

## UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF CASE-IN-POINT COURSES IN GRADUATE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

### Abstract

There exists a variety of programs designed to prepare future leaders. In the arena of graduate programs in leadership, the International Leadership Association (2020) provides over 350 programs in their database. Guthrie and Jenkins (2018) have outlined dozens of strategies for leadership education that are utilized in degree programs. As such, there exists a need for informed choices when experiential learning pedagogies are incorporated in leadership education curriculum. One methodology, known as case-in-point, was designed at the Harvard Kennedy School to teach adaptive leadership (Heifetz & Linsky, 2017). There lacks empirical research in demonstrating the effectiveness and impact of case-in-point pedagogy. This qualitative study explored the perceived impact of 12 alumni who took a case-in-point course embedded in a leadership master's program across a decade. Alumni's retrospective experiences were collected to understand the impact the course had on them during the time they were in their leadership program and the impact of the learning for their professional lives. Key themes that emerged from the participants included increased levels of awareness in race and power dynamics, an increased use of self-as-instrument, awareness of relationships to authority, and shifts in views of leadership. All participants viewed the case-in point pedagogy as powerful or positive after having graduated from the program despite many recollections of mixed or negative experiences during their time in the course/s. Implications of the findings suggest important considerations relating to scaffolding and proper processing to enhance or improve outcomes for case-in-point pedagogy designed to enhance leadership ability.

*Keywords: case-in-point, adaptive leadership, group dynamics, experiential learning, leadership development, leadership education, graduate programs*

### Introduction

In a time when markets are unstable due to a pandemic wreaking havoc on economies globally, enrollment in master's degree programs are taking on a new appeal. Not unlike the 2008 Great Recession, students are once again considering higher education as a haven from unstable job markets (Kahn, 2010). Colleges are reporting an increased number of applications and enrollments across the board (Association of

American Medical Colleges, 2020; Merchant, 2020) are showing increases as high as 4.6% (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2020). The poor job market makes a master's degree in leadership studies enticing to graduate students interested in preparing themselves for advancement into leadership roles when the economy improves. This return to education is occurring at a time when there is also a burgeoning array of programs being offered to professionals.

The International Leadership Association (2020), lists over 351 institutions with master's programs available for individuals to enroll in, as compared to 260 in 2014 (Stork et al., 2015). There are more options for prospective students with each program claiming a different set of outcomes and learning. The attainment of a master's degree can be a significant investment for individuals, requiring both time and monetary resources to complete degree requirements. According to the latest U.S. Department of Education data, the national average tuition cost for graduate programs, excluding doctoral programs in professional practice programs, was \$18,947 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018).

Given the hefty investment required by these master's programs, prospective students should be able to identify which programs are more precisely aligned with their professional goals and offer the greatest opportunity to benefit their careers. There is a need, in other words, for individuals to find programs that will provide interventions that equip them with the knowledge and tools that set them on a path for greater success. These interventions should be rooted in providing skills that are known to be impactful and useful to practitioners in their careers.

With the large number of leadership studies programs being offered and the variation across programs, students need to be able to assess the effectiveness of each program. Yet, this is not a simple task. Students often find themselves attempting to evaluate not only the courses that are offered but the pedagogy that each program privileges. For example, Stork et al. (2015, p. 34) showed diversity in the value propositions of leadership programs, but with a majority of program descriptions using "formal, objective, complex, and academic prose to describe the curriculum". Of these curriculum, students are typically choosing from programs that offer case studies, interactive lectures, discussions and self-assessments most frequently (Jenkins, 2018). The use of these strategies are well documented on their own (Fink, 2003; Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018) and in the frame of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984).

## Case-in-Point Pedagogy

One instructional strategy that is less documented but nonetheless incorporated into master's programs to develop leadership skills is case-in-point (CIP) pedagogy. Parks (2005) describes case-in-point as a creation of Ron Heifetz. The pedagogy stems from a leadership development course offered by Heifetz at Harvard University where the class itself and the dynamics that emerge in the moment during the class are pointed out as a case-in-point to teach certain leadership lessons or topics. Throughout the course, instructors and students may point to certain moments, like a particular student being continuously cut off or interrupted, to develop interpretations of conversation dynamics to draw light on these moments and formulate hypothesis as to why these situations are occurring. The students are also encouraged to provide interventions to see if a particular leadership intervention could impact or change the interaction in the moment. These components are bound together by traditional lectures where specific theories relating to leadership are shared. The theoretical rationale behind using case-in point pedagogy is to teach adaptive leadership and allow participants to practice in the observe, interpret, intervene model embedded within the theory (Heifetz & Linsky, 2011). Adaptive leadership is a theory first described by Heifetz (1994) as "the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive" (p. 14). Differentiating between technical problems and adaptive problems, the theory describes leadership as a process to support the resolution to complex problems and that the authority to do so may not always lie in those with a formal title. The pedagogy then gives students hands on experiences with the practice of this theory.

