect on their initial learnings and independent supervisory roles to become well-equipped to apply creative thinking skills to address complex, unfolding problems that reflect affective/motivational learning outcomes.

Consequentially, leadership development takes an extended period, ideally transitioning from simple initial knowledge to complex "integrated knowledge structures that support the effective application of creative problem-solving and system skills" (Mumford et al., 2000, p. 90). This correlates with Lord and Hall's (2005) analogy of moving from micro-level skills to a higher-level system.

Conclusion

Wallace et al. (2021) and others provide some crucial ways to articulate what criteria might be essential to consider to achieve leadership development outcomes. They provide a framework for fully understanding the initial stages of leadership development (the primary focus of many leadership development training interventions) and the subsequent deeper levels and maturation of leadership development. The initial step is where individuals acquire micro-level skills – basic knowledge and simple skills – often taught in leadership training and classroom environments. The ideal leadership outcomes – such as Wallace et al.'s learning outcomes (2021) – are higher-level skills where this initial knowledge becomes more complex and sophisticated after going through a "white space," which is the stage between post-training and attaining ideal leadership outcomes. In other words, the "white space" is the stage between acquiring micro-level skills and a higher-level leadership system, where an individual's efforts to achieve desired leadership outcomes occur, influenced by various personal, team, and organizational factors.

As noted previously in the Chapter 1: Introduction of this paper, there exists a research gap in this “white space,” particularly in the public sector. While existing studies often focus on leadership development in the private sector, scholars like Anderson (2010), Pinnington (2011), and others demonstrate the differences in leadership behaviors, motivations, and political environment between private and public sectors, which calls for explicit consideration of these variations in leadership development research. There is also a research gap in the “white space” specific to the Canadian context, as highlighted by Mau (2007) and McGurk (2009), and by Allard et al. (1990) who further supports the call for post-training leadership development studies. Simply put, there exists a compelling need for research addressing the “white space” that considers both public sector and the specific Canadian context.

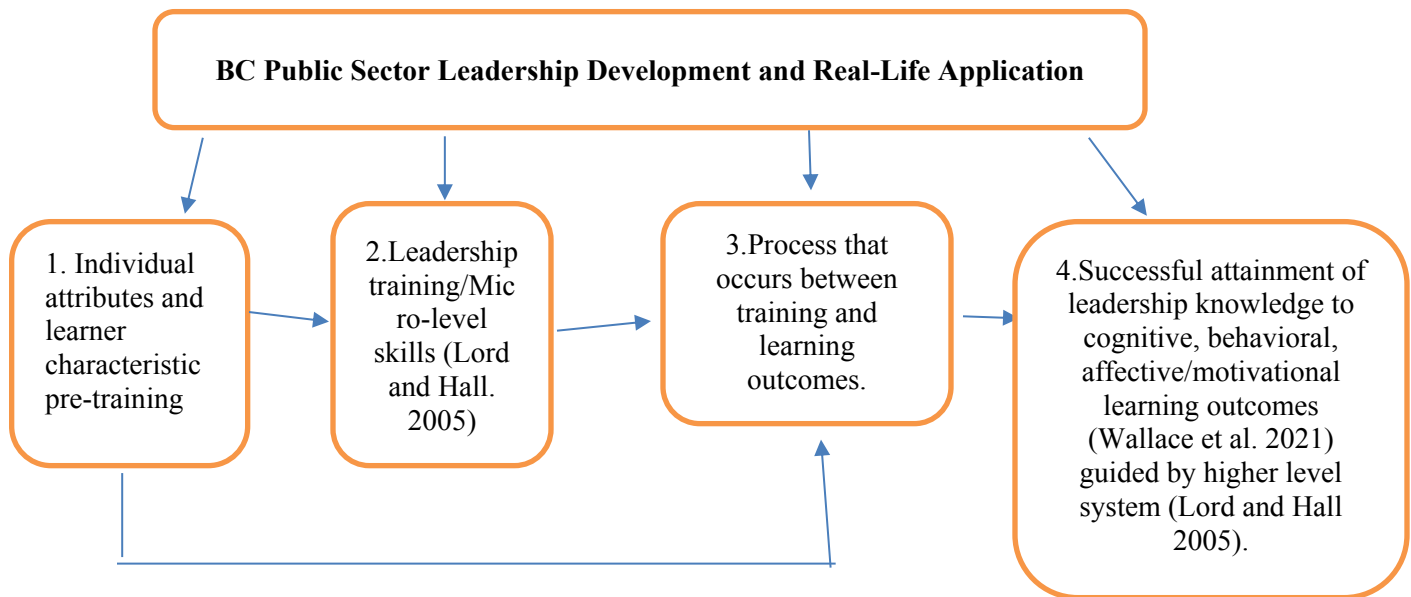
There needs to be a study that answers to these calls and aims to apply the theories of leadership development stages including Wallace et al. (2021,) Lord and Hall (2005), and others, in identifying what the “white space” between the post-training and leadership outcomes entails particularly in the public sector. More specifically, taking a closer look at how B.C. public employees work through this “white space” for the purpose of investigating how individuals strive to meet leadership development learning outcomes such as those detailed by Wallace et al. (2021) would be helpful in addressing the gaps mentioned above. These outcomes include basic leadership competencies such as those defined by the B.C. Public service, as well as more sophisticated goals, such as acquiring a leadership identity, etc. The research may ask exploratory questions related to how they are moving towards achieving these leadership outcomes, what they are doing in this space, and the crucial factors that impact this process (for example, how often did they have opportunities to practice competencies, what types of organizational support they had in their development, what were the obstacles, etc.).

Ultimately, there needs to be a study looking at the experiences of public sector employees after the training period, exploring how those who took leadership training moved from knowledge gained regarding micro-level skills to greater leadership sophistication, such as holding a deeper understanding of higher-level systems (Lord and Hall, 2005), a greater sense of a self-identity of leadership (as articulated by Wallace et al, 2021), and more robust general performance in leadership competencies within a public sector context (such as those competencies detailed by the BC Public Service).

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Figure 1

B.C. Public Sector Leadership Development and Real-Life Application



1. Individual attributes and learner characteristics pre-training

Box #1 of Figure 1 details some important individual-level factors that people bring to leadership training, such as individual attributes and learner characteristics. These individual attributes and characteristics are important to consider for this study, as these individual attributes and characteristics can influence what participants can draw from leadership training initiatives. For example, individual attributes such as ability to realize and understand the purpose for taking a particular leadership training may lead to successful goal setting, which is one of Wallace et al.'s (2021) affective/motivational leadership learning outcomes. Individual attributes such as being resilient and proactive may impact successful obtainment of intrapersonal competencies, which are some of Wallace et al.'s first-order learning outcomes. As such, these individual attributes and characteristics can also affect how individuals further develop their leadership in the “white space.”

According to Day et al. (2014), research on leadership development suggests that several intrapersonal and interpersonal factors can influence leadership development. As cited in Day et al. (2014), intrapersonal content can include variables such as personal experience (Bettin and Kennedy, 1990), skills (Mumford et al., 2000), personality (Strang et al., 2009), and self-development regarding work orientation and mastery orientation (Boyce et al., 2010). Interpersonal content includes variables like social mechanisms and authentic leadership, “ongoing processes whereby leaders and followers gain self-awareness and establish open,

transparent, trusting and genuine relationships, which in part may be shaped and impacted by planned interventions such as training” (Avolio et al., 2005, p. 322, as cited by Day et al., 2014).

Cianciolo et al. (2004) emphasize the theory of practical intelligence in leadership and leadership development. Practical intelligence indicates a “general ability to learn from experience and to apply experience-based, or tacit, knowledge to novel everyday problem situations” (Cianciolo et al., 2004, p. 214). Higher practical intelligence means an individual can apply experience-based learning to other real-life situations and develop leadership skills.

For this study’s purpose, this stage also indicated the participants' demographics that tie them together. For example, they were B.C. public servants or individuals who worked for the B.C. public sector organizations.

2. Leadership training and interventions

The second box (#2) of Figure 1 represents the leadership training and interventions stage. This study only included participants who are B.C. public sector employees and have undergone a formal leadership training initiative. This participant pool was an essential requirement as their role as public sector employees ensures that their leadership development is grounded within a public sector context. The participants may or may not have been in a leadership role. I asked if they are *currently* in a leadership role and for how long as part of the demographic questions. I also asked if they have ever filled a leadership role and for how long.

Additionally, one of the primary interests of this study was how individuals further leverage knowledge and skills gained in leadership interventions for greater leadership development post-training. Enos et al. (2003) present both formal training and informal learning as part of successful leadership development. According to them, formal training “occurs in the absence of action; learners are removed from the day-to-day work to engage in lectures, discussions, simulations, role-plays” (p. 291) – in other words, typical structured training and interventions – and informal learning occur during the process of action and reflection, including “self-directed learning, networking, coaching, mentoring” (p. 291). This progression and deepening of leadership understanding reflect the steps and levels Wallace et al. (2021) and Lord and Hall (2005) further detailed. While this study did not measure or evaluate knowledge and skills gained through training, of interest is how these former leadership-training participants drew from and leveraged some of this learning in their ongoing leadership development.

3. The stage that occurs between post-training and leadership learning outcomes in the workplace

The third box (#3) of Figure 1 represents the stage between post-training and leadership outcomes – the stage this study focused on. Jackson et al. (2010) suggest that formal leadership training and educational programs – such as post-secondary education – contribute to successful leadership development by providing possible experiences and lessons (i.e., knowledge) for expertise. In other words, training provides lessons for an experience that may complement studies derived from on-the-job experiences, thus increasing a leader’s readiness and capacity to draw vital

information from experience. Enos et al.'s (2003) definition of informal learning – learning that occurs during the process of action and reflection, including “self-directed learning, networking, coaching, mentoring” (p.291) – also belongs under this stage, where individuals are expected to learn and further develop their leadership through real-life experiences after the formal training. Their argument asks how much these leaders use the lessons learned from the training to draw out the information from their day-to-day work experiences. Is this phenomenon mentioned by Jackson et al. (2010) happening in real life? And if so, how? What might be some of the constraints in this process? What might be further helpful in this process? While some theoretical work such as Burke et al. (2007) has spoken to this stage, this study investigated further what happens in the developmental process as public sector individuals move on from their leadership training experiences into real-life situations post-training.

Table 3 below illustrates the “white space” and some questions considered when studying this post-training stage, while **Figure 2** proposes some of the critical factors to consider in this space.

Table 3

Main questions considered for studying the “White Space” – the middle space between post-training and leadership outcomes

The “White Space” – the middle space between post-training and leadership learning outcomes

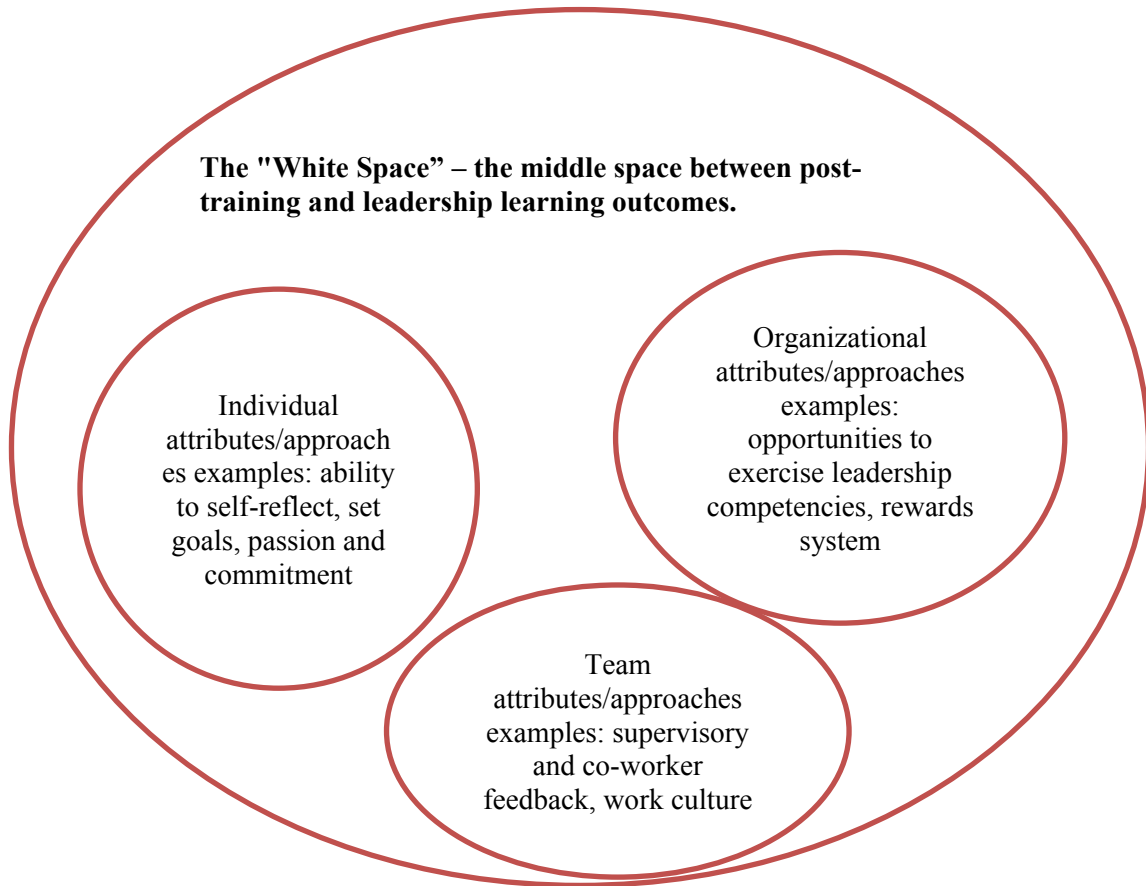
Q#1: What are individuals doing to achieve multidimensional and/or zero, first, second-order learning outcomes?

Q#2: What are some individual attributes and approaches, team attributes and approaches, and organizational attributes and approaches impacting this space?

Q#3: How do individuals find leadership development opportunities through self-development activities in everyday life to achieve their developmental goals?

Figure 2

Factors involved in the “White Space” – the middle space between post-training and leadership learning outcomes.



This study aimed to explore what public sector employees are going through post-training on their journey to become better leaders, using Wallace et al. (2021) and other research as part of the framework. The literature review explains that research such as Wallace et al.'s leadership development learning outcomes (2021) and Lord and Hall (2005) represent ideal leadership goals individuals may strive for after the training. The “white space” indicates the middle space between post-training and these leadership outcomes, where individuals are developing their leadership and trying to attain those outcomes.

As shown in Figure 2, this middle space may be composed of various factors that impact an individual to become a better leader post-training, including personal attributes and approaches (such as the ability to organize knowledge, self-reflect, etc.); – team attributes (such as supervisory support, etc.); and organizational attributes and approaches (such as organizational opportunities for exercising leadership skills). The aim was to explore what individuals – B.C. public servants in

particular – are doing to achieve Wallace et al.’s learning outcomes (2021) and Lord and Hall’s higher-level system (2005) and integrate factors impacting this process. For example, what factors might be positively or negatively influencing this stage? How has the organization supported the individuals post-training in further developing their leadership outcomes? Several variables impacting this process were categorized into **individual, team, and organizational attributes and approaches**.

One example of **individual attributes and approaches** may be an individual’s ability to set specific and attainable goals. An individual’s ability to realize and understand the goal for taking a particular leadership training may impact goal setting, which is one of Wallace et al.’s (2021) affective/motivational learning outcomes. Some other personal attributes include an individual’s ability to remember and articulate the knowledge taught during the training, organize knowledge, and develop problem-solving strategies applicable to various situations. These attributes would impact declarative, knowledge organization, and cognitive strategies, which all fall under Wallace et al.’s cognitive learning outcomes. Lastly, personality traits such as being resilient and proactive may lead to the higher achievement of intrapersonal competencies, which are part of first-order learning outcomes.

Team attributes and approaches may also play a part in this “white space.” Supervisory/peer support and work climate strongly impact success outcomes post-training (Burke et al., 2007). Having a supportive supervisor and coworkers can positively influence one’s leadership skills, such as management and technical competencies, which are part of Wallace et al.’s first-order learning outcomes. They can also affect the level of a leader self-concept – meaning whether a leader sees oneself as occupying a role distinct from other employees or as part of the collective – which is part of the second-order learning outcomes. On a similar note, non-supportive work environments that lack supervisory support, opportunity, intrinsic and extrinsic reward, etc. (Elias et al., 2004) may harm leadership development learning outcomes by causing leaders to be detached from the workplace or the significance of developing one’s leadership.

Organizational attributes and approaches may include having the opportunity to exercise competencies, internal or external rewards by an organization, etc. Hirst et al. (2004) suggest that an organizational approach such as action learning programs, formal mentoring, and job rotation programs could help the development of leadership. Burke et al. (2007) also suggest several organizational factors strongly correlated with successful outcomes post-training, including strategic links, opportunity, and accountability. For example, the opportunity for leaders to exercise certain competencies may impact the automaticity and proceduralization of those competencies, which are part of Wallace et al.’s behavioral learning outcomes. Another example would be external rewards provided by the organization, such as career advancement, pay increases, or formal acknowledgments. These external rewards may impact an individual’s leadership identity or motivation to become better leaders, which are also part of Wallace et al.’s learning outcomes.

4. Successful obtainment of a higher-level system (Lord and Hall, 2005) and leadership results

The fourth box (#4) of Figure 1 represents the final stage of leadership development: obtaining leadership outcomes. Lord and Hall (2005) argue that leadership skills develop from “what is a cognitive bootstrapping process, in which individuals first learn micro-level skills

(productions) through problem-related experiences or observational learning, and then organize them into increasingly higher-level systems that guide behavior, knowledge, and social perceptions.” These systems develop with personal identities in which leadership roles and skills become more central to an actor’s sense of self. Thus, over time, leadership skills and knowledge become inseparably integrated with developing one’s identity as a leader. This higher-level system correlates with Wallace et al.’s (2021) multidimensional learning outcomes of leader development that categorizes learning outcomes into cognitive, behavioral, and affective/motivational. Consequentially, the maturity of leadership competencies in a real-life workplace would indicate that the individual attained cognitive, behavioral, and affective/motivational learning outcomes and zero, first, second-order learning outcomes (Wallace et al., 2021), resulting in the higher-level system (Lord and Hall, 2005).

Chapter 4: Methodology/Analysis/Limitations

Methodology

This research is an explorative study that focuses on the experiences of participants. I conducted in-depth interviews with twenty-one participants working for the B.C. public sector to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how leaders attempt to further develop their leadership post-training.

Using literature such as Wallace et al.'s leadership development learning outcomes (2021) as a framework, interviews explored what public sector employees do to move from micro-level skills to a higher-level system after leadership training, i.e., what have they been doing to achieve greater leadership outcomes, and what factors might influence this process? During the interview process, I referred to leadership outcomes such as expertise in leadership competencies and others (along with other leadership development outcomes, such as development of leader identity, development of motivation to become a better leader, etc.) as achievement targets to help guide the interview process, allowing participants to have a better understanding of the questions, priming them to reflect more deeply on their developmental experiences, and providing more detailed feedback on how the developmental process has occurred. When asking about a specific competency or knowledge, the study primarily leveraged B.C. Public Sector Competencies.

The B.C. Public Service Agency created the BC Public Service Competencies to provide core competencies for general and strategic leaders in the B.C. public sector. Since this study focused on leaders in the B.C. public sector, it was important to use competencies dedicated to the B.C. public sector as a guide. The competencies include Behavioural Competencies and Competencies for Strategic Leaders. Behavioural Competencies² are general leadership skills that apply to “all supervisors, managers, and staffs” (B.C. Government, n.d.) and include four primary areas – leading people, achieving business results, personal effectiveness, and interpersonal relationships. Competencies for Strategic Leaders constitute Core Competencies that are “common to strategic leadership positions” and Role-Specific Competencies that apply to “specific job profiles” (B.C. Government, n.d.).

Through using existing literature on leadership development as a framework to develop interview questions, I was able to enhance the depth of understanding, validity, and reliability of data gathered. For example, by continuously comparing new data with existing findings, I was able to more easily identify patterns and variables that could have been missed, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the data. Additionally, as Miles et al. (2014) note, this type of method validates the quality of data gathered during the qualitative research by ensuring that new findings are grounded in the existing data. By continuously integrating and comparing new data into existing literature, researchers can validate their findings. Similarly, as Lincoln & Guba (1985) state, this method strengthens the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research through comparison of new data with existing finding and refinement of data as patterns emerge. In the case of this study, it also allowed me to ensure that the interview questions being asked are grounded within the framework of existing leadership development literature, providing a guarantee that the data being gathered are related to the leadership development in the post-training.

² See BC Government, (n.d.), Competencies List for the full list of competencies and descriptions.

Overall, the questions intended to find out how public sector employees who have taken some form of leadership development training further develop their leadership skills/competencies and higher-level leadership qualities and how individual, team, and organizational factors come into play during this process. Table 3 shows sample interview questions and the developmental outcomes that guided the questions.

Table 3

Sample Interview Questions

Individual, Team, Organizational Attributes	Corresponding Variables	Leadership Development Learning Outcomes (Wallace et al., 2021)	Interview Questions	Supporting Literature
Individual	Ability to set specific and attainable goals	Goal Setting/Commitment	Do you set specific and attainable goals at work? Do you think this helps you develop leadership competencies or motivate you further?	Jackson et al. (2007), Wallace et al. (2021), Kraiger et al. (1993), Lord and Hall (2005)
	Confident in using skills and concepts at work	Self-awareness Proactivity Personal courage	Are you comfortable applying your skills and experiences at work?	
	Personal awareness Self-awareness	Leader Identity	Post-training, do you see yourself as a leader? Why? Did your view change after the training?	
Team	Encouragement Supervisory and peer feedback Accountability Shared values Acknowledgments	Motivating others Developing others Empowering others	Do you perform more of the x, y,z competencies (For example, motivating others) after the training? What factor is most important to consider when trying to motivate and/or empower your team? (For example, encouragement, recognition, accountability, and sharing values)	Jackson et al. (2007), Wallace et al. (2021), Kraiger et al. (1993), Lord and Hall (2005)
	Accountability to team Supervisory and peer feedback Encouragement from the team Recognitions from the team Shared values	Motivation to develop as a leader	How has the team environment and support affected your motivation to develop as a leader? (For example, supervisory support, encouragement, accountability, etc.)	

