

Being Division Chairs: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Investigation into the
Experiences of Academic Middle Managers in a Canadian College

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(Educational Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

April, 2015

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ABSTRACT

This hermeneutic phenomenological study investigates the experiences of a group of academic managers (the division chairs) at South City College (SCC), a primarily university-transfer post-secondary institution in Vancouver, Canada. Written from the perspective of a participant-observer, this case study research reveals the myriad ways in which the division chairs' leadership and management aspirations were confounded by institutional systems and attitudes that had not evolved in response to changes in the post-secondary climate in British Columbia and elsewhere. The experiences of both the division chairs and contextual participants were gathered in a series of one-on-one interviews transcribed by the author. Interpretative phenomenological analysis of the data revealed that both a commitment to the collegial model and responsibility for repetitive clerical duties act as primary obstacles to leadership success for the division chairs. The author's role as a division chair during the time of data collection and analysis provides particular and specific insight into the division chairs' experiences during a time of institutional transition. Recommendations include that the institution should invest in administrative and systems support for the division chairs. Doing so would reinforce that the division chair role is a valued component of the institution's collegial culture; would relieve the division chairs of any clerical tasks identified as not essential to their role; would free the time necessary for the division chairs to lead and manage collegially; and would potentially resolve the problem of the division chairs having enormous responsibility but no authority by allowing for the consultative processes that characterize a well-functioning collegial institution.

PREFACE

This dissertation, entitled “Being Division Chairs: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Investigation into the Experiences of Academic Middle Managers in a Canadian College,” is an original intellectual product of the author, Julia Denholm. The data collection process was covered by UBC Behavioral Research Ethics Board Certificate number H12-02647 and by the Research Ethics Board of the institution described herein as “South City College” LC-REB 20121130-1.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Were it not for Dr. Daniel Pratt, this dissertation would never have been conceived of. Thank you, Dan, for persuading me that a Ph.D. was possible when I had persuaded myself it was not, and thank you for your astonishing clarity of thought and speech. My heartfelt thanks to Dr. Thomas Sork for being willing to supervise me once I had lurched my way back into the Ph.D. program; thank you for your advice, for your support, for your unfailing kindness. To Dr. Ross Paul, for your warmth, your stories, your pages of careful and helpful critique, and for your inspiring book. Dan Pratt, Tom Sork, and Ross Paul I owe this work to you. Thank you.

To my division chair colleagues, thank you for putting up with me, for helping and supporting not only my studies but also the work we did together. “South City College” is a better place because of you. And to all of the faculty and administrative leaders who gave so willingly of your time: thank you.

To my friends and colleagues who listened to my endless complaining and tirelessly read drafts, and drafts, and drafts: thank you for your wisdom, your patience, your good humour, your suggestions, and your perspective. Noel Currie, Cheryl McKeeman, Anne Moriarty, Carrie Hunter, and always Sarah Bowers. Thank you.

My deepest gratitude to “South City College” and to Capilano University for providing the supported leaves that enabled me to finish this project.

To my family, most especially to Mum, Emma, Sarah, and Dave: my thanks.

DEDICATION

For Vera Gloria Byman Denholm, James Johnstone Denholm, Emma Jane MacLeod,
Sarah Hayley Sloan MacLeod, Robert Wilson Denholm, and David Andrew Tomiak.

With love.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

From May, 2011 until January 2014 I was one of six division chairs at South City College (SCC), a primarily university-transfer post-secondary institution in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The position of division chair is roughly equivalent to that of associate dean at similar institutions, and SCC's divisions include Community Programs, Creative Arts, Health Sciences, Humanities, Mathematics and Sciences, and Social Sciences and Business. Together the division chairs oversee the 36 instructional departments and programs at the college. In pairs, they report to three deans in the Faculties of Arts, Science, and Social Sciences and Management. At the time of data collection (January-May, 2013) each division chair was a relative newcomer to the position, and we had been told that, as "new" division chairs, we represented the changed and changing organization and culture of the institution. We were also told that we were expected to be not only managers but also leaders. Together we shared the joint enterprise of defining and establishing ourselves as division chairs who were true leaders, not "just" managers.

Despite our previous experience as instructors and department chairs or coordinators, our work as division chairs was a new challenge for each of us. Division chairs at SCC not only teach a 2/8 (or equivalent) load, they also act as liaisons between and among the departments and programs that report to them, the deans to whom they report, and the other departments around the college that depend on them for information about all aspects of faculty work. Through these relationships and multiple others, division chairs ensure that the institution offers the

appropriate number of instructional sections, that those sections are filled with qualified students, and that the instructional faculty are competent and appropriately supported by such things as office space and computer access. Division chairs administer the academic, capital, and operating budgets for their departments and programs, and must not only justify their divisions' expenses but also argue for increased funding to areas in need of support.

During my time in the position, division chairs were increasingly being called upon to initiate and facilitate change; we were expected to convey and contextualize the initiatives undertaken by the deans and the other senior administrators, and were responsible for cultivating “buy in” among faculty members. At the time of data collection, SCC was undergoing a period of rapid change; consequently the division chairs were kept very busy. The tension between our roles as managers and as leaders—not to mention the tension that resulted from the additional work—brought us together very quickly. Without ever articulating it, we developed a tacit understanding that we were in this together and we could make our individual jobs easier by working cooperatively.

Because we were all relatively new to the position, and because the position was understood differently by the then-new college administration than it was by the previous one, we were all struggling to understand and embody our new roles without yet really knowing what those roles were. In many ways—at least for some of us—our lack of confidence in our own competence motivated us to work together to both learn how to do our jobs and be comfortable in our newly defined roles. We were learning what “new” division chairs do and how to do it. We were learning

how to be managers and leaders, and we were learning—quite purposefully— together. At the same time, we were very different individuals, and each of us had different trials, challenges, strengths, and goals. Some of us had career aspirations that would take us beyond the level of division chair: after I became a division chair in 2011, two of my colleagues were promoted to administrative positions (one is now dean of international education and the other has returned to faculty after serving as an interim dean). Consequently, two new faculty joined “div. chair row,” placing those of us in more “senior” positions in the role of experts, despite the fact that we were still both learning and helping to define our own roles and responsibilities. In May 2014, two of the division chairs participating in this research stepped down, having chosen not to carry on in their positions beyond their initial, two-year, appointments. In January 2014 I accepted an interim position as dean at another institution, a role that has subsequently become permanent. And, as this document was being prepared, another colleague chose to step out of the division chair role effective May 1, 2015. However, at the time of data collection, the division chairs shared a desire to lead our constituent groups in a time of rapid change at SCC. But even though the institution was actively helping us to learn our jobs, for some of us the position of “leader” was not yet a comfortable fit.

One of the ways the institution was helping us to develop leadership ability was to send us to leadership training programs. For example, in August 2011, three division chairs, including me, attended the first of two, week-long, sessions in leadership development held by The Chair Academy, an American organization that has “offered world-class, competency-based, leadership development programs for

college and university leaders since 1992” (Chair Academy). Two division chairs had previously completed this program, with positive results. However, those of us in the 2011/12 session felt that the program relied on American curriculum being delivered by American facilitators to a Canadian audience that did not reflect the audience type for which the program had clearly been designed. Although the experience was a good bonding session, we emerged without any significantly greater understanding of what it means to be a leader in the Canadian academic context. As a group, we remained on the cusp: firmly grounded in our instructional backgrounds but not yet necessarily embracing or embodying what we had been told was our expected role as institutional leaders.

1.1 Problem

My experience as a division chair made me aware of the lack of research into the experience of academic leadership and management in the context of a Canadian institution. While there is ample research into academic leadership generally, only a fraction of the literature focuses on or even includes academic leaders in Canada. For example, a Google Scholar search conducted on December 24, 2014 produced 17,600 results for “academic leadership”. Adding “Canada” to the keywords reduced that number to 3,720. And practically speaking, while many leaders are inspired by the abundant leadership literature, much of what has been published focuses on the “how to” of leadership (e.g. Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Fullan & Scott, 2009; Kotter, 1996; Mintzberg, 2009); my interest is significantly more experiential. Consequently, the purpose of this multi-participant study was to provide a deeper understanding of the process of becoming a leader as experienced by six middle

managers (division chairs) at a primarily university-transfer post-secondary institution in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Below I present the detailed statement of purpose and research questions, followed by some contextual information about the institution referred to in this document as “South City College,” including an organizational chart. I also present a brief summary of my own career trajectory, including the major change that significantly affected my perspective on some of the findings included in this document. The chapter concludes with an overview of the organization of this dissertation.

1.2 Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

This study reports the results of what began as an investigation into the experience of becoming a leader—the phenomenology of the development or construction of leadership identity—in a group of academic managers (the division chairs) at South City College (SCC), a primarily university-transfer post-secondary institution in Vancouver, Canada. Goals of the research project included establishing the context in which a group of purposefully selected “research participants”, that is, I and my colleagues at the time, were working, and soliciting observations not only about how we got where we were but also how we were being trained or were otherwise learning how to be leaders. Most importantly, a goal of the research was to provide some insight into how the development of leadership identity is experienced: to produce a kind of *What to Expect When You’re Expecting* for current and prospective academic leaders. Recognizing that most things educational are context- and situation-specific, the overarching goal of the research project was to

develop greater understanding and insight into the experience of making the transition from manager to leader within a specific institutional context.

I expected this shift to be reflected not only in a different institutional role, but also in the acquisition of a different set of competencies and proficiencies and the emergence of a different professional and institutional identity within the six academic communities of SCC. However, as can happen in phenomenological and qualitative research studies, whose natures are emergent (Cresswell, 1998, Merriam, 1998, Patton, 2002), what I actually found differed from what I set out to find.

When I began this research project I was a very new division chair who had a notion that “becoming” a division chair would include a process of identity development that would result in me identifying myself as a “leader” rather than as a “manager,” consistent with Zaleznik (1977/2004). Consequently, my original goal was to examine changes in identity development by exploring the experience of making the transition from the role of manager to the role of leader, focusing on how the shift was understood, implemented, experienced, and ultimately interpreted by each of six individuals. The original research questions were as follows:

1. How do individuals experience a shift in identity from manager to leader within an academic institution?
2. How does that experience differ from person to person and to what do individuals attribute those differences?

3. In what ways has the institution—and the activities of our small group of peer leaders—contributed to our developing individual and collective identities as leaders?
4. What can be learned to help others make such shifts in identity and role performance in similar academic departments and institutions?

However, as I worked through the processes of data collection and analysis, I learned that while my research questions had to do with the development of leadership identity, the responses indicated that the division chairs were not developing new identities as leaders but were, rather, struggling to add leadership responsibilities to their already heavy workloads, which included both clerical and managerial tasks. I therefore revisited the research questions and reshaped them to account for the explicit contradiction of one of my initial assumptions. The revised questions are as follows:

1. How do individuals experience the demands of managing and leading within an academic institution?
2. How does that experience differ from person to person and to what do individuals attribute those differences? (No change.)
3. In what ways has the institution—and the activities of our small group of peer leaders—contributed to our developing individual and collective strengths as managers and leaders? (No change.)
4. What can be learned to help others make such shifts in role performance in similar academic departments and institutions?

The process of answering the research questions as they evolved took place within the context of the primarily university-transfer institution described, in this document, as South City College.

1.3 Institutional Context and Organizational Structure

For the first fifty years of its existence, the post-secondary system in British Columbia (BC) had a relatively uneventful history. The province's oldest research university, The University of British Columbia (UBC) was established in 1915, when it became independent of its original association with McGill University (University of British Columbia [UBC] Archives, 2013a). Nearly 50 years would pass before UBC's (and thus British Columbia's) higher education system had grown sufficiently to require significant expansion. However, following a tripling of UBC's enrolment from 3000 in 1944 to almost 9500 in 1948 (Logan cited in Dennison, 1977) and an amendment to the Public Schools Act in 1958 allowing school boards to establish two-year colleges, the government commissioned John B. Macdonald, then-president of UBC, to report on the potential for expanding the BC post-secondary system. The resulting document, entitled *Higher Education in British Columbia and a Plan for the Future* (Macdonald, 1962), is generally referred to as "The Macdonald report" and has become something of a landmark in BC's post-secondary history.

Inspired by the 1960 document *A Master Plan for Higher Education in California 1960-1975*, Macdonald's (1962) report argued that the post-secondary system in BC had to expand both rapidly and thoughtfully, offering programs that would respond to student need, comprising institutions that were geographically distributed around the province, and including both an increased number of

universities and several two-year regional colleges. Consequently, Victoria College was renamed the University of Victoria in 1963 (Gaber, 2005), and Simon Fraser University was taken from concept to completion in just two years (Dennison, 1997), enrolling its first class in September of 1965 (Simon Fraser University, n.d.). Macdonald also recognized the Vancouver School Board's wish to develop a two-year college by recommending the creation, in 1965, of Vancouver City College. After nearly 30 years as a campus of Vancouver City College, South City College (SCC) was established as an independent public post-secondary institution in 1994. The institution has grown steadily over the years; as of June 2014, SCC had a population of over 21,000 students annually (SCC, 2014a).

South City College's academic offerings include both not-for-credit courses delivered through its Continuing Studies department and for-credit courses delivered on what is usually referred to as the Regular Studies (RS) side of the house. At the time of data collection, approximately 80% of SCC's RS students were at the institution to take advantage of the transfer credit model that exists throughout British Columbia: students are able to take courses at the first- and second-year level and may seamlessly transfer them to any of the province's universities for full credit. The remaining 20% of RS students were enrolled in one of several two-year diploma programs or in one of the institution's four baccalaureate degree programs. Oversight of RS programming at SCC is the responsibility of a team of academic administrators—the academic deans and division chairs—reporting to the vice-president academic and provost. Figure 1,

below, shows the organizational structure of the academic reporting hierarchy as of January 2015.

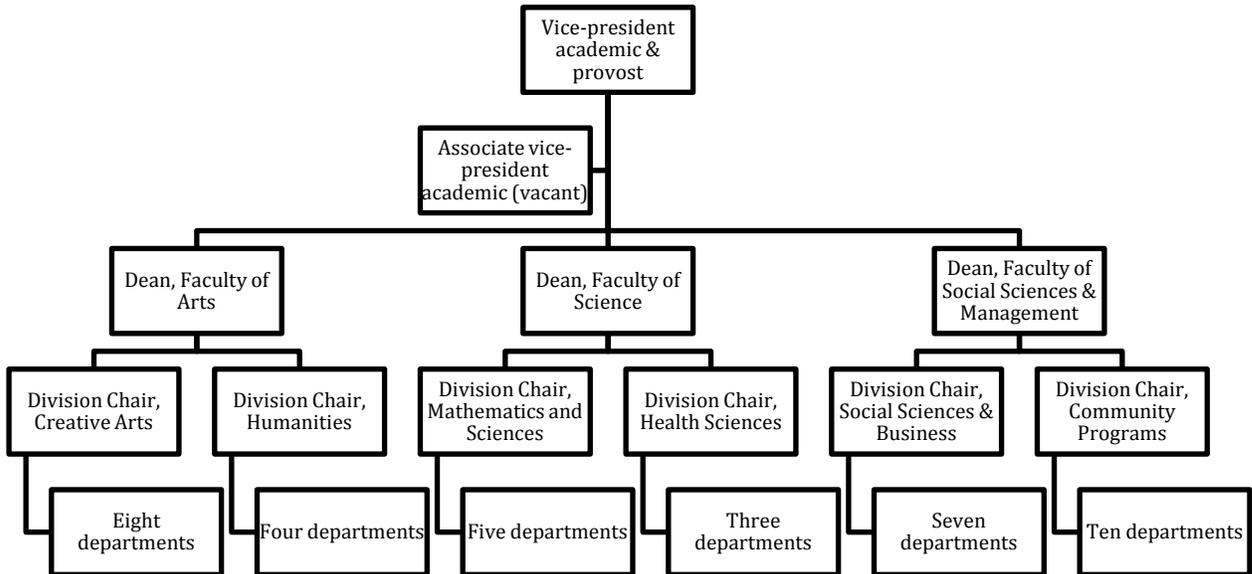


Figure 1: Academic organizational structure, South City College, 2015.

As can be seen from Figure 1, the academic hierarchy at SCC is relatively flat; the division chairs report directly to the deans, who in turn report to the vice president academic, who reports to the president. There are no associate deans at SCC.

Institutionally, in addition to the vice president academic, two other vice presidents and three non-academic deans oversee student services, continuing studies, international education, and other operational services, such as IT. On the academic side of the house, each of the six division chairs is responsible for managing and leading approximately 100 faculty members; additionally, each division chair carries the equivalent of a 2/8 instructional load. While the title is division chair, the

position is similar those of associate dean or dean at other institutions. For example, as division chair of humanities I was responsible for managing a \$6.6 million budget and leading over 100 faculty and staff in the delivery of over 500 instructional, tutorial, and administrative sections each academic year. As part of their professional development, the division chairs are encouraged to develop their potential as leaders, both by attending the Chairs' Leadership Academy (as several have done) and by participating in, and facilitating, various leadership development activities at the institution. During the research period, rarely did a month go by without a conversation about leadership development, or succession planning, or both. However, such conversations seemed predicated on the assumption that division chairs, along with their department chair and coordinator colleagues, were on some kind of trajectory that would see us moving "up" the academic hierarchy, presumably by moving into associate dean or dean positions either within the institution or elsewhere. My interest in this research project was provoked in no small part by my curiosity about how my division chair colleagues and I felt about the institutional pressure that we become leaders and my own lack of understanding about what differentiates the positions of "leader" and "manager" in a post-secondary setting.

Additionally, however, I was motivated by the influence of a changing political and economic context on the roles and responsibilities of the division chairs. In 1998, when I started at SCC, the division chairs tended to be senior faculty members, mostly men, who took on the role in the latter stages of their careers. More than one of my colleagues observed that the division chair position was seen

as an exit strategy: a relatively stable position that brought with it some prestige and a small stipend that would bump up the division chair's pension at retirement. And while this characterization may be neither completely accurate nor fair, when I applied to be division chair the notion that the position was an exit strategy, or that I would be able to coast in the job, was explicitly contradicted. I was expected to be a leader in times of change, both institutional change and change as a consequence of external pressures.

These changes included shrinking budgets (by the time I left SCC, less than half of the institution's revenue came from government; for the first time in its history the majority of SCC's operating budget was funded by tuition), aging faculty, an increase in part-time faculty, changing demographics that led to increasing inter-institutional competition for students, and an increase in students with particular needs, such as students with disabilities and international students requiring support with language acquisition and cultural acclimation. New degree and program development (including at the post-baccalaureate level, a new area for SCC) was underway, in part because the only way to increase tuition revenue beyond the government-mandated 2% per year is to launch new programs with new (read: higher than historical) tuitions. As well, government accountability measures were coming into effect, including requirements for program assessment and review that included "goals" to be achieved along the path to exemption from the Degree Quality Assessment Board process, a required step in the development and approval of degrees.

Because many of these requirements/pressures were new, and because there had been little change at SCC between 1994 and 2008 (when a new president was installed), it was clear that much of the responsibility for leading these initiatives would fall to the division chairs, particularly when a revised academic structure brought two new deans to the institution, each of whom came with a long-overdue new perspective but also the need for some time to learn their jobs and to understand SCC. Consequently, having been appointed with the explicit expectation that we would be leaders, my division chair colleagues and I often wondered what such an expectation would mean, in terms of our working lives. One of the motivations for this research project was my desire to answer that question.

1.4 The Changing Perspective of the Participant-Researcher

When I began doctoral coursework in 2008, I had just completed three years as chair of the English department at SCC. When a division chair position became available in 2010, I applied for it and was successful, starting in May 2011. Over time, and to some extent as a consequence of my doctoral studies, I began to acknowledge my deep dissatisfaction with my work as division chair, a feeling that intensified as I began the research for this document. As I conducted interviews with my colleagues and superiors, I realized that the division chair's work did not afford the institutional leadership opportunities I had envisioned that it would. I began to look for other opportunities, and in January 2014 I was appointed acting dean at another institution, a position that has subsequently become permanent; I resigned as division chair at SCC in May 2014.

To say that moving out of the division chair role has changed my perspective of the job is a massive understatement. On reflection, I see that I was deeply unsatisfied with much of the work, and that any joy I was experiencing in the job came from my engagement with my division chair colleagues, the faculty and staff at SCC, and with my dean and other administrators. I found administrative (often clerical) paperwork excruciatingly dull, and towards the end of my time at SCC I had begun to think of my job as analogous to the film *Groundhog Day*, with the “repeat” occurring at the beginning of each semester, rather than every day. However, I have subsequently become convinced that my dean at SCC was correct when she told me that being a division chair provided the best possible preparation for my current work as a dean.

This understanding has enabled me to answer a question that plagued me throughout the data collection and analysis stages of this investigation: I no longer wonder why anyone would take on the division chair role because I know now that the work of the division chair (or the associate dean, which is a similar position) is a necessary introduction to the specific responsibilities of academic administration, with all of its challenges. As division chair, one is forced to determine whether that responsibility is heady or horrifying, and to base subsequent career decisions on the outcome. As division chair, I learned that I enjoy and value that responsibility, and that I wanted more of it, rather than less, ideally in the absence of the more clerical tasks. As will be shown, that was not the case for some of my colleagues.

1.5 Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter One has presented an introduction to the problem being investigated in this dissertation, including an overview of the division chair position and a statement of the research purpose and questions. The chapter has introduced the institutional context and the organizational structure of “South City College.” The chapter also includes a description of how the perspective of the author as participant-researcher changed over the period of research and writing.

Chapter Two presents a review of the literature, including research into academic leadership, academic culture and collegiality, leadership and management skills, and leadership development, including a discussion of the relevant literature that focuses specifically on the Canadian context. Chapter Three introduces the research paradigm and its determining conceptual frameworks; Chapter Four presents the methodology and framework for data analysis and interpretation.

Chapters Five, Six, and Seven present the findings, organized by participant group. The responses of the faculty leaders at a level immediately below that of division chair are presented in Chapter Five. Chapter Six presents the responses of administrators. Chapter Seven provides the findings from interviews held with the primary participant group, the division chairs.

Chapter Eight presents a discussion of the data, including the emergent themes and sub-themes, and contextualizes the findings within the relevant literature. Chapter Nine is the conclusion, including findings, recommendations for further action and study, and a brief concluding comment.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this multi-participant study was to provide a deeper understanding of the process of becoming a leader as experienced by six middle managers (division chairs) in a Western Canadian undergraduate college. Specifically, my experiences as a division chair at the time and those of my colleagues were the subject of my primary investigation, insofar as they may potentially be of interest to other post-secondary educators and/or administrators who find themselves in similar situations, or to anyone interested in the experiences of academic middle managers. This contextual review of the literature was ongoing throughout the process of developing the study's parameters, the data collection and analysis processes, and the synthesis phases of the study. The literature review draws on books, published and unpublished dissertations, Internet resources, professional journals, and periodicals. These sources were accessed through ERIC/EBSCO, ProQuest, Google Scholar, and other search engines via the University of British Columbia's Library website. The search process was not specifically delimited by a time frame, primarily because the body of literature on academic leadership is both dynamic and growing.

This critical review begins with an exploration of various definitions of academic leadership and academic culture then moves on to a review of the literature concerned with the process of academic leadership development. The review next turns to the Canadian context, and concludes with my observations of how the review of literature supports the need to undertake the study itself.

2.1 Defining Academic Leadership and Management

Ambiguity surrounds the definition of academic leadership, with the result that the terms *leader* and *manager* are often used interchangeably (Marshall, Orrell, Cameron, Bosanquet & Thomas, 2011). In a study employing interviews and document analysis, Marshall et al. explored the nature of participants' understandings of several concepts or notions in the context of leading and managing teaching and learning: leader and manager, leading and managing, and leadership and management. They found that participants typically used "leader" and "manager" (and their variants) interchangeably but in practice demonstrated that the concepts were distinct, if integrated. For practicing and potential academic leaders, understanding the difference between management and leadership is important, and can be a key factor in a decision that has been described as "crossing over to the dark side" (Dowdall & Dowdall, 2005). Managers are responsible for planning and budgeting; leaders must set a direction. Managers take care of organizing and staffing; leaders are concerned with aligning people within an overriding vision. Managers accomplish their goals by controlling variables and problem solving; leaders achieve their vision by motivating and inspiring (Kotter, 1996).

Academic leaders must possess traditional leadership competencies such as being open, honest, consultative, and engaging as well as being able to listen, engage, persuade, negotiate, and think strategically (Spendlove, 2007). Additionally, academic leaders should be able to admit mistakes and learn from experience, should be visible to faculty, staff, and students, and should know about and

understand the vagaries of the “academic coal face,” including having an understanding of the academic process and knowing the difference between good and bad institutions. Such abilities both result from and are essential to the requirements that academic leaders must be seen and respected as academics, and should have experience as department head or in a similar position (Spendlove). The specific requirements Spendlove cites as essential for leaders in academic contexts differentiate the positions of “leader” and “academic leader.” Middlehurst and Elton (1992) cite Kotter (1990) stating that, “management is about coping with complexity, while leadership is about coping with change” (p. 252). Respondents in Middleton and Elton’s study defined academic leadership “in terms of institutional strategy, direction and development; the articulation and representation of institutional goals and values; the generation of institutional commitment, confidence and cohesion” (p. 258). In contrast, academic management was defined “in terms of policy execution; resource deployment and optimization; procedural frameworks; and planning, co-ordination and control systems” (p. 258). According to Middlehurst and Elton, academic management is

the infrastructure that supports both leadership and the activities of the institution and its parts: the system of formal roles and responsibilities with their associated levels of authority; the internal decision-making apparatus and regulatory frame-work; the activities of planning, budgeting, coordinating and controlling; and the areas of finance, marketing, staffing, student affairs, estates and buildings, [and] administrative services. (p. 259 citing Kotter, 1990)

At SCC, the organizational structure places the division chairs in a role that is strongly defined by the relatively non-hierarchical collegial model that has been in place for many years. Although members of the faculty bargaining unit, the division chairs are typically described as faculty leaders, despite the fact that much of the work they do is, given the above definitions, managerial. And historically, most of the division chairs' work has been managerial, especially in the sense that, consistent with Drucker's (1974/2011) definition of managers, the division chairs hold the institution together, at least on the faculty side. The division chairs have long been responsible for "enabling the organization to carry out its established mission in an effective way" (Davis, 2003, p. 4). In recent years, however, the leadership role of the division chairs has been emphasized; increasingly, division chairs are being called upon to challenge established processes, inspire shared visions, enable others to act, model the way and encourage the heart (Davis). If, as Drucker (1974/2011) famously observed, "management is doing things right [and] leadership is doing the right things," in times of rapid institutional change the division chairs are increasingly responsible to do both.

2.2 Academic Culture and "Collegiality"

Higher education researchers have made multiple attempts to define and study academic culture. In numerous examples, researchers provide extensive descriptions of the institutions and/or cultures they write about (e.g. Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008; Birnbaum, 1988, 2000; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Neumann, 1995; Paul, 2011; Tierney, 2008). Given that leaders are expected to be change agents (Birnbaum, 2000, Paul, 2011), and that change results in anxiety (Bergquist &

Pawlak), it is essential that a successful academic leader thoroughly understand the culture of his or her institution. Schein (1981) argued that before we can produce cultural change we must first understand the culture we are in; leaders must have full and nuanced understandings of institutional culture in order to implement decisions; understanding culture helps leaders to make the right decisions for their organizations (see also Tierney, 1988). Bergquist (1992) identified three common threads that contribute to a definition of academic culture: culture provides meaning and context for a specific group of people; culture helps define the nature of reality for the people who are part of that culture; and culture serves an overarching purpose in that it is established around the production of something valued by its members. However, because culture is an abstract concept (Schein, 2010) it resists concrete definition and is better understood through a description of defining characteristics.

2.2.1 Defining (or not defining) academic culture.

Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) argued that organizational cultures form as a means for the members of the culture to reduce their anxiety; presumably, in times of institutional change, members of the community might be expected to cling to the notion of existing institutional culture, at least as they understand it. At SCC, where both faculty and administrators refer to the culture as “collegial,” the institutional commitment to this cultural understanding persists despite a lack of an agreed-upon definition of what the term means. Although other institutions explicitly define “the collegial model” (see, for example, Capilano University, 2010), South City College does not, which means that individuals have internalized their own unique

definitions of “collegial” in a way that makes it impossible to articulate a single agreed-upon definition. Such individual definitions make institutional change difficult, because the inherent threat to institutional culture reinforces and deepens the existing cultures, causing them to become increasingly resistant to both change and the perceived threat that accompanies it. Kuh and Whitt (1988) address this problem: starting from the premise that culture is not a mechanism by which to control or influence behavior but is, instead, a framework for understanding what happens in colleges and universities, they defined culture in the context of their investigation as follows:

the collective, mutually shaping patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that guide the behavior of individuals and groups in an institute of higher education and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off campus (pp. 12-13).

Culture is, according to the authors, contextual, tacit, and paradigmatic. It exists largely at the sub-conscious level and although relatively stable, it continuously evolves.

The relative strength of a culture is unquantifiable, yet the influence of culture on a group or individual can be utterly evident, and I have seen evidence of this influence at SCC and am aware that it shapes my own experiences and those of my colleagues. Culture “shapes human interactions and reflects the outcomes of mutually shaping interactions” (Kuh & Whitt, 1988, p. 16). At SCC, where the need to respond to external pressures (such as from government or as a consequence of demographic change) is influencing the amount of time faculty are able to spend

managing and leading collegially, the division chairs often act as interpreters between the increasingly bureaucratic nature of administration and the much-valued collegial culture espoused by faculty.

2.2.2 Collegiality.

Academic or institutional culture is inextricably connected with the notion of collegiality, which at SCC has shaped the organizational model to include the unusual position of division chair, the nominal “highest” position in an avowedly non-hierarchical collegial structure. Baldrige (1971) identified three threads running through the literature on the collegium as a model for a university [or college]: “(a) descriptions of a collegial university’s management, (b) discussions of the faculty’s professional authority, and (c) utopian prescriptions for how the educational process should operate” (p. 4). The notion of academic collegiality is very strong at SCC, where faculty and administrators alike refer to the “collegial model” to describe the “participative, collegial approach to decision-making [that] is seen as one of the central values underpinning academic life” (Dowling-Hetherington, p. 220). However, the collegial model is by no means utopian: “collegiality” is not always positively experienced by academic faculty members, managers, or leaders. As an example of institutional collegiality having negative implications, Spiller (2009) observed that collegiality is typically understood as cooperation but that in practice, collegiality only works for those “in the know.” Citing Ramsden (1998), Spiller noted that collegiality “has the potential to disempower, marginalize and injure staff who are not part of the favoured group” (p. 683). That is, collegiality works well as long as one fits into the collegium. For two academic

leaders studied by Acker (2010), extensive experience in previous leadership positions was not enough to rescue them from “drowning” when they were appointed to positions for which they were not a good fit. Similarly, in a study of the experiences of newly appointed women leaders in the U.S. and Turkey, Hacifazlioglu (2010) found that “fit with the institution” was one of the most influential forces driving her subjects’ work (p. 2265).

Part of the confusion surrounding the term “collegial” is that it has been used in so many ways (Ramsden, 1998). Not only is the term used to describe academic culture (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008), it also is used as shorthand for the decision-making processes across the institution, including the ideas that power is decentralized and that faculty members represent a community of academics that has both voice and role in institutional governance (Dowling-Hetherington, 2013 citing Ackroyd & Ackroyd, 1999; and Middlehurst, 1993). And despite referring to the “collegial” model, administrators at SCC and elsewhere are responding to external pressures with a more corporate or “managerial” style (Deem, 1998, 2004, 2005; Dowling-Hetherington; Levin, 2006; Meyer, 2007; Spiller, 2010). The multiple and sometimes contradictory uses of the word “collegial” can have significant consequences for academic leaders, as Spiller found:

Multiple interpretations of the term collegiality often confounded chairpersons’ leadership efforts and sometimes directly impeded a particular team’s capacity to perform. In instances where academics polarised the notions of collegiality and managerialism, the chairpersons found themselves

trapped in the middle and were sometimes suspected of turning their backs on core academic values. (p. 689)

While Spiller argues that the term “collegiality” may be “too tired, too muddled and misused” (p. 689) to be productively redefined, Meyer observes that effective management and collegiality are not mutually exclusive, though both notions “need to evolve” (p. 234).

2.3 Developing Academic Leadership Skills

For any potential academic leader, the question of whether or not a leadership role is appropriate or desirable is central. As division chair I often wondered who else would do the job, which I frequently referred to as the death of a thousand paper cuts. These doubts led me to believe that engaging faculty in an authentic process of targeted leadership identification and development facilitates succession planning and therefore opportunities for such development must be offered at all levels, beginning with faculty members rather than being offered only to deans, vice presidents, or presidents (Bisbee, 2007). Wolverton, Ackerman, and Holt (2005) argued in favour of a systematic and early-career approach to higher education leadership identification and development. However, unlike in corporations, academic selection processes may reflect departmental idiosyncrasies more than aptitude or preparedness; academic advancement is not merely a rational process (Wolverton, Ackerman & Holt). According to Gonzalez (2010), “any succession planning effort worth its salt should pay a great deal of attention to the selection of department chairs” (p. 6), and my experience at South City supports this claim. Rather than having chair positions rotate amongst senior faculty members,

Gonzalez argues, the chair position should be seen as the prime source of academic leaders to be groomed for appointments as associate deans or deans.

To facilitate such grooming, potential department chairs should be given the opportunity to engage in leadership development activities to help them determine whether or not a leadership track is appropriate for them and giving them an “out” should the experience not support a move away from research and the classroom (Wolverton & Ackerman, 2006). Additionally, because academic life in Canada and elsewhere can be insular, one of the primary goals of leadership development at the level of department chair should be conveying the sense that the chair’s vision reaches beyond the scope of the department (Wolverton & Ackerman). Such a vision is essential, given that department chairs are frequently casual administrators who return to teaching and research unless they depart from their previous occupations to become professional administrators as associate deans or deans (Gonzalez, 2010). Consequently, professional development and succession planning beginning at the department chair level can help to support overall institutional alignment (Wallin, Cameron & Sharples, 2005) particularly if it helps the potential or developing leader to better understand the requirements and potential drawbacks of the leadership positions they may be considering.