The pedagogy has been described as having the following subcomponents: the use of cases generated from a classroom's dynamic interactions and case studies presented by students based on their current experiences (Parks, 2005). The subcomponents then form the two primary structures that are commonly associated with the pedagogy, a large group and small group in the course. The large group arrangement,

which is most closely borrowed from the Tavistock Institute's Group Relations Conference (Hayden & Molenkamp, 2002), features the entire classroom to study the group's behavior in the here-and-now (Miller, 1999), and uses the behaviors of the group to illustrate or relate to a leadership lesson. The second primary instructional or pedagogical arrangement is the use of smaller groups to study leadership dilemma as cases and then analyze them in the frame of adaptive leadership. Courses using the case-in-point pedagogy are designed in a way such that students practice and process the theoretical components that make up the adaptive leadership theory as described by Heifetz et al. (2009) in an interactive and dialogic manner such that learning is co-constructed.

While the use of experiential learning and case studies is common in the leadership classroom (Jenkins, 2018), case-in-point is distinctly different from other pedagogy in that it teaches theory as concepts to be experienced in the classroom rather than theory that exists outside of the classroom. Traditional simulations or other activities may be used to illustrate a concept. For example, a class session designed to explore the topic of authority might draw students' attention to the dynamics that are occurring in the moment. The instructor may point to certain individuals who are being authorized (i.e., who is paying attention to whom, who speaks more, who is cutting off another speaker), despite students having equal or similar academic standing as students. This pedagogical strategy provides opportunity for students to reflect on why this dynamic is happening.

The use of the term case-in-point, however, can be confusing. Although the pedagogy is recognized by the literature (Green, 2011; Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018; Haber-Curran & Tillapaugh, 2013; Jenkins, 2018; Kniffin et al., 2017; Pianesi, 2013), the specifics around what this pedagogy entails varies. At the Kansas Leadership Center, the pedagogical components are used together, but the terminology of case-in-point is used to describe the large group component specifically (Green & McBride, 2015). Various adaptations have also been employed in different classroom spaces, such as the inclusion

of coaching by the Kansas Leadership Center (Green & McBride, 2015) or adding scaffolding for undergraduate students (Werner et al., 2016).

## Benefits and Effectiveness of Case-in-Point

There is limited empirical evidence demonstrating the benefit, effectiveness, or impact of the case-in-point pedagogy for leadership development with the exception of descriptive texts published in the last two decades describing how organizations have used it (Green & McBride, 2015; Parks, 2005). Wildermuth et al. (2015) examined the varied risks and rewards that students experienced when taking a course with case-in-point pedagogy but this research did not specifically examine the impact of the pedagogy on students. Haber-Curran et al.'s (2013) research on the experiences of undergraduates who took a course that partially utilized the pedagogy found in an analysis of students' course reflection papers that students' self-awareness increased and that they gained a broader view of leadership. Some dissertation case studies have indicated that case-in-point pedagogy has allowed for new ways of seeing (O'Brien, 2016) and described the impact of this pedagogy on leaders' ways of understanding leadership (Burns, 2016). Taken as a whole, the literature seems to support the use of case-in-point to broaden perspectives and understand oneself. Yet, the absence of a broader exploration of the impact of case in point pedagogy, particularly in the context of graduate education programs in leadership, makes it difficult to assess the merit of master's programs that use this pedagogy.

Leadership development programs and graduate degrees intended on developing individuals' capacity to navigate organizations across the nation have often relied on course experiences and feedback thus far. For example, findings from alumni surveys at the University of San Diego (2018) have indicated that the courses are a memorable experience for the students. The team led by Heifetz at Harvard has described overall retrospective satisfaction and opinions through evaluations (Heifetz et al., 2006). In

both cases, these data do not necessarily translate to empirical effectiveness -- someone can see the utility of and be satisfied with course experience, but not actually use course strategies in their daily lives or at work in their leadership positions.

Some of the studies investigating the benefits of the pedagogy have focused on the individual components of case-in-point. For example, a study conducted by Grassberger and Wilder (2015) has shown that the small group sub-component, the living case study aspect of a case-in-point program, was associated with increased engagement, new skillsets, and different mindsets. Large group work, adopted from the group relations tradition, has shown an impact on individual behaviors in the group relations literature but not from a leadership education or leadership development frame (Tschuschke & Greene, 2002; Wallach, 2014, 2019). In other words, while empirical studies on the use of case-in-point have not explicitly examined CIP as a pedagogical practice, aspects of the pedagogy have been reported on that show changes in behaviors, and engagement. This research has suggested that additional skills could be developed and that it holds promise for supporting leadership development (Kniffin et al., 2017; Werner et al., 2016; Wildermuth et al., 2015).