			What type of team attributes positively influence your development as a leader?	
			What type of team attributes negatively influence your development as a leader?	
Organizational	Further training Opportunity to practice skills and concepts Formal acknowledgements	Automaticity of basic leadership tasks	When you perform certain tasks, do they ever become automatic?	Jackson et al. (2007), Wallace et al. (2021), Kraiger et al. (1993), Lord and Hall (2005)
	Career Advancements Formal acknowledgements Strategic link (organization links skills and concepts learned to strategic plans)	Motivation to develop as a leader	What organizational factors have helped you to automatize particular leadership tasks/competencies? (Frequency of opportunity to practice, formal acknowledgments, further training, etc.)	
			What organizational factors influence your motivation to develop as a leader? (Further training, opportunities to perform, career advancements or pay increases, strategic links)	

I used purposive sampling to recruit participants for the interviews. Interviewees were from various parts of the B.C. public sector who have taken leadership development programs targeted toward leaders in Canadian public sectors. The leadership development programs included, but were not limited to: B.C. Government Coaching Services or the Learning Centre training and development programs; the University of Victoria’s Learning and Development programs (Leading for Engagement, L4E, L4E+, ALI); University of British Columbia HR Leadership Development programs, and; Royal Roads Leadership programs. Program managers and consultants of these programs sent invitation emails to their alums to encourage potential participants to express their interest via email to the researcher.

Once initial participants came forward, snowball sampling and nomination sampling were employed to expand the pool of participants further. Snowball sampling involved asking participants for help locating more potential interviewees in their network (Nikolopoulou, 2022). Nomination sampling

indicated asking the participants to nominate individuals who were involved in the field for interviews. When snowball sampling and nomination sampling occurred, participants circulated my contact information to others, and other names and contacts were not distributed without the knowledge or permission of the potential participants. From the invitation emails and snowball/nomination sampling, I recruited twenty-one participants in total. I obtained informed consent from the participants and guaranteed their anonymity. The participants comprised six managers, seven directors, seven executive directors, and one Assistant Deputy Minister. They worked in various public sector organizations, including the Ministries of B.C. Government, municipal governments, the University of Victoria, and municipal police departments.

Table 4

Characteristics of Interviewees

Public Sector Organization	Interviewee	Gender	Position of Interviewee	Type of Leadership Training Taken	General Values vs Competencies focused
A (B.C Provincial Government)	A.1	F	Executive Director	Public Service Agency (PSA)/ Royal Roads (RRU)	Both
	A.2	M	Executive Director	PSA/ RRU	Competencies focused
	A.3	M	Manager	PSA	General Values
	A.4	M	Supervisor/manager	PSA	Competencies focused
	A.5	F	Director	PSA/courses offered through the organization	Both
	A.6	M	Executive Director	PSA	Both
	A.7	F	Manager	PSA	Competencies focused
	A.8	F	Director	PSA/ courses offered through the organization	General Values
	A.9	F	Director	Courses offered through the organization	Both
	A.10	F	Director	Courses offered through the organization	Both
	A.11	M	Executive Director	PSA/courses offered through the organization	Both
	A.12	F	Executive Director	PSA	Both
	A.13	F	Executive Director	PSA/RRU	Both
	A.14	F	Manager	PSA	General Values
	A.15	M	Director	PSA	General Values
	A.16	F	Director	PSA/UVic	Both
	A.17	F	Assistant Deputy Minister	PSA	Both

B (Municipal Government)	B.1	M	Executive Director	Courses offered through the organization	Both
	B.2	F	Manager	Courses offered through the organization	General Values
	B.3	M	Director	Courses offered through the organization	Competencies focused
C (University)	C.1	M	Manager	UVic	Competencies focused

Thematic Analysis

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. I read the transcribed interviews and used thematic analysis to identify, analyze, organize, describe, and report themes found in the data (Nowell et al., 2017). Braun and Clarke define thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of themes within qualitative data (2017). Braun and Clarke note that this study utilized thematic analysis because it allows researchers to identify patterns regarding participants' experiences, views, and behaviours and also helps researchers explore and understand what participants think, feel, and do (2017). This analysis method allows researchers to conduct exploratory studies that dive into participant's lived experiences, such as this one. I completed the thematic analysis in five main phases guided by Nowell et al. (2017) and Braun and Clarke (2006).

The first step of the thematic analysis involved data familiarization (Braun and Clark, 2006), which involved transcribing the interview recordings, reading the data, and noting the initial thoughts. As I read and re-read the transcriptions, I highlighted central ideas and wrote them for each transcript. The second step involved generating the initial code. Braun and Clarke describe coding as defining "interesting features of the data in the systematic fashion across the entire data set, collecting data relevant to each code" (2006, p. 87). I divided the interview transcriptions into smaller samples. As I read each transcript, I created codes that covered the particular transcript. As I moved on to the subsequent transcript, I applied the codes I made for the previous ones. I noted where codes do not match, or additional codes are needed. I created new codes based on each transcript I read. I repeated this phase until I had coded all the data. The third step involved searching for themes across the data, organizing codes into themes, and gathering all data relevant to each theme (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I read and re-read the transcripts until I could organize and categorize the codes into identifiable themes. The fourth step of the analysis involved reviewing themes. Reviewing themes indicates "checking if the themes work with the coded extracts at the first level and then the entire data set at the second level, generating a thematic map" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87). I re-read the entire data to validate the themes, then organized the themes into hierarchical frameworks to better represent the data collected and how each data relates to one another. Lastly, I selected compelling examples from the interviews that display the data results to produce the report. I chose direct participant quotes for each theme to convey the study's outcome better. In this final phase, I analyzed what aspect of the data each theme captures and how "each

theme fits into the overall story about the entire data set in relation to the research questions” (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 10).

Limitations

This explorative study focused on participants’ experiences, meaning the data collection relied heavily on each participant’s perception. The study results were impacted by each participant’s opinions and individual differences. However, that was also the significant part of this research: to understand and explore their personal experiences and perceptions on further developing their leadership learning outcomes after participating in leadership training.

Another limitation of the study was that I could not fully control the training program the participants attended. Participants attended different training programs depending on the organization or even their department. However, one common factor that tied all these programs together is their focus on public sector leadership development. Further, this study did not evaluate the leadership development program; it only investigated participants’ developmental experiences post-training. The focus was not on their *performance* as leaders but on their *experiences* trying to become better leaders post-training.

Finally, when interpreting the results of what happens in the white space, it is essential to consider several boundary conditions that could influence these outcomes. First, the type and quality of training or development workshops that participants attended likely impacted their behavior and performance in the white space. For example, high-quality workshops with well-designed content and delivery methods are more likely to result in more meaningful changes when compared to poorly structured ones.

Second, the nature and intent of the participants in these workshops may play a crucial role. Participants’ interest in leadership development can vary widely, from those genuinely eager to learn and apply new skills to those who attend with minimal engagement or for extrinsic reasons (e.g. some training programs are a welcome break from the daily grind). This type of individual variability can affect how much and how effectively participants implement new behaviors. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge whether the stated behaviors of participants are entirely unique to the white space or if they were somewhat present before training. Some participants might have already been exhibiting some of these behaviors prior to their training, and thus, the noted changes might not be solely attributable to the white space environment. Careful consideration of these factors is necessary when interpreting and discussing the activities in the white space and how participants strive to develop their leadership post-training.

Chapter 5: Findings

Introduction

The study conducted hour-long interviews with twenty-one public sector employees in leadership positions. These were six managers, seven directors, seven executive directors, and one Assistant Deputy Minister. I recruited interview participants from various public sector organizations, including the Ministries of B.C. Government, municipal governments, the University of Victoria, and municipal police departments.

The interviews comprised in-depth questions about individual, team, and organizational factors that may have impacted the leadership development process of the participants in the “white-space” – the middle space between post-training and leadership development outcomes. The questions intended to find out how public sector employees who have taken some form of leadership development training further develop their leadership skills/competencies and higher-level leadership qualities and how individual, team, and organizational factors come into play during this process.

The interview questions focused on exploring stage 3 of the theoretical framework demonstrated in **Table 5** and **Figure 3** below. **Table 5** illustrates the “white space” and the main questions considered when studying this post-training stage. **Figure 3** shows how some key individual, team, and organizational factors may be important to consider in this space.

Table 5

Main research questions to consider for studying the “White Space” – The middle space between post-training and leadership outcomes

“White Space” – Middle space between post-training and leadership learning outcomes

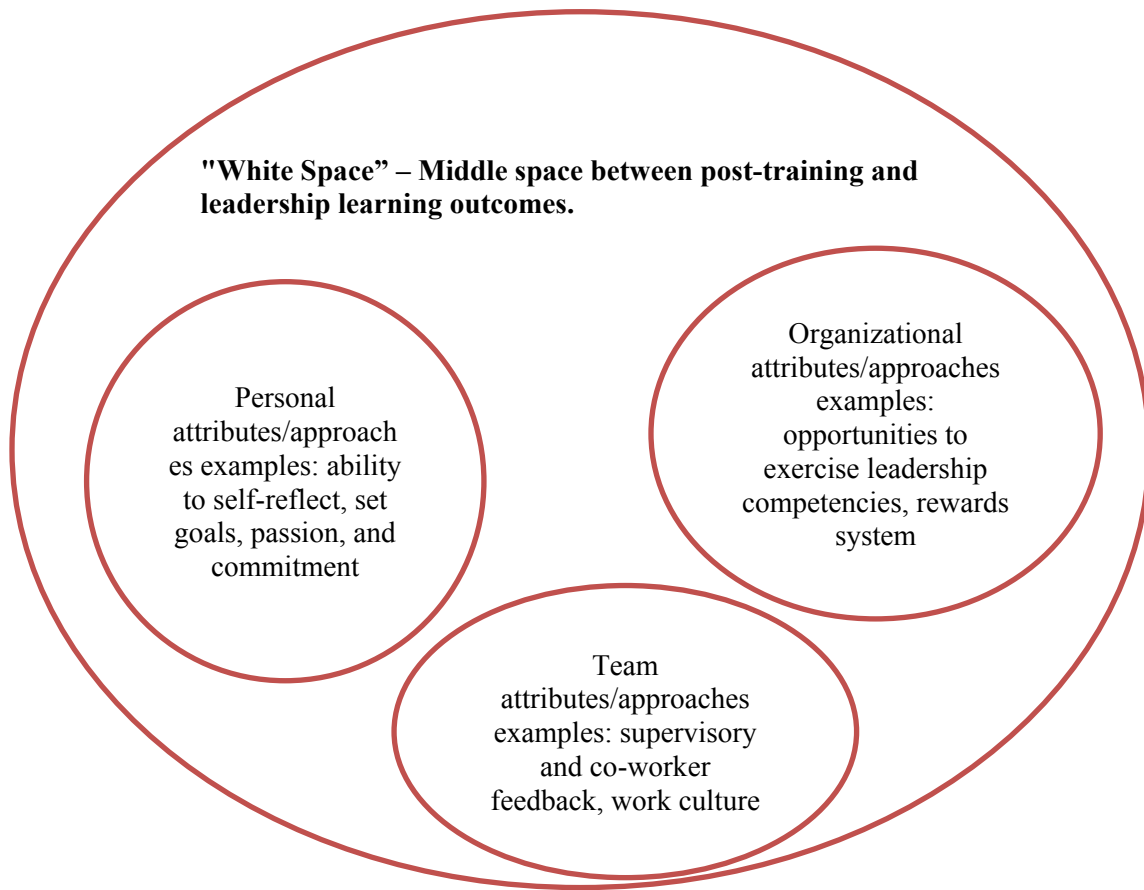
Q#1: What are individuals doing to achieve multidimensional and/or zero, first, second-order learning outcomes?

Q#2: What are some individual attributes and approaches, team attributes and approaches, and organizational attributes and approaches impacting this space?

Q#3: How do individuals find leadership development opportunities through self-development activities in everyday life to achieve developmental goals?

Figure 3

Factors involved in the “White Space” – the middle space between post-training and leadership learning outcomes.



The Findings section addresses the three main questions of this study. What are individuals doing to achieve multidimensional and/or zero, first, and second-order learning outcomes? What individual, team, and organizational attributes and approaches impact the “white space”? How do individuals learn from their daily life and work experiences? The section also describes some key factors under each question.

Question #1: What are individuals doing to achieve multidimensional and/or zero, first, and second-order learning outcomes?

The first goal of the interviews was to investigate how individuals attempt to achieve multidimensional and/or zero, first, and second-order learning outcomes and the factors that influence this process. Based on the interviews, the data was organized into the following four learning outcomes: **goal setting, performance of leadership competencies, motivation to develop**

as a leader, and leader identity. Figure 4 shows the leadership development learning outcomes among the participants in terms of what they strive to achieve and what they believe they have attained. Table 6 demonstrates in what ways individuals seek to meet each learning outcome.

Figure 4

Multidimensional and/or zero, first, and second-order learning outcomes participants strive to achieve in the “White Space.”

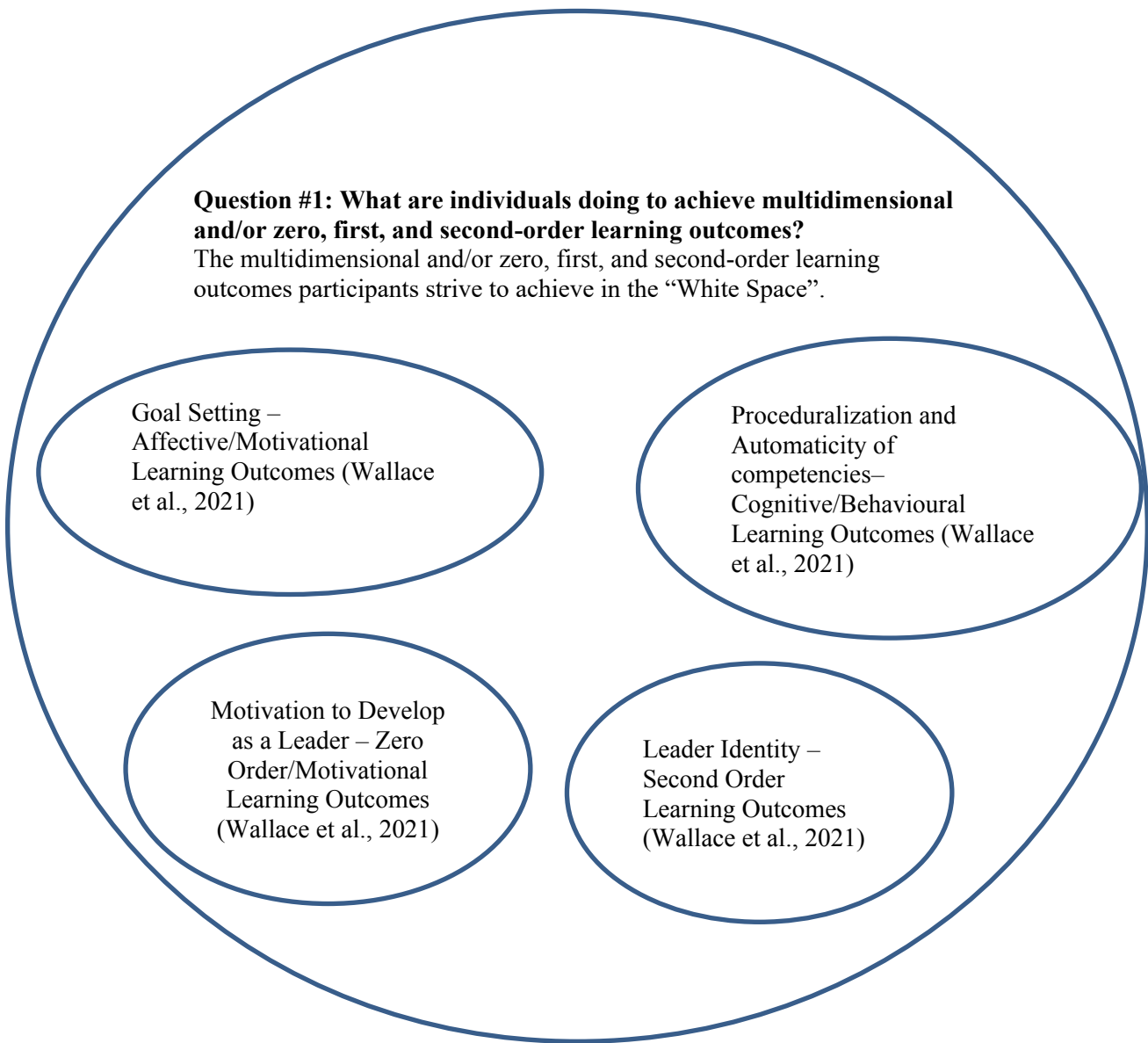


Table 6

How participants strive to achieve leadership development learning outcomes

Question #1: What are individuals doing to achieve multidimensional and/or zero, first, and second-order learning outcomes?

Learning outcomes	Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
<i>Goal Setting – Affective/Motivational Learning Outcomes (Wallace et al., 2021)</i>	Reflecting and introspecting on their position as leaders	Encouraging others to work on their development	Seeking opportunities to improve leadership competencies.
<i>Proceduralization and Automaticity of competencies– Cognitive/ Behavioural Learning Outcomes (Wallace et al., 2021)</i>	Be confident to be competent	Actively trying to use learned competencies at work post-training	Develop metacognitive ability to achieve automaticity of leadership competencies
<i>Motivation to develop as a leader – Zero order/ Motivational Learning Outcomes (Wallace et al., 2021)</i>	Having accountability toward the team	Making positive changes for the common good	Having regular discussions with peers/supervisors
<i>Leader Identity – Second-Order Learning Outcomes (Wallace et al., 2021)</i>	Occupying a leadership position-individual level	Exhibiting personal attributes at a leader-individual level	Having positive relationships with people-relational level

Goal Setting – Affective/Motivational Learning Outcome

Wallace et al. (2021) identify goal setting as one of the affective and motivational learning outcomes encompassing the importance of establishing specific and attainable leadership development goals and committing to those goals. I asked participants how they set clear and achievable leadership development goals to develop their leadership and the factors influencing the process. **The data demonstrated that participants set and achieve leadership development goals by reflecting and introspecting on their position as leaders, encouraging others to work on their development, and actively seeking opportunities to improve leadership competencies.**

Reflecting and introspecting on their position as leaders

Participants answered that they set leadership development goals by reflecting on their positions as leaders and the ways in which they use their positions to create positive change. Once

they took leadership training, they tried to be more introspective about their position as a leader, such as what they like about being a supervisor and what they can do to improve their team's abilities. For example, some participants said that they constantly think of ways to better support their team members. One participant stated, "I know that I may not always have the answer they are looking for – if that's the case, I try to connect them with someone else in the team or other stakeholders that may be able to help" (A.4).

Participants – particularly those in higher leadership positions such as executive directors – answered that they often reflect on various ways they can further develop as better leaders, such as being more accountable to their teams, or paying more attention to their team's opinions, goals, and interest. For example, one participant commented:

"I'm mindful that people will sometimes be reluctant to bring opportunities forward ... If something were on my attention, I would ensure I was accountable for reporting those items in the leadership meeting on my team's behalf." (A.6).

To summarize, the participants highlighted the importance of reflecting and introspecting on their position as leaders when setting leadership development goals. This meant reflecting on their role as supervisors, what they like to do as supervisors, and how they could better support their teams, such as linking their teams with suitable resources, incorporating team perspectives, objectives, and interests into leadership meetings, etc. By constantly reflecting on their positions as leaders, they stated that they can connect and set their leadership development goals with their team's interests and ways to support their teams, which ultimately help them develop as a leader.

Encouraging others to work on their development

Participants believed that one of the main goals they set for their own leadership development is achieving the success and the well-being of their colleagues and employees. Hence, they believed it is essential to encourage their colleagues and team members to work on their development to achieve a wholesome team and work environment. For example, some participants answered that they often encourage others to actively take leadership training and read books on leadership to help them achieve their leadership goals. One participant stated, "My strategy for leadership is thinking about how to enable others to achieve leadership development actively. I encourage them to book leadership courses" (A.2). Another participant commented, "I act more like their coach than their supervisor" (A.9). Participants suggested that encouraging others to work on their development – "almost like a cheerleader" – helps to build more successful teams, which in turn improves the work environment as well as enriches their own leadership development by moving them closer to the goal of creating success and well-being within their teams. Participants believed that focusing on their teams' success and colleagues' well-being helped them feel connected to their teams and colleagues, and acted as a positive feedback loop that eventually came back to them and helped them develop their identity as a leader.

In other words, because participants believed many of their leadership development goals are intertwined with their team's overall success and well-being, they prioritized encouraging their team to build on their development through participating in leadership training, reading, etc. This approach allowed participants to evolve into "coaches" rather than bosses/supervisors, fostering a work environment where everyone could ideally work on mutual development and success.

Emphasizing and encouraging teams to work on their own development led to stronger and more successful teams, which came back as a full circle to further motivate participants to become better leaders, which then in turn continued to bolster their identity as leaders.

Seeking opportunities to improve leadership competencies

Participants also answered that setting specific and attainable leadership development goals means consciously seeking opportunities to develop leadership skills and competencies. They continue to think about ways to improve their expertise and skills. Participants suggested several ways they seek opportunities to improve leadership competencies at work. These included *seeking out tasks and projects that would not be part of their regular duties, seeking leadership development training and courses at work, seeking peer and supervisor feedback and mentors, and hosting leadership sessions.*

The first example they provided was *seeking out various tasks and projects that would not be part of their regular duties.* For example, one participant answered that when he is presented with opportunities to be part of specific projects, he tries to take on the opportunity as long as he has time and capacity, even if he is not required to take on the responsibilities (A.6). Another participant explained that once he was part of a project where his supervisor left the team, leaving the team with no one to lead the project. The participant stated that although he was not in a leadership position and it was not originally his duty, he volunteered to take on specific leadership responsibilities so that the project could move along. He confirmed that this experience provided him with an immense development opportunity since he was able to act as a leader and challenge himself to take on more responsibilities that he was uncomfortable with (A.3). Other participants also stated that they sometimes ask their supervisors for different type of duties they can take on, which allows them to move away from their “comfort zone” and experience other things that would help them to develop their leadership competencies.

Participants also suggested actively seeking *leadership development training and courses at work* to further their leadership development. One participant described that she is usually one of “the first people to try out the new leadership courses or training” (A.8) that the organization provides when the opportunity arises. She stated that through staying on top of leadership training, she can learn about examples of leadership, delegation, empowerment, communication, and building relationships and then potentially bring those learnings back to work. Another participant stated that he tries to find more leadership training at work and encourages his employees to do the same (A.2). He said that he believes formal leadership training is essential because it accelerates an individual’s leadership development. He described that everyone needs to build their toolkit to become a better leader, and learning only from experiences without formal training would require a longer time to make the toolkit. Some other participants stated that they seek more and newer leadership training at work because the idea of good leadership constantly changes along with the changing environment. As a result, they must keep up with these changes to become better leaders. For example, one participant explained:

“When I started the workforce, leadership training focused a lot on how to ‘manage’ people. By ‘manage,’ they meant emphasizing results in numbers, reports, etc., and being a good leader meant making your employees do things the way you want them to do. Now, however, leadership training tends to be very different. They are more focused on

relationships between a leader and the employees – being a good leader means supporting and creating positive relationships with others at work and, by doing so, producing results holistically. I think this change in the training impacts the type of managers and leaders we see at work, so it's important to continue seeking newer training" (A.4).