2.3.1 Moving “up the ladder.”

The move from department chair to associate dean or dean typically takes the academic administrator out of the faculty bargaining unit, which may in itself be reason enough not to make a move that brings with it other changes such as an increased responsibility to be on campus during normal business hours, changed

relationships with former colleagues (by virtue of being no longer one of “us” but being one of “them”), and increasing conflict (Dowdall & Dowdall, 2005). Despite these apparent negatives, identifying potential academic leaders who are willing to move from, in Kerr’s (1963) terms, the guild to the corporation (that is, from faculty to administration) is not always as difficult as it might at first seem:

Some faculty members, from the earliest point of their careers . . . might be identified as potential next-generation academic leaders. They typically work at their offices . . . they are attentive to schedules, appointments, deadlines, and tasks to be completed. . . . They enjoy working with others . . . are committed to student success and are often among the outstanding teachers in their unit In general they hold at least a neutral, if not a positive, view of the academic administrators with whom they interact. (Strathe & Wilson, 2006)

By identifying individuals who demonstrate the work habits that are optional for faculty members but typically required for administrators, leaders have a head start on the process of encouraging promising faculty to take the steps to becoming academic managers and leaders (Strathe & Wilson). And at the level of associate dean and dean, such a head start helps to counteract the perception of a move from faculty to administration as being negative; rather than dwell on aspects of leadership that might be off-putting to colleagues with a more flexible approach to the workplace, potential leaders can be reminded of the rewards inherent in leadership work, such as the personal growth resulting from new and shared experience, and the transformative process of moving from mentee to mentor

(Murphy, 2003). From my own experience I would add the satisfaction of guiding and empowering faculty, staff, and students to work together on new initiatives in program and curriculum development, and to build stronger ties with their institutional and geographic communities.

The division chairs at South City College exemplify the characteristics Strathe and Wilson (2006) identify as belonging to academic leaders. At the time of data collection, the division chairs were all “Monday to Friday, nine to five” people (although the hours we kept were frequently longer). We all had long histories of committee and volunteer work, and we were all, with perhaps one exception, what might be described as “political animals.” These characteristics informed our development as academic leaders, regardless of our varying interest in advancement within or outside of the institutional hierarchy.

2.3.2 The consequences of advancement.

As leaders move up the hierarchy, expectations for their involvement in leadership development may change. For example, it has been argued that those at the vice-presidential level are responsible for developing leadership in others, rather than explicitly undertaking leadership development activities themselves (Spendlove, 2007). At this point, the leader becomes responsible for the jobs of succession planning and overseeing leadership development activities; the responsibility is to lead and inspire (Smith & Adams, 2008). Those at the vice-presidential level are also responsible to ensure that former academic leaders who were not promoted for reasons beyond their control are not overlooked in the succession planning process (Gonzalez, 2010). And for presidents, as Paul (2011)

observed, the best preparation is the work done once the position has been achieved. At all levels, then, it can be argued that succession planning and leadership development are means by which higher education institutions can assure the presence of appropriate leaders to fill vacancies as they arise, or to provide talented and experienced candidates for vacancies at other institutions. Such development practices will continue to increase in importance as institutional “churning” (in which administrators move from institute to institute within a province or similar restricted geographical boundary) speeds up with the impact of retiring baby boomers. However, in British Columbia, where an in-province move up the employment hierarchy may necessitate a geographical move of several hundred kilometers (unlike the movement that can be observed within the Greater Toronto Area, for example), it has been both my experience and observation that potential academic leaders here are sometimes reluctant to pursue such advancement.

2.4 Experiencing Academic Leadership

Although there is not a great deal of research into the experiences of academic leadership, particularly at the faculty level, some examples can be found. For instance, Wilkinson (2009) investigated the experiences of two senior female academics as they developed as leaders in the context of Australian diversity policies and practices. Consistent with a phenomenological approach, Wilkinson conducted in-depth interviews with people who had direct experience with diversity policy and practice; although not a participant-observer, the researcher gained—to the fullest extent possible—an understanding of her subjects’ experiences (Patton, 2002). Wilkinson recounts her subjects’ experiences as stories;

although she did not conduct a formal textual analysis of the interview data, she contextualized her subjects' stories within the wider framework of Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* and research on academic leadership. Similarly, Acker (2010) analyzed a sub-set of data from an interview study of 31 female academic managers in Canada, Australia, and Britain to contrast the experiences of women for whom a career in leadership is a comfortable and natural "fit" with those whose experiences were less satisfactory. Also drawing on Bourdieu, Acker contrasted two women who were "waving" with two who were "not waving but drowning" (Acker, citing Smith, 1975, p. 130). Although Acker's study was set up to contrast the subjects' differing experiences, the author observed that there were numerous similarities among all four women, noting as particularly interesting the instructive differences within the similarities. For example, all four women described themselves as assertive, with the two "waving" subjects experiencing the consequences of being assertive (the phenomenon) as positive and the two "drowning" subjects focusing on the negative consequences of asserting themselves, demonstrating the value of a phenomenological approach in terms of illustrating the different ways in which lived experience differs from person to person.

Hacifazlıoğlu (2010) examined the life histories of academic leaders and described their journeys, reporting not only the described experiences of her subjects but also analyzing them thematically, observing similarities between the processes of transitioning into academic leadership and overcoming initial challenges for women in the United States and Turkey. Hellowell & Hancock (2001) and Hancock & Hellowell (2003) produced two hermeneutic analyses of the

experiences of academic middle managers drawing on a single data set. In the first, they explored their subjects' experiences with collegiality. In the second, they likened the experiences of their subjects to a game of hide and seek, in which the subjects were required to keep certain information hidden from their supervisors in order to successfully perform their work. In an investigation focussing specifically on the experiences of academic middle managers in New Zealand, Marshall (2012) found that his participants saw themselves as the "meat in the sandwich," occupying a difficult and sometimes uncomfortable position between faculty and administration. Smerek (2011) drew on the reported experiences of new college and university presidents to demonstrate their process of sensemaking: he sought to understand how new leaders both make sense of their roles and give sense to others within their organizational context. In these examples, researchers conducted in-depth interviews with a relatively small sample of purposefully selected subjects in order to gain the best possible understanding of each subject's experience as a developing academic leader. In each instance, the goal was to identify both the shared experience of the group and the unique experience of the individuals constituting the group being studied.

In another example of an investigation into the leadership development process, Wolverton and Ackerman (2006) reported on the case of department chairs who had participated in an academic leadership development project devised by the authors in an effort to address the lack of succession planning and leadership preparation for academics moving from teaching to administrative/leadership roles in their institution. Using the metaphor of cultivation, the authors describe how the

department chairs, once provided with appropriate contexts, resources, information and support, were able to “grow into” their positions. However, unlike the strategy employed for this research undertaking, Wolverton and Ackerman approached their subject from the outside: as the organizers of the leadership development project, they were able to report on the participants’ experiences through observation and interviews; they were not able to provide the particular insights available to the participant-observer. Although there is a reasonably large body of research into leadership development among higher education practitioners, I was unable to find any examples in which the researcher was not only the instrument of data collection but also a participant in the phenomenon of interest. This research project is one step towards closing this gap in the literature.

2.5 Context Canada; Context College

Although many of the examples cited above focus on institutions outside Canada, concluding that the Canadian higher education system is not fertile ground for academic research would be incorrect. John Dennison, University of British Columbia Professor Emeritus, spent a long and very productive career studying the Canadian and British Columbian higher education systems, notably (and almost uniquely) focusing on BC’s community colleges and (former) university-colleges (see, for example, Dennison, 1995, 2006; Dennison & Gallagher, 1986; Dennison & Levin, 1988; Dennison & Schuetze, 2004). Working with Dennison in the 1990s, and subsequently on his own, John Levin has produced numerous works on Canadian and American community colleges, including studies on community colleges as baccalaureate-granting institutions (see, for example, Dennison & Levin, 1988; Levin

2004, 2001a, 2001b; Levin, Kater & Wagoner, 2006). The Canadian community college as a baccalaureate-granting institution has also been one focus of Michael Skolnik, (see, for example, Skolnik, 2001, 2006, 2009), who, along with Dennison, Andres, Lang, and numerous others has also written extensively on the college-to-university transfer systems in BC, Alberta, and Ontario (see, for example, Andres, 2001; Andres & Licker, 2005; Clark, J.D. et al., 2011; Dennison 2002; Lang, 2007). And although much of the work focusing on mid-level academic leadership comes from Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, there is a growing body of research into the experience of Canadian post-secondary middle managers.

For example, in terms of Canadian academic middle managers, Watson (1979) investigated the relationship between the definition of the role of head or chairman [sic] of a university department and the participants' academic discipline, gender and nationality. In a follow-up study, Watson (1986) determined that the differences observed in the earlier study had largely been resolved, finding that the majority of participants believed such administrators should be referred to as "Chairperson" and should primarily be responsible "to coordinate the work of members of the department and to facilitate their productivity by relieving them of routine administrative duties" (p. 16). Recalling that in 1986 all administrative records would have been paper-based, it is no wonder that faculty preferred not to be burdened with tasks Watson identified as the Chairperson's responsibility, such as course scheduling, managing the department budget, assigning faculty work, and allocating facilities and other resources. Over time, however, the expectations of both the public and government have changed, particularly with respect to the

economic and social roles of Canadian post-secondary institutions, leading Boyko and Jones (2010) to explore the ways in which the roles of middle managers in Canadian universities were (or were not) changing.

Boyko and Jones (2010) observe that “[i]n Canada, department chairs and faculty deans have received little attention in the research literature of higher education” (p. 85), citing Watson (1979/1983, discussed above), a study by Konrad (1978) that found the “majority of deans were . . . male, middle-aged, tenured faculty members” (Boyko & Jones, p. 88), and a study by Lawless (1981) that concluded Canadian department heads were clearly seen as administrators with limited power, although they had access to administrators at the executive level. In terms of the role of the academic middle manager, Boyko and Jones found that “the formal roles and responsibilities of chairs and deans have not changed dramatically in recent years” (p. 98). However, they later observe that “there seems to be an increasing sense of a need to provide chairs and deans with specialised professional development given the increasing complexity of their working environment and the growing skill set required of these positions” (pp. 99-100). This apparent contradiction supports the goal and findings of this research study: the experience of academic middle managers does not seem to align with the expectations institutions have for them. Consequently, an investigation of that experience might be expected to shed some light on the underlying reasons for the lack of alignment between the “official” roles of the division chairs central to this research project and the “unofficial” roles that Boyko and Jones imply they may be performing.

Other research in the Canadian context supports Boyko and Jones' (2010) conclusion regarding leadership training. Morrin (2013) explicitly connected the need for leadership development with the process of succession planning in her research, conducted at an Ontario community college. At the level of president, Braithwaite (2003) found that succession planning was not occurring in the Ontario colleges of arts and technology central to his study, observing further that the departing presidents wished to assist in the search and selection process. Further, Braithwaite recommended the implementation of a transition process for new presidents. These findings imply that the cultural and contextual experience of a departing president could (and should) inform the selection and orientation of her or his replacement—an explicit commitment to active succession planning. Morrin concludes her discussion by arguing that effective succession planning must be formalized and thoughtfully designed, keeping in mind “the culture, uniqueness and specific needs of the Southern College, it’s [sic] staff and students (Sense of Entitlement section, para. 6). This concern for culture and contextual experience is significant in the context of the present study, because one of the main points of contention between faculty leaders and excluded administrators has been the lack of agreement about what “collegiality” means at South City College.

While much of the literature on academic middle management in Canada focuses on the University context (e.g. Boyko, 2009; Boyko & Jones, 2010, David, 2011), several researchers have examined the roles of middle managers at the college level. For example, in addition to the previously mentioned study by Morrin (2013), Jones and Holdaway (1996) explored the differing expectations for

academic leadership and authority held by stakeholders at three academic institutions in Alberta: a community college, a technical institute, and a university. Through questionnaires and interviews, Jones and Holdaway found that, irrespective of institution or position, respondents tended to prefer the term “shared” to describe the amount of authority academic leaders should have over selected academic leadership activities (including such things as curriculum design and delivery, academic policy formation and implementation, recruitment/selection, and faculty development). More recently, West-Moynes (2012) oversaw a self-assessment of organizational culture and management skills among administrators at Ontario colleges with high indicators of student satisfaction, finding that culture and leadership are explicitly related: [d]ominant culture type also has implications for the type of leadership attributes preferred to address quality strategies, human resource management, and strategic visioning” (p. 282), and arguing that assessment of organizational culture is an important element in strategic change management. West-Moynes’ findings support one of my assumptions about my own research project: that the division chair position as historically understood is strongly connected to the institutional culture at SCC.

Finally, although my experiential approach was not explicitly mirrored in any of the literature I was able to review, Polonsky’s 2003 action research study into the move from implicit to explicit leadership among academic leaders in Ontario presents a fascinating dialogue between the researcher and the respondents, framed via a series of reflections, both contextual and reflexive, interspersed in italic text

throughout the case study section of the document. In the section on participant “C” (for “college”), Polonsky writes,

C had spent many years as a Federal civil servant and had just returned from Ottawa that day. He made reference to an article from the *Ottawa Citizen* which pointed out that many middle managers in the federal civil service were experiencing a kind of illness, allegedly attributable to their lack of Empowerment, working in an organization where virtually every decision had to be approved by a superior, which literally made them ill.

I can empathize with those civil servants as I was once one myself. I lasted 3½ years as a senior officer before resigning, believing too many wasteful and counter-productive barriers impeded work that could and ought to have been done. (p. 268, italics original)

Although I do not share the Ontario experience, Polonsky’s personal narrative (and the experiences of the civil servants cited by “C”) seemed similar to the experiential and participatory nature of my own research; although he does not define himself as such, Polonsky is very much a participant in his own study.

2.6 Chapter Summary

Although there is a significant body of research into academic leadership and management, only a small percentage focuses specifically on participants’ experiences of their roles as leaders and managers. An even smaller percentage examines those experiences in a Canadian context; still fewer focus on the experiences of academic middle managers in western Canadian colleges. I was

unable to find any literature in this area that takes an experiential approach to the subject of academic middle management, nor any in which the researcher was also a participant. Consequently, this research project can potentially enrich the conversation about academic middle managers in three ways:

- by expanding the field in terms of institutional type and location;
- by incorporating an experiential methodology;
- and by its distinctive nature as a research project conducted by a participant in the phenomenon of interest.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH PARADIGM AND THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

DETERMINING RESEARCH DESIGN

Despite considerable agreement that the qualitative approach has long since come of age (Cresswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002), any residual questions about the validity of qualitative research findings must be explicitly addressed in the research design process (Creswell & Miller, 2000). As I discovered, throughout the research process it was also worth remembering the recursive, emergent nature of qualitative research (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). Having articulated my assumptions about and prior experience with the topic in Chapter One, in the following I present the context within which I determined to conduct a hermeneutic phenomenological investigation within the framework of a multi-participant case study. I begin by discussing the case study as research paradigm, introduce the conceptual frameworks shaping the research design, and discuss the process of data collection.

3.1 Case Study as Research Paradigm

The purpose of my investigation—to better understand an experience shared by the six division chairs at South City College—led me to approach the phenomenon of interest by conducting a case study. As Yin (2014) observed, case studies are designed to answer “how” and “why” kinds of questions. Here I found myself in abundant company, as supported in the literature review found in Chapter Two. Nearly all of the examples of research into higher education leadership development I have reviewed could be described as case studies; however, as a

participant-researcher, perhaps more than for any other researcher, the need to orient myself relative to the research undertaking, the case itself, and to the specific examples of the phenomenon of interest—to my then-colleagues and myself—was vital. The questions I asked of others in my efforts to understand the nature of their lived experience were questions that I also asked of myself, because I wanted to establish not only the context within which I proposed to conduct my study, but also the context for my own reflections and observations within the study's boundaries (Patton, 2002).

3.1.1 Rationale for a case study conducted by a participant-researcher.

The overall research design framework for this research project was the constructivist case study. In terms of its ability to answer questions about the experiences of new academic leaders, the constructivist case study has much to offer. For instance, to determine how (if at all) department chairs were being prepared for their duties, Wolverton and Ackerman (2006) reported on the case of department chairs who had participated in an academic leadership development project devised by the authors in an effort to address the lack of succession planning and leadership preparation for academics moving from teaching to administrative/leadership roles in their institution. Using the metaphor of cultivation, the authors describe how the department chairs, once provided with appropriate contexts, resources, information and support, were able to “grow into” their positions. But Wolverton and Ackerman approached their subject from the outside: as the organizers of the leadership development project, they were able to report on the participants' experiences through observation and interviews; they

were not able to provide the particular insights available to the participant-observer, which was a defining objective of my investigation: I was interested in the phenomenology of the division chairs' experience, including my own, because adding the insights of the participant-researcher into the data set distinguishes this study from similar investigations into the experience of post-secondary leadership development.

Although there is a reasonably large body of research into leadership development among higher education practitioners, I was unable to find any examples in which the researcher was both the instrument of data collection and a participant in the phenomenon of interest. Many researchers conducted interviews with developing leaders (Acker, 2010; Hacifazlioglu, 2010; Hancock & Hellowell, 2003; Hellowell & Hancock, 2001; Wang, 2011; Wilkinson, 2009) while others interviewed practicing academic leaders about their processes of leadership development (Paul, 2011; Spendlove, 2007), and still others observed developing academic leaders in context (Mercer, 2009; Wolverson, Ackerman & Holt, 2005; Wolverson & Ackerman, 2006). I found one example of a researcher writing in retrospect about a group to which he had once belonged (Ryan, 2009) but no study of academic leadership development written from the perspective of a developing academic leader. Given that Merriam (1998) argued that case studies are particularly useful for studying processes and for their ability to reveal "knowledge we would not otherwise have access to" (p. 33), who better than a participant-researcher to examine a particular instance, to describe it and illustrate its complexities, and to explain, evaluate, summarize and draw conclusions about the

phenomenon of interest in a way that allows for generalization? And who, other than a participant-researcher, has the best access to otherwise inaccessible knowledge, such as the difference between the defined duties of a position and the reality of performing the role? This research project helps to close the gap I have identified in the literature and offers insights not only into the process of academic leadership development but also into the experience of being an academic manager and leader in Canada.

My approach to this case study research was designed within van Manen's (1997; 2014) notion of hermeneutic phenomenology, and the data analysis process was shaped by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin's (2009) theoretical approach to interpretative phenomenological analysis. In terms of case study, Yin (2014) observed,

A case study is an empirical inquiry that

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon ("the case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident. (p. 16)

Further, Yin's definition specifies that

A case study inquiry

- copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
- relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result

- benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (p. 17)

For this study, the “contemporary phenomenon” is the experiences of the six division chairs at South City College. Because the division chair position is unusual, the context for the division chairs’ experience is vital to the exploration.

Consequently, and in part as a result of employing an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach to the data, this study presents both single and cross-case analysis: while the research findings are the result of my cross-case analysis of the division chairs’ experience, the contextual support for those findings was found in cross-case analysis of the experiences of five faculty leaders and (separately) six excluded administrators (three deans, the vice president academic and provost, and two presidents). As well, each division chair’s unique experience can be seen as a “case” on its own; my IPA analysis of the interview data gathered from the division chairs, together with my own insights, narrowed the case context to allow the conclusions to be drawn from the division chairs’ experience within the larger landscape of academic leadership and management activities at SCC.

It can be argued that the participant-observer is necessarily biased, but van Manen (1997), drawing on Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology, addresses this concern. Where Husserl used the term *epoché* (or bracketing) to describe what he saw as the necessary suspension of the taken-for-granted, in Heidegger’s conception individual and experience are co-constituted and inseparable from each other (van Manen, 1997; 2014; Laverly, 2003). This perspective reinforces the need

for the researcher to engage in a process of self-reflection:

the biases and assumptions of the researcher are not bracketed or set aside, but rather are embedded and essential to interpretive process. The researcher is called, on an ongoing basis, to give considerable thought to their own experience and to explicitly claim the ways in which their position or experience relates to the issues being researched (Laverly, p. 28).

Consequently, in the case of the participant-researcher, the researcher and the researched are at times one and the same: the “object” of the study is, him- or herself, also a “subject.” Giddens (1993) characterizes this problem through the example of the *double hermeneutic*: not only do everyday concepts make their way into social science, social science concepts also make their way into (and have an impact on) everyday life: “the ‘findings’ of the social sciences very often enter constitutively into the world they describe” (Giddens, p. 20). A variant of this process is the *hermeneutic circle*: as information becomes available it is incorporated into the situation being studied, which requires the researcher to carry on a “reflective conversation with the situation” (Schön, 1983, p. 76). Such a conversation is a necessary part of the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, making it particularly appropriate to this research project, which focused on the experience of six primary participants, including the researcher.

3.2. Conceptual Frameworks

In order to explore the phenomenon of interest, I chose to situate my case study research within the framework of van Manen’s (1997) theory of hermeneutic phenomenology, which is characterized by six research activities:

- 1) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
- 2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
- 3) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
- 4) describing the phenomenon through the act of writing and rewriting;
- 5) maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
- 6) balancing the context by considering parts and whole.

While my original intention was to draw on van Manen (1997) to guide the whole research project, I quickly discovered that the six activities van Manen articulates were not sufficient on their own to enable me to analyze the data as thoroughly as I wished. And unfortunately, van Manen's (2014) comprehensive *Phenomenology of Practice*, a text that expands upon and extensively contextualizes the processes of conducting both phenomenological research and analysis, was published after I had completed the majority of the data analysis for this project. So while the epistemological framework of my research design was developed within van Manen's (1997) theoretical perspective, I ultimately drew not only on van Manen but also Smith, Flowers, and Larkin's (2009) theory of interpretative phenomenological analysis when conducting the data analysis process, described in Chapter Four.

This qualitative research project was designed to explore my own experience as well as the experiences of my colleagues as we worked to balance our responsibilities as managers and leaders. I wished to examine the challenges of that

task, including the different ways in which each of the six of us is experiencing the process. Because my research also included an investigation of how the institution and we as a peer group of leaders were contributing to our leadership development, my focus was both situational and experiential. And because I hoped to contribute to the literature in a way that will help other developing leaders to understand their own experiences, I planned to interpret our experience, resulting in a project that is both phenomenological and hermeneutic.

In the following I provide an orientation to organizational structure governing my investigation. First, I introduce two aspects of the conceptual framework within which I worked by very briefly discussing phenomenology and hermeneutics; second, I narrow the focus to present the specific reasons for my decision to engage van Manen's (1997) epistemic methodology, which he calls "hermeneutic phenomenology."

3.2.1 Conceptual framework: Phenomenology and hermeneutics.

Briefly, phenomenology seeks to understand the essence or truth of a lived experience (Creswell, 1998). As understood by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) phenomenology is a rigorous science in which the researcher sets aside his or her prejudgments ("bracketing" them) and relies on conscious awareness of the phenomena: we can only know what we experience (Creswell; Patton, 2002). The traditional phenomenological researcher must understand the need to "bracket" his or her preconceived notions about the phenomenon being studied and must rely on the voices of the informants (Creswell, citing Field & Morse, 1985). However, as van Manen (1997) observed, "the problem of phenomenological inquiry is not always

that we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate, but that we know too much” (p. 46). In van Manen’s conception, the phenomenological researcher should not bracket biases and presuppositions but should rather come to terms with them as part of the reflexive process of qualitative inquiry. Additionally, traditional phenomenological explorations leave the reader with a better understanding of “the essential, invariant structure (or essence) of the experience” (Creswell, p. 55). Therefore, the phenomenological researcher must be mindful that “the notion of essence is highly complex Categorical essentialism is dangerous in that it tends to see things in absolute terms” (van Manen, 1997, p. xvi). Yet if one is able to identify commonalities among the experiences of several subjects experiencing the same phenomenon, the generalizability of those findings is strengthened, which perhaps explains the myriad of ways the term *phenomenology* has come to be used in research literature (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). Regardless of their variations in form or unit of analysis, phenomenological studies are fundamentally descriptive; they focus on what people experience and how they experience it.

As Merriam (1998) observed, “phenomenology is a school of philosophical thought that underpins all of qualitative research—and herein lies much of the confusion surrounding the writing in this area” (p. 15). Indeed, all of the studies I have found that explore the development of leadership in higher education professionals could, to some degree, be described as phenomenological. Patton (2002) observed that

a phenomenological study . . . is one that focuses on descriptions of what people experience and how it is they experience what they experience. One can employ a general phenomenological perspective to elucidate the importance of using methods that capture people's experience of the world without conducting a phenomenological study that focuses on the essence of shared experience (p. 107).

An investigation into the experiences of members of a particular community is by definition phenomenological, and the findings could be simultaneously particular (in that they would capture individual experience) without being essential (in the worst, reductive, sense of that word). However, because my task was both to observe and to interpret the data I gathered about the experience of my colleagues and me, my chosen process was also hermeneutic.

Hermeneutic studies are primarily interpretive; with roots in biblical studies, hermeneutics seeks to explain, to make sense of, or to interpret a text (Bauman, 1978). Hermeneutics is based on the idea that there is no single interpretation (of a text or its analogue) but that all meaning is situated contextually; any understanding of *reality* (or what a phenomenologist might call *essence*) is socially constructed and negotiated and validated communally (Patton, 2002). It appears, therefore, that phenomenology and hermeneutics are contradictory: the first seeks to define the essence of human experience while the second argues that such a notion is impossible. However, van Manen (1997) addressed this apparent contradiction by explaining that the (phenomenological) facts of human experience are meaningfully experienced as they are lived and that they must necessarily be captured in

language, which requires (hermeneutic) interpretation. To distinguish between phenomenology and hermeneutics, I drew on van Manen, who defined phenomenology as “pure description of lived experience” and hermeneutics as “interpretation of experience via some ‘text’ or via some symbolic form” (p. 25).

More recently, van Manen refined his definition:

Hermeneutic phenomenology is a method of abstemious reflection on the basic structures of the lived experience of human existence. The term *method* refers to the way or attitude of approaching a phenomenon. Abstemious means that reflecting on experience aims to abstain from theoretical, polemical, suppositional, and emotional intoxications. Hermeneutic means that reflecting on experience must aim for discursive language and sensitive interpretive devices that make phenomenological analysis, explication, and description possible and intelligible. Lived experience means that phenomenology reflects on the prereflective or prepredictive life of human existence as living through it. (2014, p. 26)

By requiring not only the gathering of data (evidence of the “basic structures of the lived experience of human existence”) but also a reflection on that experience through “discursive language and sensitive interpretive devices” hermeneutic phenomenology is both method and, through “analysis, explication, and description,” a means of analysis and interpretation.

Any process of understanding experience requires that the reader hear from the participants directly; that is, the researcher must gather evidence about the nature of the lived experience by conducting interviews with subjects who are living

the experience in question. And because any process of understanding requires that interview data be interpreted, the analytic process must be hermeneutic. As van Manen (1997) argued, hermeneutic phenomenology is both descriptive and interpretive. Where phenomenology “wants to let things speak for themselves”, hermeneutics “claims that there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena” (p. 180). Hermeneutic phenomenology assumes not only that “the ‘facts’ of lived experience are already meaningfully (hermeneutically) experienced” but also that they “need to be captured in language (the human science text) and this is inevitably an interpretive process” (p. 181).

3.2.2 van Manen’s hermeneutic phenomenology.

In van Manen’s (1997; 2014) conception, hermeneutic phenomenology is not only an epistemology; it is also a method. Undertaking human science research is motivated by our desire to know more about the world we experience: “and since to *know* the world is profoundly to *be* in the world in a certain way, the act of researching—questioning—theorizing is the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world, to become more fully part of it, or better, to *become* the world” (1997, p. 5). Because hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with the process of understanding the nature of lived experience, the researcher does not use experiments or test situations; insofar as is possible, hermeneutic phenomenological research is grounded in the situation (van Manen). The process of hermeneutic phenomenological research includes time for reflection, which allows the researcher to make familiar the strange; the process is recursive and transforms the reflexive process from a solitary internal act to an external one by recognizing the act of

writing as itself a research undertaking. Writing enables the researcher to mediate between writing and action; writing externalizes the internal and distances the researcher from subjects and/or lived experience (van Manen).

Van Manen's (1997) theory of writing-as-research includes five paradoxical ways in which the writing and research processes are inextricably connected. First, he argues that "writing separates us from what we know and yet it unites us more closely with what we know" (p. 127). Many beginning writers have shared this experience; for example, they begin with a draft thesis statement knowing that the writing process will help them to understand their topic in a new and, very possibly, different way. Writing is the "dialectic of inside and outside, of embodiment and disembodiment, of separation and reconciliation" (p. 127). Second, van Manen observes that "writing distances us from the lifeworld, yet it also draws us more closely to the lifeworld" (p. 127). By creating a distance between self and lived experience, writing enables us to transform our subjective experiences into the objects of our reflection, allowing us to write about experiences that, at the time, may have been too emotional or personal to be articulated. Third, "writing decontextualizes thought from practice and yet it returns it to praxis" (p. 128). Writing produces text, and text as separate from our immediate engagement in experience develops a life of its own; by reflecting on text, which itself is the product of reflection on experience, we are able to engage more fully in reflective praxis, that is, in the thoughtful action of reflection (van Manen).

The fourth paradox of writing-as-research is that "writing abstracts our experience of the world, yet it also concretizes our understanding of the world" (van

Manen, 1997, p. 128). Because language abstracts from the concrete of lived experience, it inevitably intellectualizes. However, writing can concretize lived experience in ways that are more moving than the experiences themselves: “the narrative power of story is that sometimes it can be more compelling, more moving, more physically and emotionally stirring than lived-life itself” (p. 129). Finally, van Manen argues that “writing objectifies thought into print and yet it subjectifies our understanding of something that truly engages us” (p. 129). As a participant-researcher, I am engaged in a hermeneutic phenomenological investigation and so have to be able to interpret, which is a subjective undertaking. Consequently, as my work of data collection and analysis proceeded, I came to understand van Manen’s theory of hermeneutic phenomenology as defining the epistemological framework of my study. Writing in 2014, van Manen described his 1997 work as “initiatory;” and the 2014 text provides rich instruction in van Manen’s approach to hermeneutic phenomenological research and analysis. However, because most of the data analysis for this research project was done before the 2014 text was published, I chose a slightly different methodology to guide the analysis of data collected during my case study research: Smith, Flowers, and Larkin’s (2009) theory of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

3.3 Research Design

Because I came upon interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) part way through the data collection process, the framework for my research design was not, initially, informed by the principles of IPA. However, fortuitously (as sometimes happens in academic research), IPA dovetails quite neatly with van Manen’s (1997)

theory of hermeneutic phenomenology. In accordance with the principles of IPA (Smith et al., 2009), I chose my participants purposefully: the core participants in my research study were the six division chairs (including myself) who held the position at South City College during the data collection period (January-May, 2013). At that time, each of us had approximately the same role and responsibilities, and all of us performed a function that was not particularly well articulated by its formal job description. At the time of data collection, our tenure in the position ranged from eight months to nearly five years, we all had experience as department chairs at South City College, and we all, to a greater or lesser degree, came to our current positions willingly. Consistent with IPA's expectations, this core sample of participants is relatively small and relatively homogeneous.

However, while IPA emphasizes the importance of the single-subject case, and would consider even this study's core sample size as relatively large, I wanted to provide some institutional context for my investigation into the particular phenomenon of interest. Consequently, I broadened my participant group to include representatives both 'up' and 'down' the institutional hierarchy at South City College, interviewing five faculty leaders and six administrators in addition to the division chairs.

3.3.1 Institutional research ethics board approval processes.

As a researcher writing about my own and my colleagues' experiences, I recognized from the outset the need for circumspection in terms of how specifically I would be able to identify the case and the participants. And because I wanted to produce a negotiated outcome (Lincoln & Guba, 1995), that is, one that involves the

participants in the process of checking the accuracy of the data and findings, the process of negotiation informed my research plan, which included my intention to fictionalize the name of the institution and assign my colleagues pseudonyms throughout the data set and in the final (and any subsequent) document(s). In conversations on the topic of my colleagues' anonymity in an earlier paper, the consensus was that pseudonyms would be sufficient to protect their identity, an assumption that I built into the documentation provided to the two research ethics review bodies that approved this study.

In addition to being respectful of my then-employer and my colleagues, as a researcher I was responsible to ensure that I explained the purpose of my inquiry and its methods, made clear the benefits and any potential risks of participation in the study, gained informed consent, protected the data and restricted access to it, considered the implications of conducting interviews and reflecting on practice, took advice as necessary, and established clear boundaries for data collection. I also had to be very clear in my understanding of the difference between operating ethically and operating legally (Patton, 2002). That I achieved these objectives is evidenced by this project's approval by both the University of British Columbia's Behavioural Research Ethics Board and the Research Ethics Committee at the institution called, in this document, South City College.

3.3.2 Participant selection.

I solicited specific participants by means of an email invitation to participate. The core participants—my division chair colleagues (N=5)—anticipated my invitation and agreed almost immediately; I set up one-hour appointments with

each, with a reminder that I would schedule a second interview at the end of the research period. To solicit participants for the contextual element of the research, I sent an email invitation to all of the instructional department chairs and coordinators, and received the desired sample (one participant from each division other than my own, N=5) within the first ten responses. This sample was not intended to be proportionally representative; rather, the goal was to get a sense of how faculty in department-level leadership positions were experiencing their work, their understanding of who the leaders were/are at SCC, and their sense of the leadership development processes underway at the institution.

In order to solicit responses from excluded administrators, I emailed the academic deans (N=3), the academic vice president and provost (N=1), the past president (N=1), and the interim president directly (N=1); all of them accepted my invitation (total N=6). Again, I was interested in exploring these participants' experiences in leadership roles as part of the contextual framework for my central examination of the division chairs' experiences. I set up interview appointments with each of the participants, including with the appointment confirmation a copy of the questions I intended to ask during the interview.

Towards the end of the research period, I conducted follow-up interviews with my five division chair colleagues, setting up appointments with each and providing them with the second set of questions in advance.

During the active research portion of the investigation, I observed my colleagues in their day-to-day work, which allowed me insight into their experiences as they were living them, rather than as they recounted them in the formal, in-depth,

interview setting. In all I conducted 21 interviews, each approximately one hour in length:

- two interviews, at a three-month interval (approximately) with each of the five division chairs other than myself (N=10);
- one interview with a representative of each division other than the one I oversaw at the time (N=5);
- one interview with each of the academic deans (N=3);
- one interview with each of the past president, the president, and the academic vice president and provost (N=3).

I transcribed the interview recordings myself, resulting in over 300 pages of transcript data. When I include my own reflections and observational notes, the data set for this project comprises well over 400 pages of typed text.

3.4 Data Collection

To collect the data for this study I employed two methods: I conducted in-depth interviews with five core and eleven contextual participants, simultaneously engaging in a process of personal writing and reflection on the questions I was asking of my division chair colleagues. Secondly, I observed my colleagues and myself as we went about our day-to-day activities. Below I discuss the data collection strategies: interviews; direct observation; participant observation.

3.4.1 Interviews.

Qualitative interviewing allows the researcher to gain insight into the perspective of others; according to Patton (2002) we interview people in order to learn from them the things that we cannot discover through direct observation.