## Concerns Relating to Case-in-Point Pedagogy

In addition to the limited understanding of the beneficial impacts of case-in-point pedagogy, there exists some literature indicating concerns with the use of such a pedagogy. Case-in point pedagogy is an example of experiential learning; that is, it uses the generated dynamics or behavior of a group as a case-in-point to emphasize a particular lesson or point trying to be made and thus, the experiences of the students become the instructional tool in a given moment. Experiential learning has become an umbrella term used by leadership educators to describe learning that transcends traditional didactic education. In modern-day leadership education and development literature, conflicting views exist on the

use of experiential learning theory in the classroom. Popularized by Kolb (1984), experiential learning theory is supported, discussed, and questioned by a wealth of scholars (Byrne et al., 2018; Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018; Guthrie & Jones, 2012). According to some scholars (Bradford, 2019) experiential learning, particularly case-in-point pedagogy, faces ethical concerns. Bradford (2019) identified similar ethical issues as other scholars critiquing programs using here-and-now experiences (Crawshaw, 1969). Bradford (2019) discussed the lack of ability to give valid informed consent, lack of preparation of instructors and students, and students' underlying psychological distress. For case-in-point this may stem from being required to notice similar patterns of behaviors that reveal power dynamics and then using these dynamics for study. Allen (2018) added a layer to this analysis, acknowledging the danger and risk taken on by the leadership educator as well; that is, to hold such anxiety is exhausting and potentially harmful. From a classroom perspective, Werner et al. (2016), has highlighted the importance of scaffolding for students enrolled in a case-in-point course, indicating that through minimizing the pedagogy's risks, ethical issues and concerns must also be addressed. While all courses must be attentive to ethical issues, CIP is prone to these issues because it may lead to students revealing personal aspects of their lives, and personal thought processes. Since this information is used as instructional content, it arguably could place students in a more vulnerable position. As such, in addition to CIP needing to prove relevance to leadership development, CIP programs are also shouldered with the burden of proof to show that the benefits of participation in these programs outweigh the cost of potential psychological harm and murky ethics.

## The Need for Evidence

As a whole, the current literature shows that there is no evidence investigating the impact of this pedagogy, as a whole in leadership education and development, and risk mitigation has only been described (Werner et al., 2016; Yawson, 2014). Perhaps more timely than ever, there exists a call for practitioners and

leadership development programs to become more evidence based in both fields of organizational leadership (Crawford et al., 2002) and industrial and organizational psychology (Briner & Rousseau, 2011). Through the lens of ethics, this evidence must exist on two fronts: (a) evidence that benefits exist and (b) evidence that harms can be or are actively minimized.

The ethical considerations of potential negative impacts on students coupled with the need for evidence in the benefits of the programs create a narrative that studies are needed to explore and understand the impact of case-in-point pedagogy in programs designed to teach leadership. This study examines the impact of one course in one Leadership Studies Master of Arts (M.A.) program that uses case-in-point pedagogy in one of their core leadership courses. This qualitative study explored students' perceptions of the impact that the pedagogy has had on their leadership views and practice during and after they graduated from the program. In particular, the study focused on the central questions of:

- What perceptions do leadership studies alumni have of their experiences with case-in-point pedagogy in a course designed to teach leadership?
- In what ways, if any, do these professionals see case-in-point pedagogy supporting the development of their leadership knowledge and skills?

## Methodology

This is a qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) of one leadership master's degree program's case-in-point pedagogy, as used in the program's core leadership course. We use an exploratory research design. This approach is appropriate because the empirical literature on case-in-point pedagogy is rather limited. Given the absence of an existing theory that adequately explains CIP in relationship to leadership development, this orientation provides an opportunity to go deep into participants' experiences and the perceived benefits for leadership development to build concepts and new understandings of the phenomenon (Merriam &

Tisdell, 2015). Exploratory research is "designed to maximize the discovery of generalizations leading to description and understanding" (Stebbins, 2001). It relies on inductive methods as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and avoids using the lens of extant ideas in order to generate new and "fresh theories" (Charmaz, 2006). We use a constructivist grounded theory approach locating the researcher in the broader social, political and historical context in which the phenomena are occurring (Charmaz, 2016). We view the researcher's positionality as an integral part of the research construction (Clarke, 2006; Roger et al., 2018). One of the authors has taken a CIP class as part of a doctoral program, the other has not. Recognizing that individual biases are always in play, the researchers worked together to mitigate to the extent possible, any biases that might affect coding and analysis of the data.