Similarly, another participant stated, "Be more aware of seeking leadership training or furthering leadership by reading newer research, publications, etc. There's always a gap between older and newer leadership styles, which will never merge in harmony if people aren't keeping up with the research" (A.5), suggesting the importance of seeking newer training and research on leadership development to stay current with the changing environment.

Participants also seek for opportunities to develop their leadership at work by *seeking peers and supervisors feedback, and mentors*. Some participants answered that they try to ask for feedback from their peers and supervisors instead of waiting for formal performance evaluation meetings. They stated that this allows them to be more proactive and helps them to quickly identify their strengths and weaknesses. It also increases interactions with their peers and supervisors and helps them develop positive relationships. They also often find receiving feedback through more casual and informal means – as opposed to having a formal performance management meeting – results in more candid and constructive feedback.

Several participants also stated that they *seek out formal and informal mentors at work*. For example, one participant mentioned, "I seek out certain people to work with or as my mentor, who are viewed as being excellent leaders at work and experts in certain areas" (A.4). Another participant also stated, "I always sought a mentor – having a person who you can become an apprentice to and look up to" (A.3). As these comments demonstrated, participants claimed that when there are opportunities for formal mentorship, they apply for those programs to have a mentor. However, even when no formal mentorship programs are available, they search for someone at work who they view as a strong leader and ask the person to be their mentor. In other words, looking for various ways to engage in mentor-mentee relationships helps them find leadership development opportunities at work.

Lastly, a few participants mentioned *hosting leadership training* to seek leadership development opportunities at work. For example, one participant shared that he tries to host leadership sessions at work about different topics. He stated that when he hosts these sessions, he is more engaged in the session than he would be as a guest or a participant because he is responsible for interacting with the training facilitator and other logistical duties. Hence, he stated that he is naturally more engaged and focused on the materials taught during the sessions, which helps him retain the knowledge learned. Another participant mentioned that his job involves organizing and hosting employee leadership training. He explained that because this immerses him in leadership training, it brings leadership development to the top of his mind. Naturally, he can think back, review, and use the knowledge learned during the training more often than someone not involved in organizing, providing, or hosting leadership training.

The ability to learn from others was another significant factor that was noted for seeking leadership development opportunities. One participant stated, "I try to deem structure not as a top-down, but like a round table each with one's strengths and weaknesses" (A.2). They stated that they try to view people not through their positions at work but through the expertise and experience they

bring to the table. This way, they can learn from those who have a better understanding and knowledge of the matter – regardless of their position – and accommodate the learnings into their style. They try to have conversations that focus on the content, not the formal designation of the person. One participant explained this process in the following words:

“It’s trying to be a confident leader while still learning about myself and the people I lead. It’s comfortable leveling with those reporting to me and recognizing that many have been part of the branch longer than I have. So, being respectful of that and willing to learn from them” (A.5).

Hence, participants suggested that they continue to seek ways to improve their leadership skills and competencies by being more aware and reflective of their limitations as a leader and their ability to learn from others.

In short, participants emphasized the necessity of actively seeking opportunities to enhance leadership skills and competencies through various initiatives such as enrolling in organizational leadership courses and learning from experienced individuals. Individual attributes like self-awareness and the capacity to learn from others were noted as being pivotal in this process.

Proceduralization and automatization of competencies – Cognitive and Behavioural Learning Outcomes

The interviews also investigated how the participants attempted to perform leadership competencies proficiently, encompassing cognitive and behavioural learning outcomes as defined by Wallace et al. (2021). Cognitive learning outcomes indicate knowledge acquired through training and experience, while behavioural learning outcomes involve applying this knowledge to specific situational behaviours. Examples of cognitive and behavioural learning outcomes include knowledge organization, cognitive strategies, compilation, proceduralization, automaticity, and more. These outcomes focus on an individual’s ability to remember, adapt, strategize, and proficiently perform leadership skills and competencies. In the interviews, I asked the participants how they attempted to achieve cognitive and behavioural learning outcomes at work post-training, along with their perceptions of best practices. **The data identified three core ways: being confident to be competent, actively trying to use the learned competencies, and making leadership competencies autonomic.**

Be confident to be competent

Participants stated that in the “white-space” post leadership training, they became more comfortable performing leadership competencies over time. For example, they became more comfortable and competent in occupying leadership positions and performing leadership competencies, such as motivating others, setting team culture, organizing team-building activities, and prioritizing different tasks.

However, participants noted that this process did not happen overnight; and that, for many competencies, they are still struggling to become competent. Yet, something that has helped them significantly in working through this struggle was being confident in their ability as a leader. Many participants argued that being confident, even if they sometimes might have to “fake” the

confidence, led to more opportunities to practice leadership skills, ultimately leading to competence and *real* confidence. It acted as a complete circle. One participant stated, “I’m confident, and I am okay expressing my goals out loud. It doesn’t bother me to say them out loud and still know that I am not there yet ... when I express them, more opportunities come to me” (A.16). Another participant stated:

“When I am presented with tasks, I perform them with confidence. Then, people trust my decisions and opinions and come back with more opportunities and situations where I can practice my leadership skills. This also makes me feel accountable to them, so I practice more to be more competent as a leader, which leads to more confidence” (A.1).

In short, participants noted that being confident in oneself and expressing that confidence is one of the core ways they try to achieve proficiency in their leadership competencies, such as motivating teams, shaping team culture, organizing team-building activities, and prioritizing tasks. They explained that as much as formal training and education were vital for developing competencies, one’s level of confidence and belief in one’s abilities to learn and perform those competencies are also critical in improving the performance of leadership competencies. This process took time, but participants suggested that confidence, even feigned at times, opened doors to practice leadership skills, eventually leading to real proficiency. Confidence acted as a catalyst, creating opportunities to practice, leading to competence and increased confidence. This cycle enabled their ongoing leadership development process.

Actively try to use the learned competencies at work post-training

Participants stated that they consciously and actively tried to use learned competencies at work as much as possible post-training. One way they suggested they do this is by trying to make the best of the training by actively thinking back and using the knowledge learned. Participants claimed that leadership training provided essential initial learning and understanding, which was the basis for practicing and ingraining the knowledge learned. For example, one participant mentioned that after taking a course about effective management and accountability within the team, he remembered the training and consciously tried to use the strategies he learned during the training in real-life work situations. For instance, he would recall back on the importance of clear communication from the training and would try to employ the strategies learned through emphasizing what needs to get done, communicating with the colleagues what he wants from them, and making it clear he is also there for them if needed (A.4).

Another participant stated that they tried to map out how to perform a particular competency – for example, difficult conversations – before performing them using the knowledge learned during the training:

“I find that when you take those courses for interest or out of necessity, and when you have an active interest in it, you apply that going forward ... when I do a training on fierce conversation or heavy lifting, I try to remember all that and map out how the conversation will go” (A.17).

They also explained that viewing situations using different “lenses” learned from various training is helpful – for example, through the lens of coaching, the lens of higher-level leadership,

the lens of different generations, etc. Bringing these different “lenses” to work situations helped them become a better leader by allowing them to adapt to situations and act appropriately.

Eventually, through repeating these practices, the goal was to attain proficiency in leadership competencies. Participants claimed that although they may never stop learning and developing, they may achieve satisfactory leadership learning outcomes through continued practices. One participant stated:

“I don’t see it as you return three weeks from the training and know how to apply it immediately, but you do as you practice over time. That’s why it’s important to have continuity and regular training. Regular instruments and support. If you don’t use it, you lose it. Experience and feedback you get from coaching, mentorships, or training – it works in a triangular way. Post-training, I think you lose it if you don’t take training regularly. Experience only doesn’t work – it must be combined with regular training. We all have different personalities and traits that make us great leaders. But we need training to hone them.” (A.15).

Thus, one of the crucial ways that was suggested to achieve proficiency in leadership competencies is a combination of regular training and active use of those competencies over time.

According to the participants, the conscious combination of training and active use of the knowledge learned may improve leadership competencies. They used formal training as the foundation to practice and reinforce learned competencies. It involved mapping out competency execution in advance, viewing situations using various perspectives (for example, coaching, higher-level leadership), and adapting their behaviour appropriate to their circumstances. This balance between training and active use of learned competencies fostered proficiency in their competencies and promoted further leadership development.

Develop metacognitive ability to achieve automaticity of leadership competencies.

The last strategy to attain leadership competencies and cognitive and behavioural learning outcomes, is making leadership competencies become automatic, as in performing them without thinking about them anymore or using cognitive effort. Most participants declared that leadership competencies do become automatic over time.

Participants stated that the automaticity of leadership competencies heavily depends on the frequency of opportunity to practice them in real life, such as being required to perform them daily. One participant stated:

“As you do it more, it becomes more of a second nature and build confidence... you continue to use those skills as you go along and have the confidence in them” (A.1).

Interestingly, although the consensus was that leadership competencies can become automatic over time, some participants suggested that it’s important to try to make certain leadership competencies “**autonomic**,” not automatic.

They explained that the term automatic has more to do with machines – for example, a thing

that can operate almost thoughtlessly without external control or intervention. They suggested that the term *autonomic* refers to working with autonomy and quickly adapting to different environments and situations. Interestingly, the participants' description of how they attempt to make their behavioral competencies "autonomic," correlates with the development of "metacognitive ability", which is one of the Wallace et al.'s (2021) zero-order learning outcomes. Wallace et al. (2021) note that development of metacognitive ability is required in order to develop as a leader. Schraw (1998) describe metacognitive ability as a multifaceted construct involving *metacognitive knowledge* referring to the understanding of what tasks entail, *metacognitive experiences* referring to the understanding and recognition of one's experiences such as confusion, confidence, etc., while engaging in a task, and *metacognitive strategies* referring to the creation of methods to perform and adjust tasks as needed. Similarly, Lord and Hall (2005) also remark on the importance of metacognitive processes in leadership development, especially when progressing from novice to intermediate to expert skill levels. The following quote from a participant summarizes this phenomenon:

"You learn something – fierce conversation, coaching, five ten steps, practice it, practice it formally in real life – but then you learn to adapt it to your style to the point it becomes natural. If I do it mechanically, it's unnatural and weird to me. But if I apply the principles in my style, that's more natural. It's not cookie-cutter. I practice the skills in my own world how I want to" (A.16).

Another participant explained this as being similar to having an "autonomic nervous system – like breathing. Happens naturally, you don't think too hard about it all the time but can adapt to different environment" (A.2). Another participant mentioned as an example that when a challenge comes up at work, one naturally considers various stakeholders, corporate budgets, and other factors, and adapts all those things into decisions instead of mechanically checking the boxes or going by the automated system.

To summarize, participants acknowledged that, over time, specific competencies become automatic if they are frequently exposed to real-life practice and diverse scenarios. However, some participants suggested that competencies need to be "autonomic" first, meaning they need to first develop metacognitive ability and adapt learned competencies to different contexts while retaining personal style before those competencies can become "automatic.". They believed that in order to be truly proficient in leadership competencies, or to achieve automaticity of leadership competencies, they need to develop metacognitive ability, which allows them to become more natural in their leadership style with the capacity to adapt flexibly.

Motivation to develop as a leader – Zero Order/Motivational Learning Outcomes

The motivation to develop as a leader is another critical learning outcome mentioned by Wallace et al. (2021), which pertains to zero-order and affective/motivational learning outcomes. Zero-order learning outcomes indicate the motivation and ability to develop as a leader. Affective/motivational learning outcomes involve changes in motivational disposition, reflecting a desire to increase competence or garner positive recognition. This study asked how participants strive to achieve zero-order/motivational learning outcomes, exploring factors that increase their motivation for post-training leadership development. The data demonstrated that the predominant strategies for increasing their motivation to become better leaders **were having accountability**

towards the team, making positive changes for the common good, and having regular discussions with peers and supervisors.

Having accountability toward the team

Many participants answered that their accountability toward their team motivated them to become better leaders and develop their leadership skills. They stated that their motivation to develop as leaders was heavily influenced by their accountability towards their teams. Participants highlighted that having a sense of accountability to their organizations, to the work they produce, to their teams, or to the public was a core motivator for their leadership development. For example, one participant mentioned, “colleagues, stakeholders, partners ... thinking about how I can be accountable to them, that’s one of my guiding principles and will be for the rest of my career” (A.6). Another participant stated, “being accountable to my team helped me develop my identity as a leader” (C.1). Their quotes demonstrate that a major motivating factor for their desire to improve their leadership is the accountability they hold towards their teams, organizations, and others. A participant summarized, “the motivator is my desire to be accountable for the community around me, being there for my community.”

Interestingly, their accountability towards their team and community became even stronger motivator when it was bolstered by team environment they were in. When they were part of a team that held them accountable as a leader, it further impacted their motivation positively. For example, several participants said that their team put trust in their decisions, leadership skills, and opinions, making them feel accountable as a leader. One participant mentioned:

“All these factors, such as having my team’s trust and mutual respect, having our means of communication open – as in making it easy to communicate with each other whether in-person or through teams all helped me develop my identity as a leader” (C.1).

This quote demonstrates that when they were part of a collaborative team that trusted and respected each other and could communicate effectively, they felt accountable for carrying out leadership duties or performing more of the competencies learned. When a team had shared values and understanding, participants said they “want[ed] to respond to that positive community by committing to be a better leader” or to develop their leadership skills further. One participant used the “rowing” analogy to describe this occurrence:

“I don’t think that dissimilarity is necessarily a bad thing. I think you can have people with different skills and attributes – but shared values are critical in the analogy of everyone rowing in the same direction. I have this visual where there are many capable, smart people, but if they are all sitting in a circular boat and everyone’s rowing as hard as they can, we are still going around in a circle. We aren’t going anywhere.” (A.2).

As such, participants highlighted that their motivation to develop as leaders was heavily influenced by their accountability towards their teams, and was bolstered by trust, mutual respect, and open communication within their group. This collaborative work environment increased their responsibilities as leaders and encouraged a commitment to leadership duties and the application of learned competencies. This positive team environment motivated participants to develop as leaders, increasing their commitment to improvement.

Making positive changes for the common good

Another major factor that motivated the participants to become better leaders was having the desire to make fundamental differences and positive changes at work for their team and the public. Many participants claimed that their desire to make positive changes for the common good is intensified when they see their team succeed. One participant said:

“I find that if the team is successful, it’s successful on you too. As a leader you can facilitate a team’s success and that’s the biggest motivator” (A.14).

As this comment demonstrates, many participants believed that seeing a team become successful – motivated to come to work, supports each other through mutual trust and support, holds shared goals and understandings, passionate about making positive changes for the public – was one of the biggest motivators for them to develop their leadership further. Another participant stated:

“I use the language of advocate for myself. I want to open the door for many people who have trouble getting into government or accessing government services. If I see our members succeed and see them become leaders, that’s my reward” (A.15).

This comment also represents what other participants mentioned: their motivation to develop as a leader came from having the desire to make positive changes for others, which was magnified when they saw delivered results. These results included seeing development in their colleagues or employees, creating policies or other changes that positively impact the public, and building a sense of reliable community/society in their workplace and for the people. These comments from the participants demonstrate that they are primarily driven by intrinsic motivation, which refers to motivation gained through inherent satisfaction and enjoyment derived from genuine interests, personal fulfillment, and a sense of accomplishment (Deci and Ryan, 1985).

Several participants even argued that monetary or financial compensation was not a significant motivator compared to intrinsic motivation they feel from creating positive changes for others. One participant stated:

“I don’t think financial motivation is as efficient as intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation comes from knowing you’re doing something good for your team, organization, public, and development. It’s not just all about money.” (A.3).

Similarly, another participant noted:

“The aspects of recognition like monetary compensation – I don’t think that motivates me to be a better leader. When I used to be a consultant and received bonuses, it meant nothing to me other than ‘Oh, I got extra money.’ ... When someone I work with, or the department I work with, tells me or my team that we made these kinds of changes, delivered results, that has real value. That validates what I’m trying to do as a public servant.” (A.4).

Many other participants supported those financial compensations – such as bonuses, higher wages, etc. – do not motivate them to further their leadership development. These comments show that

extrinsic motivation, which refers to motivation driven by external factors such as tangible rewards, external rewards, or social approval (Deci and Ryan, 2001), does not impact the participants' leadership development as much as intrinsic motivation.

In summary, the participants' desire to affect real and constructive changes at both the team and public levels was a significant motivational factor. Observing and facilitating team success was a substantial incentive to develop as a leader and drive positive transformations for the community as a public servant. Participants highlighted that the internal satisfaction and validation they gained from seeing real and positive outcomes for their team and community surpassed the motivation they got from financial rewards.

Having regular discussions with peers/supervisors

Frequent and regular discussions with peers and supervisors were the last factor that became an important motivator to develop as a leader. "Discussions" refer to opportunities to share and discuss different leadership experiences and learnings with their peers, supervisors, or other cohorts of leaders, which also relates to the first motivating factor – accountability towards the team. Participants stated that regular discussions about leadership competencies, experiences, and learnings with their peers or cohorts made them feel more accountable for developing certain leadership competencies or taking further training. For example, one participant stated:

"Sometimes, I go back to real life, and I have a giant backpack of things I need to do in my job, so I forget about what I learned and don't even think about it. So, it's also an accountability issue – if I have a cohort or a group or follow-up discussions with which I can share what I learned, that motivates me to think about what I learned and practice it" (B.1).

Thus, after training about certain leadership competencies, when they are required to meet with their cohort or peers later to follow up with how their development is going and share their experiences using those learned competencies, they feel more committed and motivated to practice the learned competencies. These situations could lead them to seek more work opportunities to use the learned competencies.

Also, through listening to their peers' stories, they may indirectly learn from those experiences and adapt the learnings to their situations. As one participant noted, "even if it's not my own experience, if I can hear it from different people in follow-up discussions, that will motivate me to exercise my leadership development muscles" (A.2). Learning from others through discussions could accelerate their leadership development process and at the same time motivate them to become a better leader.

These participant comments show that frequent and meaningful discussions with peers and supervisors were pivotal motivators for their leadership development. These interactions provided opportunities to share experiences and insights related to work and leadership competencies, reinforcing accountability within these groups and encouraging participants to apply acquired skills. Discussions with peers and supervisors also provided indirect learning through shared experiences, accelerating their leadership growth.

Leader Identity – Second-Order Learning Outcomes

The final leadership learning outcome explored was the participants' identity as a leader. The leader identity is part of the second-order learning outcomes (Wallace et al., 2021), along with the level of leader self-concept. Leader identity refers to an individual's self-perception as a leader. The story of leader self-concept indicates different facets of leader identity, such as whether it is tied to an individual's self-concept, relational interactions with followers, viewing one's leader identity through the relationship with followers, or a collective sense within the community.

The study asked the participants whether they see themselves as leaders, the reasons behind their self-perception, and the factors impacting their identity after training. The responses yielded significant insights. The data showed that 100 percent of the participants see themselves as leaders, albeit with different rationales. Though 100 percent of the participants declared their identity as a leader, variations emerged in the level of leader self-concept, mainly falling into individual and relational levels.

Occupying a leadership position – individual level

Several participants stated that their occupancy of specific organizational leadership roles impacted their leader identities. They may oversee work projects and tasks or be responsible for organization budgets, structures, and other management issues. They may be in management or executive leadership positions, which gives them an identity as a formal leader. For example, one participant commented:

“I see myself as a leader in my team and with those I directly supervise. I lead different aspects – like different portfolios – and I like to lead and demonstrate my new points and projects. But there are also parts that I'm not the leader. For example, I report to the Assistant Deputy Minister, who might direct certain projects” (A.16).

This comment shows the leader identity developed through occupying a particular leadership role or leading work tasks and projects. Another participant also stated: “I do view myself as a leader. Having years of experience in this field in this role gives me an identity as one” (A.13).

This adds to the idea that their leader identity is impacted by occupying a leadership position and having experience in formal leadership roles. This type of leader identity is heavily influenced by occupying the formal position as a leader, which corresponds to the individual level of leader self-concept.

Exhibiting personal attributes as a leader – individual level

Some participants' leader identities were impacted by the type of personal attributes they believed to possess. These attributes included: **the ability to empathize, the ability to empower others, the ability to engage and connect with others, the ability to commit, persevere, and be resilient in changes, the ability and desire to help communities.** For example, one participant said:

“I think of myself as a leader. I try to consider what it's like for somebody to come into a particular situation. Sometimes, situations aren't ideal, and you're left alone to figure it out. I

don't want others to feel this way, so I try to empathize and make them understand what tools they need" (A.10).

Another participant stated:

"Empathy is a big factor. I empathize with my colleagues, employees, bosses – I try to think about how my actions make them feel? If I behave in a certain way, how does it affect other people in my team? I think as a leader, being able to empathize with those around you is a big factor" (C.1).

Both quotes represent the **ability to empathize**, which many viewed as important factors that impact their leader identity.

The **ability to empower others** was another major personal attribute of a leader that was mentioned by the participants. For example, one participant said, "A leader should work twice as hard but take half a credit, put [others] well-being before mine ... First empower mission, then people, then yourself" (B.1). Another participant also commented that she sees herself as a leader, because she "helps, supports, and empowers others" (A. 12).

Some participants noted that their **ability to engage and connect with others** was the reason they viewed themselves as leaders. One participant stated: "I have the ability to communicate and see other people's perspectives – see myself in someone else's shoes" (C.1). Another participant stated a similar comment: "I see myself as a leader because I am open to communications, conversations, and able to have good relationships with my peers ... [employees] want to work harder because they enjoy working with me" (B.2). These comments demonstrate their leader identity was impacted by their ability to engage and connect with their colleagues and employees.

The **ability to commit, persevere, and be resilient in changes** was another personal attribute impacting leader identity mentioned by the participants. One participant stated:

"I was part of the x, y,z program years ago. It was the first roll; we were not a solid team, and the people leading the program left. So, I stepped in and became the person conducting the program over six months to a year. I became central to the program, staff, and supervisors. This wasn't what I planned to do initially, but I ended up in a leadership position because I committed to things and was resilient in challenging times" (A.3).

Another participant also indicated that he views himself as a leader because of his ability to "persevere and endure" (A.11). He further explained that it is like being a "fighter who has great cardio," and the ability to have a "level of perseverance to get a project to delivery" (A.11).

Some other participants mentioned that they see themselves as a leader because of their **ability and desire to help communities**. For example, one participant said, "confident in making big decisions and carrying out work as a public servant, and because of their desire to make things better both for the work they do and for the community" (A.9). Another participant stated a similar comment, suggesting that her identity as a leader is impacted by "wanting to do good for the community" (B.2). They noted that their ability to observe, recognize, and care for the needs of people helped to develop their identity as a leader.