Essential to the success of any interview is the skill of the interviewer; specifically, “a deep and genuine interest in learning about people is insufficient without disciplined and rigorous inquiry based on skill and technique” (Patton, p. 341). Merriam (1998) set out the various types of interviews on a continuum ranging from highly structured (or standardized), through semi-structured, to unstructured (or informal) interviews, giving the prospective researcher a sense of the extent to which he or she can be flexible within the question-and-answer process that drives an interview’s momentum. Yin (2014) distinguished between prolonged and shorter interviews, noting that the former may involve extensive or multi-session interviews while the latter take place in a short period of time (such as an hour). In each instance, Yin emphasized the need to corroborate interview data by relying on other sources such as documents or looking for contrary evidence. But, Patton cautions, “it all comes to naught if you fail to capture the words of the person being interviewed” (p. 380).

Whether the interview is in-depth (i.e. extensive and potentially taking place over several instances) or focused (i.e. intensive and time-constrained) the qualitative interviewer is responsible for asking questions that are appropriately contextualized, open-ended, followed-up upon or clarified, supported, enhanced and (if possible), conclusive (Patton, 2002). As well, choosing the person or group of people to be interviewed, and asking the appropriate kind of leading questions are essential (Merriam, 1998).

Guided by van Manen’s theory of hermeneutic phenomenology, in particular by my desire to investigate lived experience, my primary means of data collection

was a series of in-depth interviews. Between January and May of 2013, I conducted two interviews with each of my core participants (the division chairs; N=5 times two interviews), and interviews of approximately one hour with each of five faculty representatives, three academic deans, the vice president academic and provost, and the then-interim and past presidents (interviews N= 21 total).

3.4.2 Direct observations.

Any investigation taking place in a natural setting demands that the researcher engage in direct observations that may be formal, such as observations of meetings, or casual, such as observations of interactions between colleagues recorded during a site visit. Observational research, like document analysis, can assist the researcher in constructing a representative framework for the case to be investigated. Additionally, data obtained through direct observation can serve as corroborating evidence for data collected in interviews or by other means within the research framework (Yin, 2014). The essential decision the researcher must make about observational research concerns the extent of the researcher's role as a participant: is the perspective *emic* in that the researcher is presenting an insider's look at the phenomenon, or is the perspective *etic* or a view from outside? As I have noted, as a division chair myself at the time of data collection, I was experiencing the phenomenon of interest at the same time as my colleagues; consequently, I found myself both experiencing the phenomenon and, simultaneously and to the degree that was possible, trying to convey my understanding of the phenomenon as experienced by myself and my fellow division chairs.

3.4.3 Participant-observation.

As a division chair conducting a study of leadership development in division chairs, I was necessarily a participant-observer of the phenomenon of interest. As a result, I benefitted from the opportunity to collect data from an insider's perspective. However, in order to both conduct my research and continue to do my job, the balance between my roles as observer and participant had to be fluid: I frequently had to move along the spectrum of stances available to the participant-researcher: from participant-as-observer to observer-as-participant and, frequently, to just plain division chair doing her work.

At the same time, I had to be aware of the drawbacks of participant observation: it is time-consuming; the events may be affected by my presence as researcher; and there is a potential for my observations to be biased or for me to explicitly manipulate the setting to achieve desired results (Yin, 2014). To address these concerns, I have produced a *negotiated outcome*. That is, the information I present in this document has been scrutinized and validated by the subjects who were the sources of that information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Such a process of scrutiny is necessary to ensure both internal and external validity as well as reliability (Merriam, 1998), which I discuss in greater detail in Chapter Four. However, given that the potential challenges to the validity of my findings are magnified by my necessarily biased view of the work I was doing every day, I drew on Van Manen (1997), who argued that much of the reflective work, and consequently much of the decontextualizing of the participant-observer's finding, is

done through the writing process:

writing creates the reflective cognitive stance that generally characterizes the theoretic attitude in the social sciences. The object of human science research is essentially a linguistic project: to make some aspect of our lived world, our lived experience, reflectively understandable and intelligible (pp. 125-6).

By articulating my observations in writing I was able to decontextualize thought from practice and created the space (the text) that allowed me to develop a subjective understanding of the phenomenon of interest (van Manen). Additionally, leaving South City College to take a position at a different institution provided additional perspective. Finally, by verifying the accuracy of my transcriptions and findings by seeking feedback from the participants, as described subsequently, I have been able to address the most reasonable question a reader might ask of a participant-researcher: "Why should I believe you?"

3.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a detailed description of the study's research paradigm, with a particular focus on the conceptual frameworks determining the research design. It presents the rationale for choosing the case study paradigm, specifically the case study conducted by a participant-researcher. Two conceptual frameworks, phenomenology and hermeneutics, informed the decision to employ van Manen's (1997) hermeneutic phenomenology to guide the research project, and Smith, Flowers, and Larkin's (2009) interpretative phenomenological analysis to shape the process of data analysis. The chapter also described the processes of research design and gaining research ethics board approval, including how the

criteria for participant selection and the methods of data collection were determined.

CHAPTER FOUR
METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
FOR DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

As noted in Chapter Three, as my work on this research project progressed I began to draw on Smith, Flowers, and Larkin's (2009) theory of interpretative phenomenological analysis to augment the method I had begun with: van Manen's (1997) theory of hermeneutic phenomenology. Where van Manen emphasizes reflection and the writing process, Smith et al. focus on a method for the step-by-step analysis of data resulting from a formal interview process. As I was finalizing this document, van Manen's (2014) summative work, *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing* went to print; consequently, in this chapter I illustrate the alignment between van Manen's two works and that of Smith, Flowers, and Larkin.

This chapter focuses on my approach to data transcription and analysis, including how I addressed and compensated for the problem of author bias. Mindful of my own constructivist orientation, I discuss the processes of hermeneutic phenomenological reflection and interpretative phenomenological analysis as informed by the need to ensure the validity and reliability of this qualitative research project. Further, I reflect on the role of the participant-researcher, including the steps taken to mitigate researcher bias and to ensure the quality of the research.

4.1 Transcription

While any academic research investigation involving interviews necessarily requires that the audio records of the interviews be transcribed, little has been written about the process of transcription itself as a means of data analysis (Bird, 2005; Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). However, conceiving of transcription as a method of data analysis is consistent with van Manen's (1997; 2014) notion of writing as research: the process of writing down what one hears is itself an interpretive undertaking. For example, the transcriptionist makes decisions about how to represent the text on the page, how to identify or maintain the anonymity of the speaker(s), how to indicate pause, intonation, breaks, and so on. Each of these decisions is an interpretive act. Although conventions governing transcription exist, they have evolved from being a "fixed menu" to a "buffet" (Lapadat & Lindsay, p. 69). As a participant researcher, I was responsible for recording the interviews I conducted with my colleagues and for documenting my own observations and experience of the phenomenon of interest. However, as part of the data analysis process, I took on the task of transcribing the recorded data myself, thereby avoiding the potential consequences of having the non-expert transcriptionist's interpretations imposed upon the data (Tilley, 2003). That said, by acting as my own transcriptionist, and therefore interacting interpretively with the recorded records of the interviews I conducted, I acknowledge as inevitable that, to what I hope is just a small degree, I imposed my own assumptions and biases onto the transcriptions I produced.

In an effort to counter this inevitability (and not un-coincidentally, to comply with the requirements of the research ethics review committees that approved this project), I returned frequently to the original audio-files to check the accuracy of my transcripts. This back-and-forth process allowed me to catch and correct both the expected typographical errors (“their” for “they’re,” for example) and more significant mistakes such as the substitution of “can” for “can’t.” This recursive practice continued throughout the process of data analysis, as I found it necessary to return to the original interview audio files to ensure I was accurately capturing the participants’ intention, which was sometimes conveyed through tone and was, consequently, very difficult to capture in writing.

To ensure anonymity, as far as is possible, the text identifies participant’s quotations only by an initial (“F” for faculty; “A” for administrator; “DC” for division chair), a randomly assigned (i.e. non-hierarchical) number (1-5 for faculty; 1-6 for administrators; 1-5 for division chairs), and the page number of the transcript being quoted from. For example, the notation (A1, p. 14) indicates that the original quotation can be found on page 14 of the transcript of my interview with Administrator One. In this way, I have done my best to present all data anonymously, aware that true confidentiality is impossible to achieve in this context. Where changes to the original text have been made, I have used square brackets. For example, in each instance I have replaced the real name of the institution with [South City College] or [SCC]. Pauses of three or more seconds are indicated as [pause]. My own comments are presented either separately as part of the transcription or, where a new line would disrupt the flow, simply as bracketed

interjections. Where I have eliminated part of a response for conciseness or to protect anonymity, I have used ellipses within square brackets, thus: [. . .].

Additionally, to ensure accuracy and to protect privacy, I sent each participant a copy of his or her verbatim transcript with a request for corrections and comments, revising as necessary. Finally, to facilitate the participants' review of the findings, I sent the full content of all chapters in which the participant's contributions were used to each participant with a request that each review the text for both accuracy and level of personal comfort with the way the examples may identify them as individuals and/or with the accuracy of my representation of their experiences. After receiving their feedback, I made changes as requested.

4.2 Analysis and Interpretation

In 2009, as part of my required Ph.D. coursework, I was stunned to learn that it was acceptable, even preferable in education, to conceive of research methods from a constructivist perspective, steering away from notions of "right" and "wrong" or "true" and "false" and instead looking for meaning, understanding, and the creation of knowledge. As an English major who came of age intellectually in the self-consciously postmodern 1980s and 90s (and who, at the time, would have been more likely to write "[self]consciously post/modern"), I was perplexed: why was anyone making this argument, which to me was self-evident? *Of course* meaning is constructed. *Of course* there is no "right" or "wrong," "true" or "false." There is interpretation based on careful reading of the evidence, which in my case had always been text. What "method" does one need, other than to read carefully, to think, to trace patterns, to develop interpretations and draw conclusions?

To some degree, reading carefully, thinking, tracing patterns, and drawing conclusions are all productive elements of a method for data analysis. What I am comfortable calling “close reading” has, in other contexts, been called *inductive analysis*, which Thomas (2006) defines as “a systematic procedure for analyzing qualitative data in which the analysis is likely to be guided by specific evaluation objects . . . [the term] refers to approaches that primarily use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by an evaluator or researcher (p. 238). Of course, given my previous observations on the interpretive nature of transcription, I would argue that the notion of “raw data” in this context is false. But the notion of an approach that allows the researcher, through careful reading and re-reading of the text, to identify emergent themes is consistent with both my educational history as an English major and instructor and with my desire to embrace a methodology that allows me to develop theory as an emergent or consequential result of my data analysis. To facilitate the data analysis, and to help me to formalize a process that previously had been instinctive, I turned both to van Manen’s (1997; 2014) theory of Hermeneutic Phenomenological Reflection and to Smith, Flowers, and Larkin’s (2009) theory of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

4.3 Hermeneutic Phenomenological Reflection and Writing (van Manen, 1997; 2014)

As van Manen (1997; 2014) presents it, hermeneutic phenomenological reflection is similar to what I have always understood as “thematic analysis.” However, where the notion of “theme” in literary studies often refers to some kind

of main idea or message—what I used to describe to first-year students as the “universal truths about human behaviour”— thematic analysis in human science research is a process of discovery, insight, and meaning-making: “when we analyze a phenomenon, we are trying to determine what the themes are, the experiential structures that make up that experience” (van Manen, 1997, p. 79). The process of hermeneutic phenomenological reflection is one means by which to capture the themes of experience, to uncover commonalities and illuminate individual, anti-thematic, experiences; importantly, the reflective/reflexive process is not passive. So, when van Manen (2014) argues “that phenomenological reflection is writing” (p. 365) I understand completely. Until I articulate my thoughts, either by speaking them or putting them on paper, they cannot exist for anyone but me and remain fluid and constantly shifting. Putting my thoughts in writing “fixes” them in a way that speech, which is ephemeral, cannot. There are, of course, drawbacks to writing things down; often the most profound or beautiful insight seems banal and unoriginal once committed to paper. Here the process of reflexivity comes in, and is where I relied both on my own reflection and on my colleagues’ feedback to ensure that not only have I articulated our experiences accurately, but that I have done so in an authentic way, one that both capitalizes on and mitigates the influence of my position as a participant-researcher.

4.4 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith et al., 2009)

The theory, method, and research practices of interpretative phenomenological analysis ([IPA]; Smith et al., 2009) draw on both phenomenology and hermeneutics. However, IPA also includes ideography. Where phenomenology

is concerned with experience, and hermeneutics with interpretation, ideography turns the researcher's lens towards the particular. In IPA, the researcher typically collects data from a small, purposively selected sample, which may be augmented by data collected from participants who have a different perspective on the phenomenon of interest (Smith et al.). I chose this approach, beginning with a core sample of five participants, each of whom participated in two interviews of approximately one hour, and adding myself as participant-researcher, resulting in a core group of six subjects. In IPA terminology, each of the six division chairs, including myself, can be conceived of as a case, so it may be helpful to think of this study as six individual case studies within one larger, institutional, case study. To provide institutional context, I interviewed five faculty representatives (one from each of South City College's six divisions, other than my own), to get a sense of how the experience of leadership development was understood by those who may one day become division chairs themselves. And, to get a sense of how the role of the division chair is perceived by people who can reasonably be assumed to have previously done similar work, I interviewed six people "up" the academic hierarchy: three academic deans, the vice president academic and provost, the then-current (interim) president, and the past president of the institution. This sample, though larger than is considered typical in an IPA study, is consistent with the observation that "[t]here is no right answer to the question of sample size" (Smith et al., p. 51).

IPA data analysis is both inductive and deductive; it focuses on meaning making, on both the particular and the general of individual experience, and the data

analysis process, while iterative, draws upon six key strategies or steps, summarized below.

1. Reading, closely and line-by-line. Designed to immerse the researcher in the data, the first step in IPA analysis ensures that the researcher's focus is on the participant. Because the general rhythm of an interview may shape the overall tone of the resulting transcript, Smith et al. (2009) recommend that the researcher should listen to the audio transcript of the interview at least once during this first stage of analysis. I found myself returning repeatedly to the audio-files, both to check the accuracy of my transcription and to ensure that I was accurately capturing the nuances of speech in both the data (quotations) and my analysis of it.

2. Initial noting. The distinction between steps one and two is somewhat blurred in effective IPA analysis, because the researcher should begin note-taking on first reading and add to those notes on second and subsequent readings. At this stage, the goal is to conduct a free textual analysis rather than to produce a series of meaningful units or themes. The level of detailed commentary achievable at this stage depends on the sample size. For this research project, my notes on the interviews conducted with my primary participants, the division chairs, are extensive (Smith et al., 2009). My notes on the transcripts of interviews done with representatives of faculty and administrators, while detailed, are not as complete as my initial (and subsequent) analytical commentary on the division chair interview transcripts, which, consistent with Smith et al.'s recommendations, were *descriptive*, *linguistic*, and *conceptual*. To facilitate this deeper engagement with the text, I again followed Smith et al. and prepared transcripts that included very wide margins to

accommodate extensive annotation. I did not do the same with the transcripts of the interviews designed to provide context.

3. Developing emergent themes. In this third stage of IPA analysis, the researcher faces the task of reducing the now-considerable volume of data to a manageable amount, while simultaneously retaining the complexity and nuance of the participants' contributions. Doing so emphasizes the "part-whole-part" nature of hermeneutic interpretation, frequently described as the *hermeneutic circle*, in which "the part is interpreted in relation to the whole; the whole is interpreted in relation to the part" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 92). For me, this process was entirely familiar; for most of my career my teaching has depended on my ability to both identify themes and to teach students how to identify and write about themes themselves.

Additionally, throughout this process I was reminded of van Manen's (1997; 2014) notion of writing-as-research: although taking notes and identifying themes is not "writing" in a formal, for-public-consumption kind of way, these steps in the IPA process paradoxically increased my familiarity with the data while at the same time enabling me to develop some distance from the data, allowing for meaningful synthesis and analysis. As well, perhaps because I was drawing on data derived from my own experience, I was accompanied throughout this stage by an inner editorial voice saying: "that's not how *I* would feel in that situation," or "that's *exactly* how I felt!" Having this kind of conversation with the data helped to reinforce my own experience with the phenomenon of interest, and reminded me that there was a real possibility that others would be able to recognize some of their own experience in my findings.

4. Searching for connections across emergent themes. The fourth step in the IPA process assumes that the researcher has produced a set of major and minor themes, not all of which may be relevant to the research project, and that likely have not emerged already organized in any kind of logical way. Using one or more of several strategies, including *abstraction*, *subsumption*, *polarization*, *contextualization*, *numeration*, and *function* (Smith, et al., 2009), the researcher identifies and articulates in writing, graphically, or both, the emergent patterns and connections between and among themes.

Again drawing on my experience as a student and teacher of English literature, this step in the process came relatively naturally. However, the freedom of working with data on individual sheets of paper (as opposed to bound in a book, or otherwise difficult to physically manipulate) allowed me to print the themes on individual slips of paper and move them around to identify and explore patterns. During the writing process, I would often close my eyes and visualize a particular quotation, seeing it, in my mind's eye, in the exact spot on my floor it had occupied during analysis. I then created very simple tables to record the themes I had identified.

5. Moving to the next case. While it may be tempting to begin the process of analysis by looking across all of the cases simultaneously, the idiographic nature of IPA requires that the researcher completes steps one through four for each case individually before moving on to the next. Although I found this very difficult, I was mindful of Smith et al.'s (2009) assertion that the rigour of systematically following

the steps would allow new themes to emerge for each case, thereby ensuring the production of the most thorough data-set possible.

6. Looking for patterns across cases. The final step in the formal IPA data-analysis process depends on each of the individual cases having been thoroughly worked through according to steps one through four. Here, Smith et al. (2009) suggest that the researcher should ask herself several questions about cross-case connections, the relationship between one or more themes and another or others, and the relative potency of specific themes. In this step, the researcher may uncover themes that are both specific to individual cases and also shared by one or more of the participants, allowing for an analysis of individual experience of common phenomena, which was exactly the goal of my research undertaking.

As noted previously, it was impossible to use IPA methods to their fullest extent when analyzing the data gathered from participants who were providing context. In those instances, I worked through the transcripts several times, both with and without listening to the audio-files, highlighting responses relevant to my investigation. I developed a multiple lists to sort the data for each participant group, that allowed me to manipulate the data and ultimately identify and group findings thematically. In all instances, I was careful to ensure that the process was respectful of the participants' anonymity, that all of the work was consistent with the research framework and the conceptual paradigm, and that I made every effort to ensure the validity of my results in order to ensure the quality of the research, as described below.

4.5 Situating the Participant-Researcher as Analyst

I was initially motivated to undertake this research for reasons both mercenary and altruistic. Because part of my job as a division chair was to identify and cultivate potential managers and leaders within the division I oversaw, I hoped that my findings would help to inform the process I use to encourage and empower my divisional colleagues. At the same time, overcoming the crisis of personal confidence that stems from a general sense of not knowing what I am doing in my own work (a notion that persists despite evidence to the contrary) was an enormous motivation for me in this investigation. I had also become very interested in the notion of leadership development, and had constructed for myself the idea that being a “leader” was somehow distinct from (and further along on some imaginary evolutionary timeline than) being a “manager.” What I very quickly learned, however, was that the answer to the original Research Question One (“how do individuals experience a shift in identity from manager to leader within an academic institution?”) effectively was “they don’t.” As a result, I had to reconsider the research questions in such a way as to be able to re-frame the phenomenon of interest: instead of focusing on the experience of transitioning from “manager” to “leader,” it became clear that the central participants in the study, including myself, were instead experiencing the simultaneous and sometimes competing demands of management and leadership. I also began with the expectation that conceptions of “leader” would differ from individual to individual, depending upon situational factors and each individual’s experience.

Of course I brought other contextual biases and assumptions to my work. At the time of data collection, I had been employed at South City College for nearly 15 years, and in 1983, I graduated from one of South City's professional programs. Consequently, I approached the research with a greater-than-usual emotional attachment to South City College. As well, I came to the research with several opinions about the way I thought the division chairs should define them/ourselves as leaders, including my belief that we could best serve the institution and, consequently, its faculty and students, by working together, drawing on each other's strengths, and compensating for each other's weaknesses.

When I began this study, I stated that I was having some difficulty articulating what, exactly, my biases and assumptions were, and I find that process equally difficult now that the research is complete. I have said that I was at the time a division chair, and therefore a subject in my own study. I am Caucasian, cis-gendered, privileged, middle-class. I have teenaged children, one of whom has just started college, so I have a more-than-vested interest in the quality of higher education in all of its aspects, not only in its leadership. I believe that higher education is suffering from chronic underfunding, and that the turn towards a more corporate style of academic management is an unavoidable, not entirely positive, development. I also believe that, particularly in British Columbia, higher education practitioners at all levels are underpaid, and I know the consequences of this are felt deeply at South City College.

Division chairs at SCC are faculty members; in recognition of their additional workload and responsibility they receive a monthly stipend on top of their salary,

which conforms to a grid set provincially. The money is not sufficient to compensate for the extra work and the loss of the professional development time and uninterrupted vacation enjoyed by teaching faculty. At the time of data collection, I often questioned my decision to take on the division chair position.

As a result of my ambivalence, I occasionally doubted the need for my own process of leadership development, and wondered whether it was worthwhile to continue in the division chair role. The fact that I have since moved on from SCC also influences my assumptions about the work of the division chairs: having moved from “insider” to “outsider” has enabled me to see beyond the frustrations of the division chair position and recognize its value as a necessary experience for any academic seeking to move beyond faculty leadership roles. Consequently, I have developed a better understanding and explanation of why any faculty member would want to be a division chair, when teaching is in many ways a significantly less stressful (and often more personally rewarding) job. And by sharing that understanding through the process of examining the experience of my division chair colleagues and me, I believe I am contributing to the literature in a way that can help others who find themselves in similar positions in various academic departments and institutions.

4.6 Mitigating the Influence of Researcher Bias

As part of both data collection and analysis, any observations I make and any interpretations I arrive at have necessarily been influenced by who I am and by the fact that this project included researching my own lived experiences as well as those of my colleagues. Additionally, the location of my study, South City College, was, at

the time of data collection, also my place of employment; I occasionally found myself on delicate ethical ground, given the potentially conflicting goals of both producing valid research and remaining employed. Consequently, and with some regret, I had to be both ruthless and scrupulous when selecting data for inclusion in the process of analysis; I had to return to my research questions frequently, and touched base on several occasions with participants to ensure not only that I was representing them accurately, and as anonymously as possible, but that my focus remained on my research project despite the fact that the interviews revealed an enormous amount of fascinating data that did not fall within the scope of this study.

4.7 Quality of the Research

As a participant-researcher, the potential challenges to the validity of my findings are magnified by my necessarily biased view of the work I was doing daily throughout the data collection period. As Merriam (1998) observed, “all research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner. Being able to trust research results is especially important to professionals in applied fields, such as education, in which practitioners intervene in people’s lives” (p. 198). Because I was intervening, quite explicitly, in the working lives of my division chair colleagues, I felt a deep responsibility to ensure that my findings were not only accurate, but that they were collected in a thoughtfully constructed fashion. Also important to the credibility of the findings was that they be demonstrably valid (both internally and externally), reliable, and had been arrived at ethically.

4.7.1 Construct validity.

According to Yin (2014) the first test of the quality of case study findings is to examine the construct validity of the case, which requires a critique of the case study design in order to ensure that the study has employed strategies appropriate to the phenomenon of interest being studied. Yin argued that, to be valid, the case study design must have five components: the research questions; propositions (if any); unit(s) of analysis; logical connection between data and propositions; and the criteria for interpreting the findings. In this study, the research questions are presented in Chapter One and the findings are discussed in Chapters Eight and Nine. The original proposition was to explore the (presumed) transition from “manager” to “leader” as experienced by the division chairs at South City College, although that proposition changed during the period of data analysis and writing, as has been described. The units of analysis are the division chairs, including the author as a participant-observer, contextualized by data collected from a representative sampling of participants “up” and “down” the academic hierarchy at South City College. Both the connection between the data and the findings and the criteria for interpreting the findings were established within the framework of interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, et al., 2009).

4.7.2 Internal validity.

The question of ensuring internal validity in qualitative research rests not so much in whether the results can be replicated but in whether the correlation between the data and the results is consistent (Merriam, 1998). Given that hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1997; 2014) and interpretative

phenomenological analysis (Smith, et al., 2009) are explicitly interpretive undertakings, I employed several strategies to ensure internal validity: I triangulated by drawing on multiple sources of data, used member checks to ensure that the data and any interpretations were plausible according to the participants, and invited peer examination by asking participants and colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerged (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Merriam).

4.7.3 External validity (or generalizability).

The ability to generalize the findings of a study, that is, to apply them to other situations, populations, cases, or times, characterizes the external validity of that study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Merriam, 1998). However, the findings from studies involving human subjects are necessarily difficult to generalize, because of the potential for extreme differences even among members of a purposively selected sample. In the case of this study, one of my assumptions was that the findings would illustrate both the similarities and the differences of the participants' experience. So a reader's first instinct might be to dismiss the findings as too unique or too situationally specific to be valid. As van Manen (2014) observes,

Many qualitative inquiries try to arrive at generalized understandings.

Phenomenology is a form of inquiry that does not yield generalizations in the usual empirical sense. The only generalization allowed in phenomenological inquiry is "never generalize." (p. 352)

However, as a long-time instructor of English literature, I am very familiar with the ability of literature to introduce readers to what I call "universal truths about human behavior." These truths are what connect readers to works of literature whose

events may take place in different geographical, temporal, or even totally imaginary places. Similarly, readers of this study may be looking for examples of experience that reflect their own and, finding them, may find their own experience validated, a phenomenon van Manen describes as “existential generalization” (p. 352). To facilitate such connections, I have provided clear, in-depth, detailed descriptions, including extensive examples, so that readers can easily compare their experiences to those of the participants. I have also described the typicality of the division chairs as representatives of the larger class of academic middle managers, and have employed multiple cases within the overall case-study framework in order to be able to effectively highlight both unique and multiple-participant experiences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Merriam, 1998).

4.7.4 Reliability (or replicability).

Especially in quantitative research, the reliability of a study depends on the potential to accurately replicate the findings (Merriam, 1998). However, in a recent review, Mackel and Plucker (2014) found that replication studies comprise just 0.13% of education articles, arguing that researchers have been more concerned with experimental design than on replicability. The nature of qualitative studies, however, means that the likelihood of producing identical findings, even in a second study using the same research design, questions, assumptions, participants, and data analysis and reporting strategies, is infinitesimal. Consequently, in qualitative research reliability can be seen as synonymous with consistency and dependability. Reliable qualitative research demonstrates similarity not exactitude: if a similar

study were undertaken with similar participants the results would be similar (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

While I have emphasized the uniqueness of this research study as one being conducted by a participant-observer, the phenomenological findings in the studies I have discussed in the literature (see Chapter Two) reinforce the similarity of the experiences of academic middle managers as they have been presented in studies conducted both within North America and abroad. And, as postulated in Chapter Nine, I believe that further studies involving academic middle managers from institutions other than South City College would produce relatively similar findings.

4.7.5 Ethics.

Underpinning any qualitative research undertaking is the assumption that both the participants and the researcher will conduct themselves ethically. Fundamentally, the success of a qualitative research project depends on the participants and the researcher telling the truth. While there is no way of controlling for a participant who tells outright lies that are not contradicted by any of the other data collected, by conducting a multi-participant study, and by including data gathered from South City College employees other than the division chairs, I have created, insofar as is possible, the kind of comparative context Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) recommend as one way to combat potential ethical problems stemming from invalid data being provided by one or more participants. Additionally, because this research project involved human subjects, it was approved by the research ethics boards of both the University of British Columbia and the institution described in this document as South City College.

During the process of ethics review, I was reminded that my perception of “low risk” might not be the same as that of my participants. Consequently, I made several revisions both to the invitation to participate and the interview questions to address concerns raised by the South City College research ethics board. I obtained informed consent from all participants, and provided each with a list of the questions that formed the basis of my interview(s) with them, along with a reminder that I may be asking follow-up or additional questions both throughout the interview and, if necessary, afterwards. To further address potential ethical dilemmas, to the extent that is possible I have presented all data anonymously, and have circulated the findings to all participants with a request that they review the data both for accuracy and to ensure that they are comfortable with the way the data represents (and/or potentially identifies) them and their experiences.

4.8 Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter has presented the methodology and the theoretical framework shaping the processes of data analysis and interpretation. It includes discussion of how the data were transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted within two frameworks: van Manen’s (1997; 2014) hermeneutic phenomenological reflection and Smith, Flowers, and Larkin’s (2009) interpretative phenomenological analysis. The chapter includes a discussion of the author’s specific and particular perspective as both participant and researcher, including the steps taken to mitigate the influence of researcher bias. The chapter concludes by providing an overview of the steps taken to ensure the overall quality of the research.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONTEXTUAL FINDINGS: FACULTY

With the goal of better understanding the process of leadership development as experienced by the division chairs at South City College (SCC), I undertook a hermeneutic phenomenological case study of the six division chairs, including me, employed at the institution at the time of data collection (January-May, 2013). In order to provide context for my findings, in addition to the interviews I held with the division chairs I conducted in-depth interviews with the following: a faculty representative of each division other than the one I oversaw, and all of the excluded administrators on the “academic side” of the institution: the three academic deans, the academic vice president and provost, the then-interim president, and the immediate past president. This chapter presents the findings resulting from my analysis of the data generated through the contextual interviews held with the faculty representatives of the five divisions other than my own. In each instance I asked a standard set of questions provided to all participants prior to the formal interview. In keeping with the emergent nature of qualitative research, I asked follow-up and prompting questions in order to elicit the fullest possible responses to the formal question set. I begin with a brief, necessarily vague, description of the participants themselves, followed by an exploration of the major themes arising from the data analysis.

5.1 Participants

Without exception, the non-division-chair faculty members who participated in this research project came to SCC as instructors and have subsequently taken on

the additional responsibility of working as a department chair or coordinator. Each participant carries both teaching and administrative responsibilities, and is released from instructional duties anywhere from .25 to .75 of full-time equivalency. With tenure at the institution ranging from 3 to 20 years, the participant sample represents a broad cross-section of the department chair and coordinator range of responsibilities and experience, and the participants' descriptions of their individual moves from teaching to faculty management vary widely. Following is a brief overview of the participants.

5.1.1 Faculty member F1.

This participant joined SCC in its early days and has extensive experience in both the private and public sectors as a freelancer, a consultant, and a college employee. As the coordinator for a relatively small program, F1 represents and/or can describe the experience of a significant minority of SCC faculty members who may not be employed at the institution full time or who may have full-time work at the institution but who, for a variety of reasons, are employed in additional work outside the institution.

5.1.2 Faculty member F2.

This participant chairs a small but rapidly changing department, and brings experience from both the federal and municipal levels to SCC. With a strong background and education in leadership, F2 is among the group of faculty members whose programs focus on career studies at the institution. Faculty members employed in F2's area may have additional employment outside the institution, but for the most part consider themselves to be primarily SCC employees.

5.1.3 Faculty member F3.

This participant chairs a large department at SCC and brings a long history of public sector employment, as well as a demonstrated interest in educational development and leadership, to SCC. Many faculty members in F3's area are employed outside of the institution, including a significant proportion holding full- or part-time work elsewhere.

5.1.4 Faculty member F4.

Faculty member F4 is a coordinator in a mid-sized academic department at SCC. This participant represents those faculty managers who may not be responsible for the day-to-day operations of their departments or programs, but who do the work of coordinating and successfully executing special projects that may, from time to time, be taken on by many areas of SCC. F4's experience represents that of faculty members in administrative roles who may be "testing the water" for future academic leadership positions.

5.1.5 Faculty member F5.

This participant chairs a large department at SCC and brings a long history of private sector experience to the institution. Among other things, F5's experience reflects that of faculty who have come to SCC with very few preconceived notions of what being a college instructor (or, indeed, a college administrator) might mean, but who take on both a teaching role and the responsibility of department or program management.

5.2 From Instructor to (Part-time) Administrator

As previously mentioned, all the division-representative faculty members interviewed for this research project came to SCC as instructors. Typically, faculty join the institution as part-time instructors who then work their way up to full-time instruction over a period of two or three years. Although there are exceptions, that pattern is certainly the norm for the faculty participants interviewed for this study. And without exception, these participants speak positively about their time as instructors. As F2 observed,

there was this moment when I was standing at the front of the class where I just had this epiphany; I think it was the second week, where it was like, I was, I was *born* to do this. There was just this feeling of confirmation that I was in the right place at the right time with the right skills. (p. 1)

But as these faculty members moved on in their careers, some began to feel that there was a need to do more. In some cases, the motivation was internal: “I decided that, especially as my children got older and I didn’t have so many pressures at home, that I had an obligation to, to be the faculty member that I knew I was” (F3, p. 2). For others, the push came from an external source, as was the case for F1, who describes the pressure to take on the role of program coordinator: “it was put as, sort it out amongst the faculty or we’ll consider whether we need to be running this program. [JD: really] Take care of your business” (p. 2). For another participant, the idea of an administrative role was put forward at the initial job interview: “I was being interviewed [. . .] and asked, *in that interview*, I was asked if I was interested in admin. In my entry interview” (F5, p. 1).

The pressures of administrative work have had a significant impact on many of these participants' working lives and, in some cases, on their personal lives as well. Taking on a faculty administrator role is widely recognized as a burden, which means that finding people to fill these roles is not always easy. As F1 described it, the perception of the department chair or coordinator role is a lot of paperwork, a lot of paper pushing, and, um, too many hours for the position [...] people perceive roadblocks. And that prevented faculty from wanting to get involved. (p. 1)

Another faculty member observed that "most of the people here don't want to do [administrative work]. They come here and they want to teach [...] By very far, it's the minority that want to do admin" (F5, p. 2). So I wondered, why would anyone take on these positions at all? For one faculty member, taking on administrative duties seemed to be a natural step, given previous industry experience:

I looked around and said, well who has experience with labour relations? Who has the experience with admin? Who has experience with budgeting? Who has experience doing all the components of this job? Well, I had done all of them somewhere else already before [...] I love the balance. Some instruction and some—being able to do some admin. (F5, p. 2)

For another, the motivation seems to have had more to do with self-preservation:

since a lot of us are on the Freedom 85 plan for retirement, uh, you know, we just need to make it better for ourselves too [...] and that's what really brought me forward, was the knowledge that one person would probably

succeed the previous department chair, and I was not going to finish my career under [that person's] leadership. (F3, p. 20)

As I was reviewing these responses, I was surprised by how generally negative these faculty members were about their administrative work, so I asked flat out, why does anybody do this kind of work? One person retorted, "Well, exactly. Particularly when you're not financially reimbursed for it, as we are not in this institution" (F3, p. 19); another said, "it's kind of the last man standing. Like, BOO! You're it. You're department chair. You drew the short straw" (F1, p. 17); and one person matter-of-factly said, "If we don't like it we can go back to instructing" (F5, p. 2). Reflecting back as I reviewed the data, I did not see much evidence for why these faculty members had taken on their administrative positions. For F5 there was the appeal of a balance between teaching and admin; for F3 there was a sense of obligation to junior faculty; for F1 there were the dual arguments of "last man standing" and a threat to the program. So why do it? And why carry on in the position, having taken it on? While many participants shared a frustration with their administrative duties, they were also motivated by the opportunity to do more than merely manage their departments; each had a clear understanding of the difference between the notions of management and leadership, and each had something to say about how those different activities were part of their day-to-day work.