**Research Participants and Recruitment.** This study was conducted with 12 alumni of a medium sized, private University's master's degree program in leadership studies. After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board, participants were identified through snowball or chain sampling (Patton, 2015). Given that the course anecdotally has received varying opinions in terms of favorability, an attempt was made to achieve maximum variation by including a variety of voices (Patton, 2015), in this case experiences in the class (favorable or not favorable), program of study, and current working industry. Potential participants were eligible to participate if they graduated from the leadership studies program, were formerly enrolled in the case-in-point course, identified as currently working, and were willing to participate in the study. After an interview was conducted, the interviewee was asked if they knew anyone likely to have a different view of the course and its impact. One participant indicated that they were not currently working at the time of the interview. As such, that individual's experiences of the course were considered but not used in examining impact on current leadership practices.

Participant demographic information were collected both during the interview and after the fact using a web-based survey, with 10 of the 12 participants completing the survey. Participants enrolled in the course as early as 2007 and as recently as 2018. During this time, 3 different instructors taught the course, all of whom were trained in either using case-in-point and group relations methodology. Those who we spoke reported working a variety of sectors including self-employed consultants, private for-profit organizations, higher education institutions, military, and nonprofit management. Their ages ranged from 28-44. The breakdown of this information is described in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Participant Demographics*

	<i>n</i>	%
Age		
20 – 29	4	40
30 – 39	4	40
40 – 49	2	20
Gender		
Female	4	40
Male	5	50
Non-binary	1	10
Racial/Ethnic Identity		
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0
Asian	1	10
Black or African American	1	10
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin	1	10
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	10
White	6	60
Bi-Racial	1	10

**Data Collection Procedures.** Data collection took place through one-on-one qualitative interviewing. Formal appointments that lasted approximately an hour were scheduled with participants. A semi-structured interview guide approach (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) was employed as a way to cover topics in an outlined form, which allowed for some flexibility in the interviewing process. This method was selected so that the interviewer would have a more organic conversation with the interviewees yet still be sure that all relevant topics were discussed during the conversation. In addition, given limited empirical research existing on the effects of a case-in-point pedagogy, interview questions were appropriately flexible to address various topics that the individuals wanted to explore. This interview approach allowed for additional topics to emerge to a greater depth than a more rigid approach might offer.

Given the particular interest in understanding the impact of the course, the primary messaging to secure participants did not include full details of the study. Instead, the study was advertised as a study on significant experiences in a leadership studies master's degree program. During the interview, participants were asked questions about their key educational experiences in the program in general and then asked about the case-in-point course specifically to see in what ways, if any, they found it to be impactful. They were asked to rank it against the other significant experiences in the program. To gauge the specific effects of the CIP, detailed questions were asked of participants about specific aspects of the pedagogy such as, small group case study analysis and large group sessions.

To allow the interviewer to be fully immersed in the conversation, interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Some interviews occurred in person, while the majority occurred via Zoom. Immediately following the interview, analytic memos were taken. These notes described initial reactions to the interview, key learnings, and initial codes that might be used during the coding cycle.

**Data Analysis Procedures.** Thematic analysis was used as the primary method of qualitative data analysis (Glesne, 2006). Given the interest in the grounded theory approach, after interviews were transcribed, they were loaded in MAXQDA and joined to the original audio recording to allow for later referencing for tonality. Analytic memos were produced following each interview. Each interview was coded through what Saldaña (2016) describes as descriptive, in vivo, and process coding. These first cycle coding strategies allowed for various processes and behaviors to be coded. In addition, simultaneous coding was used as it was expected that singular statements would be coded in vivo, or verbatim using the terminology of the participant and was also coded descriptively or as a process. After first cycle coding, categories were formed based on the codes that emerged. These categories then formed themes around the impact of case-in-point pedagogy on working professionals who graduated from this master's in leadership studies program.

## The Impact of Case-in-Point Pedagogy

It was evident from the interviews that the majority of participants recalled the course using case-in-point pedagogy as a memorable educational experience from the time they were enrolled in the program. These participants also shared that their learning from the course now impacts their practice as leaders. In general, all 12 of the respondents felt that the CIP pedagogy was a key and influential educational experience in how it was facilitated and that it impacted their lives. They felt differently toward the pedagogy however in several ways. Six participants explicitly indicated that the course was a "significant experience" as they recalled the impact it had on them *during* the program. Three participants pointed specifically to the curriculum of the program, and that the CIP course was a cornerstone course to the overall graduate experience given where it was embedded as the first course in the program and how it was then subsequently incorporated

in the following coursework. Only a small number did not outright recall the course as impactful but indicated towards the end of the interview that upon reflection it was in fact impactful.