As shown through the comments above, many participants suggested that at the individual level, primary factors improving their identities as leaders were their personal attributes, such as their ability to empower others, ability and desire to help communities, and more. For example, one participant stated that her ability to empathize or communicate with her colleagues help her lead more effectively at her workplace, which ultimately allows her to develop her identity as a leader. This phenomenon demonstrates Wallace et al's individual level of leader self-concept (2021), which involves viewing oneself as having a particular role or ability that distinguishes one from followers and others. Comments from the participants show that some of the primary factors that encourage them develop their identities as leaders are their personal attributes and the ways those attributes help them to become better leaders.

Having positive relationships with people – relational level

Many participants answered that their relationships and interactions with people around them, including their peers and supervisors, impacted their leader identities, which indicates the relational level of leader self-concept. When individuals possess the relational level of leader identity, they understand their identity through their relationships with others, supported by their influence and validation of their leadership through others. For example, participants answered that attempting to build strong relationships with the people around them overall makes them feel like a leader. They stated that having relationships with their team helps to share the common goal of improving the community and can provide mutual support that helps to improve their leader identity. One participant stated:

“I think this answer [whether I see myself as a leader or not] comes from the people who monitor and follow you. There have been times when I worked with amazing teams, and they had a level of support and trust where I felt like I was a leader and serving them” (B.1).

Participants also explained that they view themselves as leaders not because of their position or authority but because of their positive impact on those around them. One participant stated:

“It doesn't matter what position you're in. You can be a leader. For me, leadership is about working with people – motivating, coaching, and developing them. You help, support, and encourage people so much that they are prepared and ready to leave. But at the same time, you're such a good leader that they don't want to go” (A.12).

Another participant explained:

“Having people approach me and say can you be my mentor? “I like your leadership style”, etc. That gave me an identity as a leader. So, I do view myself as a leader because others have confirmed me. It's kind of the difference between being a leader and a supervisor. By virtue of my position, I'm a supervisor and have authority, but that's different from people seeing me as a leader” (A.8).

These comments represent the dominant view that participants had regarding their leader identity, which is that they view themselves as leaders not necessarily because of the formal authority they hold but because the people around them perceive them as leaders, validate their influence as leaders, and hold them accountable for their actions. This type of leader identity, shaped by

interactions and relationships with others, underscores the relational level of the leader's self-concept.

Question #2: What individual/intrapersonal, team, and organizational attributes affect this “white-space”?

The interviews investigated what may be some individual/intrapersonal, team, and organizational attributes affecting an individual’s leadership development process post-training. The data gathered from the interviews revealed several dominant individual, team, and organizational factors that participants deemed influential to their leadership development.

Individual / Intrapersonal level

The first category was individual/intrapersonal attributes that may have positively or negatively impacted leadership development post-training. **Tables 6 and 7** below demonstrate the individual attributes that positively or negatively affected individuals’ leadership development in the “white-space” and corresponding exemplary quotes for each attribute.

Table 6

Positive Individual/Intrapersonal Attributes on Leadership Development

Attribute	Exemplary Quote 1	Exemplary Quote 2	Exemplary Quote 3
<i>Being self-aware</i>	It’s essential to be self-aware that I’m an introvert and don’t have to change my personality for who I am, but I certainly need to work on exuding confidence and saying what I think. All of this has been my leadership growth. (A.12)	When I take these leadership courses, I pick up nuggets of self-reflection. When I was younger in the government, I didn’t like the silent pauses. I tried to fill them. Over the years, I learned there’s value in silence. I try to include introverts in the conversation and be more inclusive. (A.14)	Being able to look back at yourself and your behaviours as a leader and employee, and thinking about what you did wrong and what you did well – how your actions may have impacted those around you. If you can’t self-reflect, you can’t develop. If you take a particular leadership training or course, you can’t reflect on your strengths/weaknesses and how you could use the knowledge you learned, then you can never actually apply the skills learned. (C.1)
<i>Having empathy</i>	I try to think about how my actions make my team members and colleagues feel. If I behave in a certain way, how does that behaviour affect other people in my team? I think as a leader, being able to empathize with those	Being an excellent listener is critical. I try to listen to and pay attention to what my colleagues say, not just what I think and what I have to say and understand their point of view. (A.1)	I have always been a good listener. That has been something. I wanted to understand others and their perspectives as a leader. (A.8)

	around you is a significant factor. (C.1)		
<i>Being open-minded</i>	leadership is not just about delivering deliverables or making people learn the technical side of their work ... it's about learning and recognizing different and novel ways that individuals work – including their leadership preferences, work style, life situations, etc. – and helping them achieve their potential. (A.5)	I think being open-minded and having experience – having traveled and been around different cultures. (A.10)	I would say because of what I do outside of work, I'm always open to new tools and ideas. (A.3)
<i>Having the ability to learn from others</i>	I think about shining examples of leaders or team members who have impacted me because they could pull together people or ideas to generate excellent outcomes. That you want to emulate, so I try to think about ways to use those examples in my workplace and be a better leader. (A.13)	My colleagues and team members are comfortable leveling with those reporting to me. Recognize that they are part of the branch longer than I have. So, being respectful of that while fulfilling the leadership role. (A.9)	Another thing about enhancing leadership is knowing your organization's formal and informal leaders. Who do people turn to to talk about something happening in the workplace? Those are the people who bring in leadership traits but not even be in a formal leadership position. I reach out to them and ask for their thoughts and advice. (B.1)
<i>Having a growth mindset</i>	I try to reach for excellence as best I can ... look for levers around improving things, look at the whole system and beyond the system ..., and see how we can optimize performance and potentially impact things that would make a significant difference for all. (A.2)	The typical “get her done” is a genuine thing. Want to deliver real things and actual services quickly. So, the mentality of we need to cut to the chase, delivery is our strategy. (A.11)	The mentality to pursue good leadership, though it may not necessarily mean advancement in positions” (B.1)

Positive factors

In-depth discussions with the participants showed five critical attributes that positively

impacted their leadership development post-training. Listed in order of frequency mentioned by the participants, these attributes were **being self-aware, having empathy, being open-minded, having the ability to learn from others, and having a growth mindset.**

Being self-aware was the first and most mentioned attributes that positively impacted leadership development. One example of how self-awareness impacted the leadership development process was recognizing one's limitations, personality traits, work styles, etc., and finding ways to work on them. One participant noted:

“It’s essential to be self-aware that I’m an introvert and don’t have to change my personality for who I am, but I certainly need to work on exuding confidence and saying what I think. All of this has been my leadership growth” (A.12).

This participant’s quote showed that a big part of self-awareness is recognizing their trait – such as being an introvert or an extrovert – and learning to accept and improve on those traits to serve them better. Similarly, another participant stated:

“When I take these leadership courses, I pick up nuggets of self-reflection. When I was younger in the government, I didn’t like the silent pauses. I tried to fill them. Over the years, I learned there’s value in silence. I try to include introverts in the conversation and be more inclusive” (A.14).

As shown in the statement, they recognized their traits and limitations by being self-aware and considering what skills they could build depending on their characteristics. Some other aspects of self-awareness were being conscious of what one picks up, learning from others, and evaluating them. Participants explained that self-awareness includes wanting to pick up skills from others or through training and then being able to assess the skills you picked up and taking ownership of them. They stated that all these components which classify as self-awareness to them strengthened their leadership development process. The following quote from a participant summarized this process as:

“Being able to look back at yourself and your behaviours as a leader and employee, and thinking about what you did wrong and what you did well – how your actions may have impacted those around you. If you can’t self-reflect, you can’t develop. Let’s say even if you took a particular leadership training or course, if you can’t reflect on your strengths/weaknesses and how you could use the knowledge you learned; then you can never actually apply the skills learned.”

In other words, by being aware of one’s traits, limitations, and strengths, one could seek out learning opportunities to further one’s leadership development.

Participants also noted that being self-aware is also critical when facing challenging situations. One participant implied that when one is self-aware, one can use challenges at work as opportunities to re-evaluate and reflect on their decisions and the outcomes and look for ways to improve leadership.

Participants also mentioned that self-awareness means realizing they do not need to be in

leadership positions to be “leaders.” One participant described it as an idea of “authority versus influence” (A.6). He suggested that he try to be aware of his influences on other people – positive or negative – and focus on those. In other words, self-awareness is being mindful that they can be a leader even if they are not currently in leadership positions through positive influence on others and being aware of their potential and limitations.

In summary, participants stated that being self-aware means constantly evaluating their choices and how they impact others. They highlighted this as one of a leader's most important qualities, whether acting as managers or directors in their organizations, coaching sports teams, or being good parents and family members in their personal lives. Participants suggested that reflecting on their limitations and mistakes and evaluating how those qualities may impact others is essential for their leadership development.

The second most mentioned individual attribute that positively impacted leadership development was **having empathy**. One participant stated:

“I try to think about how my actions make my team members and colleagues feel. If I behave in a certain way, how does that behaviour affect other people in my team? I think as a leader, being able to empathize with those around you is a significant factor.” (C.1)

Other participants supported the importance of empathizing with others and being a leader. They stated that trying to understand their team members’ situations, goals, and conflicts fosters positive interactions among the team and makes people feel satisfied and more engaged with their workplace. Another participant answered:

“Being an excellent listener is critical. I try to listen to and pay attention to what my colleagues have to say, not just what I think and what I have to say and understand their point of view” (A.1).

They claimed that having empathy – being able to listen to others’ opinions and understand and share the perceptions of others – created a collegial work environment based on mutual respect, which ultimately developed their ability and identity as a leader.

Being open-minded was the third individual attribute that had a significant positive impact on leadership development. Participants indicated that being open-minded meant being open to feedback and “willing to be criticized.” They indicated it meant being open to new ideas, people, and environmental changes. For example, one participant commented that over the years working in a leadership position, she had to learn that:

“...leadership is not just about delivering deliverables or making people learn the technical side of their work ... it’s about learning and recognizing different and novel ways that individuals work – including their leadership preferences, work style, life situations, etc. – and helping them achieve their potential.” (A.5)

She explained that accepting various ideas and work styles that people bring to the workplace was essential for developing as a leader. Participants also mentioned that being open-minded was critical in the “post-training” stage because without opening their minds to learn new concepts that may

even seem foreign and “unappealing,” they may never have been able to move forward as a leader.

Closely related to being open-minded was **having the ability to learn from others**. Participants indicated they also learned from others when they opened their minds to new ideas and tools. They explained that learning from their peers and supervisors and adapting those learnings to their style significantly helped them develop as a leader. For example, one participant stated:

“I think about shining examples of leaders or team members who have impacted me because they could pull together people or ideas to generate excellent outcomes. That you want to emulate, so I try to think about ways to use those examples in my workplace and be a better leader.” (A.13)

Another participant noted, “One of the most important lessons I have learned is ‘you have two ears and one mouth.’ Listen more before you decide to speak” (A.1). She further explained that active listening is the best way to learn from others, since often, people are inclined to speak their opinions before understanding what others might have to say, which can prevent a valuable opportunity to learn from others.

Many other participants also claimed that they regularly tried to model other leaders or colleagues who resonated with them and formulated what they observed from those people into their mental map. Participants also stated that when they tried to share experiences and have discussions with peers about the materials they learned after the training, their ability to learn from others’ experiences was essential in accelerating their leadership development. According to the participants, the importance of being able to learn from others is also vital in the context of formal leadership training. If an individual is unwilling to learn from others or does not engage in an activity with an open mind, they will not be able to take away the full benefits of the training.

Lastly, the fifth main positive individual attribute identified by participants was **having a growth mindset**. Different participants defined a growth mindset in several ways, but the consensus was that it refers to having the attitude and desire to improve and be better than they are now, both in terms of work goals and as leaders. For example, one participant defined the “growth mindset” as follows:

“I try to reach for excellence as best I can ... look for levers around how I can improve things, look at the whole system, and then beyond the system ... I try to see how we can optimize performance and potentially impact things that would make a significant difference for all.” (A.2)

For another participant, having a growth mindset was having the “mentality to cut to the chase and deliver” (A.11). Similarly, another participant described having a growth mindset as being driven and wanting to be a high achiever by having a high standard of your work (A.13). Other participant explained the mindset as “the mentality to pursue good leadership, though it may not necessarily mean advancement in positions” (B.1) In short, although the exact definition of what constitutes as the “growth-mindset” differed slightly, the participants agreed that it was essential for one’s leadership development to always strive for growth and seek for opportunities and ways to improve.

Table 7

Negative Individual/Intrapersonal Attributes on Leadership Development

Attribute	Exemplary Quote 1	Exemplary Quote 2	Exemplary Quote 3
<i>Lacking self-awareness</i>	A lack of self-reflection and awareness will prevent you from learning from formal leadership training or courses because you won't know what aspects of yourself need improvement. For example, let's say you're a micro-manager. If you can never reflect on being a micro-manager, which leads to your employees' frustration, you can never work towards not being a micro-manager. (C.1)	I think what could hinder leadership development is the fear of having to take a hard look at yourself. (A.5)	But for most people, including myself, knowing things and how to implement what you learned is very hard and time-consuming. Many don't dedicate enough time to self-reflect and invest in our development. (A.5)
<i>Being egocentric/ Lacking empathy</i>	Lack of awareness, as in, do you understand people around you, their goals, and aspirations? Lacking this awareness makes you an egocentric person. (A.5)	A good phrase I learned was, 'People join an organization, but they leave a leader.' You might join a ministry that interests you, but if you lack leadership in care and understanding and feel undervalued, you will leave for another opportunity. (B.2)	Egocentric in terms of protecting or feeding into your ego. (A.13)
<i>Excessive focus on organizational outcomes as opposed to the actual development of leadership</i>	don't just say the talk but do the work." (A.11)	However, leadership is a little bit not focused on the right thing in this area ... Part of the reason is that they aren't spending time leading and delivering – but spending much time discussing." (A.11)	We are good at offering events and programs and 360 feedback – tools – but not great at assessing outcomes. Over time, did you show you increased your competency? We aren't good at that. (A.15)
<i>Having anxiety/not being able to manage stress effectively</i>	I think if I'm stressed out or feel overwhelmed – can't control my anxiety or stress – that affects people around me. Others can feel the energy and panic. (A.1)	If I can't control my anxiety or emotions, that will affect those around me and those I work with. That will negatively impact my development as a leader. (A.1)	I complain about my lack of energy (of myself), but it's true. Towards the end of the week, I'm usually in pretty bad shape because my job is about engagement, and I'm not good at it. (A.4)

<i>Being an introvert or having a tendency to avoid conflict</i>	The quieter and shyer person to get into leadership roles is difficult. (A.12)	I tend to be more towards the introverted side of leadership. More reserved. That is something that I became aware of, and I am working on building my confidence in my leadership role. (A.9)	I naturally am not a high-energy person ... I often find engaging and socializing with others very draining. (A.4)
<i>Being indecisive</i>	I try to be less tolerant because sometimes, when we need to get to a place where necessary, I have to make decisions and be less tolerant (be firmer) ... being less tolerant and being more firm are two main pieces I want to work on. (A.6)		
<i>Age</i>	I think age played a sure factor ... at one point, my age, with maturity and career development, tipped the scale. I did feel that all of a sudden, I was being taken seriously. (A.16)		

Negative factors

Individual attributes negatively impacting the leadership development process were more varied and spread out among the participants. Three primary attributes that stood out the most in terms of frequency mentioned by the participants were **lacking self-awareness, being egocentric, lacking empathy, and excessive focus on organizational outcomes as opposed to the actual development of leadership**. Other attributes mentioned included **having anxiety or not being able to manage stress effectively, being an introvert or having a tendency to avoid conflict, being indecisive and age**.

Lacking self-awareness was the main negative individual attribute that was mentioned most frequently by the participants, correlating with the fact that being self-aware was one of the most dominant individual factors brought up by the participants. Participants described a lack of self-awareness as “being afraid of taking a hard look at yourself” (A.5). One participant stated:

“A lack of self-reflection and awareness will prevent you from learning from formal leadership training or courses because you won’t know what aspects of yourself need improvement. For example, let’s say you’re a micro-manager. If you can never reflect on being a micro-manager, which leads to your employees' frustration, you can never work towards not being a micro-manager.” (C.1)

In other words, if an individual does not dedicate enough time to reflect and be conscious of one’s limitations, competencies, and other areas one needs to improve on, one could not adequately develop as a leader regardless of how many leadership training or courses one takes.

The following frequently mentioned negative individual attribute for leadership development was **being egocentric**. Participants noted that being egocentric – being overly focused on their situations, **lacking empathy**, or unaware of others’ feelings and circumstances – has a critical negative impact on an individual’s leadership development and the people around the individual. One participant commented, “lack of awareness as in do you understand people around you, their goals and aspirations? Lacking this awareness makes you an egocentric person” (A.5). Another participant explained:

“A good phrase I learned was, ‘People join an organization, but they leave a leader.’ You might join a ministry that interests you, but if you lack leadership in care and understanding and feel undervalued, you will leave for another opportunity.” (B.2)

As these participants commented, being egocentric and not being aware of team members’ goals and circumstances as a leader could lead to a dysfunctional work environment and loss of team members, ultimately hurting the leadership development of everyone in the workplace, including the leaders themselves.

The third main individual attribute that negatively impacted leadership development was **excessive focus on organizational outcomes as opposed to the actual development of an individual’s leadership**. Participants stated that, in the public sector, many managers in leadership positions focus too much on organizational outcomes, such as the principles, strategic goals, and organizational visions, but not enough on the leadership process that may help individuals to further develop their leadership to be helpful towards achieving those organizational outcomes. In other words, they suggested that many public sector leaders focus on organizational outcomes but not enough on discussing the developmental portion of leadership. For example, they explained that public sector leaders often publish strategic visions and goals they would like to achieve each year or quarter, but they do not discuss or provide feedback on how to meet them. Participants further explained this phenomenon as not being developmentally focused, meaning managers focus less on leadership process and the ways in which to achieve the desired results, as well as how their members might develop through those processes. Managers do not always provide regular feedback, and evaluate team members’ performance, and often resort to simply announcing or revisiting visions and goals. Participants believed developing as a leader meant finding the “right combination between strategic thinking and actual results” (A.11). Participants stated that having principles and setting strategic goals are important, but if an individual does not focus on actual development of performance and seeing the concrete result whether as a leader or as part of a team, that will hinder leadership development.

Several other individual attributes – though not as frequently mentioned – that negatively impacted leadership development included **having anxiety or not being able to manage stress effectively, being indecisive and not being able to make firm decisions, tending to avoid conflict** (“shying” away from difficult conversations) and **age** (not being perceived as old or mature enough to be in a particular leadership position).

Group / Team / Interpersonal Level

The second category was group/team/interpersonal attributes that may have positively or negatively impacted leadership development post-training. **Tables 8 and 9** below demonstrate the team attributes that positively or negatively affected individuals’ leadership development in the “white-space” and corresponding exemplary quotes for each attribute.

Table 8

Positive Group/Team/Interpersonal Attributes on Leadership Development

Attribute	Exemplary Quote 1	Exemplary Quote 2	Exemplary Quote 3
<i>Supervisory support</i>	latitude to develop something but have regular check-ins with leaders who will guide the process but allow you to do your work (A.13).	I once applied for a position and didn’t get the job. Like all of us, there was a bit of grieving. My supervisor said, ‘I will give you feedback on how you did with the interview and everything else, and I am happy to work with you on the job moving ahead to develop those competencies that didn’t show up for us.’ The supervisor took the time to create the assignment for my work and provided feedback at regular intervals (A.15).	Instead of scratching everything in red line and sending it back, one of my supervisors said, ‘Hey, can we set up some time and talk through it.’ When someone sends all this feedback without communication, it feels as though they are not appreciating and respecting that the project probably went through 10 hands already.... It’s about the approach you take as a leader. Everyone is trying to work hard – not valuing those work weeks with many hands involved is not good. Just take a moment when you send this email or document back – how will it impact the morale of the people? (A.12)
<i>Peer support</i>	Having clear communication – that’s one of the most critical factors. I don’t mean constant	I always go back to shared values, which is very important. For example, if I highly value relationships within the team, then it	Having people who can tell me what my struggles are real and what might be the things I am imagining or creating in my head (A.4).

contact but more like checking in with people. What can I do to make my team comfortable asking me for help? Don't just throw resources at them and expect them to do the work without communication. (A.10)

is critical that my teammates also appreciate that. We must understand that we develop and grow individually and collectively. (A.2)

Successful collaboration on team ideas and projects

What is important is this feeling of engagement in team projects in some way. I was in a team that supervised operational activities, so we had insights into what was happening around the organization. One time, we had a chance to contribute ideas on how things should operate and were engaged in carrying out these ideas. (A.6)

There are situations where we are positively trying to impact our partners ... they attend meetings, and some teams are getting quite excited ... But at the end of the day, the idea stops with the leader. So, it's detrimental to their efforts. You can't just say it. You have to let them demonstrate and walk the walk. (A.11)

No matter how good you are, you can't complete a task alone. I become better if I work with really good people. You challenge yourself to step up when you see another person doing better. (A.4)

The clarity in roles and responsibilities

Well, a clear direction from leadership. I worked for a CEO in a large organization; she had fundamental principles and a clear path for the staff. (B.3)

When I arrived on the team, there wasn't much understanding regarding the team's intent, how different roles interacted, and how one supported the other. So, making sure there was clarity in what was brought to us, what was expected of us, and that we were well consulted regarding team policy, objectives, and

Openly discuss clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations for team members and leaders (A.12).

projects –creating
clarity within the team
was tremendous. (A.6)

Positive factors

Based on the interviews with the participants, the study identified several team attributes as the main factors that positively influenced their development as a leader post-training. In order of frequency mentioned, these attributes included **supervisory support and peer support, successful collaboration on team projects and ideas, and clarity in roles and responsibilities within the team.**

Most participants identified **supervisory and peer support** as the most crucial team factors for their leadership development post-training. There were several ways they described how supervisors support their leadership development. One way was through *providing autonomy for their work*. They stated that when supervisors gave them the freedom to do their jobs in their own style, it allowed them to produce better results for their work and thus experience more personal development. They explained that some of the best situations are where they have the “latitude to develop something but have regular check-ins with leaders who will guide the process but allow you to do your work” (A.13). To develop as a leader, they claimed that having independence and learning how to take ownership of their work is critical. As per this participant’s comment, “Let me own it whether I fail or succeed” (A.3). Letting individuals have the autonomy of their work was identified as the core supervisory support that helped develop their leadership.

Another type of essential supervisory support is *constructive, regular, and respectful feedback*. For example, one participant explained:

“I once applied for a position and didn’t get the job. Like all of us, there was a bit of grieving. My supervisor said, ‘I will give you feedback on how you did with the interview and everything else, and I am happy to work with you on the job moving ahead to develop those competencies that didn’t show up for us.’ The supervisor took the time to create the assignment for my work and provided feedback at regular intervals” (A.15).