5.3 Management Versus Leadership

When asked to describe their understanding of the difference between the notions of 'management' and 'leadership' (or 'manager' and 'leader'), the participants in this portion of the study were relatively consistent: in one way or

another, all stated that leaders have a vision and they think strategically, while managers do the day-to-day tasks of making things run smoothly. And much of what these participants had to say could easily be seen as reinforcing my assumption that management and leadership are such different skill sets that they exist independent of each other. For example, faculty member F1 observed that “a manager would be somebody who’s implementing a plan that somebody else has developed” (p. 3), while F3 stated that “you can be a leader without being [. . .] a manager” (p. 3). Certainly when they were describing the characteristics of leaders and managers these participants spoke of them as being displayed by different people. For example, I was told that the “leader has a vision; and [the] manager [. . .] follows rules and puts things in the proper place at the proper time [. . .] I think a leader sometimes could be misunderstood, while [. . .] everybody appreciates a good manager” (F4, p. 2), and “my perception of a manager would be somebody who’s implementing a plan that somebody else has developed” (F1, p. 3). At the same time, however, participants recognized that truly effective leadership and management are interdependent:

Some people might have a great vision, but they cannot accomplish what they really want to accomplish, so they just keep saying this: we’re going to do this or going to do that. But how are we going to do it? For that there is the manager part. On the other side [if] there’s just the manager for the department it gives a peaceful time, but then everything is kind of stagnant and nothing is really going to change. (F4, p. 2)

This notion of stagnation was raised by a number of participants at the faculty level, some of whom were unclear about where the responsibility for institutional leadership was meant to reside: “what I’m most surprised about is where is the vision and where is the leadership of vision and strategy here? And whether it falls within a department or whether it [. . .] is supposed to be top-down or bottom-up?” (F5, p. 2). Or, as another faculty member wondered, are the notions of ‘up’ and ‘down’ becoming less relative:

I think it used to be a little bit more separate than it is; nowadays I think people—a lot of it is blurred; managers can be leaders, and the leaders aren't just visualizing all the time, they actually have to do some management as well. So, I think the lines are starting to move together a little bit more than maybe they used to be when they had a foreman on the shop floor that was the manager and then the leader was up in the office tower. (F2, p. 4)

Others were demonstrating this conflation of obligations by taking on both leadership and management roles. As faculty member F3 put it:

you can be a leader without, um, having a leadership position. And essentially that’s what I had started doing again [as a non-administrative faculty member] was being a leader without a leadership position. And so I see management very differently. Management is your day-to-day making sure that the place runs, um, that the structure is intact, that people get paid [. . .] So that’s the management part of it. And then the leadership part of what I do now is, um, you know, different from that. (F3, p. 3)

Because my interest really lay in exactly *how* the leadership was different from the management, I asked participants to speak about their own experiences as managers and leaders; I wanted to know what the experience of managing and leading was like for faculty members in administrative roles other than that of division chair.

5.4 Managing Versus Leading

When I started asking this group of participants about their experiences as managers and/or leaders, I realize in retrospect that I was imagining that the majority would talk about their own accomplishments and achievements as faculty leaders. And while some referred to the positive changes they had been able to make in their areas, the overarching message was that this group of participants was very frustrated by the challenges of their positions. In particular, they were struggling with the day-to-day difficulties of their very large workloads, which included the responsibility of managing a highly independent group of faculty members with no real disciplinary authority, and the consequences of trying to effect change in the face of the complex and sometimes stagnating bureaucracy of the institution.

5.4.1 Workload/lack of authority.

When discussing what might be seen as the more managerial side of their work, most of these participants spoke about how overwhelming the workload could be. In one case, this feeling was attributed specifically to the post-secondary environment: “Sometimes I’m still really overwhelmed. What really strikes me is that I could have moved into a leadership position in [my discipline] far more easily

than to move into a leadership position in a post-secondary institution” (F3, p. 6). This feeling was, in more than one instance, attributed to the difficulty of having to manage faculty despite not having any disciplinary authority. As collegial managers, department chairs, coordinators, and division chairs at SCC are not able to formally sanction employees or otherwise take disciplinary action; for the most part faculty leaders are powerless in the face of what one administrator called the “plug-and-play” people (A4, p. 4); that is, those who show up, teach, hold office hours, and do little or no more to engage in the activities of the department or institution, which put chairs and coordinators in the position of having to cajole their colleagues into participating more fully. As faculty member F3 describes it:

I had never worked in a place like this, and I saw many people do exactly what I did: hunker down, stay in your office, do what you have to do, you know? And so that’s what, partly, what makes the workload so high in the administrative positions because, you know, it’s monitoring faculty and the management part of it. (p. 20)

Earlier in our interview, the same faculty member observed that, while we need the so-called ‘plug-and-play’ people, “in a *competitive* environment they wouldn’t survive” (p. 9). The challenge of working in the collegial environment, that is, one in which supervisory positions are held by faculty colleagues rather than excluded managers, was echoed by others among this group of participants. One observed that “in private industry [. . .] the vision is set by the leader and then they inspire the troops to go with them. And if you don’t like it you go somewhere else. Not as easy in

a collegial environment where you have faculty that go ‘mmmm, nah, we don’t want to go there’ and can resist” (F5, pp. 7-8).

The lack of a clear means by which to effectively direct faculty members within the collegial management system also contributes to increased perceptions of inequality, particularly among those faculty members who are taking on additional work. As faculty member F1 put it,

the collegial style puts these so-called leaders in positions where they really don’t have the authority to really truly lead. Right? [. . .] We've got to consult. We've got to include everybody, get everyone's opinion. And if you *choose* that you would like to take this project on, then you can get it done by a time that suits you. That doesn't, to me, that's the missing piece on the leadership at the program level or the department level [. . .] And that's where it just appears that some people really truly care and will take that on, but then that creates an inequality within the department where some people do take a lot of these extra things on and bring a *lot* to the table, and, um, then you get other people that just don't care and will come in and do their thing and then leave. And it can lead into resentment and I've seen it; there is, at least in [my area] . . . there has been resentment over certain things because of perceived inequality. So that's the problem. (p. 13)

And the problem of inequality, real and perceived, is complicated by the fact that many faculty members are employed elsewhere, in addition to their work at SCC:

not all of them but many of them—are much like mercenaries . They parachute in, they teach, they leave. And they do a whole bunch of other

things besides this. [. . .] and as much as for people this may be their *primary* job, it isn't necessarily their only job. (F5, p. 1)

For faculty leaders, succession planning is made difficult when their departments are populated by instructional faculty who are occupied with more than just their work at SCC:

in a number of situations, people teach elsewhere, they have their own businesses; they have things going on that, um, I think they *want* to do because it provides that balance. It's not that they're just teaching at [SCC] full-time, they want to have those other things that if you take on department chair or coordinator you can't do those things, so you're forced to make a choice, and it doesn't seem to be appealing enough to outweigh the other choices. (F1, p. 2)

Unlike in the corporate environment, where succession planning is the norm, the idea of nurturing future leaders was, at the time of data collection, relatively new at SCC. For most of my career at SCC, the majority of department chairs and coordinators took on their administrative roles because it was seen to be their turn, not because they were necessarily skilled or experienced administrators, although often they were. As faculty member F2 put it:

I mean, the other piece to this is they hire teachers, right? So I came here really wanting to teach and being really excited about teaching. And then, you know, they're like, well somebody has to chair the department [. . .] so then it kind of was, well I know how to do that so I'll take that on. But it's hard to find sometimes the administrative people out of the faculty [. . .] Because it's

almost like you want to hire an administrator to do that level instead of a faculty person because maybe that's what their skills are, and that's not really what I signed up for even though I enjoy it. Because you're making change. But right now I'm not making any change [laughs]. (p. 11)

For many of these participants, the decision to take on the administrative role was motivated, at least in part, by the desire to make change or to do something new. But this desire to effect change was not always met with an actual ability to do so, perhaps because faculty members in some disciplines are more accustomed to change than others:

I think it's hard for some of my faculty that come from [my] background— [they are] used to change. So it is hard for them. And I have to keep going into the middle and going “you're going to piss people off, you're going to piss people off here, just take it down a notch.” Because there are people within an academic setting that really don't want any change [. . .] there are some that would love to just “this is the way it's always been; I've always taught Thomas Hardy, and I shall always teach *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and that will be how I retire. No you will *not* make me teach John Fowles” [both laugh]. (p. 13)

This example perfectly illustrates the difficulty department chairs and coordinators experience as a consequence of working with two conflicting groups of faculty members: those who are resistant to change and who often also resist assuming departmental responsibility beyond their teaching, and those who desire change and who are frequently willing to do extra work to achieve departmental (and

personal) goals. For many of the faculty leaders I spoke with, the desire to make change was met with some confounding obstacles.

5.4.2 Bureaucracy.

One of the biggest concerns for the faculty participants I interviewed was their difficulty trying to get anything significant done, including making change, in the face of a sometimes overwhelming bureaucracy, not only in terms of the various levels of approval but also the lack of business systems to support their work. In 2013, SCC was experiencing a period of rapid evolution following a long period of relative stagnation; the institution had just refreshed the first real strategic plan ever implemented, and the vice president academic and provost was spearheading the development and implementation of the very first academic plan. And while the appetite for change was evident, the institution's systems had not kept up.

Faculty member F1 talked about the difficulty of a task as simple as booking a meeting:

honestly it costs probably hundreds of dollars in faculty's time to book a meeting. Because you have a raft of e-mails, and [. . .] the thread ends up being 10, 12, 14 messages about planning a time *when to meet*, let alone the actual meeting [. . .] and that's where [. . .] when you're looking at leadership and trying to develop that, that's what makes it unappealing to people. You see that sort of thing happening and you just sort of go, I don't want to get involved in that [. . .] it factors into people not wanting to get involved [. . .] because they see the pain that goes with it. (F1, pp. 4-5)

In the absence of either appropriate systems or dedicated administrative support, most department chairs and coordinators are responsible not only for whatever higher-level work they might want to do, such as curriculum development, but also for any related clerical chores, such as ordering toner cartridges for printers or making photocopies, and necessary personnel management, such as mediating conflicts. As one faculty member put it, “it is difficult to do long-term, when you’re just trying to keep the fires put out day-to-day” (F1, p3). For some, the inertia has led to reluctance to put forward new ideas and a sense that their role is more about managing than leading:

when we do propose things it seems to just go into a black hole and we never hear back from it, and then we go, oh well then we’re just managerial leaders we’re not supposed to be visionary leaders, even though we were asked at one point for a brief moment in time to present a vision, now it's like well, you know what, really you're just going to be a managerial leader here; come and make sure things don't fall apart. Give people their schedules [. . .] And it's tough when I have faculty that want, and a leadership team within my department that they want to push ahead, and I'm going push ahead where? You know? To what? We don't even know we're going anywhere right now. So that's kind of where I'm at. Just trying to take it a notch down and just kind of be patient. (F5, p.3; pp. 11-12)

Despite all of the roadblocks, others are making some progress, are doing more than managerial work, and would like to see the institution be more supportive of their leadership:

I do think that the college needs to support leadership more, because you don't, my education and experience hasn't prepared me for this in many ways. So I'm learning new skills. All kinds of HR stuff, it's all good, right? [...]

It's hard to imbue others with confidence if you're not feeling confident in yourself. (F3, p. 20)

The expectation that these faculty administrators will inspire others is implicit throughout the collegial management system at SCC. There is an understanding that people need to step into these roles as both a responsibility and an obligation. However, there are evidently multiple challenges inherent in departmental leadership positions that tend to make them unattractive to many faculty members.

5.7 Chapter Summary and Reflection

Keeping in mind that my interviews with this group of faculty leaders were intended to provide context for the central investigation into the experiences of the division chairs, worth recalling are the reasons these participants gave for taking on their faculty leadership positions: F1 was motivated both by his status as “last man standing” and an implicit threat to his program, should a leader not be found. F2 felt an obligation or responsibility to the department, while F3 felt a responsibility both to herself and to junior faculty. F4 found the work enjoyable and liked to be involved, and F5 found the balance between teaching and administration satisfying. And despite articulating significant frustrations about their administrative roles, all five respondents said that they enjoyed their work. On first examination, faculty members F1, F2, and F3 might be seen to be looking inward, motivated by the needs of their departments and their colleagues. One might also conclude that the final two

faculty members, F4 and F5, are more upwardly motivated. But of course it is not so simple, because, to my mind the explanation for these participants having taken on their administrative roles, despite the challenges, lies more in what was not said in the interview context than in what was.

None of the participants in this group suggested leaving SCC to work elsewhere as an alternative to continuing in an administrative role. Two participants expressed their desire to return to full-time teaching, three expressed some interest in pursuing additional leadership roles, but not one responded to the evident frustrations of the work by suggesting that working somewhere else might be less frustrating. Most members of this respondent group have been at SCC for a relatively long time, so their commitment to the institution may have been building for many years, but the contradiction between their evident frustration with the work and their claims to nevertheless enjoy it is difficult to explain other than by concluding that there is a commitment to the institution, or, more likely, to its programs and people, that makes the unlikable elements of the administrative work tolerable. As F1 said,

I believe in my program. I believe in what we're doing; hence, I will spend two thirds of the Saturday at [a] conference representing [my area] as a whole. So you do that, but then you look at, okay, I've had Sunday off. Here I am 9 a.m., well 8:30, back at it Monday morning. (p. 24)

For this group of respondents, taking on a leadership role means serving the needs of the department, the program, and their fellow faculty members and in that way serving the needs of the institution as a whole. These leaders seemed focused,

primarily, on their areas: their departments, or programs, or communities. Those who might consider making a move “up”, perhaps becoming division chairs, are well aware of the challenges inherent in the position, yet are giving serious thought to taking it on at some point in their careers. Although they may not be able to articulate explicitly why they would consider the move to division chair, these respondents have articulated that their commitment to the institution, through its programs and people, motivated them to take on the administrative roles they currently occupy.

CHAPTER SIX

CONTEXTUAL FINDINGS: ADMINISTRATORS

With the goal of better understanding the process of leadership development as experienced by the division chairs at South City College (SCC), I undertook a hermeneutic phenomenological case study of the six division chairs, including me, employed at the institution at the time of data collection (January-May, 2013). In order to provide context for my findings, in addition to the interviews I held with the division chairs I conducted in-depth interviews with the following: a faculty representative of each division other than the one I oversaw, and all of the excluded administrators on the “academic side” of the institution: the three academic deans, the academic vice president and provost, the then-interim president, and the immediate past president. This chapter presents the findings resulting from my analysis of the data generated through the contextual interviews I held with excluded administrators. In each instance I asked a standard set of questions that I had provided to participants prior to the formal interview. In keeping with the emergent nature of qualitative research, I asked follow-up and prompting questions in order to elicit the fullest possible responses to the formal question set. What follows is a summary of the responses provided by the participants. I begin with a very brief, necessarily vague, description of the participant group, then move to a somewhat organic presentation of the major themes arising from the data analysis.

6.1 Participants

The administrators interviewed for this project had, at the time of data collection, been at the institution for terms ranging from six months to 33 years,

and, with two exceptions at the academic dean level, all were hired into their administrative positions from outside SCC. Subsequent to the period of data collection (January–May, 2013), two participants moved into different positions than they held when interviewed, and were replaced by candidates selected from outside the institution: an interim dean has returned to faculty, and the interim president has been replaced by his (permanent) successor. Because this group’s members could be relatively easy to identify for readers who recognize “South City College,” to protect anonymity as much as is possible I have not provided any further individual description.

6.2 Becoming a Leader

My first question to administrative leaders at SCC asked them to describe how they came to be in their position, assuming there would be a range of experiences, including a planned progression from faculty member, to faculty leader, to excluded administrator, with a selection process at each step. However, I learned that such a progression was not typical. As one administrator observed, “You know I’d love to be able to say that there was a plan from youth or there was something that was put into place at the time of the great schism but it was really very *ad hoc*-ish” (A4, p. 1). For the administrator-participants “*ad hoc*” turned out to be the more common means of progression. As one participant stated, “I kind of lose track of how I got here. I’m not entirely sure how I ended up in here” (A1, p. 1). For another, the process was clear but not, at least initially, particularly formal: “I was asked to [take on an acting position]. And I did that. I moved over within a week. It was a Tuesday that [the vice president academic and provost] came into my office

[. . .] and asked if I would, uh, take on his roles that he'd vacated. And I moved in on, on, um, on Monday" (A5, p. 5). Other administrators echoed these experiences, reporting career paths that depended heavily on being in the right place at the right time:

I enjoyed teaching and I took a teaching role at another institution and I just happened [. . .] to land in the situation where there was a *ton* of opportunity for anybody that showed any type of initiative. [. . .] I was department chair within a year, I was responsible for undergraduate programs within another year, and every time you showed initiative they just kept giving you more and more and more. [. . .] So I went right from a faculty member to being on the executive, and I didn't really do any of that other bit in between. (A4, p. 1)

Another administrator, speaking more generally, observed that moving forward often resulted from an invitation: "because somebody asked me to do something, something that, in some cases I might not have considered. In some cases I was itching for an invitation to do that. That was very important to moving me along" (A2, p. 7). These examples, together with the others in this section, illustrate the dilemma faced by the division chairs at SCC (and by those in similar roles at other institutions): regardless of personal desire, or professional development, or institutional design and succession planning, advancement into a leadership position sometimes depends on being the right person in the right place at the right time.

6.3 Management Versus Leadership; Managing Versus Leading

As with the faculty participants, the administrators who participated in this research were reasonably consistent in their understanding of the terms “manager” and “leader.” As one said, fairly typically, a “manager is a person who tells people what to do. A leader is a person who guides” (A6, p. 8). The notion of leader as a guide or someone with a vision of the future was echoed repeatedly. For example, as one said, “managing is making the trains run on time, and leading is deciding where to lay the track, and when to start to look into space travel because no one’s taking trains anymore” (A3, p. 3). And another observed,

in an ideal world I suppose a leader is, you know, somebody who has some vision and is able to get other people to buy into the vision, and, and has the energy to get behind people and help them buy into the vision and give them the resources to—so that they're not resentful about having to buy into the vision. And the manager, you know, at the other end of the spectrum, is the person who is processing the paper and making sure the contracts are right.
(A1, p. 9)

All of the participants in this group were clear that management and leadership required different skill sets, and all were similarly clear that successful leadership is grounded in good management:

I've known people who are exceptionally good managers, really really good at making the trains run on time, very good at, um, sorting and analyzing data in order to make, um, efficiencies in things like scheduling and class sizes, but who have no idea of how to do that on a five-year basis. And, and then of

course I've known a lot of people who can think really strategically but who are absolutely unable to make the trains run on time. And I think, you know, to be successful, you really need—not necessarily to be able to *do* both but to know [. . .] what you can't do, and find people who do those things for you.

(A3, p.3)

The notion that effective leaders are able to find others to do things for them was unique to this particular group of participants, and was assumed as a given primarily by the members of the group who are closest to the top of the academic hierarchy. For example, one said,

But you have to have the people to get things done and [. . .] I had [someone] ask me, how do I get things done? Because they've seen me come into an organization and move things forward, where they hadn't seen that happen in the past. And I said well, I have people to do things. [. . .] When I look at the academic side—there's nothing; there's no people. (A6, p. 21)

Leaving aside the question of how those on the academic side should get things done without having the people to do them, it is clear that these participants' experience has enabled them to internalize their own understanding of themselves as leaders in a way that distances them from the routine operations work done by those in more explicitly managerial roles. As one observed,

for me there is a distinct difference: a manager is more focused on day-to-day activities, uh, a leader is more vision, strategic oriented. That does not mean that in a leadership role you don't have day-to-day activities that you have to be mindful of, you do. But, uh, there is certainly more of a focus on the future,

and setting a path, and getting people excited about a vision. And, you know, getting them to orient their activities along those lines. (A2, p.3)

At the upper levels of administration, the leadership role is one that relies on persuasive skills, which is really not that different than what is happening at the division and department chair levels. However, what distinguishes the leaders in this group is that they have administrative support, are able to draw on the managerial talents of those reporting to them, and have actual authority rather than just responsibility.

6.4 The Leadership Experience

As I was planning the interview questions for this group of participants, I was operating with a preconception I have acknowledged previously: that there was some kind of distinction between the roles of *manager* and *leader* and that they existed as separate points on one's career trajectory. And although I very quickly discarded this assumption as faulty, the responses of this group of participants gave me new insight into how people who are widely perceived as leaders understand themselves as leaders. While most of these participants self-identified as leaders, and in most cases had done so for many years, their individual understanding of their own leadership experiences varied widely. For example, I asked the participants when they first thought of themselves as leaders, and learned that for some, such awareness happened very early. For example, one said,

I was always a do-er and an organizer and involved in this and that, and I think because I was out there and, you know, always seen, that opened doors,

that opened opportunities, people would ask me would I be interested in doing this? Would I like to serve on this or that committee? (A2, p.3)

This participant's response was typical of this group, another of whom observed, "I have probably always been to some degree a leader" (A6, p. 12), while a third described leadership aspirations dating back to grade nine (A5, p. 13). However, not all members of this participant group viewed their identities as leaders in quite the same way.

One participant, who strongly self-identified as a leader, talked about the challenges of owning that position:

I don't know that it's acceptable to identify yourself as a leader; I think you're supposed to be too humble to—I think you're supposed to pretend that you've been chosen for this by the people and you therefore must serve, though it would not be your choice. That's much more noble than to say, as I did, well I kind of always wanted to be a leader and always fancied myself a leader. Um, but the truth is I always fancied myself a leader, you know? (A3, p. 7)

This participant implies that there is something about the service quality of leadership, or the sense of leadership as an unselfish cause, that sets it apart from what might be seen as the drudgery of management, which helps me to better understand my initial perception of leadership and management as separate: when people are "elevated" into leadership positions, I felt they somehow transcended from a plane characterized by managerial activities to a more lofty plane of leadership where managerial tasks were a thing of the past. And of course this is

ridiculous. As one participant said, “I never ever think about ‘what’s the leadership thing to do?’ Um, I will often—it’s often 20/20 hindsight you’ll think ‘wow that seemed to work out,’ or as often as not, ‘that didn’t work out.’ And you have those learning moments” (A4, p. 5). Further, this participant observed that “this whole thing about natural-born leaders and that sort of thing, you know, I don’t buy that. I think leadership is learned” (A4, p. 3). And for one participant leadership remained elusive, despite being in an acknowledged leadership position: “I don’t feel like I really—I mean I still think a big part of this job is managerial. I can’t seem to get away from that” (A1, p. 15).

In discussing their varying levels of confidence in their identities as leaders, several members of this group of participants echoed a difficulty raised by the faculty participants: leading in a collegial environment, where there is little autonomy and where responsibility and authority do not necessarily go hand in hand, can be extremely difficult. And, because the major administrative reorganization at SCC took place fewer than five years before the data collection period, some of the academic leadership positions are not terribly well understood institutionally. As one participant put it,

I know one frustration that my predecessor had and that the other[s] have had is they think well these are leadership positions; we are supposed to be leading and yet there's a lot of managing that goes on. (A1, p. 4)

Despite this recognition, the fact remains that SCC was, at the time of data collection, actively engaged in the simultaneous processes of leadership development and succession planning, and to a large degree the process will be shaped by many of the

members of this participant group. With that in mind, I asked them to speak about leadership development, keeping in mind that, as one person put it, SCC has “just recently become reflective about this, eh?” (A3, p. 8).

6.5 Leadership Development: Opportunities and Obstacles

When the senior administrators at South City College first started to talk about leadership development, in about 2009-10, I was just starting as division chair. At that time, the idea of developing leaders and doing internal succession planning seemed very foreign, and even insulting, given that only one of three new academic dean positions had been filled by an internal candidate, despite several of the then-division chairs having applied. But one of the participants in this group provided the explanation:

when I first arrived here, one of the things that had never been discussed, and I think one of the reasons why the institution was sitting where it was, was, you had people in many many positions here that had been here a long long time. So they in some cases had one year's experience 20 times. There was no progression, and they *wanted* to progress, but the opportunities weren't there. That's from the people side. From the institution side, here we had this retirement steamroller coming at us, which we've experienced, but who was really picking up the skill set to be able to move into those positions? And we really didn't have anyone. (A4, p. 9)

The idea that there was a skills gap between the internal candidates and the potentially available positions was echoed by another participant, who was speaking specifically to the example of the division chairs:

the challenge is that as a div. chair, there are certain things that you will never hear about until you're a[n excluded] manager, which is too bad [...]. And I think that's part of the leadership development that we need to figure out for the div. chairs. Because I think, if we can figure out how to get the best of both worlds, out of div. chairs, we will be miles ahead. If we can't get the best of both worlds, we, uh, it will not serve our div. chairs well. (A6, p. 20)

As I started to explore this topic a bit further with the participants, it became clear that a common strategy to address this skills gap within a process of leadership development was a combination of formal mentorship and the less formal opportunities provided to observe a range of leadership styles.

The theme of mentorship arose primarily in responses to a question I had asked about the experiences that had influenced this group of participants in their leadership development process. As one said, "I think that it's more people than experiences. I'm a big believer in mentors" (A4, p. 10), and another: "I've been very fortunate to have amazing role models" (A3, p. 4). However, even when the participants introduced the concept of mentorship, their responses turned very quickly to the topic of leadership style and the importance not only of observing others in their leadership, but developing a personal leadership style that is both natural and, as one respondent observed, works for the individual:

Leadership is a very difficult piece. You know, I'd love to have the pill you take to make it happen, but I also—and you don't see this just at [SCC]—the styles of leadership are *so dramatically* different, and I think some are more

successful than others. So you as a person developing leadership approach however you do in your career, you gotta pick what works for you. (A4, p. 11)

Or as another put it,

a lot can be said for access to leaders, and when I say that I mean not prescribed access, so not getting stuck with someone who's your "mentor" who is going to give you some advice from *their* perspective, but having contact and being able to see how a particular person behaves in a particular situation. (A3, pp. 13-14)

Other participants shared the opinion that leadership skills are not always acquired as a result of observing those who would typically be described as 'leaders' given the typical academic hierarchy, and noted that the process is neither necessarily formal nor even immediately recognized. One participant said, "a lot of skills you learn you don't even know you're learning them, right?" (A4, p. 7). And another was emphatic about not limiting the scope of the search for potential models of academic leadership: "I think we absolutely need to recognize a very broad definition of academic leadership, and I think there are academic leaders at all levels of the institution" (A3, p. 9).

What also became clear as part of this discussion was that regardless of where an individual might look for leadership inspiration, there was little point in a leadership development program that was not properly supported over time:

But obviously, you know, there's got to be some *action* that follows those [leadership] discussions, and, you know, those discussions have to also form some sort of plan. So I'm interested in the next steps. [. . .] And obviously an

important piece, which is I have neglected to say but I need to now, is commitment. There needs to be commitment from the top and of course [the former president] was committed to this and got this off the ground when he was here. (A2, p. 6)

Despite all of this hopeful and positive-sounding conversation, there remained a thread of concern that the real work of leadership development could not be done until the institution's systems had been improved enough to allow people the time to do the necessary work. In part, one respondent argued, the problem resulted from the general sense in higher education leadership that there is little in the way of either management or leadership training at all:

I think sometimes I look at this place and I think it's filled with instructors who've never been taught to teach and managers that have never been taught to manage. [laughs] And it's not that—I think there are some great people in these positions who are doing good work *in spite of* the lack of a system to help them along the way or even to guide them as to what kind of moves to make when. (A1, p.3)

Given this evident need to better prepare academic leaders, it seems that the succession planning and leadership development initiatives underway at SCC are both necessary and somewhat urgent. But even those who most supported a leadership development program raised concerns about the institutional capacity to achieve significant results without improvements in other areas. As noted, on several occasions, participants in this group raised concerns about the systems in place at SCC. A major frustration for those at the dean and division chair level, for

example, is the paper-based system used to track faculty members' work history, including contracts, evaluations, and leave/expense reports. And although at the time of this writing there was a process underway to begin to re-vamp the systems in a way that would, ideally, streamline them, the amount of time spent on paper-based managerial tasks was seen as a significant impediment to any leadership development initiatives. As one participant said, "we have to sort out the management piece before anybody's gonna have *time* to lead" (A1, p. 17). Another concurred, in this case speaking specifically about supporting innovation:

If we don't give people time to do it, it's not gonna happen. Because, everybody who's engaged in that process on an operational level is running at 100%, so there is no real time to, you know the corner of the desk piece is, is a false economy. You know, you do things, my, my experience—and I've learned the hard way—my experience is that when you try and do things off the corner of your desk they don't get done, or if it does get done it gets done in a period that's far longer than it should and you probably spend far more than if you had just put the people in place. (A6, p. 22)

However, in the absence of people in place to get the work done, the systems problems are clearly standing in the way of leadership development. As one participant argued: "think about the systemic ways we thwart leadership. Like, how systems can crush leadership" (A3, p. 11). The connection between a potential thwarting of leadership and systems problems is explicit, because many people throughout the institution who occupy what might be called 'leadership' positions find themselves bogged down in the outdated paper-based systems I have

described. As one participant in this group observed, “it’s pretty hard to lead if you’ve got to be on top of every little management piece because somebody might get overpaid. And it’s very draining” (A1, p. 8). So if the academic leaders at the administrative level were feeling bogged down in the not-very-systematic systems, I wondered, what was the perception of the division chairs’ position in the management/ leadership hierarchy? As I discovered from the data, the members of this participant group tend to perceive the division chairs as being in a difficult, perhaps even dead-end, job.

6.6 The Role of the Division Chairs

From my former position as a division chair, I can say without doubt that division chairs bear the major responsibility for faculty leadership development and succession planning at SCC. We were expected to meet, individually, with department chairs, assistant chairs, and coordinators to discuss their leadership aspirations, to set goals, and, where possible in the absence of any significant funding, to support professional development activities designed to enhance their leadership ability. When the division chairs were given the task of faculty leadership development, I had some questions about how that might happen at SCC, so in one interview I asked about the process:

A2: Well obviously it's rooted in having, a boss who sees some potential in you, and without that this doesn't work [laughs] [JD right]. And it's also rooted in the individual having, you know, achieved some sort of success, accomplishment outside of their day-to-day work that shows that they can

handle multiple tasks [. . .] it really is rooted in the *superior* in opening doors for that individual.

JD: So how do you reconcile that with a collegial management system where we don't really have superiors?

A2: Yeah . . . That's a good question. (A2, p. 7)

This participant speaks of achieving an “accomplishment outside of their day-to-day work,” which raises the question of what kind of accomplishment that might be.

While it may be possible to create the means to achieve such an accomplishment for a department chair or coordinator, finding an opportunity to gain excluded-administrator-level experience was not easy for division chairs whose membership in the faculty bargaining unit precluded their participation in the administrative conversations happening at the executive level. Another participant in this group was similarly concerned about the division chairs' lack of outside-the-union experience:

You know, actually I think there's tons of stuff I like about the structure here. Um, but, the flaw in it is that it provides no middle ground to go from faculty to a dean. There's no place to go. So unless a person finds a way to get some extraordinary experience here, or goes elsewhere, it's really difficult for them to be dean. And that's too bad because we've got some great talent at the div. chair row, but how do we develop that? Because going from div. chair to a dean is a far bigger step than anyone appreciates until they go through it. (A6, p. 20)

Despite being seen as a rather large gap by this particular participant, the distance between the division chair position and that of dean was perceived as shorter by another, who felt that the division chairs' experience had not been properly appreciated either internally or externally: "if you're good at your job as division chair you have a *great* skill set, great leadership skill set, 'cause you have walked the walk between the college and the faculty association. And you've walked that successfully" (A5, pp. 4-5). This difference in perception exists at least in part because the division chairs are members of the bargaining unit whose primary responsibility is to support the faculty in their areas while simultaneously acting as a conduit between administration and faculty, an 'on the fence' role that has proven to be difficult to understand for some administrators who have come to SCC from elsewhere. As one participant reported, reflecting on the division chair role:

I had this conversation with the dean at the time, who was sort of saying that [pause], he was sort of my boss. And, uh, I said well, in fact, I actually feel that the departments are my bosses, because they elected me [laughs] and I'm still faculty in that position, and I am still raising the faculty concerns. (A1, p. 6)

Because the division chairs are faculty members, despite the wide range of experience the division chairs have, there is a perception, as one participant observed, "that this role of division chair [is] very limiting" (A5, p. 4).

For division chairs, a significant part of the workload is crisis management, which is not necessarily the case for the most senior administrators. As one participant in this group stated, "One of my things, and they laughed when I arrived

here, I said we don't have many emergencies at post-secondary institutions. And everybody said what do you mean? Everything's a crisis right? And I—I don't believe in that" (A4, p. 11). While that may be true at the big-picture level, the division chairs' job frequently involves crisis management of the most immediate kind: dealing with students and faculty. When I asked one participant to describe the division chair experience the response was "Oh, I used to call it 'everybody's doormat.' [...] I viewed the role as making sure the job got done. And whatever that took" (A5, p. 9). My experience working with division chair colleagues was similar. There was nothing that we would not do to make SCC run better. But I also knew, and I see this most clearly on reflection, that I would not be content in the position for long. And some of what I learned in the interviews reported in this chapter helps to explain why.

6.7 Chapter Summary and Reflection

For the faculty leaders whose experiences were presented in Chapter Five, the implicit motive for taking on a chair or coordinator position was their commitment to their program or department, to their colleagues, and to the institution, a commitment profound enough to outweigh the persistent and unanimous frustrations caused by their administrative work. By contrast, and in response to a nearly identical set of questions, the excluded administrators voiced almost no such frustrations. And where the faculty leaders came to their roles somewhat reluctantly, in several instances reporting that it was 'their turn' to take on administrative tasks, all of the administrators reported being asked, at various stages and sometimes repeatedly, to take on leadership roles. When I asked both

faculty and administrators very similar questions about self and leadership, the administrators were, nearly unanimously, able to speak about themselves, sometimes at length, as leaders. The faculty, however, not only spoke reluctantly about their own leadership qualities but, when pressed, in many instances turned the conversation away from themselves and towards others.