**Impact During the Course.** While all participants indicated the course as notable, they were clear that they felt less positive toward the course while taking it compared to how they felt about the course once they were working in leadership positions. In fact, of all of the individuals interviewed, only one person indicated they liked the course overall while enrolled. The main point of contention regarding the pedagogy was pointed specifically at the large group here-and-now sessions where students were expected to observe the dynamics of the classroom as it occurred in the here-and-now. Most participants expressed frustration at the time of being enrolled in the course due to a lack of understanding of how or why the course was structured the way it was. Specifically, the constructionist arrangement, the “in the moment” “here and now” orientation of the class where class content was constantly emerging, ran counter to a traditional didactic method of teaching and the expectations of what a “masters’ level course” might look like. This level of uncertainty created disequilibrium. Respondents felt negatively about the resulting anxiety in the room, being confronted with uncomfortable dynamics, or having to relive dynamics from day-to-day life and using the dynamics as a way of studying various leadership concepts. One participant, reflecting on the large group sessions recalled wondering if the course, and in particular the large group, was salient to learning at all. “It was very difficult for me to see what the grand scheme was for the class. I felt like [it was] a psychology course ... but it didn’t feel like leadership, especially not at the time.” Another participant who was negative toward the course while enrolled in it said: “I am a combat soldier who has gone to war, and been shot at, and I have never been more uncomfortable in my entire life than with how uncomfortable I have been in that room ... you have NO idea what will happen ... the uncertainty is unbearable.”

Some other commonly repeated sentiments heard from participants pointed to the cohort dynamics that were formed as a result of participating in the large group portion of the class, which then persisted for an extended period of time beyond the end of the course. In some cases, course interactions enhanced relationships among peers because students formed alliances, but other times, the interactions negatively affected them creating divisions among the students.

Conversely respondents tended to report more positive experiences with the small group sessions where they were allowed the opportunity to engage with their colleagues in a useful space, to analyze cases that they would present to their peers, practice consulting, and where relationships were able to emerge more organically and supportively. One participant indicated “it [small group] was such a *thing* in the program. We continued to talk about [the class] after; we created the 550 macarena.” The participant referenced the dance that was popular at the time that they used as a mnemonic device to remember the core principles being taught in the class. The “Macarena” was used throughout that students’ time in the program to leverage the knowledge from this class to be used throughout the program. Moments like this also served as an opportunity for students to develop relationships with one another and the Macarena became a symbol of their experiences in the course, and a way to reference back to their time in the class.

The small group’s ability to connect peers also helped respondents process their experiences with each other – colleagues who were sharing the course experience at the same time. Because the course was felt by some as “an incubator for you to be uncomfortable in an environment that was safe to explore,” the small group helped them make sense of the course.

**Impact on Professional Practice.** These alumni recalled that during the time they were taking the class, it felt largely anxiety-inducing. Yet, in retrospect all but one participant found the course to be positive, useful, and enriching for their current work as a professional. The impact of the course

on their current leadership practice was coded and placed into three themes: increased levels of awareness, relationship to authority, and a refined view of leadership. We describe each of these next.

*Increased Levels of Awareness.* The first major theme when considering the impact of the case-in-point course revolved around an enhanced sense of awareness, which was described in different ways. The awareness was developed through the constant practice of examining the group's behavior and dynamics, including students enrolled in the class as well as the course facilitators. For example, some participants indicated increased levels of self-awareness, while others indicated increased awareness of group dynamics and power dynamics that are race and/or gender based. This awareness was developed as power dynamics were purposefully exposed within the classroom group. When respondents talked about an increased self-awareness, they spoke about how they came to understand their particular tendencies to speak or act in certain ways in a group setting. This pedagogy, according to the participants, now informs how they "show up" or interact with others in teams in the workplace or even in their personal lives. Some participants also spoke to how they became aware of the amount of physical space they take up when they interact with others. They recognized that space could serve to intimidate or express an openness to engage but in either case, how one uses space sends implicit messages to others.

The pedagogy was a tool used to confront students' previous beliefs about certain identity groups. As student-to-student interactions occurred in the course, the instructor called out how implicit and sometimes explicit biases were marginalizing the voices of some and privileging others. Facing the reality of the inequity led some respondents to feel "embarrassed" and ashamed that they didn't know previously that this was happening. One participant who grew up in a

small conservative town shared that they "cried for a whole semester because [they] were so embarrassed that [they] didn't know any of these things." Being exposed to their peer's lived racial experiences and realizing the marginalization that some of these peers experienced on a daily basis was incredibly humbling.