This comment showed that not only was their supervisor willing to provide constructive feedback on what the individual did well and what may need more improvement, but the supervisor also took the time to create relevant job assignments regularly to help the individual develop leadership competencies. This type of feedback is constructive, practical, and action-based, allowing an individual to establish competencies practically. Another example is this participant’s experience below with how her supervisor provided feedback to the team. She stated:

“A long time ago, one of my supervisors – if I was totally off the mark – instead of just scratching everything in red line and sending it back, said, ‘Hey, can we set up some time and talk it through.’ When someone sends all this feedback without communication, it feels like they are not appreciating and respecting that the project probably went through 10 hands already. Different people reviewed and took weeks of work to produce that work, and someone overhauled it with all these questions and edits and then sent it back with no proper

feedback – that’s not good. It’s about the approach you take as a leader. Everyone is trying to work hard – not valuing those work weeks with many hands involved is not good. Just take a moment when you send this email or document back – how will it impact the morale of the people?” (A.12)

Her experience showed the importance of the style and tone of a supervisor's feedback. She further explained that in terms of leadership development, it is essential to feel supported and respected by your supervisor or someone you admire as a leader. When a person in a leadership position provides feedback on an individual’s work in a way that shows no respect or acknowledgment of the effort and time that went into it, it can negatively impact morale and the will to work on development. Hence, the tone of feedback provided by a supervisor – feedback provided respectfully and engagingly – is an integral part of supervisory support.

Like supervisory support, peer support was considered crucial in leadership development. Participants answered that having *peers who can communicate effectively and provide constructive feedback* positively impacted their leadership development. One example of effective communication is having clear communication. One participant commented:

“Having clear communication – that’s one of the most critical factors. I don’t mean constant contact but more like checking in with people. What can I do to make my team comfortable asking me for help? Don’t just throw resources at them and expect them to do the work without communication.” (A.10)

Some other examples of effective communication provided by the participants included having means of open communication, either in-person or virtually (and through either conversation or written communication), reaching others quickly to discuss specific issues, and respecting each other’s work style.

Constructive feedback from peers was also considered a significant factor in leadership development. One participant stated, “frank and constructive feedback that is action-based – which means I can practically and realistically do something about it” (A.4). Another participant mentioned, “Having people who can tell me what my struggles are real and what might be the things that I am just imagining or creating in my head” (A.4) and articulated that this was very helpful in realizing what kind of things he needed to focus on for work productivity and improvement of leadership competencies. Participants stated that having the correct type of peer support created mutual trust and respect within the team, creating a feeling of belonging in the same community. This sense of strong community and support led to feeling accountable towards their team and motivated them to become better leaders and teammates. They asserted that peer support was particularly vital in developing leader identity; the type of leader they want to be for their team to respond to the support and trust from their peers.

Another critical factor of peer support that positively impacted leadership development was *shared values and understanding*. For example, when asked what team attribute significantly impacted their leadership development process, one participant stated:

“I always go back to shared values, which is very important. For example, if I highly value relationships within the team, then it is critical that my teammates also appreciate that. We

must understand that we develop and grow individually and collectively” (A.2).

Another participant noted, “Another key factor is having that shared vision. If they don’t have that shared vision, it’s tough to pull the team together to work towards the common goal” (A.14). Many other participants supported this notion of the importance of having shared values within the team. Overall, the participants showed that one of the vital team attributes which positively impacted them to work on themselves to become better public servants, better teammates, and ultimately better leaders was the shared understanding of what they value, what they need to do, and what they are trying to do as a team.

Collaboration on team ideas and projects was another essential team attribute that positively impacted leadership development. Many participants noted that their leadership development – whether it was an increase in motivation, improvement in leadership competencies, or outcome of leader identity – occurred when they were, as a team, allowed to engage and participate in suggested ideas and projects actively. For example, one participant explained:

“What is important is this feeling of engagement in team projects in some way. I was in a team that supervised operational activities, so we had insights into what was happening around the organization. Once, we had a chance to contribute ideas on how things should operate and were engaged and involved in carrying out these ideas” (A.6).

According to the participants, when they were engaged and actively involved in team projects, it created a positive and strong team environment. It improved the leadership abilities of the people involved. They felt encouraged and motivated that they were part of a project as a team, which increased their feeling of accountability to the team and influenced them to work harder on improving various competencies.

Finally, participants identified **clarity in roles and responsibilities** as an important team attribute positively impacting leadership development. One participant indicated that it was important to have “a clear direction from leadership. I worked for a CEO in a large organization, she had key principles and clear direction for the staff.” (B.3) Another participant noted:

“When I arrived on the team, there wasn’t much understanding regarding the team's intent, how different roles interacted, and how one supported the other. So, making sure there was clarity in what was brought to us, what was expected of us, and that we were well consulted regarding team policy, objectives, and projects –creating clarity within the team was tremendous.” (A.6)

Their comments demonstrated that without the clarity of roles and responsibilities, they could not fully figure out what purpose they are serving in the team and the organization, how they are helping others, and how they are producing results. Hence, without the clarity of roles and responsibilities, they could or would not be able to develop their leadership or be successful at their jobs. As one participant commented, having a team that could “openly talk about clear roles and responsibilities within the team and the expectations for team members and leaders” (A.12) may create a robust work culture that has a significant impact on the success of the team as well as leadership development of individual members.

Table 9*Negative Group/Team/Interpersonal Attributes on Leadership Development*

Attribute	Exemplary Quote 1	Exemplary Quote 2	Exemplary Quote 3
<i>Uncollaborative team environment: lack of shared values, constructive feedback, trust, and transparency.</i>	Many strategic planning and planning of deliverables and priorities occur in public service. However, not much thought is given to how we may provide feedback to each other emotionally intelligently.” (B.1)	One of the things happening in the public sector is that we are so afraid of getting it wrong, so we sometimes are not giving the feedback that people may benefit from. (B.1)	The big thing is a lack of transparency, which leads to a lack of trust. If your leader or colleagues are not transparent about what goes on within the team – even with job opportunities, projects, etc. – then you lose the trust in your group. (C.1)
<i>“bad” leaders/supervisors: egocentric, micro-management,</i>	A bad supervisor for me is someone who does not recognize the variety of learning styles and does not invite people to bring their whole selves into the conversation. Someone who creates a mold and expects everyone to adjust to that mold. (A.15)	Micro-managing is probably the worst type of attribute for a supervisor. It is very demotivating when you remove people’s autonomy over work and life. It also shows that you, as their manager, do not trust your colleagues and team members, which leads to a hostile work environment. (C.1)	Public service tends to be more rigid and strict due to its nature of being under public scrutiny. Still, the kind of micro-managing that happens in public service is incredibly demotivating. Letting people do their own thing in a certain way, being okay with things not done precisely the way you want it and letting go of control to a certain degree – that’s incredibly important (A.3).
<i>Lack of social interactions</i>	The early pandemic was hard when everyone went home, and social interactions and discussions among the team members decreased significantly. It negatively impacted the work environment. (A.1)	When COVID-19 hit, it was more difficult because you do not have the same number of interactions that induce a collaborative environment ... Without interactions, leading your team or improving your leadership is very hard. (C.1)	I was in an organization where the team struggled and was in disparate locations – spread out through Vancouver Island – working different hours – some people working through the day, some through the night. Because of that, there was a tough time with communication. (A.6)

Negative factors

Participants identified several team attributes that negatively influenced the participants' leadership development. In order of frequency, these attributes included: **an uncollaborative team environment, “bad leaders/supervisors,” and a lack of social interactions.**

The first significant team attribute noted that negatively impacted leadership development

was an **uncollaborative team environment**, caused mainly by a *lack of shared values, a lack of constructive feedback from peers or supervisors, and a lack of trust and transparency within the team*. Participants noted a *lack of shared values and understanding* could result in an uncollaborative team environment and negatively impact leadership development. Participants answered that when they were in a team that did not share common values, it took away the sense of community and the will to work together to produce results, ultimately impacting their motivation to work or to develop as a leader.

Lack of constructive feedback from supervisors or peers was another factor that resulted in an uncollaborative team environment and hindered the leadership development process. For example, one participant stated, “I think in the public service, a lot of strategic planning and planning of deliverables and priorities occur. However, not much thought is given to how we may provide feedback to each other in an emotionally intelligent way” (B.1). He further explained that as much as planning team goals and deliverables is essential, it is also crucial that people are receiving constructive feedback regularly, particularly regarding leadership development. He stated that one of the most challenging aspects of leadership development was the lack of conversations between peers and supervisors regarding strengths, weaknesses, things that needed improvement, and how they could improve. The participant commented, “I think one of the things that is happening in the public sector is that we are so afraid of getting it wrong, so we sometimes are not giving the feedback that people may benefit from” (B.1).

Several other participants supported this comment suggesting that there appears to be lack of constructive feedback due to fear of unintentionally “offending” or “hurting” other’s feelings even though the feedback may turn out to be beneficial to the individual receiving it. Participants noted that this lack of constructive feedback negatively impacts individuals’ work results and productivity. It prevents them from furthering their leadership development post-training by not allowing them to learn and reflect on their strengths and weaknesses. As this participant stated, “In terms of leadership development, how we go about giving feedback to people is essential. Quite often, these conversations do not happen as much as they should,” lack of constructive feedback from peers and supervisors was indicated as a factor that results in a less than optimal team environment, which leads to a negative influence on people’s leadership development.

Lack of trust and transparency within the team was another factor identified for causing an uncollaborative team environment. A participant reflected on his experience with the statement:

“The big thing is a lack of transparency, which leads to a lack of trust. If your leader or your colleagues are not transparent about what goes on within the team – even like job opportunities, projects, etc. – then you lose the trust in your group” (C.1)

As this participant commented, lack of transparency within the team was the primary factor that bred mistrust within the group. For example, one participant described his experience where the news about a job opportunity was not made public to the whole team. He stated that only one or two team members were aware of the opportunity because they received insider news due to their close relationships with the hiring panels or the supervisors. Another participant also described similar experiences where they were unaware of projects, job opportunities, or social events that could lead to career advancements because they were “not close enough with whoever manages the hiring process within the team.” They claimed that when they learned about this type of favoritism and

lack of transparency, they lost all trust in their team, as well as their will to collaborate and make the team successful. Participants also explained that when their team members discussed their work or personal qualities “behind their backs”, it caused them to lose all trust in their team. They claimed that feedback and criticism are essential; but that this information should be given directly to the individual and not talked about without the individual present, since then it “feels more like gossip than feedback” (A.17). In short, a lack of transparency and trust within the team leads to an uncollaborative team environment, which may hinder individuals’ opportunity to improve their career, competencies, motivation, and eventually negatively impact their leadership development.

Having a “bad leader/supervisor” was indicated as the second central team attribute that negatively impacted their leadership development. Several factors were associated with what the participants viewed as the worst qualities of a leader. The first factor was being *egocentric and lacking care and understanding of their staff*. A participant stated:

“A bad supervisor for me is someone who does not recognize the variety of learning styles and does not invite people to bring their whole selves into the conversation. Someone who creates a mold and expects everyone to adjust to that mold” (A.15).

Participants explained that when they had a supervisor who did not accept the fact that everyone has unique situations and goals – that everyone works best in a variety of ways, learns in different ways, and has their individual problems and challenges to work through – it posed severe barriers to their development. Under such leadership, they could not fully express or work towards their career or leadership goals and spent most of their time trying to satisfy or fit the mold created by their supervisors.

Another participant commented, “Someone who has knocked you down, knocked the confidence out of you, deconstructive in their criticisms – this can set you on a path of demotivation” (A.13). She further explained that experiencing disempowerment from her past supervisor who continuously made her feel demotivated and doubt herself without offering real, constructive criticisms, made it very difficult for her to believe in her abilities to advance and become a leader. Another participant added that having an egocentric supervisor who did not understand his goals were detrimental because it made his focus to be on “pleasing the boss.” It prevented him from focusing on engaging in leadership development opportunities such as further training or taking on tasks out of their comfort zone. As such, many participants described experiencing a bad leader/supervisor who lacked empathy and understanding of others as one of the significant challenges they experienced in their leadership development.

Another attribute of a “bad leader/supervisor” indicated by the participants was *micro-management*. One participant stated:

“...micro-managing is probably the worst type of attribute for a supervisor. It is very demotivating when you remove people’s autonomy over work and life. It also shows that you, as their manager, do not trust your colleagues and team members, which leads to a hostile work environment” (C.1).

Similarly, the dominant number of participants expressed that micro-management caused significant problems for their leadership development. It made them feel devalued and demotivated and took away their freedom to think critically or freely for themselves. Another participant stated:

“Public service tends to be more rigid and strict due to its nature of being under public scrutiny. Still, the kind of micro-managing that happens in the public service is incredibly demotivating. Letting people do their own thing in a certain way, being okay with things not done precisely the way you want it and letting go of control to a certain degree – that’s incredibly important” (A.3).

Overall, participants suggested that micro-management could be more severe in the public sector because it tends to be more vulnerable to public scrutiny. Participants stated that, in the public sector, an organization’s work and actions are directly tied to taxpayers’ money and inevitably more subject to media and public scrutiny. Hence, this scrutiny and rigidity often trickles down to everything a public servant does, which sometimes feels overwhelming and demotivating. Participants offered that while they understand why certain levels of micro-management may happen in the public sector, it took away their confidence and motivation to improve themselves especially when they were constantly trying to achieve some form of autonomy over their work. Participants indicated that to further their leadership development, it was essential that they feel empowered and have ownership of their work.

Participants also indicated that some “bad leaders/supervisors” *do not follow through with their promises and do not remain accountable* to their teams. One participant stated:

“Of course, situations happen, and we do not expect every promise to follow through. That is not possible. However, when there is a continuous pattern of failed promises, that breeds mistrust and shows lack of accountability to the team” (A.3).

Participants further explained these promises do not have to be about delivering significant initiatives or projects, such as increasing the team budget. The promises they would expect from their team leaders would be smaller scale, such as keeping the team members updated on what to expect from the higher leadership, and/or making sure stages of team projects remain transparent. For example, one participant added that while a supervisor cannot reasonably conduct every team initiative promised, a pattern of a supervisor canceling the initiative at the last minute will create mistrust and dissatisfaction towards the work. When leaders or supervisor fail to follow through on commitments, participants suggested that they feel a lack of control and agency over their work, which also diminishes their motivation to develop their own leadership or work goals. In summary, participants described that when leaders or supervisors do not follow through on their promises and do not remain accountable to their teams, they were no longer willing to work hard, felt disempowered, and lost faith in leadership, ultimately reducing their motivation to develop as leaders and negatively impacting their leadership development.

Lastly, participants indicated that a **lack of social interactions** within the team negatively impacted their leadership development process. As one of the examples, they described the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, causing a lack of social interactions within the team, which negatively impacted their relationships with the team members and thus their own leadership development. One participant stated:

“...the early pandemic was hard when everyone went home, and social interactions and discussions among team members decreased significantly. It negatively impacted the work

environment” (A.1).

They described that a lack of social interactions not only made it harder to work effectively as a team due to making communications among the team harder, but also made it harder to pull the team together and create a sense of community as a leader. Another participant stated:

“When COVID-19 hit, it was more difficult because you do not have the same number of interactions that induce a collaborative environment. Those social interactions and daily discussions with your team members are essential because those are what helped me also become a better leader. We all develop mutual respect and trust towards each other through those interactions. Without interactions, leading your team or improving your leadership is very hard” (C.1).

This participant’s statement represented what many others suggested: that a lack of social interactions – which most recently were mainly caused by the pandemic – made communications within the team harder and in turn created difficulty in establishing trust and respect among the team. The participants in leadership roles suggested that this lack of interactions made it more difficult for them to lead their team effectively. Overall, the participants indicated that the lack of social interactions within the group functioned as a significant challenge in both performing their leadership duties and advancing their leadership development.

Organizational Level

The third category was organizational attributes that may have positively or negatively impacted leadership development post-training. **Tables 10 and 11** below demonstrate the organizational attributes that positively or negatively affected individuals’ leadership development in the “white-space” and corresponding exemplary quotes for each attribute.

Table 10

Positive Organizational Attributes on Leadership Development

Attribute	Exemplary Quote 1	Exemplary Quote 2	Exemplary Quote 3
<i>Given more career and job advancement opportunities</i>	I would say nowadays, more than ever, there is so much more opportunity. Just look at the job board – if you want to move up, this is the best time I’ve seen in years. (A.11)	There used to be no openness and positions outside my branch due to geographical limitations, etc. That shifted – that is where my leadership opportunity opened. (A.5)	All these opportunities were within the same role – they were meeting temporary responsibilities within the branch, such as leading the group engagement process. (A.6)

Given more opportunities for leadership development programs

The opportunity for secondary education – scholarships – partly paid for by the public service was essential. I would not have done my Royal Roads leadership program if I didn't have the scholarship (A.13).

I did my MPA at UVic through the Public Service scholarship. So, making that available was huge, making me feel like I was doing something valuable for the organization (A.8).

Education opportunities, scholarships that staff can apply for, and funds that go towards supporting a positive learning environment (B.2)

Being provided a mentor, a coach

Various organizations have mentorship programs. While I think some of them may have varied in success, overall, it is imperative to have someone above you give you the support you need as you move through leadership (A.14).

Coaching was helpful – having someone to lean on, especially when you aren't sure who to seek help with (C.1).

If someone is identified as a potential leader, having people willing to mentor and look out for those people is essential, like being an apprentice to the executive position (A.3).

Seeing more organizational commitment to leadership development

leadership material in newsletters or orientation materials ... communicates a clear message about an organizational emphasis on leadership

For me, having organizational clarity in terms of goals and priorities is critical... the organization needs to emphasize leadership and the importance of employees'

There is also an organizational support piece for leadership development. Having that support from the top down is very helpful (A.9).

	development ... having the presence of leadership development as a priority (A.2).	leadership development and allow them to prioritize and clarify the objectives. (A.6)	
<i>Receiving formal acknowledgments</i>	As an organization, we try to celebrate small and large wins through newsletters, which may have worked well to motivate individuals (A.1).	When my client or someone I work with, or the department I work with tells me ... that you guys did so amazing and made these kinds of changes, delivered results that have real value ... that validates what I'm trying to do as a public servant," (A.4)	Formal recognition in terms of kudos and acknowledgments in newsletters – I know organizations do this a lot, but I'm not sure those are that helpful. I'm unsure how much help it gives to the person who gets 'formal recognition.' I often think it feels more like an organization checking the boxes for the executives and the higher-ups, not necessarily focusing on the actual development of the individual receiving the acknowledgment (A.3).

Positive factors

The participants identified several organizational attributes that positively impacted their leadership development post-training. In order of frequency mentioned, these attributes were **given more job and career advancement opportunities, given more opportunities for leadership development programs, being provided a mentor or a coach, seeing more commitment to leadership development at an organizational level, and receiving formal acknowledgments.**

The most mentioned attributes were **given more job and career advancement opportunities.** The participants declared that one of the positive changes in the public sector at the organizational level was that more opportunities for jobs and career advancements became available. This trend was mainly due to the pandemic allowing remote work environments to be more prevalent, opening many job opportunities. One participant stated, "I would say nowadays, more than ever, there is so much more opportunity. Just look at the job board – if you want to move up, this is the best time I've seen in years" (A.11). Another participant also stated, "There used to be no openness and positions outside my branch due to geographical limitations, etc. That shifted – that is where my leadership opportunity opened" (A.5) Thus, participants suggested that individuals are now able to apply for jobs in anywhere in the province regardless of where the location. The

participant added, “I can work for even positions outside of Victoria. Now the public service is more flexible” (A.5). Being free from geographical limitations and the ability to move around various jobs within the province without having to move physically allowed many temporary and permanent leadership positions to become available. The increased opportunities for job and career advancements allowed participants to experience more diverse type of jobs in various regions, encouraging them to learn different types of skills, challenging them to experience unfamiliar duties and work positions, and enhance their knowledge and abilities, which, in turn, impacted their leadership development positively.

Participants also stated that *given more temporary and acting job opportunities* allowed them to advance to leadership roles and take on more responsibilities. For example, one participant commented, “All these opportunities were within the same role – they were just meeting temporary responsibilities within the branch, such as leading the group engagement process” (A.6). The participant further explained that these temporary roles were “leadership ability gaps” that he stepped in to fill temporarily, and “from the leadership perspective, those were the opportunities that helped [his] development.” Other participants declared similar statements. One participant stated that having acting opportunities, even for short-term coverage, is a substantial motivating factor. Another participant claimed that “opportunities for temporary assignments has always been beneficial for people to broaden their horizon” (A.13). As all these remarks demonstrated, taking on leadership roles and responsibilities led them to practice more leadership skills and seek ways to further their leadership development.

Similarly, another commonly mentioned positive organizational attribute was **given more opportunities for leadership development programs**. Participants stated that the public sector has focused more on leadership development in recent years, resulting in organizations offering more leadership training without cost. They also indicated that if they hope to take leadership programs outside of the organization – such as leadership courses at the University of Victoria, Royal Roads University, and other online certificates – they could apply for scholarships within their organization. For example, one participant explained, “The opportunity to have secondary education – scholarships – partly paid for by the public service was essential. I would not have done my Royal Roads leadership program if I didn’t have the scholarship” (A.13). Another participant also said, “I did my MPA at UVic through the Public Service scholarship. So, making that available was huge, which also made me feel like I’m doing something that will be valuable for the organization” (A.8). As such, several participants mentioned that they were able to take leadership courses or continue with their academic studies through the scholarship provided by the organization, such as the Pacific Leaders Scholarship provided by the B.C. Public Service. They explained that taking more leadership training within and outside the organization with the help of “education opportunities, scholarships that staff can apply for and funds that go towards that supports positive learning environment” (B.2) furthered their leadership development.

The third most frequently mentioned organizational attribute that positively impacted their leadership development was **being provided a mentor or a coach**. Participants explained that when they had a formal mentor or a coach available to them, it immensely helped their leadership development process. For example, one participant stated, “Various organizations have mentorship programs. And while I think some of them may have varied in success, overall, I think it is imperative to have someone above you give you the support you need as you move through leadership” (A.14). Another participant suggested, “coaching was helpful – having someone to lean

on especially when you aren't sure who to seek help with" (C.1). Other participants mentioned that having meetings with a mentor or coach once or twice a month was a practical and effective way to receive constructive feedback and learn from them. Some other examples of organizational mentorship included the organization providing the opportunity for employees to be an apprentice to executive leaders. One participant suggested, "If someone is identified as a potential leader, having people who are willing to mentor and look out for those people is important. Like being an apprentice to the executive position" (A.3). Another example was being part of a coaching committee made up of different academic and career backgrounds that they could learn from and mold the learning into their styles. Participants stated that when they have reliable mentors or coaches in the post-training phase, they could meet regularly to discuss things they have learned or ways to implement learning in the workplace, which critically supported their leadership development.