In the context of a reflection on leadership development and succession planning, then, it seems there is work to be done to nurture the leadership strength of faculty members who have taken on leadership positions at SCC. But there is some risk to doing so, particularly recalling one participant's observation that doing leadership training "is perhaps a bit misleading too. We don't have that many positions" (A1, p. 17). Even so, reflecting on the difference between the responses of the administrators and the faculty members, it is impossible to ignore the difference in tone. Where the faculty members express frustration, even anger, the administrators are significantly more positive about their own experiences and seem, for the most part, confident that investing in leadership development will have positive results. But when I look at where the real difference lies, I am repeatedly reminded of the difference in the level of support provided to these two groups of leaders. Where administrators are supported not only by their own assistants but also by their various "reports" including deans, directors, managers, and clerical staff, faculty leaders have access to almost no administrative support at all. For example, when I was division chair, the Humanities and Creative Arts divisions shared one full-time administrative assistant, who worked out of the division chairs' office, which was located in a different building than the one housing

the majority of Humanities and Creative Arts faculty. Consequently, faculty leaders are responsible for processing an enormous amount of paperwork in an organization that, like many post-secondary institutions, is paperwork-heavy. At least one administrator is aware of this problem, observing, “we've got a lot of high-priced clerks in this place [laughs]. I don't think it's a good investment, uh, because they were never trained to be clerks” (A1, p. 10). This lack of training—and I would argue that the solution is *not* to train faculty members to be better clerks—extends up the administrative hierarchy, where the pattern is often to

take our best teachers out of the classroom, put them into administrative positions and say ok [laughs] now you're a director; now you're a division chair; now you're an associate dean or whatever [. . .] and we don't do a good job of giving folks the tools to be successful in their jobs. (A2, p. 6)

Based on the administrators' assessments of their own leadership experiences, it seems clear that providing faculty leaders with appropriate administrative support would go a long way in terms of supporting any proposed leadership development and succession planning activities at SCC.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FINDINGS: DIVISION CHAIRS

In my effort to understand the experience of leadership development from the individual perspectives of the six division chairs at SCC, including myself, I constructed a data-gathering process that included two semi-structured interviews, between one-half and one hour in length, with the division chairs other than me.

In the first series of interviews, held in January, 2013, I asked both contextual questions, such as “how did you come to be a division chair” and “explain your understanding of the difference between manager and leader” and questions about the experience of leadership development as understood by the participants, including, for example, “tell me more about what the experience of being seen to be a leader has been like for you.” As preparation for the second round of interviews, held in May, 2013, I had asked participants to think specifically about their experiences in what the institution described as a leadership role, and the interview questions focused on whether and/or how their sense of themselves as leaders had grown or intensified.

Because my intention was to gather as much description of the experience of leadership development as possible, the interviews were quite fluid, sometimes becoming conversations in which I would contribute my own responses to the questions. As well, throughout the period of data collection I was reflecting on my own experience of leadership development and thinking about my own responses to the questions I was asking of the other division chairs. To ensure anonymity, as far as is possible, the text identifies participants and their responses only by the initials

“DC” for division chair, a randomly assigned number (1-5), and the transcript and page numbers, where relevant. For example, the notation “DC1-1, p. 14” indicates that the original quotation can be found on page 14 of the transcript of my first interview with Division Chair One. This chapter begins by introducing the participants. I then summarize their pathways to the division chair position, and their understanding of the terms “leader” and “manager” in order to provide necessary context before presenting my summaries of the individual division chairs’ conversations with me about their experiences of balancing their roles managers and leaders.

7.1 Participants

Because it would be relatively easy for readers familiar with “South City College” to identify the individual division chair participants, Table 1 presents only the most general details about these individuals. I include the length of each interview held with each participant in order to reinforce the fact that not all participants spoke at the same length, and consequently some contributed more extensively to the data set than did others.

Table 1
The division chair participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Years in position at data collection	Interview 1 (minutes)	Interview 2 (minutes)
DC1	F	4.5	102	37
DC2	M	3	54	54
DC3	M	1*	102	33
DC4	F	2**	49	31
DC5	F	1*	30	23

* left the position April 30, 2014

**leaving/left the position April 30, 2015

At the time of data collection, I had been a division chair for two years; I left SCC in January 2014 after nearly three years as division chair and resigned the position in May 2014.

As can be seen from Table 1, all of the division chairs participating in this research might be described as being relatively new to the position; only DC1 and DC2 had moved into their second term, the first of two potential three-year terms following the first two-year appointment. At the time of data collection I had just been appointed to my second term, which began May 1, 2013.

7.2 Becoming Division Chairs

Because the division chairs interviewed for this project all had been department chairs or coordinators previously, faculty in their areas would have already seen them in action; it is usual that when a division chair position becomes available the more obvious contenders are encouraged to apply. This was the case for one participant, who said “people had been approaching me for a number of years to run as/for division chair. Some people did it almost every time there was an election” (DC1-1, p. 3). Another participant had also been asked several times to consider becoming division chair, but ultimately ended up chairing a division other than her “home” division. Several times during my years at SCC the difficulty of finding a faculty member who was not only willing to take on the division chair position but was also ready and had the necessary divisional support became apparent. One respondent described the circumstances surrounding his decision to take on the role of division chair in an area that had historically struggled to find

appropriate candidates, echoing some of the difficulty experienced at the department and program level:

I wasn't sure who else in the division would step up to the plate [. . .] So I thought, given the history of [my area] to not be able to champion a leader from within, uh, I thought well, you know, maybe it's time for me to do this.

(DC2-1, p. 1)

Of the six division chairs, at the time of data collection four came to the position uncontested, which, as has been shown, is also typical at the department and program level.

Given the apparent lack of competition, I was also interested in what motivated my colleagues to take on the division chair position; for some it seemed to be the desire to effect change, or to move things forward. For example, one division chair spoke of the chance to do something new: "I thought, uh, that this might be a good opportunity to try and see what this is all about. It gets me a seat at the table. Gets me to look at the bigger pictures that are here" (DC3-1 p. 1). Another division chair echoed the theme:

I started looking at wanting a change, and moving in a different direction, I thought, okay these skills apply to a division chair role because I'm going to be looking at broader pictures; looking across the campus, looking at projects in different ways. Um, so that's kind of what brought me to think, okay I have something to contribute in this role. (DC4-1, p. 2)

For one division chair, the motivation had less to do with taking on a leadership role than a desire to get things (and people) organized within a relatively non-hierarchical system:

there's not a very hierarchical structure in the college. You know, so it was all, it's all very much among equals with the faculty in very many ways; it's not really a question of managing them or, uh, *leading* them is perhaps a funny term because most of them don't want to be led very much. They'll work *with* you if you want to do something that they like, but, and they'll certainly appreciate it if you go ahead and organize something so that they don't have to, but, uh, there's not much of a hierarchical structure there.

(DC5-1, p. 2)

The notion of whether or not it is possible to “lead” in the traditional sense when the “leaders” are in fact colleagues of those they are expected to lead is one that perplexed me throughout my time as division chair.

In an effort to figure out how my colleagues understood the notion of leadership at SCC, I asked them to define leadership and management from their perspectives.

7.3 Understanding “Leader” and “Manager”

One of the difficulties experienced by all of the division chairs results from the lack of institutional clarity about the role itself. As one division chair put it: “honestly, unless you’ve been a division chair, you have no clue what it's like to be a division chair. And that's never going to be in any collective agreement ever” (DC2-2, p. 12). And as another observed, “faculty look at the division chair position as a

leadership position” (DC3-1, p. 6), the division chairs themselves were less clear on their role, describing it variously as a “bridge” (DC1-2, p. 7), a “buffer” (DC5-1, p. 9), and “neither fish nor fowl” (DC3-1, p. 11). From my own perspective, the challenge of simultaneously doing a job and defining and/or explaining it was significant. I recall feeling very frustrated by the amount of the work that was frankly clerical, and did not feel as though I had time to do the so-called “leadership” work that I had been told, repeatedly, was expected of me. I was not alone in this frustration; my colleagues were also feeling the tension; as one said, “when I first stepped into this job [. . .] I did not feel like a leader, I felt like the thing that people hit from both sides as they tried desperately to meet” (DC5-1, p. 9). In retrospect, the “in the middle” (Gabel, 2002; Marshall, 2012) nature of the division chairs’ work seems to result from two competing expectations: while faculty and administrators want the division chairs to be leaders, the division chairs are expected to be faculty colleagues who teach, manage large and complicated areas, and develop and maintain multiple spreadsheets related to scheduling, contract status, evaluation schedules, and benefits.

I confess to thinking, early on, that the move from manager to leader was a progression: a move forward or up, an assumption that was quickly contradicted. As one division chair observed, “I find myself as division chair I vacillate, that I flop between manager and leader all the time. I change that ‘hat’ way, way more often than I ever anticipated” (DC2-1, p. 3). That ability to vacillate depends on having internalized the qualities of both a manager and a leader, and having reached a relatively sophisticated level of comfort in both roles, as was articulated explicitly by

one participant: "It's obviously just two aspects of the same person" (D4-1, p. 4).

Being a successful divisional leader must, consequently, depend on one's ability to draw upon managerial skills in order to move the division forward or lead it in alignment with the academic and strategic plans.

Getting to the point where leadership is possible, however, requires a solid foundation in the managerial aspects of the position. As one division chair observed:

I think there's a lot of stuff that we do as division chairs that can only be described as bureaucratic. [. . .] signing off schedules, budgets, all of those things. That's more managerial. And yet if you don't do that, and you don't do it well, I think you lose your credibility as a leader, because the whole point of doing those things is to make life easier for your department chairs and your faculty. And that's the job. So [pause] I think once you've built a certain amount of credibility, by being good at your job, you can then take people in new directions. They'll listen to you if you make a proposal to do something new and different, and, um, and that's where the leadership comes in. I think the two are very closely tied in *this* job. (DC1-1, p. 3)

Here, the connection between managerial skills, credibility, and leadership skills is made explicit. In order to gain the respect and consequent support of the faculty in their divisions, division chairs draw on the credibility they developed both in previous work (which may also have been heavily managerial) to gain the trust of the division faculty whom they are now expected to lead. The ideal progression, then, might not be from "manager only" to "leader only," but from "mostly manager with some leadership skills" to "mostly leader with a solid grounding in

management.” All of the division chair participants provided significant evidence that their position is highly managerial. Despite being described as a leadership role, much of the work seemed a lot like the description one division chair offered:

a manager is a person who, as [the dean] says, makes the trains run on time. It’s all the minutia, the day-to-day stuff, the daily grind; it's the nose to the grindstone, um, making sure that paperwork filled out, making sure everybody’s happy. (DC2-1, p. 3)

I would say that more than two-thirds of my time as a division chair was spent doing the kinds of tasks described above. Given that one quarter of my time was taken up by my teaching assignment, very little of my day (less than 1/12, if my arithmetic is correct) was left for the leadership part of the job, which the same colleague defined as follows:

The leader, on the other hand, is a person who, um, tells the trains where to go. Who has the vision and says “this is where we want to go” and we're going to point everybody in this direction and we’re going to run this way. [. . .] if you have a vision that’s not going to lead you to a good place you can derail [. . .] the whole process; it’s a terrible place to be. So it's a critical role. (DC2-1, p. 3)

As I learned, there was ample evidence that the division chairs’ role as leaders was indeed critical. For example, during the data collection period the vice president academic and provost was beginning to develop the institution’s first academic plan, a document that ultimately will align with the overall strategic plan and guide SCC’s academic-side employees through the process of shaping the future direction and

development of the institution. At the same time, the institution launched the Teaching and Curriculum Development Centre (TCDC), which is the hub of teaching excellence, curriculum development, and program review and renewal. These faculty-focussed undertakings are vital to the success of an institution that prides itself on instructional excellence, and the division chairs were deeply engaged in the work done to prepare for and implement these new initiatives. Consequently, the division chairs will undoubtedly be called upon to ensure there is faculty buy-in and ongoing engagement in the processes of implementing the academic plan and launching the cycle of program and curriculum review that forms part of the TCDC mandate, which means that the division chairs' understanding of their status and abilities as leaders is important if the institution is to be able to draw on their expertise moving forward.

7.4 Experiencing Leadership and Management: The Division Chairs

The following section presents a summary of the data resulting from two interviews conducted with each of the division chairs who held that position during the period of data collection: January-May, 2013. As far as possible, I have organized each participant's responses according to roughly the same sequence. In the first interview, participants spoke about coming to the position, and understanding the difference between "manager" and "leader," topics that I have presented in a consolidated fashion, above. The following summaries focus explicitly in the participants' *experience*, which is the central focus of this study.

7.4.1 Division chair one (DC1).

Of the division chairs participating in this research project, Division Chair One (DC1) has the most experience and, by several accounts, is the most widely recognized as both a faculty and an institutional leader. With previous experience both as chair of a large department and as an acting division chair, DC1 was, at the time of data collection, the longest-serving division chair at SCC. For DC1, the division chair position is not a step along the path to advancement; in fact, she emphasized that the job is one that fits logically into a collegially managed environment, rather than a hierarchically managed one. This approach to leadership stems, at least in part, from DC1's excellent understanding of her own leadership style: she describes herself as a servant leader, which is reflected when she explains her understanding of why people are motivated to take on leadership roles:

I think many of us who've moved up the ladder have done it because people have really encouraged us to do it, not because we sat there one day saying: "one day I'm going to be." Now, there are some people who are ambitious and I think that's great, but some people who are ambitious are not willing to do the work, and that's not so great. So it's a very small group, I think, that will be stepping into these leadership positions and it's important for us to identify them, encourage them, but also give them some of the tools they're going to need. (1, p. 11)

DC1's previous experience had evidently given her some of those tools, which enabled her to build her credibility, in part because she became an informal, somewhat accidental, mentor for other department chairs:

even when I was department chair, other department chairs—more junior ones—would often come to me and ask me things. So there was already this [pause] a little bit of that credibility was already built before I came into the position. (1, p. 4)

Yet when she took on the division chair role, the lack of proper or systemic preparation for others taking on the department chair role became apparent when several of her departments elected new chairs, some of whom did not have any experience other than their work as instructors:

And suddenly they were department chairs. And they ran into a number of difficulties and just found it hard to do everything and [pause] needed a lot of handholding and a lot of, of encouraging, and a lot of reminding: did you get this done, did this happen, uh, that sort of thing. And it wasn't a good experience for them. So you really want to prepare people for what is actually a very challenging position. Don't just elect someone because it's their turn. (1, p. 11)

As a servant leader, DC1 was very aware of the need to provide good examples for people considering moving into an academic leadership position, so it was not surprising to hear her say that she was spending her time not only mentoring and supporting new department chairs but also working with her faculty to encourage a thoughtful approach to succession planning:

I think that this whole succession planning thing is important. For most of my—most of the discussions I've had with department chairs I've brought that up. You know, who's going to, who's going to be next as department

chair? And some of them—sometimes people hadn't really thought about it—so they have to kind of think. And I said well, what do we do for these people, who are possibilities, to give them a broader experience within the college to know more about what goes on in how decisions are made and, and that kind of thing, so, looking for committee opportunities; looking for [selection and evaluation committee] opportunities. (1, p. 10)

When I pushed this a bit further to ask about formal succession planning and leadership development initiatives, DC1 spoke first about the institutional culture:

The culture is such that people have been paying attention and seeing people's strengths and encouraging them. I think what may be somewhat new is saying, well how can we hone those strengths and make them, make these people more ready and more likely to say yes. (1, p. 11)

And then she commented on the lack of a relationship between more traditional or corporate-style succession planning and what was happening at SCC. For instance, at one point the institution brought in a consultant to identify key leadership competencies, which did not resonate for DC1:

I think that the people who run these things, who develop these things even though they can add some value to what we do, don't understand what we do. Even [the consultant], after all the time she spent here, still thinks of people wanting to move up the ladder. I don't think that's true. (1, p. 11)

I wondered whether there was something distinctively different about SCC that had led to a culture that did not produce a large number of aspiring administrators. DC1 felt that much of the lack of leadership ambition could be attributed to the history of

the institution, which began as a small community college in the 1960s. She describes speaking with someone who had been part of the original process of forming the college system in B.C.:

I remember him saying [. . .] the intention was that, that we be instructors not professors. And um, he didn't even like the word faculty. He wanted to be a very different kind of institution than the university [. . .] And I think the college system here in BC was built out of that kind of idealism. [. . .] And that idealistic view of the college system was part of their view and they passed that on. I'm not sure it's going to stick with the new generation I see changes already but, but I think it, it's infused our whole institution (1, pp. 6-7)

When I probed about why the idealistic view might not stick, DC1 replied,

I'm not sure if our new generation of faculty are absorbing that culture. They, some of them, seem to be a little more focused on themselves and their career and what can I get away with or, how, you know, what do I *have* to do as opposed to what do I have opportunity to do. (1, pp. 7-8)

The collegial management model at SCC depends heavily on the willingness of faculty members to take on leadership roles that do not bring with them much in the way of tangible gains. From DC1's perspective, part of the problem for the current division chairs was that the pace of change had increased institutionally without any corresponding change in the faculty leadership hierarchy: the new deans and vice-president academic and provost were generating new work, including new program development, curriculum review, scholarly activity and research support activities such as the establishment of a research ethics board and gaining tri-council

eligibility. However, growth among excluded administrators had not been matched by growth at the division or department chair level, so the additional workload was being passed down to the same number of division and department chairs.

DC1 was concerned about how the division chair position might change in response to the increased workload; she worried that it might be defined differently, and potentially in an unappealing way: "I am a little bit afraid that if we define it too closely we'll end up with all the bureaucratic stuff and none of the more interesting bits. So think we have to be careful there" (1, p. 13). Given that the "interesting bits," for DC1, included the opportunity to mentor and lead her divisional colleagues, I was interested, in my second interview with her, to find out how she was feeling about her leadership role in May as opposed to in January:

I think I'm perhaps less optimistic than I was when we last spoke. [. . .] there has been, for me anyway, less opportunity for leadership as things move on here at the college. And I'm wondering if that's because the deans are taking on more of that, which they should. So that's a positive thing. (2, p. 1)

As we were talking, DC1 said she felt as though she was not doing anything new; a serious problem because in our first interview she had been clear that avoiding boredom and getting things done were two of her key motivators:

I really do have to accomplish something during the day, and I think department chair and division chair both gave me a list of things that I had to accomplish, that I could accomplish within a short period of time, and say okay today I achieved this, this, and this. (1, pp. 8-9)

However by May, the time of our second conversation, I could sense DC1's frustration: she seemed worn down by her work, perhaps because the things she was doing were not the things she enjoyed doing or that satisfied her need to be accomplishing things. As she said,

I think what bothers me most is when I don't have enough to do and I'm coming here and I'm doing all this trivial stuff and I feel like I need to be *here* because, I need to be available. I don't know if you've noticed but the last four weeks, like a thousand meetings. I must spend an hour trying to juggle meetings and . . . Anyway, um [pause] that's when I feel like the days wasted I could've been, I don't know what, but never having *enough* time to tackle the big projects and yet needing to be here. (2, p. 11)

In part, DC1 attributed her sense of malaise to the fact that she was missing some of the camaraderie that seemed to have disappeared from division chair row:

I really really miss [two former division chairs]. I think that was a, a group that really came together well. [. . .] Um, for my personal leadership style I feel that, yes, I've always been in a position of leadership in some way or another, but I like working in teams of leaders. [. . .] I really liked, you know, bullshitting around this table with a glass of wine, and ideas came out, things were hashed through that, that you might not be able to put down in minutes but it really made a difference. And so I, I like that a lot and that is part of my leadership style. I love sitting in a group and brainstorming; just talking about things. (1, p. 14)

DC1's leadership style is clearly one of engagement, and one that developed early on. Like many of the other leaders I spoke with, she understood herself to be a leader, and understood her personal style, very early:

Well what you were saying earlier about people knowing when they were six. Um, I've always been told I'm bossy. I've always been in charge in some way or another, in any, almost any kind of group [. . .] "in charge" is the wrong word too but I'm used to people saying "oh yeah that's a good idea, let's do that." I, throughout my growing up years had to learn to encourage people to come up with my ideas themselves. [. . .] I'm just someone who naturally spouts ideas; I don't exactly require anybody to agree with them, at least not unless they're important to me. [. . .] I like to talk. It's the way I think. I'm not one of these people who sits in a room by themselves, although I do a lot of reflecting before and after, I like the excitement of just coming up with things and brainstorming and adjusting and listening to other people and putting things together. (2, p. 5)

As one of the two participants in this research project who remain in the division chair position past April 30, 2015, DC1 exemplifies the kind of commitment to the institution and her colleagues that characterizes many employees at SCC. She describes herself as a servant leader; she understands the institutional culture and the difficulties that it frequently presents; she gets tired; she gets frustrated. Despite these challenges she persists in her work as division chair, and remains open to new challenges:

I don't have a worked-out plan for my future—my process has always been making a decision on an interesting opportunity and seeing where it leads—usually to new interesting opportunities. (2, p. 12)

7.4.2 Division chair two (DC2).

One of the more “senior” division chairs, having moved into his position in May, 2010, DC2 came to his role with a commitment to stay as long as he retained the support of his divisional faculty members:

if I'm going to be division chair, I'm not going to do it for two years; as long as I have support I believe you have to have, for continuity's sake, be prepared to go the full eight years. I think there's a benefit to that. [. . .] we've seen a whole lot of change at the college and it's been really tough when you have a revolving door because nobody knows what's going on. There needs to be that cohesiveness. (1, p. 2)

DC2's commitment to continuity may be in part attributable to his reflective style of leadership. As he observed,

my style is that I am not a front-of-the-line, sword in hand, lead the charge of the Army up the hill . . . I am very much a quiet, conservative, let stuff happen, sit back, review it ponder about it, um, kind of leader. And that came out in my evaluation. I think somebody said “[DC2] leads from behind.” (1, p. 4)

And while it was clear that DC2 recognized his own leadership skills, when pressed he was very particular about the framework within which he was willing to self-identify as a leader:

I consider myself more as a representative of [my] division. And that, that does entail leadership to a certain degree absolutely, and it does entail that managerial side of things, um, I'm the voice for the faculty in [my area]. (1, p. 5)

Perhaps because of this awareness of himself as the voice for faculty, DC2 was particularly aware of the need to choose his words carefully in his day-to-day work. For example, he cited the practice of a former dean, who was known for having an especially deliberate way of speaking and writing, saying that only with experience had he come to understand why that style was necessary:

whenever I try and convey something that's of substantial importance I will either say let me give you an e-mail on that or I will pause and I will mentally think how I'm going to respond to that. Because people in the college hang on your every word [. . .] So as a leader, um, I've learned to [. . .] be very careful with what I say [. . .] I'm appreciative of the fact that being division chair has allowed me to grow in that way. (1, pp. 4-5)

The growth that DC2 had experienced was due both to his longer experience in the position and to some specific leadership development training: along with a former division chair, DC2 had completed the two-part Chairs' Leadership Academy. So I was interested to know whether his perception of leadership had changed in response to this or other leadership development initiatives:

I think I see it as more of, a larger responsibility now. I guess I had the old view of, I'd be putting in my time as division chair, I'm going to get something out of this, but I also have a responsibility to pay back to future division

chairs, to mentor, um, and mentor like way ahead of time and not just, like, oh my term's up in three months I'm going to mentor you. I think that the cultivation of encouraging people has to occur way way way sooner (1, p. 9)

The idea that a division chair might be thinking about what to do next was a relatively new notion at SCC at the time of data collection, one that DC2 thought of as overdue:

I think we've been very behind the times in promoting leadership from within. Uh, I think you have to look no further than the selection of the deans for that. There were many division chairs who applied for the positions, but yet when you compare their skill set to the skill sets of other people, we were, we were far behind that. Um, I think it's the institution's responsibility to provide some leadership training for those who definitely want to step up and make that one of their aspirations. In fact I think it's the responsibility of *all* institutions to do that. (1, p. 8)

This approach to leadership development resonated throughout our conversation, and eventually DC2 was very explicit about one element he saw as vital to assuring the success of leadership development, which was to encourage others and to build their confidence:

people need to be encouraged. [. . .] if [the previous division chair] hadn't encouraged me, I'd probably be thinking ah, I'm not going to be a division chair; I don't have the *chutzpah* for that, I don't have the personality for that I'm just going to take the easy path and just, you know, do what I'm doing all the time. Well, that's very selfish. (1, p. 13)

The perspective DC2 had on leadership development—its importance and the kinds of skills and strategies necessary to be able to identify and motivate potential leaders—came in part from his understanding of how his role changed when he moved being a department chair into the division chair position:

being a department chair, I had, I knew pretty much, as I said before, everything there was to know about that position. Being a division chair leader means that your, sort of, scope has increased by about tenfold. With all the changes going on in the college, uh, I think it's really hard to be a leader now. (1, p. 6)

DC2 had described himself as having started in the division chair position at “the tail end of the old guard” (1, p. 6), noting that now things were different now. so I asked him to talk about what had changed about his perception of himself as a leader at SCC. He described the role of the division chair as a distiller of information, or as a translator. First he said, “you have to have a larger, big, larger picture and say how am I going to filter this down to my division? Is it going to impact my division and is this something we're going to have to keep a watchful eye on?” (1, p. 10). According to DC2, the distillation of information was particularly important as the business model at SCC began to change. For example, he observed

you have to have a balance about “this is the big picture from within the college, you guys need to be aware [. . .] aware about what other people are thinking about, uh, where the institution is going to be going so you can align yourself with that, and if it doesn't align, then don't say I didn't tell you,

because I did tell you, I'm trying to give you a heads-up on, on how it will affect your department." So distilling is, uh, it's huge. (1, p. 11)

And although DC2 clearly enjoyed the responsibility, and his work as division chair, he was very clear during this first interview that he did not find leadership easy:

I think there are very pivotal moments where you are tested as a leader, and/or manager as well, and those are the defining moments where you go, oh whew, I was thinking along those same lines, I'm really glad about that. [. . .] everyone was asked for their opinion I threw in my two cents and it was consistent with the outcome so I'm going okay, all this time, you know, thinking about the big picture stuff, and, institutional risk, all that kind of stuff, it's finally starting to rub off on me. [. . .] or sometimes I'll [. . .] come back and go geez I really blew that decision, I totally screwed that up royally. And, so you do a self debrief you think okay, that's where I fell down I didn't do *this*, or I wasn't listening to that. [. . .] And so it's not, it's not a linear path it's a rocky path. (1, pp. 12-13)

Between the first and second interviews I had asked the division chairs to reflect on their experience as leaders; for DC2 that task may have been relatively easy because, as his responses suggest, he was already quite self-reflective. Recalling that DC2 had previously talked about what most division chairs call "putting out the fires," I asked how he decided what needed his attention and what could wait.

Starting my fourth year here I think it's like, yeah I've got a pretty good sense of what can go wrong, but even then stuff will still blindside me. And you have to assess what you're doing all the time, you know, reassess it reassess

it re-prioritize. Is it okay? Is this smoldering; is this fire out? And sometimes I have a fire that I've put out and then it flares up again when I thought the fire was out. [. . .] And I was like, aagh, I thought I dealt with this. (2, p. 4)

On the one hand, DC2 felt as though his experience as a division chair allowed him, however imperfectly, to prioritize and “put out the fires.” But on the other hand, the pace of change at the institution, and the resulting loss of institutional memory, was making it so difficult to operate in the absence of codified rules and systems that he felt entirely inexperienced. As he said,

it's the *rate* of change. Like, before when somebody retired or work was available, you know, it was pretty obvious what the solution was [. . .] But when there's so much change going on, people scramble. They panic. [. . .] I think it's the rate of change that scares a lot of people. And when that happens, all the past collegial stuff goes out the window and it's a mad dash to the fire exit. (2, p. 2)

The fact that, institutionally, there had been next to no planning for the number of retirements that were inevitably going to occur over the five-to-ten years following the period of data collection was very concerning for DC2, who was clearly feeling its effects:

it's the whole proactive versus reactive stance. And now we're in the reactive stance and we're trying to catch up so bad, and we're just . . . I understand that HR is doing its best to catch up, but the horse has left the barn, like two years ago. So we're desperately trying to catch up. And the only way to really

catch up is to throw some resources at them [. . .] and let's get caught up so we're all up to speed. (2, p. 3)

It seemed to me at this point that there was a lot of catching up being done at the institution, but there was very little support for that to happen, whether in terms of time or resources. Focusing specifically on the leadership development initiatives, I said that it seemed as though DC2 was moving “one step forward, two steps back.” I asked him to put that feeling into his own words:

the process of leadership development—I'm glad something is happening. It should have happened a long time ago, and the fact that it's happening so late in the game—it's hard to get people to buy into this now. That's the hard part. One could argue that it would have been harder five years ago, but then you'd have that five years ago—that resistance, people would've overcome it [. . .] I mean, there was a conversation about you know, having the leadership, succession plan happening, and some people in our divisions didn't buy into it at all because it was like what are we going to do? [. . .] Because now you make the ask and then it's like well we'll try and find the funds for it in and it doesn't happen and then it's another project that didn't go; you know, an empty promise kind of project. (2, p. 7)

While DC2 recognizes an apparent commitment to leadership development and succession planning, he understands explicitly that in the absence of appropriate resources the exercise will be an empty one, and will not attract faculty buy-in or, possibly worse, could undermine faculty support and trust in their division chair.

The latter point caused great concern for DC2, who reported being motivated both by his contributions to the institution but also by fear:

what also motivates me is that my biggest fear is letting people down. Like, that is probably something that, that keeps me awake at night, is when somebody charges you with a task and if you don't follow through or do a good job; that's my biggest fear. It's, you know, you can't trust him to do anything, he'll just screw it up or do a half-assed job. It's like: give it to someone else if you want to get it right. That's my biggest fear. [. . .] So, yes, it can be debilitating sometimes I suppose. But you've got to do something. So, move forward, and break out of that cycle, and move forward. And hopefully nobody finds out that you *are* an imposter. (2, p. 11)

Given that DC2 is one of the three participants in this research project who has stayed on in the division chair position, I asked what motivated him to do the work, and he responded beautifully:

A lot of it is the thrill of the chase. Knowing now what I know of how things go on in the college, I'm a much more informed college member. And there was stuff when I was a faculty member, even when I was department chair, I would say why the hell are we doing this this way? And now when you have the big picture it's like, *oh*, okay I can kind of see why it's being done this way. I may not agree, but I can see the other person's or the other viewpoint. And it's nice to be in the know. It's nice to be in the position where you can make stuff happen. [. . .] You know, it's fun to be a division chair. For all the complaining and whining and all that, yeah there are some days when it's not

fun, but most of the days it's still fun to be a division chair. *And* you get to work with really great people. Like, if we had dud division chairs here I probably would be going oh my God I'm not going to renew my contract *ever* again, I'm going back to faculty. The fact that we have good people and they know what it's like to be a division chair and you can kind of cry on the shoulder, it's good to have support systems. [. . .] Somebody has to be division chair, and I'm not saying I'm perfect but I like to think that I'm taking the division someplace where it's going to be better than when I came into being division chair. (2, p. 14)

The ability to see the positive in a job that is often fraught with frustration is one of the features that characterizes DC2 in all the work that he does, and perhaps explains the fact that he is one of the two division chair participants in this research who remain in the role after April 30, 2015.

7.4.3 Division chair three (DC3).

Prior to becoming division chair, DC3 had enjoyed working as department chair very much: "I think if, the department chair's role was, if it could have been extended I probably would have just stayed there. Um. It's a really nice blend of teaching and and managing. Not so much leading" (1, p. 2). When I asked about his understanding of the difference between the two activities, he spoke specifically about how he understood them in the SCC context:

this job, this division chair job, I've only been doing it for eight months, so it's hard for me to know, um, how much of it is management and how much of it is leadership. At this stage, I see it more about managing processes and

providing *some* input into the strategic thinking we're doing for the future.

(1, p. 3)

For this division chair, both the amount and the nature of the managerial work done by department chairs was frustrating, despite his improved understanding of the institution and its processes. For example, one of the division chairs' responsibilities is oversight of professional development activities, which are done during non-instructional duty (NID) time:

One of the things that, you know, as a faculty member I had to complete NID reports [and] NID plans which I really thought was a paper exercise. As a department chair I had to read these things, for my department, and I thought it was largely a paper exercise. As a division chair, I now read these things from about 140 faculty and now I'm convinced it's a paper exercise. (1, p. 4)

At the time I managed to refrain from observing that the deans also sign NID plans and reports, but the fact that they do certainly reinforces DC3's point. There seems to be a disconnect between the perception of the division chairs as faculty leaders and the reality of their day-to-day work; much like DC3 I found the managerial elements of the job took the majority of my time, yet the institution had formally committed to leadership development and succession planning, even though there are very few opportunities for faculty to advance beyond the division chair level, given the limited number of excluded administrator positions. DC3 ascribed this contradiction, at least in part, to the structure of post-secondary institutions:

I think the notion of leadership in post-secondary institutions is a strange one because the leadership tends to be concentrated at the very very very top of which there are very few people. At [SCC], we are not top-heavy. [. . .] If I were to look in the organization and say who are *bona fide* leaders in this organization by title I would probably say the VPs, the deans, and the president. So, and this is part of the problem that I've had with this [leadership development] discussion [. . .] I'm supposed to sit down with my department chairs in my area and talk about their future plans. And this is where I think post-secondary education as an employer, or as employment, is different. Most of these people are not aspiring to any place above the department chair level. (1, p. 5)

While it is useful to recall that this participant enjoyed his time as department chair very much, many faculty members do not aspire even to that role, and his assessment that most instructors are not interested in so-called “leadership” positions is accurate, and plays out in the difficulty of finding candidates to run as division chairs. Consequently, the institutional focus on succession planning and leadership development seems logical. However, DC3 sees its focus on department and division chairs as a significant challenge for division chairs:

how am I going to convince somebody who spent 20 years or 15 years, who came into this profession to teach, to now forsake all teaching and then go into some sort of administrative role, however you define that, to do that exclusively. It's going to be very, it's going to be a tough sell. And why should

I have to sell it in the first place? Um, I can encourage it but I shouldn't have to do too much to, to sell it. (1, p. 5)

By the time of our second interview, DC3 was three months further into his position and had registered for an upcoming session at The Chair's Academy. I wondered whether his understanding of his role as leader, or himself as leader, had changed over this period of time:

It's a little unclear to me at times what I'm leading or who I am leading. [...] I recognize the role probably less as a leader than as a manager, in that I'm not merely administering decisions made by others but I'm in a position where I can determine the, uh, what those decisions will be made, uh, what those decisions will be. So whether we sit on a strategic planning meeting, or whether we sit on a variety of these other committees, these decisions will be influenced by my contributions as well as the contributions of others. So if that's what we mean by leader, then fine. But I would consider that more a manager than a leader. I don't see the role of the division chair, currently, as somebody who [pause] develops an idea and then takes a herd of other people along with that idea with a purpose, a future goal.