Respondents discussed how this reality check, while very difficult to acknowledge at the time, affects their current role as organizational leaders. Increased awareness of group dynamics and power dynamics that are race or gender based led one HR manager to "keep a tally to see who speaks [in a meeting] [so] I can tell my managers 'hey, did you notice you spoke more than your team?'" Another participant who is a project manager indicated that learning about power dynamics through this class resulted in him thinking critically how some voices can be elevated and others silenced. When a person in authority tells those, he supervises to "just go with whatever our CEO said," this leader now feels empowered to say, "I'm collaborative in nature, I take everyone's opinions, put them together, and make a decision." In other words, he felt he was more confident to push for a more inclusive work culture.

Race dynamics were also pointed to when respondents discussed some of the lessons they learned from the case-in-point pedagogy. One participant recalled:

I remember being in [the course] ... folks wanted to institute a lead student facilitator which did not go over very well in our large group because the person was white male identified, so like he was immediately shot down and [they] said that he was taking up too much space and that he was trying to take up that authority, and [he was asked] why was he trying to do that.

Another participant was confronted with their racial identity during the class and how the norms of her behavior were affecting others. She stated: "I actually got the feedback at one point that you know when people look at you [and] see this ...

blonde haired and blue-eyed young women ... and then what comes out of your mouth is so angry...”, which seemed to confirm how white women are perceived by non-white students and how femininity and accompanying anger perpetuate a gender stereotype in their minds. This feedback however had the unintended consequence of making her less willing to contribute to the classroom and has affected how she acts in her workplace where she sometimes feels worried she would be perceived as abrasive.

In general, participants shared sentiments that the course allowed them “the time and space to be more self-aware ... and [to reflect on] the impact [they were] having on others.” In other words, the course allowed them the feedback they needed to hear on how their behaviors might be interpreted by others in the other courses in the program. This latter sentiment was replicated throughout interviews with participants stating:

I am definitely much more aware of the space that I take up in conversations and being like okay this is something I feel passionate about and I want to talk about it. And I also have to discuss it in such a way that I’m not leaving other people out of the conversation and [knowing] when something comes up that I can be an ally for.

These lessons were impactful on their own but particularly because they weren’t exposed to these dynamics in their other courses: “I felt like we were going to name some of these things [such as privilege], whereas in other programs [courses they] might try and navigate away from them. I felt like that [this] class specifically is like ‘no, you’re going to name what’s happening.’” Instead of allowing dynamics to skirt by and elephants in the room to go unaddressed, when certain things happen such as when individuals were cut off, demonstrated frustration, or spoke more often than others, the course was designed purposefully to call out what was happening and situating it specifically in race and gender. This learning, albeit

painful in the moment for many, has served to provide a greater awareness of self, each person’s place within a larger group and the actions they need to take as leaders to push for greater equity.

**Awareness of Self-As-Instrument.** A subtheme that emerged revolved around participants’ use of self in working with others. In particular, the participants reflected on the ways that raising an awareness of self then spurred them to act or to think through how they might take up their leadership differently in their current practice. For example, one participant recalled a recent companywide discussion on equity diversity and inclusion issues and how they were able to point out inequity by stating: “hey, I’ve noticed that the people in the room that are talking currently are all of our Caucasian [colleagues]. Would love to maybe hear someone with a different viewpoint.”

This same participant who was confronted for their race during their time in the class, explained how they used that understanding as the basis for future decision making. The participant avoided addressing a toxic work environment with their supervisor: “I thought down to what the consequences would be, and I really thought through how he was going to react.” The participant went on to indicate that the course has “made me much more circumspect.” In this particular case, the participant felt that they “ended up living with a toxic environment for a lot longer than I think I would have when I was younger.” This participant had learned the value of identifying the dynamics of what was constructing a toxic environment, and rather than lashing out, instead, taking time for thoughtful action to dismantle the conditions that were being created by the supervisor.

*Awareness of Relationship to Authority.* Another major theme that emerged in the comments from respondents was how these alums had learned more about their relationship to authority through the case-in-point pedagogy. For example, one participant

indicated, "I've always had an interesting relationship with authority that I had to work through, and I think that the course in the program really helped me reflect and think through my own relationship with authority." The case-in-point pedagogy deliberately challenges the authority relationship in the room by calling out the power dynamic. The instructor requires that the students think through how one might expect authority to act and what happens when they do not meet expectations. The idea of who has positional authority versus who has authority caused participants to examine their own authority in the context of their professional relationships in their current workplace. One participant shared the thought process they recently went through when they needed to challenge their supervisor at work. He stated, "For me, I'm an authority pleaser; I'm a rule follower – challenging authority is not my thing. I know when I need to step outside the box and get on the balcony and ask what's going on, why am I feeling this way?" The class taught him the importance of examining his relationship with authority through examining his own reactions when authority was being challenged. Recognizing the importance of taking time to reflect on an authority dynamic that was happening in the moment, increased his level of self-awareness of his personal reactions but also helped him to understand the best course of action forward.