Participants also noted that it positively impacted their leadership development when they **saw the commitment to leadership development at an organizational level**. They stated that organizational commitment to leadership development referred to an organizational culture that supports leadership development and considers it one of the priorities for their employees. One participant argued, "There is also an organizational support piece for leadership development. Having that support from the top down is very helpful" (A.9). This may mean having a clear direction from the leadership on including leadership development goals as part of the critical principles strategic vision. One participant stated:

"For me, having organizational clarity in terms of goals and priorities is critical... the organization needs to emphasize leadership and the importance of employees' leadership development and allow them to prioritize and clarify the objectives." (A.6)

Organizational clarity may also mean making it mandatory for employees to take certain levels of leadership courses, such as Leadership 101 or Basic Leadership Skills for Everyone. Another participant stated, "Leadership material in newsletters or orientation materials ... communicates a clear message about an organizational emphasis on leadership development ... having the presence of leadership development as a priority" (A.2). When an organization actively informs their employees about leadership training courses and opportunities through newsletters, orientation materials, and in other forms of communication, this signals to employees how much the organization values leadership development. Overall, participants claimed that a clear organizational emphasis on developing leadership motivated them and nudged them to further work on their leadership development.

Finally, although not as significant as other factors listed above, participants suggested that **receiving formal acknowledgments** from their organization may positively impact their leadership development. For example, one participant stated that their organization circulates newsletters with celebratory remarks on specific teams and individuals. She said, "As an organization, we try to celebrate small and large wins through newsletters, which I think may have worked well to motivate individuals" (A.1). Another participant commented, "When my client or someone I work with, or the department I work with tells me ... that you guys did so amazing and made these kinds of changes, delivered results, that has real value ... that validates what I'm trying to as a public servant," (A.4). This supports the idea that formal acknowledgments such as celebratory newsletters can have positive impact on morale and motivation to develop.

On the other hand, other participants also argued that, as much as receiving kudos or acknowledgments through newsletters felt nice, these acknowledgments did not crucially help leadership development. For example, one participant commented that public recognition does not offer much help in actual leadership development other than the organization demonstrating to the outside that they have taken the initiative to ‘recognize’ the individual. One participant noted:

“Formal recognition in terms of kudos and acknowledgments in newsletters – I know organizations do this a lot, but I’m not sure those are that helpful. I’m unsure how much help it gives to the person who gets ‘formal recognition.’ I often think it feels more like an organization checking the boxes for the executives and the higher-ups, not necessarily focusing on the actual development of the individual receiving the acknowledgment” (A.3).

These participants suggested that although receiving formal recognition may improve the individual's morale depending on the person and may motivate the team, it does not offer practical ways to improve leadership competencies further or advance in their leadership role. Hence, participants agreed that formal recognition from an organization may positively impact leadership development by increasing their motivation but was not as effective in developing leadership skills and competencies.

Table 11

Negative Organizational Attributes on Leadership Development

Attribute	Exemplary Quote 1	Exemplary Quote 2	Exemplary Quote 3
<i>Lack of follow-up discussions or further training</i>	Many courses that the organization offer is information-based. If you look at courses with applicable behaviors like negotiating, fierce conversation, and practical ones, these might need follow-ups. However, you learn new skills and return to applying them as soon as possible. I could join no cohorts or follow-up groups to continue with the learning (A.13).	But if you take the learnings – and especially if you aren’t in the management position – then by the time it comes to the point that you need to use those skills, it’s probably gone (A.3).	There’s always a gap of continuity with training. It’s crucial to get commitments and reminders. I wish there were some way to be reminded of the training you’ve done and to follow up on it. How does your learning stay alive after weeks and months? This is a missing point in many programs (A.12).
<i>The public sector’s hiring and talent management culture that discourages leadership development process</i>	Competency-based interviews, I believe, are smoking mirrors. You theoretically can win the position if you know how to play the	Creating the culture of looking for aspiring leaders – how do you create a culture where it’s comfortable for people to say, ‘One day, I want to	I am very nervous saying this, but there is too much time spent in leadership within the organization talking about equity. I believe equity is essential to consider and very important. Still, quite often,

competency interview game – even if you’re less competent. What if I’m looking for, as a primary trait, a motivated, self-directed, innovative, like-minded thinker? I’m not looking for you to hit level 3 and two bullets on team competency. I understand you need some framework. However, I’m not sure our current hiring regime achieves that (A.11).

run this place, be in charge, be executive director, etc? We must be more intentional about supporting that culture and not discouraging younger, newer people from announcing their career goals (B.1).

the organization devotes all its time to meeting equity and diversity quotas instead of focusing on the actual merits of an individual (A.11).

Disconnect between training and real-life work situations

To get the most efficiency, training has to apply to your work (A.7).

We have all these courses (courses focused on political ideals) – and it’s not that we aren’t interested in the subject matter, or we disagree with the importance of the subject – but you’re saying the same thing again and again. You aren’t teaching us anything new. And if we dare bring this up, they think we have anti-positive intentions, and we do not (A.11).

I wish I had a day, a month, or something of training that taught me what we expect from an Executive Director role. There’s a gap for leaders in executive positions to learn what to think about in terms of engagement and working with people and the protocols. There was none, and it was sink or swim (A.12).

Organizational dysfunction

There’s some inconsistency within the units and how they are structured – for example, there is a lack of middle management, which means a lack of support for those at the leadership level regarding workload—overburdened with work. Participating in all those leadership meetings can be challenging when there’s no one managing the team

When I’m asked to do multiple jobs at once or asked to have multiple responsibilities at once, it makes it hard for me to do my real job. I am an executive director, and there are duties I should primarily be carrying out as a leader. While I don’t mind being involved in many things and supporting my team the best I can, being asked to be involved in many other situations or issues gives

There has been an increased amount of movement internally. A lot of priorities emerge, and folks move on. It may benefit people to move on and learn new things, but the organizational context has been challenging. New people come, get excited, do some insight work, create a bit of vision, and collectively learn, but then they leave, and someone else comes in, and we have to do the same thing over again. It causes disruptions in work and makes team building incredibly difficult (A.15).

while I'm doing that me less time to do my real
(A.9). job. (A.1)

Negative factors

The interviews with the participants also revealed organizational attributes that negatively impact leadership development in the “white-space.” In order of frequency mentioned, these attributes included **lack of follow-up discussions or further training, the public sector’s hiring and talent management culture that discourages leadership development process, disconnect between training and real-life work situations, and organizational dysfunctions.**

One of the most frequently mentioned organizational attributes that negatively impacted the leadership development process was **a lack of follow-up discussions or further training** after the initial leadership training. A participant stated:

“Many courses that the organization offer are information-based. If you look at courses with applicable behaviors like negotiating, fierce conversation, and practical ones, these might need follow-ups. However, you learn new skills and return to applying them as soon as possible. There were no cohorts or follow-up groups that I could join after the training to continue with the learning” (A.13).

Similarly, to this participant’s comment, other participants suggested that when their organizations do not offer follow-up discussions or training after the initial one, retaining and applying knowledge learned in real life is a challenge. They argued that they often took the course about a specific competency – for example, difficult conversation, developing employees, etc. – and when they went back to work, there was no opportunity or time to practice those competencies learned. Thus, the absence of follow-up discussions or training prevented leadership knowledge from being practical. One participant also said, “There’s no follow-up on how you apply your learnings into the real world. People go on and have these amazing sessions, post notes, roll up the info – but afterward, they don’t follow through on the stuff learned” (A.13). This comment suggested that having no follow-up discussions or training meant individuals were not given the opportunity to further practice what they have learned during the training.

Another participant supported this notion with the following: “...but if you take the learnings – and especially if you aren’t in the management position – then by the time it comes to the point that you need to use those skills, it’s probably gone” (A.3). He was not given the opportunity to use or retain the knowledge learned, which meant he was also not responsible to develop and improve on their leadership. Another participant explained:

“There’s always a gap of continuity with training. It’s crucial to get commitments and reminders. I wish there were some way to be reminded of the training you’ve done and to follow up on it. How does your learning stay alive after weeks and months? This is a missing point in many programs” (A.12).

This participant further explained that for the time in question, there were no discussion cohorts,

forums, or reference materials post-training to continue the learning and help them remember and practice the things they learned. A majority of participants offered that a lack of follow-up after initial training was one of the most negative organizational factors that impacted leadership development post-training.

Another organizational attribute negatively impacting leadership development **is the public sector's hiring and talent management culture that discourages leadership development process**. Several factors concerning the public sector's hiring and talent management were mentioned as negative influences on leadership development. For example, participants explained that, particularly in the public sector, the *hiring process emphasizes individuals' ability to speak to "competencies" over other comprehensive qualities or abilities as leaders*. They explained that the hiring process evaluates individuals' abilities to "choose the correct answer within the bars" rather than assessing their potential, will, or motivation to be leaders. One participant stated:

"Competency-based interviews, I believe, are smoke and mirrors. You theoretically can win the position if you know how to play the competency interview game – even if you're less competent. What if I'm looking for, as a primary trait, a motivated, self-directed, innovative, like-minded thinker? I'm not looking for you to hit level 3 and two bullets on team competency. I understand you need some framework; however, I'm not sure our current hiring regime achieves that" (A.11).

The participant suggested that the current hiring process in the public sector evaluates an individual's ability to speak to a particular competency in a desired way in interviews, cover letters, and resumes, but then went on to explain that the hiring process does not evaluate other critical factors of an individual, such as their identity, will, or motivation to become good leaders. Participants also stated that this "competency-focused" hiring process does not work if the team is looking for an individual who can bring new, different ideas, or shares the same values, and not just someone who can check the competency boxes at the interviews. For example, younger individuals applying for certain roles may not have all the leadership competencies listed in the job description but may have stronger motivation and a helpful perspective to develop as a better leader.

Another participant stated, "People are also immediately screened out from the hiring competition because they do not meet all the competency requirements" (A.2). The participant added that while he understands the importance of these job competencies and the importance of expecting what type of individual the organization is looking for to minimize the mistake of hiring the "wrong person," he argued that this process quite often is imperfect and screens out people that may be more competent than the person who meets those specific competencies listed on the job description. For instance, the participant explained that the job description could have overlooked some competencies that are important for the role, which would result in screening out individuals that may have possessed those important competencies not included in the job description. Other participants also stated that individuals can learn many tasks on the job or through training offered by the organization, while some leadership attributes are more difficult to develop, making these attributes particularly important to select for. Thus, other important qualities such as perseverance, motivation, or desire to develop as leaders should be considered as important as meeting certain competency requirements.

In summary, participants suggested that the public sector's hiring culture emphasizes an

individuals' ability to speak to particular competencies over other comprehensive qualities as a leader, and this in turn negatively impacts their leadership development through minimizing the importance of developing leadership qualities such as their identities, will, or motivation as leaders. Participants noted that these types of qualities are often developed and honed over time and may be more or equally valuable for leadership roles than immediate competencies. They suggested that by putting excessive focus on evaluating individuals based on stated competencies on job descriptions, the public sector sometimes creates an organizational culture that discourages individuals from developing a wider range of important leadership qualities.

Another factor concerning the public sector's hiring and talent management that negatively impacted participants' leadership development was an *organizational culture that discourages younger, newer individuals from comfortably declaring their career advancement goals*. This opinion was shared by more than half of the participants, ranging from younger to older participants, and male and female participants. For example, one participant said:

“Creating a culture of looking for aspiring leaders – how do you create a culture where it's comfortable for people to say, ‘One day, I want to run this place, be in charge, be executive director.’ We must be more intentional about supporting that culture and not discouraging of younger, newer people from announcing their career goals” (B.1).

Another participant stated, “I do think age played a factor in my [leadership development process] for sure ... I do feel as so that people used to tell me I'm a bit too young for that – to be in a certain role, taking on a leading role, etc” (A.16). A number of participants suggested that public sector organizations historically “haven't always taken kindly in having younger members speak up about seeking promotions and career advancements” (A.2).

A different participant also offered a similar idea, stating:

“Hiring practices show that only the people who have been in the job for 12 years are getting the bump up. That kills the team's motivation. They say, ‘What am I working for?’ And they leave” (A.11).

Taken together, the responses offered that there are structurally limiting factors within public sector organizations that prevent and discourage individuals from working on their leadership development, especially with career advancements, with one of those factors being young and/or being a newer individual to the organization.

Participants also claimed that the hiring process is sometimes too focused on *meeting “equity quotas” instead of merit, which prevents individuals – who are qualified but do not fill the quota – from receiving leadership development opportunities*. One participant stated:

“I am very nervous saying this, but there is too much time spent in leadership within the organization talking about equity. I believe equity is essential to consider and very important. Still, quite often, the organization devotes all its time to meeting equity and diversity quotas instead of focusing on the actual merits of an individual” (A.11).

Another participant added, “Merit is very important to me. This is a very passionate area for me, and

I am nervous about bringing the subject up because it may be controversial. However, you cannot put merit on the backhand and focus on filling up quotas” (A.17). As shown from these comments, there were some concerns about how public sector organizations heavily focus on meeting the quotas instead of finding the most qualified person for the job based on merit. They argued that this hiring process could cause much damage not just to individual leadership development but also to the organization and its success. They stated that while considering diversity and equity is very important and should not be neglected, the priority should always be on merit.

Participants also stated that often, *job opportunities or other opportunities to advance in their careers were not always transparent*. Some participants mentioned that they had previously experienced situations where information about job positions was given only to specific individuals close to the hiring panel. They indicated that there were times when job positions or opportunities to be part of a new project were not posted publicly, preventing any open competition for the chance. These opportunities were available to people in “inner circles.” One participant commented, “You don’t just progress to a higher level because you performed well in your job. You need a specific skill set: a relationship with people around you. Whether aligning with your work goal or not” (A.3). This lack of transparency in hiring processes led to some participants becoming demotivated, in general, which further discouraged them from making efforts in their own leadership development.

The **disconnect between training and real-life work situations** was the next primary organizational attribute that negatively impacted leadership development post-training. Some participants stated they were required to take particular *leadership training that did not consider their unique work situations*. They mentioned that although they may be in the public sector, the work environment in policing or corrections vastly differs from working for the Ministry of Transportation or Ministry of Finance. Participants said they often took leadership training that did not consider the work environment, type of circumstances, and challenges they might face in the actual workplace, creating a disconnect between what they learned from the training and real life. As this participant commented, “To get the most efficiency, training has to apply to your work” (A.7). Participants argued that training that does not align with real work situations or goals does not impact leadership development positively.

Similarly, another example of training that did not align with actual workplace circumstances was training that *focused excessively on “ideals and doctrines that often get repetitive” instead of providing more training on practical leadership skills*. More specifically, participants mentioned that they were often required to take training about the “ideals” that the government emphasizes, such as diversity, equity, and Indigenous sensitivity. While the participants agreed that this training is essential and beneficial to learn once or twice, they also indicated that it surpasses the amount of other important leadership training, such as courses focused on a particular competency or practical skills at work. A participant commented:

“We have all these courses (courses focused on political ideals) – and it’s not that we aren’t interested in the subject matter, or we disagree with the importance of the subject – but you’re saying the same thing again and again. You aren’t teaching us anything new. And if we dare bring this up, they think we have anti-positive intentions, and we do not.” (A.11).

Similarly, another participant stated, “They are focusing their time on making us take training that is no longer helpful. Are you trying to make us better leaders or trying to indoctrinate us into

something that we are already a part of?” (C.1) In short, a number of participants suggested that leadership in the public sector is often overly focused on conveying certain ideals rather than trying to help individuals develop their leadership abilities, or to develop skills that can be applied and observed in the actual workplace. They clarified that they are not debating the importance of these ideals nor whether it’s important to learn these ideas; rather, they suggested that organizations put too much emphasis on these ideals and not enough on the actual progress or development of public servants.

The last example of training that did not align with the workplace was the *lack of executive-level leadership training for higher-level leaders*. One participant mentioned:

“I wish I had a day, a month, or something of training that taught me what we expect from an Executive Director role. There’s a gap for leaders in executive positions to learn about engagement and working with people and the protocols in the executive level. There was none, and it was sink or swim” (A.12).

The participant explained that the organization had insufficient executive-level leadership training, creating a significant gap in public-sector leadership development training. She noted that one of the biggest challenges in becoming an executive director was that there was no organizational support in teaching her the role and responsibilities of an executive director. Other participants also noted that even though there is a big difference in their work and the expectations they need to fulfill as an executive director versus middle management, most leadership training provided by the organization was for aspiring leaders or early middle management. This gap made them feel less supported and made it difficult for them to become competent in their new roles sooner. Participants expressed their desire to see more leadership training geared towards executive leaders, which would help them align with their experience gained and knowledge learned in their workplace.

Participants identified **organizational dysfunction** as a final organizational attribute that negatively impacted leadership development post-training. Participants mentioned two significant factors as the leading causes of organizational dysfunction: *a lack of employees or middle management to support departments*, and *increased employee turnover*. Participants stated that throughout their time in public service, they often experienced heavy workloads due to *a lack of employees and middle managers*. One participant explained:

“There’s some inconsistency within the units and how they are structured – for example, lack of middle management. This means a lack of support for those at the leadership level regarding workload. People are overburdened with work. Participating in all those leadership meetings can be challenging when there’s no one managing the team while I’m doing that” (A.9).

This participant described that she experienced a big challenge as a director because there were not enough middle managers to manage various aspects of the team, which caused her to be responsible for many things within the organization and eventually prevented her from focusing on dealing with her actual job as a leader. She suggested that when she is consumed with various technical and bureaucratic concerns, this leaves less time for her to be able to focus on developing leadership competencies or gaining further practice in being able to address other leadership-oriented concerns. Another participant stated:

“When I’m asked to do multiple jobs at once or asked to have multiple responsibilities at once, it makes it hard for me to do my real job. I am an executive director, and there are duties I should primarily be carrying out as a leader. While I don’t mind being involved in many things and supporting my team the best I can, being asked to be involved in many other situations or issues gives me less time to do my real job.” (A.1)

She further mentioned that because there were not enough people in the organization to delegate or share her work with, it was difficult because she was busy taking on multiple responsibilities at once. Other participants suggested that the lack of support from the organization in providing sufficient middle managers and staff prevented them from having enough time to pay attention to their jobs or development. They indicated that they were often asked to be involved in all other things besides their primary duties, which left them little time to take additional training on leadership and further led them to leave their development for last.

An increased rate of employee turnover in the public sector was another factor that was found to cause organizational dysfunction and negatively impact leadership development. A participant described:

“There has been an increased amount of movement internally. A lot of priorities emerge, and folks move on. It may benefit people to move on and learn new things, but the organizational context has been challenging. New people come, get excited, do some insight work, create a bit of vision, and collectively learn, but then they leave, and someone else comes in, and we have to do the same thing over again. It causes disruptions in work and makes team building incredibly difficult” (A.15).

As shown through the participants’ comments, several participants described that the public sector has been experiencing an increased number of employees moving to different jobs in a short period. This phenomenon may be due to the introduction of a remote working environment where employees are no longer limited to employment in their regions, and thus can work for positions anywhere in B.C. This may also be because the public sector is experiencing an increased workload after the pandemic and is trying to increase the number of employees to match the amount of work, creating more permanent and temporary job opportunities. Whatever the reason, participants implied that increased internal movement made it difficult to develop a solid and stable team environment and relationships between coworkers, negatively impacting leadership development. These statements from the participants correlated with the previous finding that demonstrated the positive impact of having a solid and stable team environment on leadership development. The participant further added:

“I had four directors in one year – so I spent about three months with each leader. There’s a bit of a revolving door. It is rare to spend a year now with one leader who’s giving you feedback. It was hard to receive constant feedback – did I show overtime that I increased my competency? I don’t know” (A.15).

This participant’s comment showed that constant changes in the team structure – in this case, changes in the supervisory position – also made it harder for him to receive consistent and regular feedback. Frequent supervisor changes mean an individual must constantly rebuild a relationship

with the new supervisor. This situation prevents an individual from establishing stable and reliable connections with the supervisors/leaders and receiving continuous feedback from a dedicated supervisor. As participants have suggested, this phenomenon can negatively affect leadership development because leaders are not receiving constant and regular feedback, and no one is keeping track of their progress long-term.

Question #3: How do individuals find leadership development opportunities through self-development activities in everyday life to achieve their developmental goals?

Finally, the study investigated how individuals find leadership development opportunities through their self-development activities in everyday life to develop their leadership in the “white-space.” The study asked the participants what they do outside their workplace to develop their leadership further. Table 12 demonstrates how participants find leadership development opportunities at work and self-development activities in everyday life.

Table 12

Leadership development opportunities through daily life experiences

Self-Development Activities in Daily Life	Exemplary Quote 1	Exemplary Quote 2
<i>Participate in external committees or groups</i>	I belong to a business analyst and project management government group outside of work. It is based in the U.S., so it may not be directly relevant to my work. Still, the group provides good learning and information about leadership (A.4).	There’s also a rich network of mentorship ... B.C and Canadian Association Chiefs of Police (B.1).
<i>Engage in coaching or volunteering</i>	I like field hockey, so I volunteer as a coach in field hockey teams (A.3).	I’ve also coached kids as a volunteer activity. Far as leadership goes, it’s different working with kids as opposed to adults, but there are certain leadership qualities I can bring back to work (A.10).
<i>Seek out leadership training and courses outside of work</i>	I just finished a certificate program from an x, y, z University on equity and inclusion. I look outside the organization to develop superior skills. At least 10 to 15 hours a week over four months to finish the certificate program (A.15).	working towards receiving Certified Health Executives (B.2)
<i>Read books or listen to podcasts on leadership</i>	I often like to read articles about areas that I belong to at work – for example, about project management (A.14).	“I listen to podcasts. For example, recently I got really into x, y, z podcast – he’s an organizational psychologist

<i>Engage in self-care activities</i>	And self-care ... you don't get work-life balance at a certain level ... but carving out time to take microbreaks or take a part of the afternoon and do something you really enjoy (B.1).	exploring different themes in the workplace dynamics, discussing different perspectives (A.11).
		Work-life balance ... even things like debriefing difficult situations with my wife helps (B.3).

Finding leadership development opportunities through daily life experiences

Participants answered that they also engage in self-development activities in their daily lives outside of work to further their leadership development. These activities included **participating in external committees or groups, coaching or volunteering, seeking out leadership training outside of work, reading books or listening to podcasts on leadership, and engaging in self-care activities.**

For example, some noted they **participate in external committees or groups**. A participant explained:

“I belong to a business analyst and project management government group outside of work. It is based in the U.S., so it may not be directly relevant to my work. Still, the group provides good learning and information about leadership” (A.4).