If the leadership responsibilities of the division chair were, at least to DC3, subordinate to the managerial ones, I was interested to know how, or if at all, the "leadership" elements of the division chair position could be identified and developed:

if there is an element of leadership in the division chair, it's, it's really almost a *faux* leadership. Because, when I think of leaders, um, I think the ideal

situation is that leaders get people to do things; to show them a direction or to encourage a direction, and support them in their travels to wherever it was they were going. But similarly, there is power to push those people along if necessary, or there is a consequence if they choose not to go in that direction. And there isn't one here. Division chairs don't have anything other than persuasive effect on the direction of the department chairs. It's not that they would necessarily *want* it, but it's the one element that seems to be missing in, in what I would see as a leader. (2, p. 3)

Here, DC3 is echoing a concern raised by many of the department chairs and coordinators interviewed for this project: the lack of any formal consequences for faculty members who are resistant or uncooperative or non-compliant makes leadership, particularly leading change, very difficult. And while the ability to impose formal sanctions may be something division and department chairs would like to have, in an academic organization that ability typically rests with the deans and those above them in the hierarchy. At SCC, whose collegial management structure effectively has equals supervising equals, the negative consequences of giving disciplinary power to members of the bargaining unit would probably outweigh the benefit. And DC3 recognized this, saying,

I think the *true* leader doesn't need that tool [sanctions] at all. So it becomes irrelevant. But it is a resource that that leader can use if need be. I think we manage fairly well here through persuasive effect. Through collegiality. We know that there are other institutions, post-secondary institutions, that manage in a much different style. And at that point, some become quite

litigious and, and entrenched. So, maybe it's a good thing that we have it the way it is now. (2, p. 5)

The notion of collegiality and the success of the collegial management model are both highly prized at SCC, with a real sense among the faculty that we are/were all in it together. And despite his frustrations with the amount of administrivia and managerial work involved in the position, there were some positive elements for DC3, including the working relationship among the division chairs as a group:

if we're talking about teams, not leaders but teams. Um, I think there's only one real effective team, um, above the level of faculty and that is the team of division chairs. [. . .] What I'm talking about is a collegiality, some sort of spirit of connection, um, as opposed to a dispirited connection, that exists among the division chairs. I'm not quite sure why that is, why it's there, and I know that in previous iterations of division chair row it's been closer, but I think it operates more like a team. And I think the organization might do well to pay attention to that and to somehow tap into that, um, so that if there's anything that's even possibly infectious [laughing] that the organization could benefit from that. But we're in a really strange situation with the time now, within this organization I think it's chaos for the next couple of years. The only stability is really going to be division chair row. There's going to be instability at the deans' level, instability at the VP level and certainly instability at the president level so, um, we're largely the glue. (2, p. 7)

However, even that camaraderie was not sufficient to compensate for some of the frustrations DC3 was experiencing as division chair. Despite gaining access to a seat

at the table, as he described it, ultimately the negatives would outweigh the positives, and DC3 left the division chair position in May 2014. In retrospect, some of his responses during this interview process clearly foreshadow this decision. For example, when I asked about his experience as a faculty leader, he described it, laughingly, as “unrewarding” (1, p. 7) before going on somewhat more seriously to observe,

there is a tremendous amount of responsibility that is attached to this position and the compensation, whether it be time or whatever you want, it's not *just* about money but it's also time, um, is not commensurate with that responsibility. (1, p. 7)

My subsequent question was, of course, then why take the position? To which he replied,

I was flattered to be asked; to be considered. Um, somebody at one point described division chairs as responsibility junkies. And I know that that is what I am. I've been, I had been here for 20 years—21 years at the time I was asked, and um, I felt a change was as good as a rest, so there was a bit of that. I was intrigued by the position, because it got me exposed to the inner workings of the organization. I wanted to see what that was about. So for me it was an experience. (1, p. 8)

As noted, however, the experience was not sufficiently positive to carry this particular division chair past his first two years in the position. As he observed, being division chair provides needed experience for those wishing to move into a dean's job, but he did not have such an aspiration:

I don't think anybody gets to be a dean without having done the division chair, so it's a step along the career pathway that may eventually allow people to get the VP position. Very few people but some people may. Or at least it's a point of leverage when one wants to go and look at places outside of [SCC], so going to look at another college somewhere else. It's a notch in the belt that way. That's not the case for me, because I'm not likely to go and work for Mount Royal University in Calgary or anything like that, I'm, my career will be here. Um, so it really is an experience in the best sense of the word. But I can't say . . . unless something changes in how this job is done, and I don't really have a whole lot of recommendations at this point as to how that should change but, um, I couldn't see doing it five-six years from now. (1, p. 8)

As things turned out, the division chair job did not change sufficiently to remain attractive: in May 2014 DC3 returned to his faculty position at SCC.

7.4.4 Division chair four (DC4).

As a faculty member coming from a primarily non-instructional department, DC4 had not interacted as extensively with teaching faculty as other division chairs had, which posed a bit of an obstacle, at least while she was establishing herself. For DC4, leading an area comprised of a number of small, very independent, departments posed a new challenge. I asked what that experience had been like for her:

Well as I say, I think in the end it's been good. [. . .] a lot of the department chairs I work with didn't know me very well. [. . .] And I didn't know much

about their programs. [. . .] And from the outside I think I would say I looked at some of those programs and gave my head a shake. They should be doing it another way. I had to learn to listen to them first, and understand them first and then say, okay now I understand it. (1, p.3)

The notion of listening first as a component of effective leadership was central to a number of DC4's examples, and seemed to be key not only to her leadership style but also to her approach to managing a challenging division. For example, she began using meetings of the department chairs and coordinators in her area as a venue for solving common problems:

we had this roundtable open: so-and-so's having this problem; is anyone else having this problem? And then you open the floodgates and you just sit back and listen and go, wow okay. [. . .] It's very interesting you learn—we work with really intelligent people [laughs] and driven people. So, it's just getting them to, sort of put their energies in a positive way. (1, p. 3)

DC4 relies on persuasion as a core strategy in terms of getting things done, which is only logical in a collegial management system where there are no real consequences for people who choose not to do things. DC4 expressed her understanding of the power of this strategy when discussing her leadership experience:

you can take the experience two ways. You can take on everything yourself and say, it's up to me to change the world and I need to control my division and my role at [SCC] and we need to make sure that I do everything a hundred percent correct. Or [. . .] you can talk to people, you can understand their experience and go okay, we have some consensus on this let's move

forward. It doesn't have to be perfect; everything is a work in progress. (1, p. 5)

In practice, this strategy played out in her approach to leading others:

when somebody asks me how to do it I make suggestions and I'll say I suggest you do this this and this if you have a problem come back and I'll help you with it. And often, especially talking to some of the younger department chairs, they run and they come back and go, thanks, I figured out how to do it. If you solve that problem for them, then they never learn. You know, it's like teaching them how to fish, that old adage. That's what we need to do more of, um, and people have different styles and all that but I'm not their mum I'm here to support them. (1, p. 6)

Although at the time of data collection DC4 had only been in the division chair position full time for about one year, her insights into her experience as a faculty leader were highly developed despite (or perhaps because of) her atypical history and experience at SCC. When I asked whether her perception of herself as a leader had developed during her time as division chair she said,

I have a much better understanding of how things function on a broader scale. [. . .] So now I'm realizing how departmentalized I was before I came into this role. [. . .] Um, you know we all talk about silos, but it's really hard to change that mentality, um, and I was probably part of the silos. I didn't even think I was but I think, you know, I was. (1, p. 10)

Understanding and sharing the institutional context for decisions, whether they were made departmentally or at the very highest level, is one of the key elements in

the division chairs' role. Unlike the department chair position, which is necessarily department-centric, the division chair has to think more institutionally:

I'm in a role now where, as a department chair you could kind of mouth off about things that you weren't happy about because you were defending your department. And now I see my role as more global and I really have to look at the picture of the whole institution before I make a judgment on something and say, okay that's great for that department but really does that work for everyone around the college? (1, p. 4)

As part of this same discussion, DC4 commented on how much she was enjoying learning about areas of the institution she had previously not been familiar with, "I had to learn a lot about the registrar's office; that's been new for me. I didn't know about a lot of these things. I've never done a sirtral [section reconciliation document] before I became a division chair" (1, p. 4). This topic led her to identify a persistent frustration among all faculty: the difficulty of understanding, and using, the various systems around the institution. She said,

I think part of that, part of the struggle in [SCC] right now and the complaints we hear about "we don't know who to go to" and I will, I will back up on my history—it took me at least a year to figure out how to get things done in this place. You didn't, you knew what the *official* system was but you knew that wasn't the way you got anything done; you had to get your key people. (1, p. 9).

Having access to the unofficial systems is one of the key characteristics of the division chairs, and is not a topic likely to be covered in a leadership development

forum. But DC4 understood that quality to be central to the division chair experience, and it was a theme that resonated throughout both of my interviews with her. For example, in the second interview, she reflected:

being in this role for a while, and seeing all of the changes around me, I've realized that division chairs are in a position of knowing a lot of things, and it's really important to the institution, and understanding, not how to use the power, but how to use the information in a productive way. Um, and be positive about it, and not worry about the history of stuff. Just go yeah so-and-so always says that. Big deal; let's figure out how we go forward. (2, p. 13)

But being able to engage that knowledge, and able to use it to negotiate the various systems, depended on the extent to which various faculty members had bought into the division chair in her role; DC4 spoke about the experience of being seen as a leader:

All of a sudden I was somebody they had to answer e-mails to and, and listen to right away. And that was very interesting. And, I, you know, and that's where as division chairs we can do a lot, like, a department is having a problem with something and I can just say "well let me just send an e-mail on that." And you get it done, get listened to because they see you as a leader. (1, p. 7)

By way of contrast, in the second interview DC4 offered an example of a time that her role as division chair was not sufficient to get a particular thing done. In this case, the example arises from the challenge of costing a new program:

I said my concern with this post-baccalaureate thing is we're kind of setting a precedent here; is that a problem for the institution going forward? Like, everything we do is going to be a model. And he said well, [senior finance person] thinks that every post-bac or post-degree thing can be different. And I went okay, so there's no standardization of this? And maybe that's okay I don't know. But somebody has to make that decision. Not *me*. (2, p. 6)

This example illustrates several problems. First, although the division chair position carries with it a certain weight, it is insufficient to have an influence outside the immediate academic sphere. Second, while the vice-president academic does carry the weight to move processes along, the lack of a framework, in this case to determine the appropriate price-point for new programming, means that each new program must, effectively, reinvent the wheel. Finally, because the program DC4 was working on was entirely new, there was no precedent for setting the cost, so—despite all best efforts to the contrary—the fact that the cost “bar” was being set was inescapable.

Such frustrations characterized DC4's perception her of role as a leader, and none of her examples or experiences seemed to have changed significantly in response to leadership development activities or initiatives. But, I wondered, had DC4's perception of herself as leader changed between the first interview and the second?

That's a hard one. I don't think my understanding has changed greatly, at all. I think what's happening is there's so much external movement, which I have to react to. Change is happening, so I've had to adapt my leadership style in

order to deal with different people that I didn't necessarily deal with, or different priorities that have come up. (2, p. 1)

One of the things DC4 did notice was that she had learned the value of being patient:

I've had to learn to say, okay, some things need to wait and some things I need to learn about before I jump in there. And I need to be careful of that because it does damage as opposed to does good sometimes. And then I need to step back a little. (2, pp. 11-12)

The patience DC4 had developed helped her significantly, particularly when she was deciding where to put her energies and what the consequences of intervening in any particular situation might be:

And some department chairs really struggle with some of the faculty, and I know that. And it's what hill do you die on? Right? [laughs]. Which one is most important? So, but I think that's been a growth for me in learning that, okay think about other things that might affect, or that you might be affecting when you don't even realize you're going to affect that department. (2, p. 10)

One of the hallmarks of leadership growth, at least for DC4, seems to lie in her ability to be more reflective about the consequences of an action or decision prior to taking it. Not only is DC4 aware of her changing perspective; she sees her actions in terms of how they might affect the institution as a whole, where previously she had focused on her department specifically:

I walk in every day, as I'm sure that you do, with a plan [both laugh]. Execute it one out of five days, maybe [laughs]. But the adaptability piece is really okay because I've always been okay with that. But I'm learning now, I'm

learning to think broader. [. . .] I think I've grown in learning that you need to consider all aspects of the college when you implement something. (2, p. 9)

Being able to think broadly also helped DC4 to contextualize some of the pressure she was feeling as the result of the financial constraints the institution was experiencing at the time of writing. Although all areas were being expected to look for opportunities to generate revenue, DC4's division includes several two-year career programs that were seen as potentially attractive to international students:

We've all been forced to think more at the revenue for this place. [. . .] And if that's one of the decision-making criteria then we have to think about that. I mean, I think it's very funny that I'm hearing [. . .] that the post-bac will be really good for international students [. . .] And all of a sudden they're all over my program. I'm going that's great, but these programs [already] have waiting lists of like 100 people for 40 spots. (2, p. 10)

The increasing pressure on SCC, as with all post-secondary institutions in British Columbia, to find alternate sources of revenue in response to shrinking government funding was, at the time of writing, forcing faculty and administrators to think creatively and to develop and implement new programming, often on very tight timelines. Consequently, as DC4 observed, an additional skill-set would be required:

A lot of people can think big picture but they can't operationalize. Or they can operationalize but they need somebody else to do that. Not many people can do both, which is a good skill. It's always fun to talk about what we can do, but then the hard work comes when you have to make it happen, right? (2, p. 12)

Here, DC4 articulates the experience of many academic middle managers, including me, at the time of writing: we are former faculty members who brought some managerial experience and, we hope, some leadership potential to our positions. We are experienced in curriculum development at the individual course level, but typically not at the program level. And, unless we had acquired some extraordinary experience, typically from employment outside the post-secondary sector, none of us had/has experience with the entire process of program development, from conception to implementation. This lack of experience was, at the time of writing, a significant frustration for DC4 in particular, and ultimately she also chose to step out of the division chair position, resigning effective April 30, 2015.

7.4.5 Division chair five (DC5).

As with the majority of the faculty members in leadership positions of all kinds at SCC, Division Chair Five (DC5) had been approached at various stages in her career by colleagues encouraging her to take on leadership roles, and began by becoming a department chair “from a desire to get them organized [laughs] more than anything else really” (1 p. 2). Her long history as a department chair, a faculty association selection committee representative, and on numerous college-wide committees gave her a breadth of experience relevant to the role of division chair, although she was, uniquely, division chair in an area that does not include her “home” department. This is unusual at SCC; division chairs are almost always selected from members of the division faculty. However, this experience gave her a thorough understanding of the collegial management model at SCC; she observed

that, in the absence of an explicitly hierarchical structure, the difference between “managing” and “leading” was

a question of perception really, and, um [pause] it's possibly just even a new take that people are trying to have—trying to make things sound positive, rather than negative. (1, p. 2)

Throughout both interviews, DC5 returned repeatedly to her perceptions of the language being used to describe her position as division chair/leader, particularly the emphasis on positivity:

if you title your conference, “Coping with Change” everybody's going to be on the defensive; whereas if you call it “Visioning the Future” it sounds positive but it's actually the same thing. So it's kind of, trying to put a positive spin on something. (1, pp. 2-3)

Interested to get to the particulars of DC5's experience within the context of that positive bent and its influence on her role, I asked whether she considered herself to be a leader and she responded,

one piece of the leadership thing is lacking. The admin side is not. I can organize papers, and I can attend meetings, and I can speak at meetings, and I can go out and I can meet with students who are coming in today, and I can be a welcoming presence to them and this kind of thing. But what I do lack is the actual technical expertise in the area. (1, p4.)

DC5 raised repeated concerns about the impact of a lack of technical expertise on her leadership ability in the division chair role. For example, she said,

if you're just making a general discussion of some sort you can mask the fact that you don't have technical competence in the area. But if it comes down, you know, to attending a meeting where really somebody was wanting to talk about technical equipment in a lab or something, I don't know. (1, p. 4)

The difficulty of feeling truly like a leader in a context where the language was unfamiliar seemed to influence DC5's response to my questions about formal leadership development offerings, in which she was willing to participate, but with some reservations. When discussing a specific session she noted,

I must say I have retained not all that much from it. I would need more—I'm a slow learner I guess in this field and I would need more, uh, explanation of what I'm supposed to be doing in that. I came away feeling, um, that I had too much other stuff to do and I just didn't really have enough time to absorb this, and I wasn't really sure what I was meant to do anyway. (1, p. 6)

Self-deprecatingly, DC5 takes on the burden of not really knowing what to do with the information provided at a leadership development session, begging the question of why the next steps in the process—including how to make time to take those steps—had not been outlined at the session itself. The authenticity of the leadership development experience was also important, and again, the notion of “spin” arose:

I must say that the vocabulary of management in general tends to leave me a bit cold. People are using terminology which I don't readily relate to and I have to try to figure out what it all means and that; [. . .] it's like being as positive as you can while you're implementing a budget cut . (1, p. 6)

Some of the discomfort with terminology clearly came from DC5's teaching background:

most of us are primarily teachers really; we are instructors. And some people go into admin and maybe fine, like that but, but the vocabulary of the sort of personal development and also, um, you know, honing your leadership skills or whatever this is just not a way I would think of it. (1, p. 7)

DC5 not only questioned the value of "leadership" development workshops for people who see themselves primarily as teachers, she offered some examples of the sorts of sessions that would be valuable to that audience:

I think people in department chair positions have often been interested in are things like, you know, conflict resolution or how to deal with difficult faculty or practical . . . Things very practically related to your everyday tasks. How to deal with Banner [data-management software]. How to interpret the financial data that is in Banner. Things that will actually help them to function a bit quicker or something. Because usually, one of our other problems is that we have too much to do [. . .] It's not just about thinking about career structure all the time. And I must say I don't. Or I didn't until I got this sort of thing [both laugh] foisted onto me. (1, pp. 7-8)

Even though DC5 did not have a long history of thinking about herself as a leader, her description of the experience as she understood it in January 2013 is very concrete:

I do think that, there is definitely a dichotomy here between a leader/manager type person in a, in a totally admin role and the fact that we are

faculty, and that normally the standard path for most of us is just to become faculty again. [. . .] I know that my opinion when I first stepped into this job was just that I felt like a buffer. I did not feel like a leader, I felt like the thing that people hit from both sides as they tried desperately to meet. (1, p. 9)

This observation, which came near the end of my first interview with DC5, echoes my own experience and that of several colleagues. Yet, even at the time of this interview, all of the division chairs were being told that we were leaders; we were the conduits (not buffers) between administration and faculty, and we would be responsible for spearheading new initiatives. In the second interview I wondered, therefore, whether DC5's perception of her role had changed:

Well it hasn't changed very much; I think the main reason for that is that the actual job is very much the same as it was three months ago, and I'm essentially the same person. Probably got, especially with going to the leadership workshop days, I think I've got a bit more conscious that I just need to follow my own style and not be anybody else. But [laughs] that's about all really that I can say. (2, p. 1)

Despite the passage of three months—not a terribly long time, but three of the busiest months in an academic year—little had changed in terms of DC5's perception of self in a leadership role. In a later communication, however, she reported having been influenced by author Susan Cain's (2012) bestselling book *Quiet*, saying "my perception of leadership skills [has] come to include the ability to stand up for time to be quiet and think as a leader and to object much more forcibly to endless drains on one's time through attendance at futile meetings" (personal

communication; November 29, 2014). At the time of our second interview, however, DC5 seemed to be wrestling with the connection between leadership and content expertise:

I don't really relate to the leadership label very well, is that I think I, I have got confidence from the division that I now represent, and that I really do think that I . . . they know that I have a desire to look after their interests, so I think I would get their confidence. So on that level, yes I can be a leader. And I think I can perform my admin tasks okay, or give guidance about administrative details across the college, more or less, with the occasional inevitable mistake. So that aspect of it yes. But the other aspect of it *no*, and that is, in terms of content related to individual departments all I can really do is facilitate. Because I just don't know enough about their material, what they do, to really provide any leadership on that. [. . .] And then, I [pause] I'm still sort of floundering about a bit in being identified as a leader because I don't like labels. (2, p. 2)

Despite her reluctance to be labelled, DC5 did report feeling an increased level of comfort in her position, resulting from a greater familiarity with the tasks and people:

I probably feel more comfortable just because of time. There's nothing really surprising about that. I think anybody in these roles gradually [pause] just learns some of the new material; gets used to working with all these new people, including the constant rotation of people such as in the [area name] office, which is kind of entertaining. [. . .] I had to learn about a whole new set

of people in the sense of having moved to a completely new division. That in itself surprisingly was less difficult than I thought [. . .] even though I really didn't know some of them *at all*, and it seems to be okay. What I did find very funny recently was, I went to the [. . .] articulation meeting for [my department] and found that I didn't really feel at home over there anymore, which I did find strange [. . .] So I did kind of feel a kind of shift. (2, p. 3)

Even though she had felt “a kind of shift,” DC5 reported that “it wasn't that I'd sat there analyzing this at all; it was just purely something that I noticed” (2, p. 3). In fact, DC5 states that she is not particularly reflective:

I'm not really somebody that sits down doing a lot of self-analysis. I mean, it doesn't appeal to me all that much. Um, but I probably could do it, but I don't have all that much time and I find myself just sitting there when I go home at night thinking . . . maybe I should be thinking how did I do today, but in reality I'm not. I'm going to eat my supper; I'm going to have a drink of wine; I'm going to do something else. Because I need to do something else I just don't want to do this all the time. (2, p. 4)

While reflection certainly takes time, what DC5 reports here is actually a response to an implicit understanding of self: she not only needs to do “something else,” she in fact *does* something else, despite the pressures of the work. The demands of the division chair role, combined with the difficulty of setting priorities—particularly for someone new to the position—have everything to do with one's ability to be comfortable enough in the work to authentically embrace the leadership role. Yet

DC5, who claimed not to be particularly self-aware, addressed the need to become comfortable as soon as she moved into her office:

Well, I guess the first thing I always do when I move into a room and get all my stuff in so I've got all my plants and artwork on the wall. So [...] my first thought was, well I've got to bed in here and sort of adapt. Well obviously there was this sense of "gee, what have I done? Am I crazy?" You know? Moving from [my home department] and suddenly finding myself over here. But my first instinct, having moved, because obviously once the decision is made the next thing is, well get on with it; sort yourself out and sort of bed in, somehow. (2, p. 7)

Following from that first step in "getting on with it" came the increasing sense of familiarity that results from practice:

it's like learning to drive; it's the sort of, as soon as you come into a new field you got to *work* to get all your procedures in order, whereas once you learn to do it it's the procedural memory. At that point it just goes on to automatic so it becomes easier because you got a lot of the processes in place, you've got a lot of the reactions in place. (2, p. 7)

Far from being not self-aware, DC5 here makes clear that she knew exactly what she needed to do in preparation for the demands of a new role: she needs to have her things in place; she needs to get on with it; she needs to work at developing the instinctive reactions that come with experience. Yet despite this awareness, she was indecisive about pursuing a costly formal leadership development opportunity:

I'm not sure that I'm going to do it because it is so expensive I almost feel embarrassed. And I think that's a problem, again, I guess we shouldn't be feeling embarrassed uh, about the cost of something just because, you know, we are in these positions, uh, if a workshop costs a couple of thousand dollars or something it's—to me it seems like a very high price to pay when I could just be taking a [continuing studies] course here, free. So I feel a bit guilty about that when I know the college is short of money, but, you know, I think that perhaps reflects the sort of selling oneself short attitude that can be a problem. (1, p. 9)

Although she had made this comment during our first interview, by the time of the second interview DC5 had not taken up her dean's offer to attend the Chair's Academy, a relatively expensive and time-consuming leadership development activity; instead she completed a semester-long course in financial management, which helped her to better understand the financial side of her position. But as things turned out, at the time of our second interview DC5 was already pondering whether to stay on in the division chair's role, although that did not become clear until later, when she announced her intention to return to her teaching work rather than seek a second term in the position. In response to an email request for a bit more insight into her experience as division chair and her plans for the future, she wrote the following:

At the moment I am planning to return to instruction because I like it better. I like my own subject area and find it interesting. I have decided that personal time is more important to me at this point and that I'm old enough to have a

choice and not work full time over the whole year at college. If I had been (quite a bit) younger, I might have considered "moving up." I think in retrospect that this may not have been a good idea anyway, so I'm just as happy that it never happened. As it is, I have other interests that are more important to me. (personal communication, October 13, 2013)

By the time of our final communication regarding her experience as division chair, DC5 had been able to reflect a bit more on her understanding of herself as a leader, observing that she had come to understand herself as someone who was "leading from the back," in part because she had worked with a group of energetic and highly capable department chairs and coordinators. But she also stressed that changes in technology—particularly the impact of email—as well as changes to the physical structure of SCC ("new buildings and more impersonal spaces and the transformation of the faculty lounge to the lunch in front of the computer screen while dealing with email") had significantly and negatively affected both workload and the workplace experience for her (personal communication, November 29, 2014).

7.5 Chapter Summary and Reflection

Each of the division chairs interviewed for this research project has experienced the challenges of a position that is seen as a "leadership" role but that is clearly also both managerial and clerical. For four of the six participants, including myself, these challenges were sufficient to cause us to leave the position: two participants have returned to faculty at SCC, a third will do so in May 2015, and I have left the institution. Although all of these participants came to the role with

some enthusiasm and interest, each expressed the frustration of encountering significant obstacles, including the loss of student contact, the challenge of meeting external regulatory and accountability requirements, struggles with inefficient systems and processes, insufficient preparation for their work, a lack of effective leadership development and training for themselves and others, a lack of recognition and/or remuneration, an overwhelming amount of administrivia and inefficient systems, exhaustion in response to the large workload and lack of time, difficulty keeping up with the rate of institutional change, and a lack of authority, even power, in their position.

Of these challenges, the most frequently cited can be summarized thematically as follows, presented in ascending order from least to most frequent:

1. Lack of recognition/remuneration
2. Lack of power/authority
3. Rate of institutional change
4. Amount of responsibility; workload
5. Nature of the work: administrivia and systems problems
6. Lack of relevant experience and training

As well, in response to my questions about their own experiences as leaders and managers, these participants all spoke extensively about their own development as leaders and their responsibility to develop leadership skills in others. Consequently, two additional themes emerged:

7. Personal leadership development: on the job and formal
8. Developing leadership in others: mentoring and succession planning

These emergent themes, findings and their implications in terms of understanding the lived experience of leading and managing in a Canadian, primarily two-year undergraduate institution are discussed in depth in Chapter Eight.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION

Chapter Eight presents a discussion of the data generated through observations of and interviews with the primary participants in this research study, the division chairs at South City College (SCC). I conducted two interviews, at an approximately three-month interval, with each of the five division chairs other than me. As discussed in Chapter Four, the data analysis process was informed by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin's (2009) theory of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), and was completed within the guidelines set out in Chapter Four for ensuring the overall quality of the research. This chapter presents the results of the analysis and synthesis of the findings, beginning with the overarching themes that emerged from the data in response to the research questions.

While the individual experiences of the division chairs are interesting and to some degree informative on their own, discovering the "so what?" of the project demands a synthesis of the participants' individual experiences. Consequently, analysis of the interview responses resulted in the emergence of several areas of commonality related to the (revised) research questions:

1. How do individuals experience the demands of managing and leading within an academic institution?
2. How does that experience differ from person to person and to what do individuals attribute those differences?

3. In what ways has the institution—and the activities of our small group of peer leaders—contributed to our developing individual and collective strengths as managers and leaders?
4. What can be learned to help others make such shifts in role performance in similar academic departments and institutions?

Specifically, the process of data analysis and syntheses revealed two overarching themes: 1) obstacles to leadership; and 2) leadership development for self and others. Table 2 outlines the two overarching themes and the related sub-themes that emerged through the recursive data analysis process outlined by Smith et al., (2009).

Table 2
Emergent themes and sub-themes

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Obstacles to leadership<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Lack of recognition/remunerationb. Lack of power/authorityc. Rate of institutional changed. Amount of responsibility; workloade. Nature of the work: administrivia and systems problemsf. Lack of relevant experience and training2. Leadership development for self and others<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Developing leadership in oneself<ol style="list-style-type: none">i. on-the job learningii. formal initiativesb. Developing leadership in others<ol style="list-style-type: none">i. mentorshipii. succession planning
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Themes one and two were developed and subdivided through a process of open coding, sorting, re-coding, and re-sorting. For theme one, the sub-themes are presented in order from least (1a) to most frequently reported (1f). Because the goal of this portion of data analysis was to find common themes across all six participants' experience, unique responses that might have fallen into this broad thematic category have been excluded. For theme two, the organizational pattern was determined by logic rather than frequency of like observations.

8.1 Emergent Theme One: Obstacles to Leadership

"We're sort of like the, the beginning of the administration; we need to wear both hats. We sit on the fence; we have to serve what the faculty needs and we have to serve what the administration needs and sometimes it's a lose/lose scenario" (DC2-2, p. 7).

Among the multiple areas of commonality within the division chairs' descriptions of their experiences, the participants' frustration resonated most strongly. As I worked with the data I found myself frequently wondering why the division chairs continued in their/our work, and was not terribly surprised that, over the period of research and writing, four of six chose not to continue in the position. And I present these particular thematic findings somewhat reluctantly, because they may seem to imply that the division chairs are a relatively unhappy bunch, which is not the case. Each of the participants is deeply committed to the institution (even me; even though I subsequently left), and each was, during the time of data collection, working extremely passionately and positively on behalf of his or her division and the institution. However, providing the division chairs with a rare opportunity to speak candidly about their own experiences clearly gave them a chance both to share information and to vent. On reflection that is not surprising;

when the data illustrate that the division chairs' so-called "leadership" activities seem to be confounded at every turn, it is no wonder that they expressed some frustration with the responsibilities of their roles.

In the following sections, I discuss the individual sub-themes identified under the overarching theme of "obstacles to leadership." Table 3, below, shows the response frequency per division chair by "obstacle" theme.

Table 3
Obstacles to leadership: response rates by theme, lowest to highest frequency

	DC1	DC2	DC3	DC4	DC5	Total
Lack of recognition/remuneration	0	5	3	0	1	9
Lack of power/authority	3	1	8	3	3	18
Rate of institutional change	6	8	0	5	0	19
Amount of responsibility; workload	6	15	1	0	3	25
Administrivia and systems problems	2	10	8	5	1	26
Lack of relevant experience and training	2	9	6	11	9	37

Even without a careful analysis of the data underpinning these thematic categories, it seems possible to make some interesting observations about the data as presented in Table 3. For example, although the most-cited sub-theme occurred on 37 instances throughout the division chairs' data-set, DC1, who has the longest experience as a division chair, spoke of her own lack of relevant experience and training on just two occasions, a marked contrast to DCs 2, 4, and 5 for whom the theme was much more prevalent. One might conclude that longer experience in the division chair role leads to a reduced focus on one's own lack of training. And while

that may be true, equally possible is that DC1 simply said less about her own training for the division chair position than other participants did. Table 3 also reveals that some participants mentioned some themes more frequently than did the others (for example, DC2 on both workload and administrivia). Therefore, it is useful to keep in mind that my interviews with the participants were not of equal duration, as was shown in Table 1.

8.1.1 Lack of recognition/remuneration.

“There is a tremendous amount of responsibility attached to this position and the compensation, whether it be time or whatever you want, it's not *just* about money but it's [. . .] not commensurate with that responsibility” (DC3-1, p. 7).

Although not a concern expressed by all of the division chairs, the lack of institutional recognition of the work, specifically in terms of appropriate remuneration, posed a small but significant obstacle to their/our ability to progress as leaders. As one bluntly put it, regarding the need to attend sometimes interminable meetings, “I need to be paid more to want to put up with that” (DC5-2, p. 9). The significance of the problem was highlighted by the bitter tone of some participants' comments. For example, one referred to “the grunt work that division chairs do, that nobody sees. All [other faculty members] see is the end result. And it's like oh, well, how hard could that be?” (DC2-2, p. 13). Although they did not necessarily say so in our formal interviews, all the division chairs who participated in this research project spoke repeatedly about the increased workload and the absence of appropriate compensation, particularly given the fact that as division chairs we were expected to work longer hours, and to do so on campus, than our faculty colleagues. We were also expected to be available year-round, including

during the holiday time most of us were unable to fully utilize, as is typical for faculty members who take on administrative positions such as that of division chair (Dowdall & Dowdall, 2005).

Yet despite the additional work and responsibility, division chairs at SCC receive only a small monthly stipend (\$519.44 in April, 2013) on top of the regular faculty salary, a fact not seen as particularly consequential by senior administrators. As one participant reported:

when I was considering the appointment I had a conversation with [a senior administrator] who asked me why I wanted this position and I said “well, it gets me a seat at the table.” And he says “good ‘cause that’s very rewarding.” After I got the appointment, this same [person] asked me how it was going and I said [. . .] “I find that the personnel issues are really quite intriguing and that's rewarding” and he said “good.” And, um, then I said: “and I think that the *compensation* for this position is terrible.” I said “the hours are very very long, relative to what I was doing before, and the pay is inadequate and yet I have all this responsibility.” And his response was that the reward is in the work, which sounds a bit exploitive to me. (DC3-1, p. 7)

The role of direct compensation in the decision to take on or continue in a middle-management position such as that of division chair is rarely discussed in the higher education literature. When it is mentioned, as in Murphy (2004), a sometimes significant salary increase is included as a given in list of other extrinsic benefits such as status, mobility, and professional advancement.

But the non-hierarchical nature of the collegial model at SCC means such benefits have little value, so the division chairs might reasonably expect greater compensation for taking on the additional work and responsibility of the position. However, because the “collegial” model sees the division chairs as being first among equals, the faculty association has actually opposed increases to stipends for division chairs, department chairs, and coordinators. As one participant observed,

It's like the stipend for division chair, right? You put it down every time in the collective agreement request or whatever; I think I actually gave up on it last time it's like just why bother because nobody's going to, it's, nobody's going to do anything about that anyway. (DC2-2, pp. 12-13)

Consequently, these stipends increased only modestly throughout my fifteen years at SCC, and division chairs are unlikely to see any significant increase in compensation while they remain members of the bargaining unit, because as faculty members they are tied to the faculty salary scale. As DC3 argued, expecting the division chairs to work longer hours and on more days than their faculty colleagues (at the end of my second year in the position I had banked 48 unused vacation days) is exploitive, so one of several things should happen. Either the workload needs to be reduced, or the faculty association needs to bargain for an increase in the division chair stipend, or the division chairs need to be able to move, even temporarily, out of the bargaining unit. The latter suggestion would also help to address the second most-frequently cited obstacle to leadership for the division chairs: the difficulty of being in a position of responsibility with little authority.