*Refined Leadership.* The last major theme that emerged in speaking with the variety of participants in this study indicates that they refined their views of leadership from a more positional or task-based approach to a more relational approach. For example, one participant who recalled the visceral reactions when first enrolled in the course found that it was the most impactful to his leadership style. He spoke to an enhanced understanding of what he was able to influence as a leader despite working in a larger system (the military) and wanting to be able to provide things that his direct reports needed: I realized the things that me and my soldiers generally

complained the most about the military: not having freedom of choice, not having the ability to have real off time, the ability to experience life, and decided that I was actively going to change that within my sphere of influence. So, within my company within my team, within my organization, I can at least provide that kind of breathing space and then ensure that I can teach anyone who's willing to listen [to] what I learned.

One alum, a teacher, indicated that the course helped "develop the definition" of leadership they now use, which is a more "relationship centric" approach. The course had made clear that when two people say basically the same thing but get vastly different responses, some of the explanation is related to the different relationships they have with the person speaking. Given the nature of the case-in point pedagogy, the dynamics of interactions are analyzed and critiqued in the moment. Participants are led to understand whose voice is recognized and whose is silenced. Relationships are interpreted through a gender and/or race lens.

The result was that alumni learned that more attention to the speaker occurred when rapport was established. A sport coach felt that this pedagogy taught them that you have to analyze "the relationship piece in leadership" because relationships are constructed within a racialized and gendered context. Some participants explained how, given the pedagogy, they were able to try different ways of interacting in different subgroups during the class which deepened the learning and has now been impactful for their work as professionals.

## Discussion

Based on the findings from this study, it appears that the case-in-point pedagogy has the potential to impact students of leadership studies. The alumni who are now working professionals explained how the pedagogical arrangement of the large group sessions gave them the perspective that

it is really important to recognize and confront inequities. Small group sessions were also beneficial in providing a safe space to work through the challenges they had experienced in the large group setting and support their own professional growth.

The course is designed such that the large group sessions are much more focused on the case-in-point. These “here-and-now sessions” were largely unstructured and emergent. The alums’ comments replicate the concerns of Bradford (2019)(b who claimed that the course would create conditions of personal exposure in the classroom and that there could be negative impact from feedback, regardless if it is planned or spontaneous. The large group on its own does not have a built-in component of debriefing and if instructors do not incorporate debriefing into class planning, it could result in the lack of integration of learning. That being said, the benefit that is offered in the use of case-in-point is that the various theories being taught are not presented as purely conceptual but rather in an experiential way. Participants seem to describe the impact of the course on their current practice (i.e., increased levels of awareness, clarity in relationship to authority, and refined views of leadership) as a result of CIP pedagogy in the course. These findings are consistent with existent case studies (Haber-Curran & Tillapaugh, 2013; O’Brien, 2016). That is, the large group offered an opportunity for participants to *live* the concepts of a theory and experience it in the classroom as a case-in-point of the theory, rather than studying it as an abstract concept. The result was that participants claimed they are able to use the tools and skills from the course when they work with groups in their current leadership positions in a very practical way, rather than regurgitate a theory.

The small group sessions were structured and more supportive. They served as spaces where students could share their experiences in a somewhat safer environment. This pedagogy made clear to them the

ability and degree of reflexivity to the class. Absent knowledge about the precise classroom experience that these alums were involved in, prevents a clear understanding of differences in responses.

important role that reflection and discussion can have in moving the work forward. The positive experiences of the use of case studies in the small groups - scenarios which case-in-point pedagogy constructs from the experiences of students’ lives and brought forth in the large group supports the findings from previous research that has shown positive outcomes associated with case studies in leadership education (Grassberger & Wilder, 2015; Guthrie & Jones, 2012).

Clearly, the alums in this study grew in their awareness of the dynamics of power race, gender, and positional power relations. They gained a critical perspective of leadership that moved them from thinking of leadership as positional and authoritative to more relational and constructivist. It is without a doubt that all of the participants in this study found case-in-point courses to be a memorable and impactful experience in their graduate coursework. And, for the most part, participants showed that given some time away from the course, they were able to recognize how much they could integrate the lessons learned in the class and some of the same pedagogical strategies into their professional lives by way of recalling how certain professional behaviors were learned from the practical moments of a CIP course.