Another participant commented that in his own time, he participates in board meetings that occur across Canada, which include other public servants in the same field. This activity allows him to indirectly experience challenges and unique circumstances that other public servants go through and learn from those shared experiences. He suggested it is a valuable learning experience where he can take from other people's experiences that are not limited to his workplace and use those learnings to further his leadership development. Other participants have also suggested joining external committees and boards to connect with diverse regional public sector employees. This activity broadens their perception by providing indirect experiences outside their workplace or B.C.

Some participants mentioned that they regularly **engage in coaching or volunteering** outside of work. One participant stated, “I like field hockey, so I volunteer as a coach in field hockey teams” (A.3). Another participant and several others said they volunteer as coaches in specific sports teams, such as hockey or baseball. One participant commented, “I've also coached kids as a volunteer activity. Far as leadership goes, it's different working with kids as opposed to adults, but there are certain leadership qualities I can bring back to work” (A.10). As per this comment, they noted that although coaching in sports teams is different from working as a manager or a director at work, they still learn valuable lessons regarding leadership through coaching that are relevant to the workplace. For example, they learn how to motivate and engage the team. When their team loses, they learn how to help them pick themselves up and move through challenging situations. All these skills are essential leadership competencies that could be used at work.

Participants mentioned they **seek out leadership training and courses outside of work**. For

example, one participant said, “I just finished a certificate program from an x, y, z University on equity and inclusion. I look outside the organization to develop superior skills. At least 10 to 15 hours a week over four months to finish the certificate program” (A.15). Other participants also indicated that they look for further leadership training opportunities outside of work, such as “working towards receiving Certified Health Executives” (B.2) or other diploma/certificates. They implied that while leadership courses provided within the organization internally are essential, sometimes they are not enough, and they need to look for other places to continue their learning.

Other examples of self-development activities outside of work included **reading books on leadership and listening to podcasts and TED Talks about leadership or related topics**. A participant commented, “I often like to read articles about areas that I belong to at work – for example, about project management” (A.14). Another participant stated, “I listen to podcasts. For example, recently I got really into x, y, z podcast – he’s an organizational psychologist exploring different themes in the workplace dynamics, discussing different perspectives” (A.11). A different participant also stated, “I have a book on my nightstand called ‘Quiet.’ It’s about leadership styles of introverts versus extroverts” (A.12). As these comments demonstrated, reading books and listening to audiobooks or podcasts are common ways participants work on leadership development outside work.

Lastly, participants stated that they **engage in self-care activities** can be very helpful for leadership development. For example, one participant suggested that sometimes, when faced with difficult circumstances or problems, taking a step back from it and engaging in other personal activities helps him solve the issue. He tries to distance himself from the problem and refresh his mind to bring the best ideas instead of constantly thinking about the problem. Similarly, several other participants indicated that work-life balance is crucial in stress management and leadership development. Hence, carving out time to focus on relationships outside of work and engage in various hobbies helps them stay motivated at work and work on their development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provided valuable insights into the mechanisms through how public sector employees further their leadership development process post-training. Firstly, the study showed that goal setting, performance of leadership competencies, motivation to develop as leaders, and leader identity are critical leadership development learning outcomes that participants actively pursue. The findings demonstrated the importance of self-reflection, encouragement of others, and the proactive seeking of opportunities for achieving goal setting. For proceduralizing and automizing competencies, being confident, actively trying to use learned competencies, and developing metacognitive ability emerged as key methods. Additionally, the motivation to develop as a leader was driven by having accountability, making positive changes for the common good, and having constructive dialogues with peers and supervisors. Furthermore, the development of a leader identity was significantly influenced by occupying leadership positions, having personal leadership attributes, and positive relationships with others.

Secondly, the study elucidated the individual, team, and organizational attributes that influence leadership development post-training. Positive individual attributes included being self-aware, having empathy, being open-minded, having the ability to learn from others, and having a growth mindset, whereas negative individual attributes included lacking self-awareness, being

egocentric, lacking empathy, and excessive focus on organizational outcomes as opposed to the actual development of leadership. Positive team attributes were supervisory and peer support, successful collaboration on team projects and ideas, and clarity in roles and responsibilities within the team. On the other hand, negative team attributes were an uncollaborative team environment, “bad leaders/supervisors,” and lack of social interactions. Next, positive organizational attributes included given more job and career advancement opportunities, given more opportunities for leadership development programs, being provided a mentor or a coach, seeking more commitment to leadership development at an organizational level, and receiving formal acknowledgements. Negative organizational attributes were lack of follow-up discussions or further training, the public sector’s hiring and talent management culture that discourages leadership development process, disconnect between training and real-life work situations, and organizational dysfunctions.

Lastly, the study found diverse self-development activities individuals engaged in to enhance their leadership development within the “white-space “of their daily lives. These activities included participating in external committees or groups, coaching or volunteering, seeking out leadership training outside of their organizations, reading books and listening to podcasts, and prioritizing in self-care activities. The findings showed the importance of continuous and self-directed learning and the utilization of avenues outside o formal work settings to further leadership development process post-training.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Analysis

Introduction

The main research questions addressed in this study were as follows:

How do public sector employees further develop their leadership post-training? In other words, how might they continue to develop micro-level leadership skills as well as further develop other “higher-level system” leadership attributes (Lord and Hall, 2005; Wallace et al., 2021) that eventually lead to positive cognitive, behavioral, and motivational leadership outcomes? What may be some of the organizational and personal factors that affect this in-between stage?

To investigate this main research question, I studied how Canadian public sector employees who have attended leadership development training strive to become better leaders post-training, using Wallace et al. (2021), other relevant literature, and B.C. Leadership Competencies, as a guide. The main research question was broken down into three sub-research questions which were **what are individuals doing to achieve multidimensional and/or zero, first, and second-order learning outcomes, what are some individual attributes and approaches, team attributes and approaches, and organizational attributes and approaches impacting this space, and how do individuals find leadership development opportunities through self-development activities in everyday life to achieve developmental goals.**

What are individuals doing to achieve multidimensional and/or zero, first, and second-order learning outcomes?

The first portion of the study revealed several ways in which B.C. public sector employees attempt to achieve multidimensional and/or zero, first, and second-order learning outcomes in the ‘white space’ post-leadership training. It was found that participants work towards many of Wallace et al.’s (2021) learning outcomes such as zero-order and motivational learning outcomes including goal setting, motivation to develop as a leader, metacognitive ability, and self-awareness, cognitive and behavioural learning outcomes including knowledge organization, automaticity, and proficiency in leadership competencies, second-order learning outcomes including leader identity and level of leader self-concept, and first-order learning outcomes including intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies. The study unveils that individuals strive to attain these learning outcomes by supporting team members, nurturing others’ personal development, actively seeking avenues to augment leadership competencies, developing confidence, actively utilizing acquired skills and more. The study also highlights the interplay between formal training and practical application central to leadership development.

Interestingly, leadership learning outcomes that participants did not speak to were abstractions of leadership, which is a component of second-order learning outcomes. Abstractions of leadership refers to philosophy of leadership styles, such as transformational, or servant leadership (Wallace et al. 2021). Participants did not suggest that they adhere to any specific leadership philosophies. Though there seemed to be no popular leadership style or philosophy that participants followed, the data from the interviews suggest that they share a common idea of what good leadership entails – a leadership style that emphasizes emotional and social intelligence, relationships in the workplace, and effective service to community and public.

One of the interesting discoveries regarding public sector employees and their leadership development relates to their motivating factors for becoming better leaders. A substantial majority of participants expressed that their primary motivation comes from their desire to facilitate the growth and development of others, instigate fundamental changes for the public, and foster positive relationships within their teams or organizations. The prevailing sentiment among participants was that developing leadership revolves around creating positive changes for those around them and serving the community. These motivators had a direct impact on their leader identities as well. Many participants answered that they perceive themselves as leaders because of the positive impact and relationships they cultivate and how they make positive changes for the public.

Existing literature further supports this finding that public sector leadership is often characterized by its service to society and its impact on policy and governance. Individuals motivated by performing civic duty and contributing to public goods (Rainey and Bozeman, 2000), and inspired by their desire to positively impact public policy and governance (Bass and Riggio, 2006), may be more likely to work for public sectors than private sectors where different motivators may influence individuals. For example, individuals in the public sector more often cite intrinsic factors rather than extrinsic factors, which is not always reflected in the private sector. As a contrast, Finklestein and Hambrick (1990) note that monetary benefits such as higher earning potential, stock options, and financial bonuses are often noted as a key motivation for many private sector individuals to work on their leadership development.

During interviews with participants, there were occasional mentions of extrinsic motivators such as financial rewards and career advancements. For example, some participants mentioned extrinsic motivators such as greater job security and stability, which have also been demonstrated through academic literature as potential motivators for public sector leadership development (Perry & Wise, 1990). However, these extrinsic motivators were considered supplementary rather than drivers for their commitment to leadership development. Overall, there was less of an emphasis on external motivators, with some participants even clearly stating that financial compensations or other external factors do not provide them satisfaction or motivation to develop. For example, one participant noted that “monetary compensation ... don’t think that motivates me to be a better leader ... it meant nothing to me other than ‘Oh, I got extra money’” (A.4). This phenomenon highlights that in public sector leadership development, intrinsic motivators such as the satisfaction of helping and creating others and the desire to make fundamental changes for the common good appear to greatly motivate public servants to further their leadership development process.

Another notable insight from the interviews is that all participants acknowledged themselves as “leaders,” demonstrating their leader identity, although with varying levels of leader self-concept. Their level of leader self-concept primarily fell into individual and relational levels. According to Wallace et al. (2021), individual level of leader self-concept indicates viewing oneself as a leader because of the formal role or position one holds, or because of the particular leadership competencies or abilities one believes to have distinct from followers and others. The relational level of leader self-concept indicates understanding one’s leader identity through his or her relationships with others, supported by their influence and validation of their leadership through others. Participants who fell under the individual level perceived themselves as leaders because they held formal leadership roles or possessed certain leadership competencies, such as empathy or effective communication. Those who fell under the relational level perceived themselves as leaders

due to their interactions and relationships with others.

This finding suggests that participants' perceptions of leadership and leader identity may be influenced by their perception of their traits and who they are in relation to others. For example, though all the participants suggested that they perceive themselves as leaders, some participants believed their leader identities are influenced mainly by their personal traits such as being proactive, or occupying formal positions as leaders, while other participants believed their leader identities were mainly influenced by their relationship with others, such as how they are viewed by their colleagues, or how they impact their colleagues. These findings suggest that participants' leader identities were not only influenced by their individual traits and formal leadership positions, but also by the interactions and relationships they have with their coworkers and other people's perception of them. This finding aligns with existing research on leadership and leader identity development that states leader identity is developed not only by personal attributes but also by interactions and relationships with others. For example, Avolio et al. (2005) argue that individual's self-perception and identity as a leader is intricately tied to their individual attributes but is also informed by their interactions with others. Similarly, Epitropaki et al. (2004) suggest that individuals' identity as a leader is not solely based on their personal traits, but also on how they are perceived by people around them. The study overall reveals the relationship between B.C. public sector employees' leader identity and the level of leader self-concept, offering insights into their self-perception as leaders and the factors that shape their leader identity.

What individual/intrapersonal, team, and organizational attributes affect the “white-space?”

The second portion of the study focused on investigating individual, team, and organizational factors that may positively or negatively impact leadership development in the “white-space.” Interviews with the participants revealed five main positive individual attributes: *self-awareness*, *empathy*, *open-mindedness*, *ability to learn from others*, and *possessing a growth mindset*. Throughout the interviews, participants emphasized self-awareness and the ability to learn from others. They claimed that self-awareness is essential in reflecting on their strengths and weaknesses and determining their competencies or personality traits to work on further. For example, without being self-aware of their flaws, individuals would be unable to figure out what training or courses they even need to take because they would not know what competencies they lack. These findings correlate with what existing literature identifies as important individual attributes for leadership development. For example, Cianciolo et al. (2004) suggest that practical intelligence – a general ability to learn from experience and others – is one of the individual attributes that can further leadership development and improve one's leadership skills. Researchers such as Day et al. (2014) and Sosik et al. (2009) support these participants' comments, stating the importance of conducting a self-assessment for leadership development. They explain that identifying strengths and areas for improvement allows individuals to set specific development goals aligned with desired leadership outcomes.

Participants also tied being self-aware to being accountable to those around them and having empathy – thinking about how their actions affect the team members and others. The link between self-awareness and development of accountability towards the team is supported by existing literature such as Brown et al. (2005), who argues that leaders with better self-awareness are more likely to have accountability within their teams. They suggest individuals who understand how their

actions impact other are better positioned to develop leadership attributes such as having accountability and empathy.

Participants also emphasized the ability to learn as one of the more significant individual attributes. Without having the ability to learn and utilize the new information, regardless of how much training or courses they might take, they would not be able to make the knowledge their own. Participants further stated their ability to learn is particularly important if they have leaders in their lives whom they admire and consider as their role models or mentors. If they can learn from others' experiences, they can adapt this learning to their style and use them in real-life situations without having to undergo the same experiences. This ability to learn from others' experiences is also mentioned in existing literature such as Bennis and Biederman (1997), which argues the importance of peer learning, group discussions, and exchanging ideas for developing leadership competencies.

As for negative individual attributes, the study highlighted three primary attributes: a lack of self-awareness, being egocentric, and not being result-oriented. Lacking self-awareness inhibits one's ability to learn from leadership training or other learning opportunities, because without the awareness of areas for improvement, one cannot develop. Being egocentric impedes leadership development by preventing one from understanding team members and recognizing the collective need for improvement. Egocentric individuals can also resist change since they may be unwilling to adapt new leadership ideas and approaches and may only accept their style as accurate. As Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) explain, this resistance to change may be a significant barrier to leadership development. Lastly, not being result-oriented enough was another main negative individual attribute. Participants argued that in the public sector, many individuals and leaders emphasize creating strategic visions and goals but do not focus on concrete results. Not being result-oriented is a negative leadership development attribute since it diminishes the importance of meeting tangible outcomes. Other negative attributes were mentioned, such as indecisiveness and an inability to manage stress, but these three attributes stood out as prominent individual factors that hinder leadership development.

Interestingly, many of these negative individual attributes were mentioned as attributes of someone else's that participants experienced, rather than their own negative individual attributes. Although some participants talked about their own negative attributes – for example, being introverted or being easily nervous or anxious – many participants referred to the negative attributes as if they were someone else's that they observed. Many participants deflected the question from themselves and answered in a way that suggests how others' negative individual attributes may have damaged their leadership development process. This could be because of two main reasons. First is that even when anonymity is guaranteed, it is possible that participants may not have wanted to take the risk of stating their negative attributes publicly. Second is that they could have naturally geared towards pondering someone else's negative attributes and how those may have impacted them, instead of looking into their own negative attributes. This second observation itself is an interesting finding. This suggests that self-awareness or self-reflection, as in being aware of one's own negative attributes – also one of Wallace et al.'s leadership development learning outcomes, and a factor that is constantly mentioned by the participants as an important individual attribute for leadership development – is a truly difficult attribute/outcome for individuals to attain, despite its significance in the leadership development stage. This finding does not necessarily mean that participants are lacking in self-awareness, or that they are lacking in ability as a leader. Rather, it seemingly demonstrates one of the real-life challenges in leadership development processes, which may be the

challenge in trying to attain self-awareness, and the difficulty of facing and being more conscious of one's own negative individual attributes.

Post-training, critical team attributes that positively impact leadership development include supervisory and peer support, shared values and understanding, successful collaboration on team projects, and clarity on roles and responsibilities. Supervisory and peer support were highly mentioned as the most influential factors, especially when these involved constructive feedback, autonomy in work, mutual trust, and transparency within the team. Participants claimed that constructive feedback that provides action-based and practical ways for improvement at work enables growth. The importance of constructive feedback is well-documented in the leadership development literature. Edmondson (2003) has suggested that constructive feedback is a valuable resource for leadership development as it provides insights into individuals' leadership effectiveness and areas requiring improvement. However, the emphasis that participants in this study put on feedback that is not only constructive but regular and consistent is an interesting finding. Most participants indicated their desire to have structured and consistent feedback to discuss their progress over time, demonstrating the value they put not simply on receiving supervisory and peer feedback but on receiving it in a regular and structured fashion. Consistency in how they receive feedback is a way for them to tangibly measure progress and results, which many claim to be lacking in the public sector.

Having autonomy in one's work is also a dominant factor that is considered crucial among all the participants. Individuals need to feel ownership of their work – even if they make mistakes – to improve their leadership skills and identity. Participants suggested that because the public sector is often directly tied to taxpayers' money and more subject to media and public scrutiny, there tends to be an increased level of rigidity and micro-management that occurs in the workplace. Participants further explained that this type of work environment often takes away their autonomy over their work, which sometimes leads to decreased motivation for developing leadership skills and identity.

Other team attributes such as shared values and understanding within teams, successful collaboration on team projects, and clarity of roles and responsibilities were also highlighted as positive factors that collectively play pivotal roles in the leadership development process. These factors are supported by the leadership development literature as well, such as Gollwitzer and Sheeran (2006), who argued sharing goals with colleagues or supervisors increases commitment and creates a sense of accountability, and both Katzenbach and Smith (1993) and Yukl (2013), who all emphasize effective communication and collaborative culture as a cornerstone in leadership development through fostering a positive team environment.

Participants also identified several team attributes that negatively influence leadership development. These include an uncollaborative team environment resulting from a lack of shared values, lack of constructive feedback, and an absence of trust and transparency. Particularly in regard to lack of constructive feedback in the public sector, some participants provided interesting insights as to why this may happen in the public sector. Comments from the participants suggested that in the public sector, there are more concerns about how certain feedback might be perceived by the person receiving the feedback and others. This phenomenon demonstrates to a degree the concern with optics and the emphasis on maintaining positive workplace relationships that seem to be constant occurrence in the public sector. Another insight that was derived from the participants'

comments on lack of constructive feedback is that the public sector may be more concerned about publicly posting organizational goals and outcomes – almost as if to publicly show that as an organization or a team, they are working towards meeting certain targets – rather than having difficult conversations to work towards those goals. This finding implies that there may be extra focus on stated goals and optics over providing actual constructive feedback to meet those goals.

Having a team environment based on trust and transparency is also critical. Participants stated that if certain information – such as job opportunities or new project ideas – only goes to specific individuals in their team and not the whole team, they feel deceived by their team and supervisors. This breeds mistrust, creating a toxic team environment. Participants argue that if one cannot trust one's team, it acts as a vast demotivator and stops the individual from wanting to work or develop as a leader. Literature supports the vital role “trust” plays in leadership development. For example, Mayer et al. (1995) state trust is fundamental to effective team function and leadership. Lack of trust can prevent individuals from building rapport with team members and embracing leadership concepts, ultimately impeding their development as leaders. De Dreu and Weingart (2003) also explain that teams with persistent conflicts and tensions can hinder individuals from developing their leadership.

A “bad leader/supervisor” was also highlighted as a significant issue, characterized by micro-management, egocentric personality, unfulfilled promises, and lack of accountability. One interesting finding was that micro-management was mentioned and emphasized multiple times throughout all the interviews as the “worst type” of team environment that could result in a lack of motivation, lack of ownership, and an overall detrimental impact on leadership development. Participants also noted that micro-management can occur more frequently and intensely in the public sector due to being under higher public scrutiny than the private sector. Hence, much of the work produced by public sector employees is expected to follow exact steps and go through multiple reviews, which can often result in micro-management.

A lack of social interactions within the team has also been identified as harming relationships and leadership growth and has been exacerbated in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The negative impact of a lack of social interactions on individuals' leadership development aligns with existing literature, such as Ancona and Bresman's work that shows teams that operate in isolation from the rest of the organization may have limited opportunities for leadership development (2007). They argue that individuals in isolated teams experience limited opportunities to strengthen relationships with coworkers and may have limited exposure to diverse perspectives and opportunities to practice their leadership skills in broader organizational contexts. These findings collectively show the importance of a supportive, trusting, and communicative team environment for leadership development.

Participants also identified several organizational attributes that positively impacted their leadership development post-training, including opportunities to practice leadership skills through job opportunities or being part of new projects, being provided a mentor or a coach, and having effective feedback systems. Opportunities to practice leadership skills were especially a vital factor. These opportunities ranged from being given job opportunities, new projects, and tasks, to being provided scholarships to take external leadership courses. Participants highlighted that, since Covid-19, job and career advancement opportunities have increased in the public sector due to remote working environments and opportunities for more temporary and acting positions. These openings

allowed individuals to experience different leadership responsibilities where they could hone their skills and gain practical experience by applying their learning in real-world situations (Eisenbeiss et al., 2008).

Mentorships and coaching provided by organizations were also identified as critical factors by the interview participants, mainly based on effective feedback systems, such as 360-degree feedback. Participants claimed that they found mentors or coaches within the organization, who can provide guidance, share experiences, and offer advice consistently and regularly, extremely valuable for the leadership development stage. Mentoring and coaching are highly effective for leadership development (Kram, 1985), along with adequately structured feedback such as 360-degree feedback and self-assessment tools, which can guide goal setting by identifying areas for improvement and enhancing the attainability of leadership goals (Atwater and Yammarino, 1997).

Participants considered organizational commitment to leadership development and formal leadership training significant, particularly as initial learning, which may accelerate leadership development. For example, one participant stated, “organizational support for leadership development and leadership development programs ... having that organizational support from the top down is very helpful” (A.9). Another participant stated, “I think formal training ... accelerates development. While observations and life experiences ... takes a long time ... whereas, if you can go away for half a day or couple days and learn about examples of leadership, delegation, empowerment, communication, building relationships, then bring them back to work and start applying them, that’s more helpful” (A.2). Several researchers also highlighted the importance of organizational support and opportunities for formal leadership development programs, including Schein (2010) and Day et al. (2014). Schein (2010) suggests an organizational culture that supports and values leadership development positively impacts an individual’s leadership development process because when leadership is promoted and rewarded from an organizational level, individuals are more likely to apply and practice what they have learned during training, knowing that their efforts align with organizational priorities. Day et al. (2014) state formal leadership development programs that offer structured training and resources enhance the leadership competencies of trainees.

However, according to the participants, the substantial caveat concerning formal training was that for it to be truly effective, it required follow-up training, forums, discussion groups, and other means to continue the learning after the training. Participants identified the absence of adequate training follow-up as one of the significant organizational attributes that negatively impacted their leadership development. They felt that the deficiency in continued learning – lack of follow-up training or discussions – prevented them from effectively utilizing the knowledge learned. Another caveat regarding formal training was that it needed to align with their work situations. For example, some participants stated that, especially if they work in unique public service areas such as policing or corrections, general leadership training was not as valuable for real-life circumstances. Some participants also stated that when they required executive-level leadership training, available leadership training that was focused on middle-management or early leaders created a disconnect between what was being offered and actual job responsibilities. They also underscored that training programs that overemphasized teaching certain ideals rather than practical leadership skills was less beneficial to their leadership development.