8.1.2 Lack of power/authority.

“I did not enjoy the feeling of being a buffer without any real power to make decisions” (DC5-2, p. 9).

When defining leadership, many of the division chairs interviewed for this research project identified the ability to make change as a key component. However, each of the division chairs reported a lack of change-making ability related to an overarching lack of authority or power to ensure faculty cooperation. As one respondent noted,

I see it [leadership] as the ability to make, to have power to make change, to have the power to facilitate, um, a change in direction for the organization. I think that the division chairs’ ability to do that is very limited. Certainly I would say they don't have unilateral change or unilateral ability or power to do that. (DC3-1, p. 6)

DC3 was not the only participant to identify the lack of a unilateral ability to enact change as a problem; others did as well, with most connecting that lack of ability to the collegial model. For example, DC1 observed the following:

You can't require [faculty to perform specific tasks] because we've got this collegial culture. So you have to convince, but when you convince someone—or appear to convince someone—and then it just doesn't happen [that's very frustrating]. (DC1-1, p. 5)

The collegial model also seemed to contribute to DC4's frustration with her own inability to “push,” as she described it:

we're seen as leaders by some people but we aren't seen as leaders by others. So I think we have, in the division chair role you have a funny relationship

with that. How people perceive you, so then you have to react to how they perceive you in a sense. You can take control to an extent but you can only push to a certain extent. (DC4-2, p. 1)

Because the division chairs are faculty members at the “top” of what is understood to be a non-hierarchical, collegial, organization, their frustration is unsurprising and certainly not unique: the image of the middle manager as stuck between a rock and a hard place, desperately trying to herd cats, is practically universal (see, for example, Hellawell & Hancock, 2010; Paul, 2011; Ramsden, 1998; Spendlove, 2007; Spiller, 2010).

Balancing the task of leading change in a rapidly changing institution with the responsibilities of mentoring and managing faculty members may require that the division chair position be excluded from the bargaining unit, because the collective agreement provides no mechanism for one faculty member to exercise authority over another. And despite some interest in such a move by division chairs over the years, it has long been resisted both by faculty in general and the faculty association in particular.

8.1.3 Rate of institutional change.

“And now it's all happening at once. And this is, this is I think another challenge to our collegial model, because [pause] how do we adapt to all this change while surviving with this model? The challenges to the leaders are much greater in some ways” (DC1-1, p. 12).

The relationship between collegiality, institutional change, and the division chairs' experience is grounded in memories of the “old” version of SCC:

I do remember the old days when I first started here it was full of full-time faculty, almost all male, who would spend a lot of time in the faculty lounge,

chatting about lovely academic things, it was—the conversations were amazing—I really enjoyed sitting in. Um, but they had stay-at-home wives, and they had houses in Kerrisdale [a tony Vancouver neighbourhood], and they had large boats. Almost all of them. And it was the kind of job where you could do that. It isn't anymore. (DC1-1, p. 8)

Like many faculty members at SCC, DC1 recalls the long-gone days when the institutional culture was significantly more collegial, in the way that Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) define that term. However, in response to external pressures such as reduced funding, increased governmental oversight, changing demographics, and an increasingly internationalized higher education system, not to mention the influence of a change-oriented president who led the institution from 2008-2013, SCC has changed, and new faculty coming to the institution do not share DC1's nostalgia for a collegial model they have never experienced. In fact, those faculty are contributing to institutional change, as DC1 observed:

it's changed the culture, for a number of reasons. One is that, um, almost all faculty who are of an age to have children whether male or female are involved in that high-performance parenting that we now do, and they just don't have the time for anything else. So they rush off to get some kid to hockey practice or to ballet or whatever, so there's a lot of that. So they come, and they do what they can, they still love the teaching, they still love their students, but it's harder to get them involved in some of the other things. (DC1-1, p. 8)

One of the defining elements of the collegial model as many faculty at SCC understand it is the assumption that all faculty members are “in it together” and that everyone will work collaboratively for the betterment of all. But one of the downsides of collegiality, as has been shown, is that those responsible for navigating and implementing change are not given any authority to compel their colleagues to do much of anything. The division chairs have accepted the inevitability of change but felt hampered in their attempts to lead faculty through the change process:

one of the things we have to be able to do as a leader is we have to be able to adapt and get people to accept adapting to new situations because it’s not going to stop changing. Whether you like it or not. (DC4-1, p. 9)

The tensions here are clear: the division chairs are aware that the institution is changing and the change is having an effect on the institution’s operations, which are becoming increasingly corporate. However, as faculty leaders, they are operating within a collegial model that is no longer effective. As Ramsden (1998) observes: “there is slippage between the demands of the new environment and the methods of leadership and management we are using to run universities” (p. 21). At SCC, the division chairs, responsible for negotiating the boundary between faculty and administration (Wenger, 1998), feel the burden of their role as change agents very keenly, particularly because that responsibility comes as an additional obligation in an already heavy workload.

8.1.4 Amount of responsibility/workload.

“I'm not sure we've been given [more responsibility]; I think this has grown organically. And nobody's noticed” (DC1-1, p. 13).

At SCC, division chairs are responsible for multiple duties in each of nine categories: academic, college-wide responsibilities, divisional functions, scheduling, external, students, finance, personnel, and facilities. According to the *Description of Duties* (“South City College” [SCC], 1996) the division chair is responsible for a laundry list of tasks including communicating information, holding meetings and circulating minutes, approving schedules, ensuring various procedures are followed, and expediting timesheet submission. However, when three division chair positions came up for renewal in 2011, the deans’ position description referred to the 1996 task list and additionally noted that “the academic management structure of the College will certainly continue to evolve over the next 2 or 3 years. Applicants need to be aware of this and must be willing to participate in and embrace change and the level of uncertainty that inevitably accompanies it” (SCC, 2011). Implicit in this statement is the expectation that the division chairs’ participation in change would bring with it additional obligations, which certainly seemed to be the case for my colleagues and me at the time of data collection.

Along with all of the more “managerial” (or even clerical: circulating minutes? expediting timesheet submission?) tasks captured in the 1996 job description, the 2011 position summary explicitly sets out a list of required “knowledge and abilities” that includes “demonstrated leadership skills” and a “demonstrated ability to apply leadership skills and work as part of the instructional

team to carry out the mandates and strategic initiatives of the College” (SCC). As well, the 2011 document states that

Division Chairs are responsible *and accountable* for providing leadership to their divisions and for carrying out a wide variety of duties. . . . Division Chairs are expected to represent their division as well as apply a cross-college perspective when providing advice and assistance to the Deans, to the Vice-President Academic and Provost and, where appropriate, to the President, regarding the overall management of the College. (SCC, emphasis added)

Worth noting is that the 1996 document agreed to by the college and the faculty association does not include the words “and accountable”—the effect of introducing accountability into the deans’ version of the position summary is subtle but important, and is a clear illustration of the changing expectations of the division chairs from the administration’s perspective. Given that “persons in leadership positions in collegial systems are expected to influence without coercion, to direct without sanctions and to control without inducing alienation” (Birnbaum, 1988. p, 102) it remains unclear how the division chairs might be held accountable for leadership development.

So when DC1 observes that the change in the division chairs’ responsibilities has grown “organically,” she is only partly right: the changes may feel organic to the division chairs, and it may certainly seem as though no one has noticed, but the 2011 position description suggests that the additional responsibilities are both expected and have been clearly articulated, at least by the deans.

8.1.5 Administrivia and systems problems.

“The parts of the position I do not enjoy are the repetitive and to some degree redundant paper work” (DC4-1, p. 13).

Much of what the division chairs do is neither leadership nor management; as one division chair put it, “if we’re to assume the mantle of leadership, then give us the time to do it. [. . .] Don't saddle us with clerical work” (DC3-1, p. 11). One way to address the problem of overwork would be to reduce the paperwork that division chairs process, much of which is highly clerical and could reasonably be handled by staff rather than by faculty members. For example, division chairs are responsible for processing faculty appointment recommendation forms (FARs). Doing so means ensuring there are sections available, that the appropriately senior and qualified faculty member is assigned the work, that the resulting contract does not duplicate a contract already in place, and that the faculty member is being assigned a contract of the contract status based on his or her tenure at the institution. At other institutions, all of these questions might be answered by human resources (HR) staff; however this is not the case at SCC. As DC2 notes,

As a senior academic leader, I should be able to open up one page or one screen on the computer and say here's what person X is all about. Here's their past history for the five years here's all their LOAs [leaves of absence], you know, the whole thing. . . . So what happens is, when stuff like FARs come in, um, it's such an inefficient process because I have to take the FARs and say do we have budget? And not only do we have budget but where is it going to show up on the budget schedule, like under whose name and all that? (DC2-2, p. 8)

In part, the absence of computer-based systems is related to the changing environment at SCC. In times of relative institutional stasis, it was reasonable to expect the division chairs to be familiar with the details of individual faculty contracts. However, as the institution has grown, the systems for record-keeping and information management have not grown correspondingly:

the fact is we're getting a little too big to consult and, and have this process of just—we need some process. And, you know, 10 years ago I would've never said that [laughs]. I was not a procedure/policy kind of person. But I've learned that they have their place, and they help get things moving in, in the right direction, and that there's some standards. (DC4-1, p. 8)

That the division chairs themselves would articulate the need for better systems and more efficient processes underscores the challenges of the position: on the one hand they are “collegial” managers, working in an institution that values “consensus, shared power, common commitments and aspirations, and leadership that emphasizes consultation and collective responsibilities” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 86). On the other hand, however, in the absence of a clear hierarchical structure (at least among faculty) the division chairs need logical systems, policies, and processes that allow them to handle routine work easily and to ensure it is done correctly. The division chairs are both responsible and accountable, but they have very little authority, an apparent contradiction consistent with Marshall (2012) who found that institutional organizational structures may act as barriers to leadership development because “authority did not necessarily rest where the responsibility rests” (p. 522). This is true at SCC, where the division chairs, as collegial managers,

lack the tools to exercise authority over their faculty colleagues. Paradoxically, as was seen in Chapter Six, administrators not only recognize this lack but in some cases are experiencing it in their own positions. The larger problem may be that the collegial model can allow a determined individual or group to impede all progress and, in the absence of any consequences, allows individuals to evade responsibility (Ramsden, 1998).

8.1.6 Lack of relevant experience and training.

“There's stuff here that you can never train for. It's the school of hard knocks. You get burned a couple times and you learn don't touch that, or deal with this now because potentially it's blown up before, it'll blow up again. So it's experience” (DC2-2, p. 4).

All of the division chairs who participated in this research brought with them experience as instructors and as department chairs and/or coordinators. And while that experience was sufficient to qualify them for the position, with the exception of the most senior participant, all identified a lack of relevant experience and training as a serious obstacle both to their perception of their own success as division chairs and to their expectations for successful leadership development. For one division chair, in the unusual position of leading a division that does not include her “home” department, the problem was less a lack of experience than a lack of discipline-specific expertise:

I can shuffle the right papers around and attend the right meetings, and I can learn about these, these people's needs that I can articulate them in a meeting. But, the sense of leadership from being a really competent faculty member in this area, of course has actually decreased. And that feels rather strange. (DC5-1, p. 4)

What was really missing for DC5 was the confidence that comes from being an expert in at least one of the disciplines in her division; without this expertise, she lacked the “insider’s” view that other division chairs brought to their/our positions. In this instance, the notion that management (and leadership) skills are transferable across the disciplines was contradicted by the division chair’s evident discomfort in the position of leader without discipline expertise, although in at least one other instance, a division chair had successfully led a division other than his “own.”

However, even division chairs with significant discipline-specific expertise did not always feel fully prepared for their work. For example, DC4 observed that when she started as division chair

a lot of the department chairs I work with didn't know me very well. In fact I didn't even know who some of those people were, to be quite honest. And I didn't know much about their programs. I mean I deal with little departments, but it was nine programs to get my head around, and they're all quite different. (DC4-1, p 3)

Despite coming from within her division, for DC4 the division chair position presented a new and significantly larger challenge, something I recall feeling when I took on the role, even though I had experience as chair of a relatively large department. Part of the problem, as articulated by DC4, is the lack of training early on in one’s career:

I think part of that, part of the struggle [at SCC] right now and the complaints we hear about “we don't know who to go to” and I will, I will back up on my

history—it took me at least a year to figure out how to get things done in this place. (DC4-1, p. 9)

For a number of the division chairs, leadership training and succession planning (or the lack of these things) were significant frustrations. The timing of such training was seen to be key, as DC2 pointed out, “I think that the cultivation of encouraging people has to occur way way way sooner” (1, p. 9), because “the succession planning has really fallen behind; I’m really glad to see that *now* there’s a realization of that and we have some mechanisms to help deal with this” (1, p. 8). However, the fact that some training was starting to occur did not help the participants in this research, for whom such training was being offered too late to be helpful in preparing them for their current work.

One participant was explicit about the lack of training in place for division chairs: “So, there’s nothing to prepare people, or to make people aware of what it is this div. chair job is” (DC3-1, p. 8). In the absence of such training, DC3 was expecting to learn on the job, including learning leadership skills, which, presumably, DC3 would learn from other leaders. As he observed:

But I still need exposure to those people. And [. . .] where does this exposure come from? If I’m sitting here fooling around with FARs all day I’m not exposed to leaders so nothing can be constructed other than what was previously constructed. (DC3-1. p. 13)

While learning on the job may have been sufficient for division chairs whose work was primarily managerial, preparing the division chairs to take on true leadership roles requires an early commitment to the process of identifying and cultivating

potential candidates for the work. This is consistent with Marshall (2012), who observed that academic middle managers frequently find themselves in their positions somewhat by happenstance, and so have not engaged in any formal training or preparation for the position. As DC2 pointed out:

I think people who, who are able to step up should be recognized and said, somebody should say to them, I think you have the ability to be a division chair. Uh, if you wish, I would be happy to mentor and to strengthen your skill set. (DC2-1, p. 13)

At the same time, as has been shown, the institution needs to address the problem of the division chairs' workload in order to allow them the time not only to develop their own leadership skills but to identify and nurture potential future leaders. As the next section illustrates, the division chairs see the tasks of succession planning, mentorship, and training as their responsibility, one that supports them in their experiences as leaders both of faculty and within the institution as a whole.

8.2 Emergent Theme Two: Leadership Development in Self and Others

As shown previously, the division chairs at South City College (SCC) are experiencing the challenge of developing leadership skills while still responsible for both management and clerical duties in a variety of ways, each quite distinct from the others. All of them, however, identified the responsibility of developing both their own leadership and that of others as a large component of their job, regardless of the obstacles that may interfere with that work. This responsibility is consistent both with the SCC Leadership Profile, which emphasizes the leader's ability to "Build Strong Teams" through "team leadership, mentorship and coaching, relationship

management, [and] communication” (Jackson, 2011) and with Kotter’s (1999) observation that,

because managerial work is increasingly a leadership task, and because leaders operate through a complex web of dependent relationships, managerial work is increasingly becoming a game of informal dependence on others instead of just formal power over others. (p. 14)

In the context of higher education leadership, which the division chairs say depends far more on persuasion than on control of others, Kotter’s point highlights an intersection between theories of leadership development that draw on the corporate environment and the experience of developing leaders in a post-secondary institution. This should come as no surprise, given previous arguments about the effect of an increasingly corporate-style administration on a generally collegial faculty. However, recognizing a phenomenon and being able to do anything as a result are two very different things: even though the division chairs are aware of the need to develop leadership in them/ourselves and others, doing so within SCC’s particular version of the collegial model is extremely challenging.

With two research questions in mind, specifically questions three (in what ways has the institution—and the activities of our small group of peer leaders—contributed to our developing individual and collective strengths as managers and leaders?) and four (what can be learned to help others make such shifts in role performance in similar academic departments and institutions?), the following section presents the results of my analysis of the interview data specifically relating to the division chairs’ experience of leadership development, both in terms of

individual leadership development activities and their/our efforts to encourage leadership development in others.

8.2.1 Developing leadership in oneself.

“The fact that somebody might want to anoint me as a leader just because that’s their conception of what this job is doesn’t necessarily mean that in fact—does in fact—make me a leader” (DC3-1, p. 6).

Despite being described across SCC as “faculty leaders,” overall the division chairs were somewhat reluctant to describe themselves as such. One said, “Um, I’ve always been told I’m bossy,” (DC1-2, p. 5), while another conceded, “I would see myself as a *sort* of leader” (DC5-2, p. 2). All of the division chairs did, in one way or another, self-identify as leaders, but they often switched between the first and second person when describing their leadership. A typical example is DC2: “I guess one of my realizations is that, you can never assume that, uh, everybody is on the same page. And I think as a leader I need to be cognizant of that, and be aware that you can’t make any kind of assumption” (DC2-2, p. 1). The distancing effect of moving away from the first person suggests a lack of identification with or internalization of the leadership role, consistent with Gronn’s (1997) observation that leadership is emergent and attributed, and not something that is automatically bestowed as a function of one’s position; for the division chairs, successful leadership often means moving seamlessly between their role as faculty insiders and taking the distancing step back from their own experience to see things from the administrative (outsider’s) perspective (Marshall, 2012).

Because all of the division chairs, including me, felt the obligation to be the best leaders possible, we tried to take advantage of opportunities to enrich our

leadership experience whenever possible. In the next sections I present a discussion of the division chairs' experiences of leadership development activities: first the informal or on-the-job experiences they have had, and second the more formal leadership development activities they have participated in while in the division chair position.

8.2.1.1 *On-the job learning.*

“Something that I picked up very young probably as a result of my personal upbringing is that the way to learn things is to watch people who are good at it and steal [laughs] steal their techniques. Um, don't listen to what they tell you, listen to what they do, and watch, and pick that up. And I think that's how I learned to teach. That's how I learned to lead” (DC1-1, pp. 13-14).

One of the most ironic characteristics of academic institutions is the lack of attention they pay to educating and training their own staff, faculty, and administrators (Paul, 2011). In this regard, SCC is typical: although the division chairs who participated in this research project all brought with them experience as department chairs and/or coordinators, the only training for the position any of us received was four months at one-quarter (or equivalent) release time as incoming division chairs. With the exception of DC1, the other division chairs participating in this research came into the position relatively unprepared; although we all had acquired relevant experience in one way or another, the only way we were going to really learn the job was by doing it. For most of us, the first step was thinking about the institution more broadly. The narrow focus of the department chair position had to give way very quickly to the broader scope of the division chair role, which puts the division chairs into an entirely new forum:

I mean, as a department chair I had virtually no contact with those [other] occupational units, or entities, before. Um now, it's a weekly ongoing thing, so now I see how that works, how the personalities of the functional positions that are in that work. So how do the deans work in those contexts? How does the VP work in that context? (DC3- 1, p. 4)

Before even beginning to think about developing their leadership, the division chairs must spend a relatively long period of time simply learning the managerial and clerical elements of their new position. By the time the division chairs are halfway through their first two-year appointment they have experienced the full academic year only once, which does not allow much room for reflection on their leadership.

However, despite their relative lack of experience, the division chairs were remarkably aware of how they were learning and developing their leadership skills on the job. They spoke of the need to “take two steps back and watch what’s going on” (DC5-2, p. 6), and how it was important to think “about the big picture stuff, and institutional risk, all that stuff” (DC2-1, p. 12). They even talked about their own learning styles: “I'm a visual learner, number one, um, so reading a manual is totally out for me or not quite totally out, I'm learning how to do that [laughs] but it's not my strength” (DC4-1, p. 15). The majority of division chairs recognized the importance of learning from mentors, with one saying, “I like the fact that I'm constantly learning from the people I work with and from colleagues at other institutions” (DC1-2, p. 12), and another noting, “I have to give [the acting dean] credit for one thing [in particular]: he's good at contracts and good at all that

figuring out all the minutia of that stuff, which is not my strength at all” (DC4-1, p. 15). However, they also bemoaned the relative lack of mentors available to them at SCC. For example, DC3, with whom I had discussed the notion of a constructed understanding of the leadership role, wondered

[how] the sources of these constructions, or the influences for the constructions may arise. So how much time do I spend with the president? None. And yet, arguably the president is, is, is the supreme leader here. If I'm not having any exposure to him, how am I supposed to construct how my leadership will be? (DC3-1, p 12)

This lack of contextual examples would arise again as an obstacle to the successful completion of one of the formal leadership development activities many of the division chairs participated in: the Chairs' Leadership Academy.

8.2.1.2 Formal initiatives.

“I have not had any leadership development training end of story. I haven't had any. Um, I'm encouraged to go to the Chair Academy, I've heard mixed reviews about that, um, so we'll see” (DC3-1, p. 8).

As noted previously, in 2011, SCC hired a consultant to produce a “Leadership Profile” (Jackson, 2011) that set out a series of competencies to be developed in new and aspiring institutional leaders. Supported by a series of documents housed in the Human Resources department, the division chairs were given the responsibility of meeting with their department chairs and coordinators to discuss and plan for leadership development activities. At the time, our unanimous response was twofold: 1) how do we find the time to do this? and 2) what about our own leadership development?

Among the division chairs participating in this research, three (DC1, DC2, and me) had, with the support of the institution, completed the Foundation Leadership Academy offered by the Chair Academy, an Arizona-based organization offering “worldwide leadership development for college and university leaders” (Chair Academy, 2014). For DC1 and me, the experience was not especially positive: I found much of the content irrelevant in a Canadian context and both of us felt that this kind of training would have been significantly more useful earlier in our careers. DC2, however, attended a different session than we did, and found the experience highly valuable: “I still reference the huge tomes that they give out” (DC2-1, p. 9). When I first interviewed DC3, he was considering attending the Chair Academy; by the time of our second interview he had committed to attending, but had some reservations:

one of the components of this leadership Academy is I need to find a mentor, and I need to find three evaluators. Well given that this organization is so *flat* at the top, who am I going to find, as a mentor, who is above me? That could be two of three deans, possibly, and then two VPs and a president. And there's two or three of us going to this leadership Academy and so does that mean that one of those people is going to end up with multiple? [. . .] So I question the relevance again to this particular sector, uh, the post-secondary sector. (DC3-2, p. 5)

Part of the difficulty the division chairs were experiencing with leadership development arose from the fact that the more formal training they were being offered did not address the more immediate need to learn the day-to-day

operational (read: managerial) elements of the position. This included the “leadership development” sessions that SCC’s human resources department was, at the time of data collection, holding for chairs and coordinators. For example, DC4 observed,

I think that's where [HR's] presentation fell flat with all of the department chairs. Great, we have wellness; great, we have leadership. But what about the basics that we need? Let's talk about that. That was the comment that I heard afterwards. (DC4-1, p. 16)

This sense of needing the basics was shared by DC5, who observed,

I think people in department chair positions have often been interested in are things like, you know, conflict resolution or how to deal with difficult faculty or practical . . . things very practically related to your everyday tasks. How to deal with Banner. How to interpret the financial data that is in Banner. Things that will actually help them to function a bit quicker or something. (DC5-1, p. 7)

What emerges from these responses is a lack of distinction between “leadership development” and “training,” neither of which seemed to be happening particularly successfully, at least for this group of participants. The implications of the lack of faculty leadership development at SCC are felt regularly, typically in the early part of the spring semester when elections for chairs and coordinators are held. During my time at the institution, there were multiple examples of departments having to persuade, coerce, even beg faculty to take on department chair or coordinator positions; at the division chair level there were similar challenges, with four of six

participants in this research having stood for the position unopposed, and two having been approached and explicitly encouraged to apply for their jobs. This led one division chair to observe,

nobody wants this job, meaning there's slim pickings; you have an open competition but if all six division chairs left just *en masse* just for whatever reason, um, the organization would be extremely hard-pressed to find six people who would step up. (DC3-1, p. 8)

One solution to the problem, as DC3 suggested, would be to start the process of succession planning, including training, much earlier:

I think the directions from HR should be, is better spent at the people who have been on the faculty for five years to encourage them to take on coordinator roles in departments and to encourage them to look down the future possibly taking department chair roles so that the functional description of the department chair isn't one of a "tag you're it" position. This is something that one could aspire to. (DC3-1, p. 5)

One of the ways to enhance the attractiveness of chair and coordinator positions, including that of division chair, would be for those in academic leadership roles—specifically the division chairs at SCC, but also middle-level managers at other institutions—to focus on the rewards of academic leadership rather than the frustrations. This may sound disingenuous, given the complaints the division chairs have raised about the frustrations of their roles. But as Murphy (2003) observed, leadership and teaching are both interpersonal transactions, and may provide similar rewards:

Those who progress into leadership roles may hesitate in leaving teaching behind as their primary work because they fear they will miss that level of shared experience and bonding that occurred with their students. The discovery that the significance of shared experiences continues in the leadership role, though with different contours and impacts, is often a pleasant and satisfying realization that enriches the leadership experience for many academics. (p. 89)

And for many of the division chairs participating in this study, the rewards of leading others, specifically through mentorship and an active engagement in training and succession planning, were some of the greatest they experienced.

8.2.2 Developing leadership in others.

“Leadership is a much more overarching form than what I thought it was. And maybe for some people that's obvious, but, you know, for me I've been wrestling with that and now I think I'm coming to the conclusion that, you know what? A great leader can take anybody anywhere” (DC2-2. p 12).

Although three of the six division chairs who participated in this research had completed some formal leadership training, such an opportunity was a new innovation at SCC at the time of writing, and was not one that was being formally extended beyond the division chair level. However, the division chairs had been assigned the task of developing leadership skills in the department chairs and coordinators in their respective divisions and felt responsible to do so, despite a lack of budget and time. In terms of understanding and achieving the goal of “leadership development,” the division chairs spoke primarily of two strategies: mentorship and succession planning.

8.2.2.1 Mentorship.

“We are, are *here*, not to make ourselves important, but to make things work. To help people do the very valuable job that they do” (DC1-1, p. 5).

Without exception, the division chairs see themselves as mentors to all faculty in their areas, but most particularly to department chairs, to coordinators, and to each other. In terms of working with departmental chairs and coordinators, the process of mentorship may be very hands-on, and might look quite a bit like training:

So you need to kind of sit down with them and say, well, think about it this way. And if you do that, they are intelligent people and they go, oh yeah I'd never really thought about if that impacts on that department, or how that was going to be a problem for somebody else because I made this change.

(DC4-2, p. 9)

For some division chairs, this process was not always easy, particularly in situations where a new department chair or coordinator came to the position with very little or no prior experience, as one participant reflected,

in the last round of department chair elections there were a couple of people who were selected who had absolutely no experience in anything other than their own classroom work. A little bit within their department, but no sense of a wider range of what goes on at the college, no sense of, of how things were done. And it was just too overwhelming. And, um, and [. . .] Maybe not surprisingly both of those folks have stepped down [. . .] I spent a lot of time with them. (DC1-1, pp. 4-5)

This experience supports Wolverton and Ackerton's (2007) observation that post-secondary institutions seem to assume that a good faculty member will automatically be a good department chair, which of course is not always the case. At SCC, weak or underprepared department chairs inevitably create more work for the division chairs overseeing the departments' activities, so providing the appropriate mentorship is important:

the responsibility is not just slough off and give them a very quick answer. It's training the faculty on how to do their job better and understand the bigger picture within the college. So it's, and having the patience and the time to do that. (DC2-1, p. 14)

Not only must the division chairs spend sufficient time with each of their department chairs and coordinators, effective mentorship also depends on their ability to communicate effectively with their sometimes very different colleagues. As one observed,

I feel like you have to sit back and think okay I have to work with this person this way and I have to work with that person that way, um, to make sure I achieve what we need to achieve. And so I, I think I'm learning to sit back and go okay, it's this particular person who thinks this so stop and think about how I handle that situation. (DC4-1, p. 5)

For the division chairs participating in this research, the process of applying and developing their own leadership and mentorship skills was ongoing, which was part of the appeal of the position. As DC1 explicitly stated, the challenge was vital, "because I'm very very easily bored. And so, for me, leadership has been a constantly

changing challenge. Which is what I need. I like solving problems. I like achieving things” (DC1-1, p. 8).

As purported leaders in a rapidly changing post-secondary environment, however, the division chairs were frustrated by the lack of ability to enact change in the absence of any consequences for those who choose not to participate. As DC3 observed,

I think the ideal situation is that leaders get people to do things; to show them a direction or to encourage a direction, and support them in their travels to wherever it was they were going. But similarly, there is power to push those people along if necessary, or there is a consequence if they choose not to go in that direction. And there isn't one here. Division chairs don't have anything other than persuasive effect on the direction of the department chairs. It's not a—not that they would necessarily *want* it, but it's the one element that seems to be missing in, in what I would see as a leader. (2, p. 3)

Effecting change for division chairs is particularly difficult precisely because of the lack of sanctions or consequences for faculty members who choose not to participate in the process (Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Marshall, 2012; Ramsden, 1998). Consequently, when functioning as both mentors and change-agents, the division chairs work very carefully, always mindful of the need to operate within the parameters of the collegial model while simultaneously introducing and to some degree interpreting or translating the more managerial approach being introduced at the institution. For example, one division chair, who had spoken at length of the need to provide context for his colleagues, observed, “you have to frame everything

so that people have the big picture. And then they can say ‘okay I can see what's happening now’” (DC2-2, p. 6). DC2’s experience is consistent with Wolverton and Ackerton (2005), who found that most aspiring academic administrators desire a better understanding of “big picture” issues including “learning to delegate, building trust, knowing what you don’t know, and knowing culture” (p. 233), and who argued that orienting potential leaders to such issues was an important part of succession planning, which is another of the division chairs’ responsibilities.

8.2.2.2 Succession planning.

“[The dean] said well you know you might want to think about being the dean one day. I’m going ‘well I, I,’ and that caught me totally off guard” (DC2-1, p. 9).

The notion of succession planning at SCC was practically unheard-of during most of my experience at the institution. While there was a general awareness of the need to find people both willing and able to take on administrative positions such as those of department chair, coordinator, or division chair, the idea that planning for such roles would be undertaken intentionally was never articulated. As one division chair put it, “nobody ever talked about succession planning. I never heard at [SCC] any talk about succession planning in my role as department chair. If it was going on, I wasn't aware of it” (DC3-1, p. 8). However, as the institution became increasingly committed to advancing the notion of leadership development, the idea of succession planning was a logical outcome, particularly given the somewhat-belated recognition that a very large retirement bubble was quickly approaching, and little had been done to prepare for it.

In part, this complacency could be attributed to the long period of relative stasis at the institution throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. As one division chair

put it, “it comes down to the rate of change. Before it was easy to see the big picture. We kind of lumbered along; we were this giant hulking thing, and all of a sudden you lose half your faculty in two or three years” (DC2-2, p. 2). As noted earlier, the most effective way to plan and prepare for potential vacancies at the department chair, coordinator, and division chair level would be to start early by identifying potential leaders and introducing them to the potential rewards—and challenges—of taking on an administrative position.

At SCC, where there is pressure on the division chairs to manage organizational change in a way that will somehow satisfy both the faculty they represent and the administration/institution that employs them, succession planning is inextricably linked to the change process. In a managerial model, institutional administrators are expected to be efficient, particularly when it comes to successfully managing increasingly scarce resources (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008). However, at SCC, where the notion of collegiality persists, the emphasis is on deliberate and thorough processes, which are clearly in conflict with the more expeditious expectations of a managerial style (Bergquist & Pawlak; Birnbaum, 1988). So while the division chairs accept the responsibility for encouraging their departments and programs to engage in thoughtful succession planning, they are also aware of two potentially dissuading factors: first, that those being groomed as “successors” may become the *de facto* agents of institutional change, whether they want to or not; and, second, given the relatively flat organizational structure, there are very few positions beyond those at the department level: on the academic side of the house, “above” the department chair there are only the six division chairs, three

deans, and the academic vice-president and provost. Yet the division chairs persist; as one said:

Yes there's going to be limited opportunities for [advancement] but, I, I think that it goes well for a person's morale to know that they have they have the capability to do that if they so choose. Whether or not they want to go for that or if they tried and were rejected they can go, "oh no problem. I know I could do the job if I got the job." (DC2-1, p. 13)

Although there are few positions at the "top" of the academic hierarchy, there is an opportunity at SCC to encourage "young" faculty to take on the leadership roles that will be opening up due to the anticipated retirement of the baby-boomer faculty members. SCC's relatively static period during the 1990s was accompanied by very slow faculty turnover, resulting in a "demographic gap" on campus. One way to fill that gap is to actively engage younger faculty in professional development and to appoint younger faculty to department chair positions (Usher, McLeod & Green, 2010). Given that these "younger" faculty members are less likely to long for the golden days recalled by DC1, such succession planning may be an effective way to both encourage institutional change and reinvigorate an understanding of collegiality that currently seems to have outlived its usefulness.

CHAPTER NINE

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

When I started this research project, my purpose was to explore the phenomenon of leadership identity development as my division chair colleagues and I were experiencing it. However, once I began my research, it quickly became clear that my notion of leadership as a “next step” in some kind of evolutionary process was incorrect, primarily because it was based on the false assumption that management and leadership are discrete activities. Consequently, I changed my approach and focused on how the division chairs were experiencing the shift in role from manager to leader in response to the new vision of the division chair position being articulated following significant administrator turnover. However, having written my way through the data, I have learned firsthand that “to write is to measure the depth of things, as well to come to a sense of one’s own depth” (van Manen, 2014, p. 365). For it turns out that I have been investigating neither leadership identity development nor the process of evolving from the status of “manager” to “leader.” Rather, I have been discovering the myriad ways in which the division chairs’ aspirations, including my own, to be effective leaders and managers, are and were being confounded, primarily because systems and attitudes at South City College [SCC] have not evolved in response to changes in the post-secondary climate in British Columbia and elsewhere.

The fact that, as of April 30, 2015, four of the six participants in this study have or will have left the division chair position suggests that the experience of managing and leading within SCC was unsatisfactory for the majority of participants

(research question one), with each division chair experiencing the position in different ways, and leaving or staying in the position for reasons of his or her own (research question two). Moreover, between May, 2011 when I became a division chair and the writing of this document, four of the six positions have been vacated so frequently that they have been held by twelve different people in a four-year period. The resulting lack of continuity, not to mention the potential for errors resulting from turnover in positions where the incumbent's success often depends on extensive institutional knowledge, can only be seen as a liability for the institution, particularly given that one of management's priorities in a recent round of bargaining was the extension of the division chairs' maximum term from six years to eight.

The participants in this research found that the formal and informal leadership development activities they undertook—ostensibly in support of their work as division chairs—either lacked relevance, or were difficult to complete (given the lack of potential mentors/role models) or they occurred too late in their careers to be truly valuable (research question three). That said, there is much to be learned from this research to help those in similar academic departments and institutions—and, indeed, the division chairs at SCC—to make similar shifts in role performance in response to the changing expectations for academic middle managers and leaders (research question four).

In the absence of any significant changes to the division chair position, I suspect that, in the not-too-distant future, SCC's division chair model will simply break down. My experience as a division chair (call me "DC6") and as a participant-

observer in this research project suggests that the potential demise of the division chair position can be avoided, but only if both faculty and administration at SCC make a real commitment to change.

9.1 The Problem of Stasis

In many ways, the division chairs are being prevented from taking on a true leadership role because the position is a manifestation of an organizational structure that is no longer functional. But if nothing else, the collegial model is persistent; as DC1 recalled, speaking about the idealism of the college movement in British Columbia in the 1960s,

the intention was that, that we be instructors not professors [. . . they] didn't even like the word faculty. [. . .] And when I came here there were a lot of old faculty; they had been here since the beginning. And that idealistic view of the college system was part of their view and they passed that on. (1, pp. 6-7)

That “idealistic view” of an institution explicitly different from the university model has played out for many years at SCC, in part because of the relative lack of change at the institution between 1994 and 2008, including the absence of turnover at the dean level. As one administrator observed, that lack of change resulted in a situation where people “had one year’s experience 20 times” (A4, p. 9). However, although the organization and function of institutional management and leadership did not change much over that 20-year period, the institution changed significantly: the number of students increased to the point that two new buildings were added, the program mix changed, with significant growth in Nursing and Business in response to a move to degree-granting status. The use of email as a means of communication

became ubiquitous, adding to the pressure for all employees to be available and responsive at all times.

Simultaneously, the post-secondary climate was changing dramatically, including significant and ongoing reductions in government funding, which created a necessarily entrepreneurial spirit at the executive level that was not exactly embraced by faculty. Yet throughout this period the academic administrative model changed not at all: from 1994 until 2010 there were six division chairs and two deans. When a third dean position was created in 2010 the six divisions were realigned under the deans in twos instead of threes; shortly thereafter the division chair job description changed to include both responsibility and accountability for leadership without any corresponding change to remove some of the more clerical responsibilities that had historically been part of the division chairs' work.

SCC was resistant to systems change for so long in part because the two academic deans, appointed in 1994, stayed in their positions for more than fifteen years. Having established the paper-based systems they and the division chairs maintained—primarily in response to an historical lack of faith in human resources personnel—it was unsurprising that neither of the deans saw the need for significant change, despite institutional growth. And, as my experience with the faculty association reinforced, there was little reason to develop new systems because those in charge were personally familiar with the details of the majority of faculty contracts, department section budgets, and the intricacies of vacation and professional development schedules. Throughout their tenure, the deans provided

administrative oversight and the division chairs “just kept things ticking along and [pause] enjoyed the perks of being div. chair” (DC1-1, p. 12).

So for many years the collegial model, though ostensibly non-hierarchical, did accommodate a certain amount of advancement. The department and division chair positions required much less work and bestowed at least some prestige, and in times of little institutional growth or change, they were desirable roles (DC1-1).

When the job itself is seen as the reward, there is less demand for an increased salary; when the work is not changing very much it is relatively easy to master. And when there are few labour-relations-related problems, there is not much to challenge the division chairs as faculty managers. Of course, this kind of labour peace depended on close cooperation between the faculty association and administration, which was facilitated by the deans’ former positions as members of the faculty association executive. Add to this a relatively well-funded post-secondary system and it is easy to see how the collegial model, despite its potential drawbacks, was sufficient to allow the institution to carry on, even flourish, with few disruptions.

However, since 2008 things at SCC have changed significantly. No longer do the deans carry the details of faculty contracts in their heads, and because those details are sometimes buried in paper files, mistakes (including overpayment of faculty members) are becoming more frequent. Division chairs are now responsible for acting as the institutional memory, which is a dangerous proposition both because of turnover in the division chair positions and as the average age of faculty rises. The list of duties the division chairs are required to perform not only defines

the position but constrains what is possible; given that the division chairs do both clerical and management work, plus teaching, how can they be expected to add leadership to the mix? The answer for four of us was that we could not: the demands of managing and leading within a rapidly changing academic institution made our positions as division chairs intolerable, particularly given the frustrations of working within a collegial model while burdened with multiple and repetitive clerical tasks or “administrivia.”

9.2 Collegiality and Administrivia; Management and Leadership

Throughout this document I have used two terms that could easily be seen as scapegoats for the frustrations experienced by the division chairs at SCC: collegiality and administrivia. Neither of these terms has a clear definition, yet each is used to explain or excuse the frustrations that stem from a lack of support provided to the division chairs that might better enable them to perform the increasingly complex management and leadership tasks that are expected of them. Yet it is insufficient to simply blame the collegial model, or bemoan the fact that division chairs seem bogged down in clerical tasks that preclude their development as leaders: I would argue that a thoughtful and *supported* approach to management and leadership development could provide the route out of the current situation and potentially reinvigorate the collegial model, which remains highly valued at SCC. First, however, it is important to define the terms as they are commonly used and understood in the context of SCC.

9.2.1 Collegiality

“It is frequently obvious that discussions of the collegium are a lament for paradise lost rather than a description of present reality” (Baldrige, 1971).

The majority of community colleges in British Columbia (BC), Canada were established between 1960 and 1975 (Dennison, 2006; Dennison & Gallagher, 1986). The rapid expansion of the college system in BC between 1965 and 1978 resulted in institutions that were undoubtedly a product of their time: they were regionally and community focused, they provided access to post-secondary studies for an entirely new population of students, and they provided a variety of educational activities including academic upgrading, skills and vocational training, and university-transfer studies (Dennison). The colleges were also focused on teaching rather than on research, so faculty included instructors selected primarily on the basis of their teaching skills (Dennison). Many of these instructors came from Canada, but many others had recently come to the country to avoid the draft in the United States, bringing with them the politics and passions of the 1960s and 70s, including a commitment to the notion of collegiality that has long defined the culture of many higher educational institutions in the United States, Canada, and elsewhere (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008; Ramsden, 1998).

The “collegial model,” as it is known at SCC, places the *collegium* or *community of scholars* at the centre of an organizational structure that is non-hierarchical and might be better envisioned as a series of concentric circles, with students at the centre, upper-level managers at the outside edge, and teaching faculty, chairs, and coordinators in between. However, as was shown in Chapter One, the organizational chart in use at SCC clearly illustrates a hierarchical pattern

more traditionally reflective of corporate organizational structures or the *bureaucratic* model identified by Birnbaum (1988). This apparent contradiction is not unique to SCC; as the 1971 epigraph from Baldrige, above, indicates, faculty and administrators have long disagreed about the model that best describes the structure of post-secondary institutions. And at SCC, as elsewhere, there is a certain amount of lament about the way things used to be, when the collegial model was sufficient and the division chair role was seen as “a reward for long service” and a job in which the division chairs “did what they did and it wasn’t all that much” (DC1-1, p. 8). At SCC, “collegiality” is a term with near-mythical status; it serves as shorthand for an almost infinite number of assumptions, most of which remained both unarticulated and unexamined throughout my years at the institution. This is consistent with Ramsden (1998), who observed that collegiality “is an idea that has been made to do duty for an extraordinary range of valued academic processes,” and has “acquired an iconic meaning related to values of unselfish collaboration among small groups of scholars” (p. 22).

One constant at SCC is that collegiality privileges faculty autonomy over almost all other values, as illustrated in the way division chairs are selected. Although division chairs are officially interviewed by a committee that recommends the chosen candidate to the president, prior to that interview the division faculty have voted to select their preferred candidate according to a process defined in the collective agreement. In my years at SCC I recall only one time that the candidate supported by the faculty members was not appointed division chair; in practical terms the interview process is a formality that affirms the candidate already

selected by his or her colleagues. So although the benefits of collegiality are numerous, including membership in a community, participation in shared decision-making, and ownership of academic processes (Ramsden, 1998), at SCC the collegial model also best serves the needs of those who are accepted as members of the collegium: citing Ramsden, Spiller noted that collegiality “has the potential to disempower, marginalize and injure staff who are not part of the favoured group” (2010, p. 683) including, presumably, well-qualified candidates for division chair positions who may for any number of reasons not have the support of their faculty colleagues. Despite these drawbacks, the SCC Leadership Profile, developed in 2011, cites “collegiality” as the first characteristic in the first area of competency (“makes good decisions”), defining the term as “valuing and demonstrating inclusivity, openness, civility and respect as a way of working at [SCC]” (Jackson, 2011). While these characteristics are certainly desirable, making quick and responsive decisions within a collegial context is almost impossible. Collegiality, Ramsden argues,

is one of those models which is fine in theory but has not often been applied in practice one only has to study the operations of university [and college] committees candidly from within to see that manipulation and craftiness frequently dominate over open, consensual decision-making, and that it takes courage and even foolhardiness to question the chair’s authority. (1998, p. 23)

The inefficiencies of the collegial model have been apparent at SCC for many years, and are increasingly evident as the institution experiences the effects of reduced government funding. When resources are scarce, and as demands for

institutional accountability increase, collegial leadership is increasingly difficult to sustain (Bergquest & Pawlak, 2008). As Ramsden observes,

A higher education system whose institutions need to search for new funding sources, plan strategically, and compete with each other in a market with manifold clients no longer possesses the homogeneity and stability which can make collegiality an effective way of getting things done. (1998, p. 23)

Further complicating the situation is the phenomenon Deem (1998) describes as “new managerialism,” that has been embraced by government and is having an influence on the institution as a whole. Characterized by clearly articulated mission statements, and an emphasis on strategic management and financial planning, new managerialism is shaping the role of the division chairs in the sense that they are required to respond to increasing governmental demands for accountability, quality assurance, and fiscal responsibility (Deem, 1998; Santiago, Carvalho, Amaral & Meek, 2006). The steady decline of provincial funding to post-secondary education across Canada (Deering & Sá, 2014) combined with increasing demands for quality assurance and accountability (Ministry, 2013) have led directly to increased pressure for division chairs to provide leadership for new initiatives such as formal program review, curriculum development, and an explicit commitment to teaching excellence. Consequently, perhaps because one of the hallmarks of collegiality is its ability to resist change (Spiller, 2010), the division chairs have found themselves in the challenging position of having to convey the increasingly “new managerial” message of the administration to faculty members who are not particularly

interested in hearing it, and who cannot easily be held accountable for refusing to listen.

Faculty at SCC yearn for a return to an effective and functional collegial model. However, the current division chair, chair, and coordinator structure does not provide the time needed to support a functional collegial model. Collegiality, when it works, relies on relationship building, meetings, conversations, discussions, debates. It demands that leaders know their constituents well and that they understand how to both manage their day-to-day needs as well as lead them to ensure that the institution can achieve its goals. Given the changes in the post-secondary system in British Columbia, particularly the increasing demands for documentation and a general culture of accountability, if the division chairs were appropriately supported they could become the actual (rather than just the nominal) leaders of such initiatives as support for curriculum development, program assessment, review, and revision, commitments to excellence in teaching and learning and facilitating data collection as evidence of institutional accomplishments and milestones. This is work the division chairs long to be able to do. However, they find themselves mired in trivial administrative tasks—administrivia—that occupy time that could be better spent appropriately managing and leading faculty.

9.2.2 Administrivia

The lack of administrative support afforded to the division and department chairs featured prominently in my decision to step down as division chair, and was clearly a frustration for DC3, who spoke repeatedly about being bogged down in

what he described as “administrivia,” a catch-all term for the multitude of clerical and administrative tasks seen as interfering with leadership activities at the division and department chair levels. While the excluded administrators at SCC acknowledged having people to get things done, this is not the case for the division (and department) chairs, who like many academic middle managers, have very little administrative support for themselves and their faculty (see Acker, 2010, and, in contrast, Hellowell & Hancock, 2001). Without dedicated administrative support, faculty leaders at both the department and division levels are responsible for tasks that in any other organization would be handled by clerical staff. And while some departments have assistants to provide such support, many do not; in my area only one department employed an assistant, and that person’s job was primarily to provide technical support in the language labs, not to provide administrative assistance to the department chair. Consequently, department and division chairs, most of whom are paid at the top of the salary scale, are performing clerical tasks including such mundane activities as photocopying and setting up meetings.

Like my colleagues, I was responsible for oversight of more than 100 faculty members, including four department chairs, two assistant department chairs, and seven coordinators. Because there is no systematic connection between payroll, human resources, scheduling, and faculty at SCC, my job included acting as the coordinator for all of these areas; as a division chair, I was responsible to confirm that every faculty member in my division had the appropriate contract for his or her workload, had been assigned to the correct number of sections, was consequently being paid the right amount, was completing the required hours of non-instructional

duty (and documenting any use of the institutional funding in support of those activities), and was taking assigned vacation. While the finance and payroll departments were responsible for actually managing the money and paying the employees, in terms of clerical assistance, I was able to rely on one person, who divided her time between my division and another, and who was the sole administrative support for two division chairs plus all of the chairs, assistant chairs, coordinators, and faculty in those divisions. And although staff in the deans' office and in human resources provided vital assistance, ensuring the employee records—kept in paper files and on Excel spreadsheet files known as “recipe cards” in honour of the paper versions they replaced—were kept up to date, responsibility for administrative oversight lay with me. When an error was made that affected faculty, I was responsible both for providing the explanation and finding a solution, usually with the help of the one individual in the deans' office who was charged with oversight of faculty contracts and recordkeeping. Consequently, like my colleagues, among the first things I did as division chair was to develop a series of spreadsheets to track faculty workload, professional development, contract type, evaluation date, and so on. Because my predecessor had worked entirely on paper, I had to persuade finance to release electronic copies of their spreadsheets, which I was then able to modify for my various purposes; in the absence of this cooperation, I would have had to build all of the necessary spreadsheets on my own. It is no wonder, then, that one of my first professional development activities when I became a division chair was to take an introductory course in Excel.

The burden of record-keeping responsibility at SCC extended to the department chairs, assistant chairs, and coordinators with whom I worked very closely. They, too, kept spreadsheets to track the workloads and contract status of the faculty in their departments, and we had to reconcile our spreadsheets with each other's and with those in finance every semester, making changes and corrections to errors that would then reappear, like clockwork, the next semester. One of the most egregious examples was the nearly two years it took for a deceased faculty member's name to finally be removed from the finance spreadsheets. I could offer other examples, but the fact is that SCC relies on a byzantine paper-based bureaucratic system managed by faculty not because they are the best people to do it, but because so little information is stored in easily accessible ways that even simple clerical tasks depend on faculty members' institutional, sometimes discipline-specific, knowledge.

I probably would have been more accepting of the clerical aspects of the division chair position had it not become very clear to me—through the research conducted for this project and in my day-to-day work—that institutional administrators were well aware of the problem and were doing nothing meaningful to address it. Two major systems reviews were conducted in my not-quite-three years as division chair, neither of which resulted in any significant changes to the division chair workload or the systems we and the department chairs/coordinators most often engaged with. In my last few months as division chair, there did seem to be some improvement in the support that human resources staff were providing to division and department chairs, and to coordinators, but the notion of a computer

database or any kind of automated system for managing faculty contracts and workload assignments still seemed a distant dream. And yet, as was shown in Chapter Six, several members of the excluded administrative group acknowledged that the division chairs were being held back from gaining necessary leadership experiences by the minutiae of their workload assignments. At times it seemed to me that SCC was a classic example of “we do it this way because that is the way it has always been done.”

When I speak of collegiality and administrivia as scapegoats, I mean the following: faculty leaders, whether at the department or division level, value an approach to leadership that is consultative and inclusive and that provides room for discussion, debate, and a collective approach to informed decision-making. Like my colleagues, the frustration I felt about my own lack of power or authority to compel faculty members to do things stemmed directly from my inability to carve out the time needed to take a more consultative approach. In the absence of time to debate, I yearned for the ability to direct, which is not necessarily the best approach in an institution committed to a collegial model. Lacking the time for management by walking around, I found myself managing by email—sending lengthy messages to colleagues because doing so was faster than arranging even a quick meeting. In this I was explicitly hypocritical, for at any available opportunity I would find myself extolling the virtues of the collegial model, praising the consultative approach sometimes in the same breath as I would complain about having to attend yet another meeting. At times I felt like the White Rabbit in *Alice in Wonderland*: always late, always distracted, and frequently less-than-fully present during meetings

because the compelling lure of my mobile devices was impossible to resist. I was always aware of the fact that time spent in meetings was time spent not doing the work that was generated in those meetings—work that added to the always-present “to do” pile of documents on my desk.

Administrivia—the mundane paperwork that DC3 so eloquently argued was preventing him from becoming an effective leader—represents perhaps the greatest challenge for division chairs to overcome. As has been shown, there is significant duplication of work being done by faculty leaders at SCC. Some of this work, such as reconciling instructional workloads with course assignments but never checking that the workload is accurately reflected in payroll records is seen as pointless, because it does not achieve its purported goal of ensuring faculty are being paid the appropriate amount for the work they are doing. Another example is work that is duplicated at multiple levels, as was described above. At the time of this writing faculty workload records were being maintained, individually and without any integration, by human resources, the deans’ office, and payroll, as well as by each of the division chairs (for departments in our divisions) and also at the department level. My colleagues and I certainly felt the consequences of doing the same clerical tasks and correcting the same errors semester after semester; although not all participants spoke of the burden of clerical work in our interviews, as a group we complained about it regularly, and tried hard to work together and share resources so at least we were not duplicating each other’s work.

However, the trouble with blaming the frustrations of the division chairs on the difficulties of working collegially or on the pain of completing administrative

tasks seen as trivial and perhaps “beneath” them is that assigning blame does nothing to correct the problem. If the division chairs want to continue working collegially (as we all said we did), and if the demands of the division chair position have increased without being acknowledged or compensated for (as we all said they have), and if the lack of appropriate administrative support and functional record-keeping systems means the division chairs spend an inordinate amount of time bogged down in paperwork (as we all said was the case), then the institution needs to make the appropriate investment to correct these problems and provide administrative support for the division chairs. Doing so would reinforce that the division chair role is a valued component of the institution’s collegial culture; would relieve the division chairs of any clerical tasks identified as not essential to their role; would free the time necessary for the division chairs to lead and manage collegially; and would potentially resolve the problem of the division chairs having enormous responsibility but no authority by allowing for the consultative processes that characterize a well-functioning collegial institution.

9.3 Managing and Leading: Findings and Recommendations

Despite the fact that the difference between management and leadership, or managing and leading, is clearly understood by SCC faculty members, administrators, and the division chairs, many of the obstacles the division chairs face in their efforts to add leadership to their skill set result from a lack of capacity to accomplish leadership tasks. In his now-classic 1990 *Harvard Business Review* article “What Leaders Really Do,” John Kotter distinguishes between leadership and management, arguing that “management is about coping with complexity,” while

leadership “is about coping with change” (p. 86). Management sets goals through a process of planning and budgeting, achieves those goals by organizing and staffing, and ensures achievement by controlling and problem solving. In contrast, leadership sets a direction and moves towards it by aligning people, ultimately fulfilling the vision by motivating and inspiring (1990), see Table 4.

Table 4: Management Versus Leadership Activities (adapted from Kotter, 1990)

Management	Leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and budgeting • Organizing and staffing • Controlling and problem-solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting a direction • Aligning people • Motivating people

Kotter (1990) explicitly acknowledges that management and leadership are interdependent. However, implicit in Kotter’s definitions is the fact that managers and leaders are not clerks: according to Kotter both managers and leaders *allocate resources* to achieve their goals. The trouble at SCC is that there are very few resources for faculty to allocate in support of either management or leadership; as faculty member F1 reported, it can take hours to simply organize a meeting, never mind hold one (p. 4).

Although all division chairs reported coming into their positions with hope and optimism, for four of us the frustrations of the position proved insurmountable. DC5 found herself more interested in exploring other opportunities and, despite having been successful in the position, consequently was unwilling to continue her

discomfort with both the language of leadership development and her lack of discipline-specific expertise related to the division she led. DC3 was confounded by the expectation that he would develop leadership skills in the absence of significant contact with institutional leaders, but also lacked patience for the interminable administrivia and longer hours required in the division chair position, not to mention the lack of financial compensation for the extra (and possibly less interesting) work. DC4, who made the decision to leave the position well after the period of data collection, reported that reading the results of her participation in this research project reinforced her choice. I became frustrated for many of the same reasons as DC3, but had also reached a point at which I felt I was no longer accomplishing anything as a division chair, or at least not anything that I was finding particularly rewarding. In contrast, DC1 and DC2 continue as division chairs: despite raising some concerns about the role, each has been able to find sufficient reasons to carry on. Those staying on as division chairs may be similar to the academic managers identified by Acker (2010) as “waving, not drowning;” her take on the water-centric metaphors used by others (“fish in water,” and “swimming” rather than “drowning”) to characterize Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* as it relates to what has been described as academic “fit” (Paul, 2011).

Regardless of the reasons why the remaining division chairs have stayed, and why new division chairs have chosen to take on the position, the fact remains that the institution has made enormous changes at every level of excluded administration, but has done nothing to recognize or accommodate the additional workload and leadership expectations it has placed on the division chairs. But

thoughtful investment in administrative assistance, leadership development, mentorship activities, and engagement and awareness would go a long way towards resolving the frustrations currently captured in complaints about an inefficient collegial system and an abundance of administrivia.

9.3.1 Administrative assistance.

A central concern underlying the decision made by more than half of the core participants to leave their position is the lack of administrative support afforded to the division chairs (and, by extension, to department chairs and coordinators). Were I making recommendations to the SCC administration, I would observe that each of the six division chairs, and probably each of the department chairs/coordinators who participated in this project, is being paid at the top of the faculty salary scale, or approximately \$88,000 per year in 2014. Adding to that both a benefits package valued at over \$15,000, and the division chair stipend of approximately \$6,000 illustrates that, at about \$110,000 annually, the division chairs are, indeed, very highly paid for the clerical tasks they are currently performing. According to the CUPE Salary grid (SCC, 2014b), in 2014, senior secretaries at top of scale were paid \$45,589 annually, plus benefits. My experience working with staff being paid at this level (the division assistants) suggests that, with proper training, they could take on many of the more clerical tasks currently being done by the division chairs, if there were others in place to assist at the department level. Providing department chairs and coordinators with administrative assistance would reduce the time they spend on clerical activities and would free them to do the work of program review, program assessment, and curriculum development increasingly required not only

by government but also by a highly competitive post-secondary market. With appropriate assistance, the division chairs might also have the time they currently lack to accomplish the leadership activities they are both responsible to undertake and accountable for, including developing leadership skills in others as part of an overall commitment to succession planning.

9.3.2 Leadership development.

The division chairs are required to be faculty and institutional leaders; instructors; managers; human resources, labour relations and conflict resolution experts; and payroll and benefits clerks. Yet they are paid only incrementally more than their faculty colleagues, they work longer hours and are unable to fully utilize the vacation and professional development time to which they are contractually entitled, and in addition to performing extensive managerial tasks, they are responsible to be leaders who must engage their followers by relying only on their own persuasive skills. For the institution to send the division chairs off to a “leadership academy” or to require that they participate in the development of a “leadership profile” and then anoint them as leaders without doing anything to remove any of the innumerable obstacles that prevent them from actually leading is disingenuous.

Because the division chairs found the formal leadership development activities they engaged in as division chairs of little benefit, and given that experience and preparation seem to be the key to success for academic leaders (Paul, 2011; Spendlove, 2007; Wolverson, Ackerman & Holt, 2005; Wolverson & Ackerman, 2006), the institution should identify opportunities for potential leaders

to acquire some leadership experience and/or training early on in their careers. If formal activities such as the Chairs Leadership Academy are to be provided, those opportunities should be available to faculty earlier, perhaps when they first take on a departmental coordinator or chair position. And given that several of the SCC division chairs found the Chair Academy's programming unhelpful, the institution might explore Canadian alternatives, such as courses offered by the University of Manitoba's Centre for Higher Education Research and Development (CHERD), whose University Management Courses might provide relevant instruction for middle managers at the college level, and which, though expensive, are frequently offered in Banff (other CHERD programming is offered in Toronto, Ottawa, and Niagra-on-the-Lake; see University of Manitoba, 2015). During my time at SCC, I was offered the opportunity to attend College and Institutes Canada's (CICan) Leadership Development Institute for Potential Deans and Directors (my dean had attended the academy for potential vice-presidents, and found it most helpful). However, I was unable to take up this opportunity, which others could potentially benefit from.

While strategies such as targeted leadership development (Wallin, Cameron, & Sharples, 2005) may help the institution to identify potential leaders early in their careers, consistent with the data from division chairs, who spoke of the need to begin succession planning early, such opportunities must be both appropriate and reasonably affordable. As an alternative to the sometimes expensive formal opportunities offered by CHERD and CICan, the institution might consider supporting interested faculty in the pursuit of leadership studies at institutions

across Canada, including Royal Roads, Simon Fraser University, and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Or, the institution could develop internal leadership development strategies, such as those offered at the University of Manitoba, McGill University, University of Ottawa and elsewhere (Boyko & Jones, 2010). Another option is the sort of formal programming described by Wolverton, Ackerman and Holt (2005), and Wolverton and Ackerman (2006), which serve the dual purpose of identifying and developing future leaders and weeding out those participants who may find themselves disenchanted with the possibility of a career in academic administration.

9.3.3 Mentorship activities.

Faculty members interested in mentor/mentee activities should be encouraged to seek potential mentors from across the institution, both to acquire a wide range of feedback and to avoid banging up against the relatively flat hierarchies commonplace in post-secondary institutions. Faculty might also consider engaging in formal leadership development, education, and training opportunities, which may range from the mentorship relationship described above, to formal education in leadership, to engaging in learning activities specific to a certain role (Brungardt, 1997). As suggested by the division chairs, potential and existing department chairs may be most interested in the latter opportunity, which is both immediately applicable and practical. Potential division chairs/middle managers could also engage in committee work, including serving on departmental selection and evaluation committees, whether in their own department or through the faculty association.

9.3.4 Engagement and awareness.

While faculty at SCC have good reasons for respecting and maintaining the collegial model, the shifting nature of the post-secondary environment in British Columbia and elsewhere means that change is inevitable. Rather than digging in their heels or, conversely, simply accepting change without protest, faculty should seek training and leadership development activities that have been crafted explicitly with both the larger political context and the institutional structure in mind. This means that, in addition to understanding culture as a vital element in successful organizational leadership and change (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008; Fullan & Scott, 2009; Paul, 2011; Schein, 2010), middle managers/leaders and faculty interested in administrative work might learn more about larger forces influencing the current post-secondary climate, such as special-interest groups and government, rather than concentrate on the competing tensions between faculty and management (Levin, 2006). Because the division chairs are frequently called upon to mediate between “the past as a ‘golden era of collegial scholarship’ and the present as a ‘vulgar consumer-led enterprise’” (Dowling-Hetherington, 2013, p. 229 citing Morely, 1997, p. 239), incumbents might benefit from coming to the position with a better understanding of both perspectives. Further, if the institution can find “language that can reconcile the hope the term collegiality tried to capture with the current requirements for accountability and performance” (Spiller, 2010, p. 689), some of the structural changes recommended here might be achieved. The result may be to enable the division chairs to take on their leadership role in a meaningful way, unencumbered by clerical tasks and with sufficient time for a consultative

collegial approach that would empower them to be both responsible and accountable for their achievements.

9.4 Recommendations for Further Research

Given the relatively large size of the data-set produced as a result of this research, there are several research projects that could be undertaken working with the same data. For example, a study could be designed to trace a single theme or themes more explicitly across the participants at all levels of the academic hierarchy, or to focus explicitly on the contrasting and particular experiences of the division chairs who continue in their roles and those who have left the position or institution. Additionally, a researcher could undertake a close reading of the division chairs' interview responses to establish a more specific explanation for why two division chairs stayed in the role and four left. Such an analysis might also include an examination of syntactic features, such as the shift from "I" to "you" present throughout the data set. A more intensive IPA reading of the data from the faculty and/or administrator participants might reveal additional emergent themes and findings. And of course the challenge of approaching this data in light of van Manen's most recent (2014) work is very appealing.

With these potential projects in mind, it may prove useful to develop a new research protocol that would expand the data set to include contributions from middle managers at institutions other than SCC for comparative purposes. Alternatively, an interested researcher might develop an investigation that would situate the findings of this research more specifically within the relatively small body of research into the experiences of post-secondary academic middle managers

internationally. And finally, it would be very interesting to invite the participants in this research—particularly the division chairs—to share their perceptions of the findings presented here.

9.5 A Brief Conclusion

The division chair position at South City College is unusual, but the experiences of the division chairs are by no means unique. As described in Chapter Two, for example, researchers in Canada have identified an apparent contradiction between the relatively unchanged formal descriptions of middle managers' duties and the need for institutions to provide middle managers with "specialised professional development given the increasing complexity of their working environment and the growing skill set required of these positions" (Boyko & Jones, 2010, pp. 99-100). At SCC, this contradiction arises from the effect of a strong commitment to a collegial culture that constrains the ability of the division chairs to accomplish the leadership tasks they have been assigned. Recalling Kuh and Witt's definition of culture as "the collective, mutually shaping patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that guide the behaviour of individual groups in an institute of higher education" (1988), the collegial model at SCC has shaped a particular "culture" around the division chair position: responsible for acting as the institutional memories for their areas, and lacking the administrative, human resources, and systems support to relieve them of multiple and repetitive administrative tasks, the division chairs' time is fully taken up by their work as managers. They cannot possibly "move from manager to leader," because even if such a move were possible (that is, even if I had discovered that "manager" and

“leader” were two entirely distinct identities), the challenge of completing both their current work and the additional administrative and accountability tasks required by changing government expectations makes it impossible for them to become the kind of academic leaders the institution has explicitly stated they must be. My own experience confirms that Boyko and Jones’s finding is correct: although there has only been a small change to the formal division chair job description since 1996, in practice the work is significantly different than what was expected at that time. However, the collegial culture at SCC is both entrenched and very slow to change—certainly it has not changed sufficiently to (yet) permit the division chairs to move beyond their current role in which, despite being referred to as “faculty leaders,” they are really “faculty managers.”

What I have learned that distinguishes this research from the extant research in the field is that, for at least one group of academic middle managers, the official descriptions of their duties have not changed extensively other than the additional requirement to be accountable for leadership development (see Chapter Eight). While other researchers have investigated the work of academic middle managers using surveys or questionnaires (David, 2011; Watson, 1979, 1986; West-Moynes, 2012) or a combination of interviews and other methods (Boyko, 2009; Braithwaite, 2003; Jones & Holdaway, 1996; Morrin, 2013; Polonsky, 2003), with the exception of Polonsky, whose personal responses to his participants’ contributions are interspersed throughout his data analysis, these researchers have not brought an “insider’s” perspective to their investigations.

I have learned that the work the division chairs are actually expected to do, and are doing, has changed significantly. As Boyko and Jones (2010) observed, “there is every reason to believe deans and chairs are experiencing mounting pressure to become increasingly entrepreneurial and to seek out new sources of revenue while restraining costs” (p. 99). And while to an extent this is true at SCC, for my division chair colleagues and me the pressures seemed more to result from the expectation that we provide leadership to faculty in times of rapid institutional change, including shrinking budgets, aging faculty, changing demographics, demands for program development, and newly-introduced government accountability measures. Yet little has been done to support the division chairs as they confront these new challenges, which are being added to the work they are already doing, much of which is more concerned with managing (keeping the trains running on time) versus leading (making the transition to space travel). This research reaffirms Boyko and Jones’ findings, and builds on them in the following ways: by expanding the field in terms of institutional type and location; by incorporating an experiential methodology; and by its distinctive nature as a research project conducted by a participant in the phenomenon of interest.

My work as a division chair, my participation in this research, my observations and interactions with my division chair colleagues, and my current work as a dean at a different institution have all led me to conclude that the solution to the division chairs’ problems is relatively straightforward, and could ultimately save the institution money. Investments in administrative support and in systems development—specifically in systems to automate the sharing of information

between human resources, payroll, scheduling, and division/department chairs—would very quickly save money by reducing the work of maintaining multiple versions of the same records and by preventing errors that are costly and time-consuming to correct. And providing faculty, including the division chairs, with effective and contextually appropriate leadership development, although potentially expensive, would go a long way in terms of supporting chairs, coordinators, and division chairs as both managers and leaders. As I learned very early on in this research project, managing and leading are interdependent skills, and by supporting faculty in their management tasks, the institution is also supporting their leadership. And vice versa.

Such an investment is more than monetary: it is also an emotional investment in the ethos of the institution. The division chairs are the leaders in a collegial faculty model. While it may be possible to compensate for some of their frustrations by paying them more, or by enabling them to move out of the bargaining unit for the duration of their appointment, in my experience that was not what they wanted. It was certainly not what I wanted as a division chair.

No one becomes a faculty leader for the glory. It is hard work, and it is mostly thankless. We division chairs really wanted to make change at SCC. We were ready to be faculty leaders, we were committed to the new vision of the institution, and we understood the need to get faculty buy-in for new initiatives, especially around accountability. But we spent the majority of our time bogged down in paperwork, some of our time managing our often-challenging faculty, and not much time leading. And we complained. But we did not complain terribly effectively, and

consequently we did not achieve very much in the way of improvements. Now that I'm no longer a division chair, I would encourage my former colleagues to band together and agitate forcefully for the support necessary to allow them to lead collegially. They need a strategic plan of their own, and they need to involve the faculty association, whose commitment to the collegial model and to the idea of the division chairs as first among equals seems unshakable. The division chairs—and other academic middle managers in similar positions—need to leverage that commitment in support of their goals. If the goal is to reinvigorate the collegial model, perhaps the first place to look for assistance is the collegium. By turning to their faculty colleagues, particularly the department chairs and coordinators who share many of the division chairs' frustrations, the division chairs may be able to mobilize the support necessary to achieve some much-needed changes. Because if they do not (and I say this from my current position as an excluded administrator) the changes will not happen: at SCC (and elsewhere) there are many voices clamouring for scarce resources, certainly enough to drown out the pleas of six division chairs.

I wanted to be a division chair at SCC very badly, and am fortunate to have had the experience. Nothing would make me happier than to learn that, properly supported, the division chairs were leading their faculty collegially through the sometimes choppy waters of assessment, program review, curriculum design, degree and program development, and the multiple other tasks required of strong managers and leaders. I wish you great success, my friends.

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