Other negative organizational attributes that the participants illuminated included limited

opportunities to develop leadership skills. These attributes align with current research in leadership development, which shows that limited leadership opportunities and toxic organizational culture can critically hinder individuals' leadership development. For example, Lasson and Vinberg (2010) suggest that limited leadership opportunities at the organizational level may hinder leadership development as individuals struggle to build their leadership skills, leading to frustration and stagnation. Cameron and Quinn (2006) argue that a toxic organizational culture characterized by a lack of transparency, unfair competition, or a lack of ethical values can also have a detrimental impact on individuals' leadership development, and individuals may find it challenging to apply leadership principles in a work environment that promotes negative behaviors.

Of particular note here is how these negative organizational attributes – limited leadership opportunities and toxic organizational culture – were embedded in the public sector, especially concerning the formalized hiring process and competency-based evaluations prevalent in public sectors. The interviews revealed that this hiring process may overlook other essential qualities, such as leader identity, motivation, or will to develop as a better leader. Moreover, participants also stated that excessive focus on equity quotas during hiring may negatively influence leadership development by potentially overshadowing merit-based hiring, as well as discourage otherwise highly talented individuals who do not meet these equity quotas from advancing in the workplace. Furthermore, they noted as negative attributes the lack of transparency in job opportunities, as well as organizational cultures that tend to discourage younger and newer individuals from voicing their career goals. Participants noted that these factors may decrease individuals' motivation to develop their leadership and discourage them from looking for opportunities to develop leadership, ultimately impacting their leadership development in negative ways.

How do individuals find leadership development opportunities through self-development activities in everyday life to achieve developmental goals?

The last portion of the study related to how participants find leadership development opportunities in their everyday lives. Participants revealed they utilize various ways to develop leadership further. These included participating in external committees, volunteering, and coaching sports teams. These activities have broadened their perspectives by allowing them to interact with individuals from different fields and regions and gain insights that they may adapt to their work environment. In addition, participants stated they proactively engage in learning through reading, listening to podcasts, attending workshops, etc., to stay connected to leadership trends and encourage further learning. The current leadership development literature supports these approaches undertaken by the participants. Yukl (2013) has suggested that engaging in continuous learning and taking on challenging assignments are essential for leadership development as these experiences allow individuals to explore and refine their leadership skills in real-world situations. Tushman and O'Reilly (2002) corroborate this notion when suggesting that proactively seeking leadership development opportunities and learning increases individuals' ownership and responsibility for their development, ultimately enhancing their leadership capabilities.

Notably, one of the most prevailing themes that emerged from the interviews was the significance of establishing and maintaining relationships within the context of participants' leadership development. A substantial number of participants highlighted the importance of relationships, indicating that their growth as leaders was mainly promoted by the interactions they shared with their supervisors and team members – in other words, supervisory and peer support.

Throughout the interviews, they emphasized the importance of creating a sense of community through shared values, a positive work environment, teamwork, trust, and reliability. Making connections and establishing relationships was not only important for developing leadership but also for actual career advancements. Many participants answered that they progressed through their leadership roles because they were able to have good relationships with their supervisors and peers and make connections.

For example, one participant noted:

“The factors that impacted my leadership development the most were relationships with people and previous supervisors. In younger and earlier days, having supervisors who believe in you and encourage you is huge along the way. In terms of growth and leadership - you grow with that” (A.17).

When asked what was most impactful in developing leadership, another participant declared, “Relationships. Simple and clear. Today my biggest successes are based on relationships that have been established and the trust that came with it” (A.16). As these participants explain, many participants agreed that having a positive relationship with your supervisors and peers and being mindful of how these relationships affect their career and daily life make a significant impact on their leadership development. Having mutual trust and respect from people around them provides participants with motivation and desire to become better people and better leaders. Consequentially, participants claimed that this creates a positive spiral where they want to make the same positive relationship with others around them by considering ways to engage and connect better with others and thinking about ways to help others develop their goals. One participant stated:

“Successful team, successful milestone, they build on each other and become a fun experience. That motivates me – to see people enthusiastic about going to work, doing the task, getting motivation in yourself and the team, getting a happy feeling, and making it fun to work” (A.14).

She further added that creating a positive team environment, positive relationships, and seeing other people thrive from those relationships is what she considers to be a successful leader. They are also what impact her leadership development positively. Similarly, many other participants emphasized that positive relationships and seeing people grow in these relationships provide ultimate satisfaction in their leadership development journey.

This emphasis on establishing relationships corroborates other findings in the leadership development literature. Day et al. (2014) argue that building a professional network by attending company events, engaging with colleagues, and seeking sponsorship from influential coworkers can open doors to leadership development opportunities. However, what was interesting from this study’s finding is that this emphasis on connections and relationships also served as a negative factor for leadership development. For example, participants believed that to progress through their career (“climb up the ladder”), it was essential to make connections and build relationships with those around them. A contingent of participants stated that the public sector overemphasizes relational dynamics and “which powerhouse you know as an ally” for job progression and career advancements. Some participants noted that the public sector often views networking and relationship-building as “competencies” required for job progression. Consequently, introverts or

those less adept at making those connections may find their career advancements hindered, regardless of their productivity or performance at work. Furthermore, the focus on relationships regarding hiring or job opportunities posed problems concerning transparency. Some participants raised concerns regarding reduced trust in the team or the organization due to the lack of transparency in the hiring process. Often, job opportunities would not be openly advertised and remain available to those who “played the relationship game right.” For some participants, this functioned as a significant demotivator to develop their leadership, because it hindered their opportunities and will to improve their career and leadership competencies. The overemphasis on relational dynamics – particularly in regard to hiring process – led to participants becoming demotivated, which discouraged them from making effort in their own leadership development.

In short, though building and maintaining relationships is essential in public sector leadership development, functioning as a critical element that creates a positive work environment and guides individuals’ leadership development stages, it may also carry significant negative implications if applied inappropriately.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Summary

In conclusion, this research study investigated the intricate leadership development process among public sector employees in British Columbia, focusing on the “white-space” between post-training and desired leadership outcomes. The findings addressed three main questions – how individuals work to achieve leadership development learning outcomes post-training, how individual, team, and organizational attributes impact this space, and how individuals find leadership development opportunities in their daily life and self-development activities. The insights from this study offer unique and valuable perspectives on public sector leadership development, particularly on the motivating factors, self-perception of leaders, and the critical impact various attributes and opportunities have in the leadership development process.

One significant finding explores the intrinsic motivators that drive public sector employees to continue pursuing their leadership development post-training. Most participants expressed a strong desire to grow and develop others, achieve tangible positive changes for the public, and foster positive relationships within their teams and organizations. These intrinsic motivators propel their leadership development while critically shaping their identity as leaders. Participants perceived themselves as leaders primarily because of their positive impact on people around them and their contributions to the common good. This finding demonstrates the role altruistic motives play in the public sector, where serving the public and creating positive changes for the community is the principal driving force for leadership development.

Another impactful insight regards the participants’ leader identities. All participants viewed themselves as leaders and fell into two categories – individual and relational level – though with varying reasons. Participants with individual levels of leader self-concept viewed themselves as leaders due to formal leadership positions or specific leadership competencies they hold. In contrast, those with relational levels of leader self-concept based their leader identities on their interactions and relationships. This finding highlights individual traits and interpersonal dynamics in shaping leader identity, particularly in the B.C. public sector context.

Some crucial findings related to individual, team, and organizational attributes that impact the public sector leadership development post-training have also emerged. One of the positive team attributes is the significance of supervisory and peer support, primarily characterized by respectful and constructive feedback provided consistently. Autonomy in work ownership was also important for developing leadership skills and identity.

On the other hand, working under a “bad leader/supervisor” was identified as a critical negative team factor, defined by characteristics including micro-management, egocentrism, lack of accountability, and unfulfilled promises. Notably, the participants consistently brought up micro-management as the most detrimental team environment, which decreases motivation and ownership and hinders individuals’ leadership development. Participants noted that micro-management was more prevalent in the public sector because of its higher scrutiny and pressure to adhere to procedures strictly. Other team attributes, such as the lack of social interactions exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, have also been identified as possible negative factors for leadership growth.

Concerning organizational attributes, opportunities to practice leadership skills were deemed vital. Participants considered more opportunities for jobs, new projects, and tasks critical for leadership development and noted that remote working environments opened doors to increased opportunities, including temporary and acting positions. Other positive organizational attributes included mentorship and coaching programs, effective feedback systems such as 360-degree feedback, organizational commitment to leadership development, and formal leadership training. Regarding formal leadership training, findings show that it needs to ensure continued learning through follow-up mechanisms, align with real-life needs of public sector roles, and include practical leadership skills over idealistic concepts.

Some valuable findings related to the negative organizational attributes in the public sector are limited leadership opportunities and potentially unhealthy organizational culture. For example, participants raised concerns regarding the overuse of competency-based evaluations and its emphasis on individual's ability to speak to "competencies" over other comprehensive qualities or abilities as leaders. They explained that the hiring process evaluates individuals' abilities to "choose the correct answer within the bars" rather than assessing their potential, will, or motivation to be leaders. Participants also raised concerns over the excessive focus on equity quotas in the hiring stage, which could overlook merits and other essential qualities as leaders. Participants also stated a lack of transparency in job opportunities and an organizational culture discouraging career goal expression from younger and newer employees as negative attributes.

The last part of the study explored how participants develop leadership through daily life activities and found five major activities: participating in external committees or groups, coaching or volunteering, seeking out leadership training outside of work, reading books or listening to podcasts on leadership, and engaging in self-care activities.

The findings overall underscored the significant influence relationship-building plays in the public sector leadership development process, both as a factor that fosters a positive work environment and as a potential negative factor when approached inappropriately. Because of the vital role relationships play in individuals' leadership development, this study suggests a need for a more careful and equitable approach to relationship-building, particularly regarding recruitment and career progression within the public sector, to ensure transparency and fairness.

The findings from the study provide valuable insights into the BC public sector leadership development and suggest the following areas for improvement to further effective leadership development post-training.

Recommendations for Public Sector Leadership Development

Based on the data gathered from the interview participants, the following are some recommendations for improving leadership development in the public sector.

First, from an organizational point of view, to improve leadership development in the public sector, it would be critical for public sector organizations to focus on providing internal satisfaction to the employees by demonstrating how the work that employees are doing is making positive changes to the public and showing to the employees that their effort is not in vain. The interview

data shows that in public sector leadership development, the most impactful motivators for leadership development are internal satisfaction that comes from helping and developing others and the desire to make fundamental changes for the common good. As Wallace et al. (2021) describe, having sufficient and compelling motivation to become a leader may influence one's leadership identity, which then may cause them to actively seek out ways to develop their leadership, such as seeking out leadership activities and training, which could then reinforce their leader identity as well as leadership ability, creating a "positive spiral." Deci and Ryan (2000) and Locke and Latham (2002) also suggest that fostering intrinsic motivation through helping individuals understand and internalize the value of personal and organizational goals may encourage individuals to commit to their leadership goals more. The importance of employees realizing the positive impact of their work on the public is further supported by Grant (2008), who suggests that when employees realize the positive impact of their work on the public, it serves as a significant motivational factor that creates a sense of purpose, job satisfaction, and commitment to their roles. These motivational effects ultimately can lead them to further develop their leadership by impacting their motivation to become a leader and their leader identities. Internal satisfaction can also improve their leader identity by increasing their commitment to leadership roles, motivating them to work on improving their attributes as leaders, and creating stronger relationships with their colleagues and employees.

Second, public sector organizations should approach the idea of networking and relationship-building more carefully for a more equitable and transparent system. As noted previously, a strong focus on establishing and maintaining relationships has significant positive and negative implications for leadership development in the public sector. In a positive sense, emphasis on relationships within the work environment can create a compelling and positive community built upon supervisory and peer support, respect, and collaboration. However, on the other hand, if relationship-building is misused, it can result in favoritism, lack of transparency, and decreased trust towards the organization and the public sector recruitment process in general. Ensuring a transparent recruitment process through clear communication of job opportunities, qualifications, and criteria to all candidates is essential. Open and public job postings that enable equal access to information can prevent the perception of unfair recruitment practices. Additionally, regularly evaluating the team environment and collecting employee feedback about their experiences, particularly regarding relationship-building, may help maintain positive relationship dynamics. The goal is to balance creating beneficial connections while reducing the negative consequences that could arise from the misuse of relationships.

Similarly, the third recommendation is to continue to develop organizational processes that syncretize equity and merit in hiring and talent management culture to encourage further leadership development processes. Syncretization of equity and merit involves integrating the principles of fairness and inclusivity – equity – with the recognition of individual abilities and achievements – merits. For example, one way of doing this may be broadening the criteria of what constitutes merit (Bergman & Jean, 2016). By expanding the definition of merit to include diverse experiences and skills, employers can acknowledge merit in a more diverse population. Another way syncretization between equity and merit could be achieved is through using a more holistic approach to hiring, which means considering not only the candidate's direct qualifications but also their potential to grow and contribute in diverse ways, acknowledging that traditional metrics of merit may not be able to capture all the positive attributes particularly of those from underrepresented groups (McGee, 2020). Syncretizing between equity and merit allows hiring and talent management processes to be fair and effective in selecting most capable candidates, and also recognizes that

equity and merit are not mutually exclusive; they can complement each other to create and encourage further leadership development experiences.

The fourth recommendation is to provide more follow-up training and courses after the initial training. One participant stated, “Any course I took with the public service that didn’t follow-up or encourage dialogue, new skills in conversation or coaching, didn’t resonate with me well. Those that did allowed me to practice those newly learned skills. Those are the ones I could take away long-term” (A.17), emphasizing the importance of follow-up training that encourages discussion and further learning. Participants suggested some of the practical ways of providing follow-up training. For example, one participant stated, “I suggest that, even with some of the books mentioned in the training, if they have a discussion space, forums, or a reference library that you can touch base on, you could get more out of the training” (A.3). These include providing a discussion space or internet forums after the initial training to allow participants to share on-going experiences and learning. Creating employee resource groups that offer follow-up leadership development activities and provide access to further resources and connections can also be beneficial (Kupritz and Cowell, 2015). For further development, it would be helpful to allow a discussion space that encourages trainees to ask what they did during the training to improve leadership development, how those activities shifted things for them, and what might be the areas of improvement organizationally and individually. Some other ways to follow up post-training may include offering an online library with reference materials or providing additional or more advanced training on the same topic. Doing so would allow more discussions to happen after the training, which is essential for continuing the learning that occurred during the initial training.

Another practical recommendation to improve leadership development in the “white space” is to provide training that aligns with real-life work. For example, as the participants suggested, even if the training is about general competencies such as motivating people or having difficult conversations, it would be beneficial to have the content align more with the unique work situations that can be found within the public sector (such as corrections, police departments, etc.). As much as unique and important differences hold true in differentiating the public sector from the private sector, it also holds true that there is quite a bit of variability within the public sector itself. One participant commented, “One challenge is that the training is broad in terms of everyone learning the same concept – specific competency, etc. – and there isn’t a lot in the middle about you being a leader doing your work within your specific branch” (A.7). Another participant stated, “it is crucial to connect what you learned to what you are trying to perform” (C.1). As shown through these comments, as much as generalized concepts and competencies are important, the challenge arises from addressing how particular training connects to individual leadership roles within their organizations. There was a consensus regarding the need for training to align more with the work environment and situations.

The sixth recommendation is to provide more opportunities for mentorships and coaching sessions. Participants suggested that having mentors is one of the more important organizational factors that positively impacted their leadership development. One participant noted:

“It is very important to have people willing to mentor and look out for aspiring leaders. It’s like being an apprentice to someone already in a leadership position. I always sought a mentor. Having a program where you can apply to become an apprentice to someone you look up to is very helpful” (C.1).

Another participant also stated, “I know the public service is not known for executives or people in higher leadership roles having lots of time, but even just having a meeting once a month – or every two months – would be very effective” (A.3). As these statements demonstrate, participants noted that having the opportunity to meet with people already in leadership positions such as executive directors, or those who they view as their role models, as a mentor-mentee relationship would be very helpful in developing their leadership. It would allow them to learn from the mentors and establish positive relationships.

Lastly, participants recommended that organizations offer more training over days rather than an hour or half-days. For example, one participant described having spread-out training as having the time to engage in “prepare, participate and practice” phases (A.15). He described the prepare phase as having the initial material and reflecting it on your own space. The participate phase might be when “you participate in a webinar across the province with a guest or a panel.” The practice phase might be “with a workbook – finding ways to look for opportunities to practice the conversation and skills to incorporate them into your job.” He further explained that these phases are impossible to carry out in training that is one or just a couple of hours long. This kind of developmental information needs to be carried out over a more extended period to allow trainees to understand and engage with the materials thoroughly.

In conclusion, some recommendations for improving leadership development in the public sector post-leadership training would include enhancing intrinsic motivators; approaching relationship-building more transparently and carefully; balancing equity versus merit-based hiring; providing more follow-up training; aligning training with real-world scenarios; fostering mentor-mentee relationships and extending training duration. These recommendations aim to provide meaningful, practical, and effective support for aspiring leaders in the public sector as they strive to develop their public sector leadership in the “white-space.”

Limitations and Areas for Further Research

The insights from this research can inform and enhance leadership development approaches post-training in the public sector to contribute to the growth and effectiveness of potential leaders.

However, the study also holds some limitations. This explorative study investigated participants’ experiences, and the data collection depended on each participant’s perception. Thus, the study results were impacted by each participant’s opinions and individual differences. However, that relates to the primary goal of this research, which was to explore personal experiences on how they further develop their leadership learning outcomes after post-leadership training.

The study could also not fully control the training program the participants have taken since they have attended different training depending on the organization or the department they belong to. Nonetheless, all these programs focused on public sector leadership development. In addition, the study’s goal was not to evaluate the leadership development program. The focus was not on the participants’ abilities as leaders but on their *experiences* in trying to become better leaders post-training.

Lastly, another study limitation is that the interview sample size was limited to twenty-one

participants. However, this sample size is generally expected for explorative and qualitative studies that use in-depth interviews as a primary data collection method. For example, Morse (1994) suggests that qualitative sample sizes often range from fifteen to thirty participants for in-depth interviews. Also, Morse along with other researchers such as Creswell and Creswell (2017) and Patton (2014) indicate that the importance of qualitative research is not achieving certain number of participants, but rather achieving data saturation and depth of understanding. They state that qualitative research is encouraged to continue data collection until new data being collected does not significantly contribute to further insights, which was the case with this study. Further, the participant pool is focused enough to represent a specific population in BC – public sector employees – yet diverse concerning their job positions, race, gender, age, and more, well representing the wider population within the BC public sector. For example, the leadership roles of the participants ranged from managers to executive directors, and the age group ranged from individuals in their thirties to individuals nearing retirement. They were also from different areas of the B.C public sector including various ministries and municipal governments.

To continue with further research on public sector leadership development is recommended. One suggestion might be to compare the findings of this study to the Work Environment Survey (WES) score conducted by the B.C. Ministries. WES aims to determine how the work environment positively or negatively impacts B.C. public servants' work abilities and leadership development. Hence, it could be helpful to compare the WES scores with the data gathered in this study, especially with team and organizational attributes, to better understand the relationship between work environment and leadership development processes among B.C. public servants. Another suggestion might be to conduct more studies exploring the space between post-training and leadership development outcomes in various areas within the Canadian public sector. These may include other public sector jurisdictions such as the federal government and other provinces, universities, or health authorities.

Furthermore, although this study is focused on Canadian public sector leadership development, some of the findings in this study – such as the heightened importance of dealing with optics and public scrutiny, importance of mentorships, emphasis on intrinsic motivation and positive relationships within the workplace – are becoming increasingly relevant in both public and private sector contexts. For instance, both public and private sectors are facing growing public scrutiny and accountability. While the public sector has always dealt with intense public scrutiny due to taxpayer funding and public service mandates, the intensity of this scrutiny has only grown with the advent of social media. Relatedly, the private sector is now experiencing increasing consumer awareness and activism, where corporate actions are scrutinized through social medias and news coverage (Madsen & Rogers, 2015). In addition, according to Ryan & Deci (2000), both sectors value intrinsic motivators as driving factors for leadership development; the public sector may often indicate public service motivation as a significant driver, while the private sector indicate autonomy and purpose as main intrinsic motivators (Pink, 2009). Given this growing convergence in these areas between public and private sector contexts, this study may also have a notable bearing on related “white-space” activities in a private sector context..

In conclusion, it is hoped that this research study, along with future research on the public sector leadership development in the Canadian context, will contribute helpful insight into how public servants develop their leadership after formal training and what individual, team, and organizational factors may benefit or hinder them in the process. Moreover, it can be hoped that

considering the growing convergence between the public and private sectors, this study may contribute to better understanding of not only the public sector leadership development processes, but also of the “white-space” activities in the private sector leadership development.

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Appendices

Appendix I

BC Public Service Competencies

Leading People

- Change Leadership
- Change Management
- Developing Others
- Empowerment
- Holding People Accountable
- Leadership

Achieving Business Results

- Analytical Thinking
- Business Acumen
- Conceptual Thinking
- Decisive Insight
- Long-Term Focus
- Managing Organizational Resources
- Planning, Organizing & Coordinating
- Problem Solving & Judgment
- Strategic Orientation

Personal Effectiveness

- Building Partnerships with Stakeholders
- Commitment to Continuous Learning
- Concern for Order
- Continuous Development
- Expertise
- Flexibility
- Improving Operations
- Initiative
- Innovation
- Integrity
- Organizational Commitment
- Reflecting on Difficulties
- Results Orientation
- Self-Confidence
- Self-Control

Interpersonal Relationships

- Concern for Image Impact
- Conflict Management
- Customer/Client Development
- Engaging External Partners
- Impact/Influence
- Information Seeking

- Listening, Understanding & Responding
- Organizational Awareness
- Partners with Stakeholders
- Relationship Building
- Service Orientation
- Teamwork & Cooperation

Appendix II

BC Competencies for Strategic Leaders

Core Competencies

- Building strategic alliances
- Vision and goal-setting
- Creating and managing change
- Solving problems creatively
- Promoting empowerment
- Executive presence

Role-Specific Competencies

- Service Delivery - motivating for peak performance
- Project Management - building team orientation, design strategy, and structure
- Governance - design strategy and structure
- Negotiations - negotiating/conflict management
- Stakeholder Relations - communicating effectively

Appendix III

Possible Leadership Programs for Data Gathering

- B.C. Public Service Agency Leadership Programs
- UVIC Leadership Development Program
- UBC Leadership Programs
- Island Health Leadership Development
- Master of Arts in Leadership - Royal Roads University.