Student readiness, that is the dispositions they had coming into the class to confront some of their own unconscious biases, may in fact explain the differences that emerged across respondents’ experiences. Eleven individuals expressed positive experiences with the case in point pedagogy and believed it to have a positive impact on their leadership today. On the other hand, one individual felt the experience was decidedly more negative than positive and was unable to reconcile the experiences from the course or consider it a learning experience. These respondents although they took the same class, took it from different professors, were interacting with different groups of students, brought different life experiences, beliefs and

There is also the possibility that across the various years that the participants took this course, certain structural arrangements changed. As mentioned earlier, different professors and student groups

likely altered the whole group and small group conditions that may have impacted cohort dynamics.

It is also important to recognize that although the eleven participants felt they had learned about power dimensions, the construction of inequality and a leader's role in addressing this construction, they had also experienced some trauma. As the result of being made to face some challenging dynamics, these alums and likely many others not interviewed for this study found discussions of race and gender dynamics and their position within these dynamics, difficult to process. We take this up issue in the final section of this article.

## Implications and Conclusion

The study presented here broadens the scope of existing literature on the empirical effects of case-in-point pedagogy and leadership education. The implications and takeaways, while elevating some of the positive benefits of CIP, also highlight the need for proper scaffolding and debriefing to address the potential trauma that this pedagogy may cause.

Based on the findings of this study regarding the impact of CIP, professors and graduate program administrators might be encouraged to ask if CIP could or should be incorporated into the curriculum of other leadership development or graduate education programs as suggested by Kniffin et al. (2017). Moreover, students who are making decisions as to which master's in leadership studies programs they should apply to, might well consider the implications of engaging with CIP pedagogy for their personal and professional lives. While it was agreed that all participants recalled the course and case-in-point pedagogy to be a memorable and impactful learning experience, the alums interviewed for this study explained that the experiences of the course were not all positive. The case-in-point pedagogy increased self-awareness and the ability to name group processes, but they also experienced some trauma during the process.

Given the design of the study, it is not possible to claim that these findings are generalizable in the traditional social science sense of generalizability. More specifically, while it is proposed that the methodology outlined in this proposal can adequately answer the research question proposed in this study, one must be careful about drawing larger generalizations on the results of the study. Instead, the intention has been to gain a deeper understanding of the types of experiences that students have had with CIP pedagogy and that impact it has had on their lives as leaders. The significance of this study could thus be best described by the application of schema theory as described by Donmoyer (2009). That is, by better understanding the different experiences a professional may find to be impactful, program administrators of M.A. programs may be able to more critically consider if they should assimilate and accommodate this pedagogy into their curriculum planning.

From a purely utilitarian perspective, the outcomes from the course may resolve ethical concerns raised by Bradford (2019). That said, instructors and programs must ask questions as to whether the teaching team is ready to handle this sort of course and if the students are adequately prepared to receive the format. Given the variation in experience and the fear and hurt that some respondents recounted in reflecting on their experience in the class it appears that there is a need for purposeful orientation and scaffolding to prepare students for the case-in-point course which could offer greater learning potential and enhance their leadership practice. Consistent with the recommendations of Bradford (2019), there is perhaps a need to properly develop the instructional staff and prepare students for this style of learning. This ideology is in tension with the true origins of case-in-point, which demands a sudden immersion into an anxiety inducing environment such as what participants experience at conferences held within the Tavistock tradition (one of the foundational constructs of this class). That said, this study suggests that certain activities and interventions proscribed by CIP may need to be adjusted to lessen directness and harshness, at least in earlier parts of the course.

Further, facilitators, teaching assistants, and the institution need to provide a proper environment where reflections can be purposefully engaged in as a part of the course or in addition to the course to ensure that the students have the space to reflect and process the learning from the course so that the learning can be integrated into the curriculum. Lastly, it may be helpful to provide additional training to staff to assist students in navigating their experiences. While discomfort is sure to arise when issues of inequality are exposed and connected to participation in the course, psychological safety within a learning environment seems key. If an individual does not have the resilience and psychological capacity to explore these issues in a healthy and productive fashion or have the proper debriefing to make sense of these experience in a productive manner, an individual may leave the experience significantly wounded.

The literature currently shows that a variety of styles exist and that individuals each have a different preference for styles of learning (Honey & Mumford, 1992). A course using the CIP pedagogy requires reflection of the individual to understand how the occurrences of the program might be useful to the participant as a professional. This thought is reflected in the findings of this study, as individuals have all indicated that it was through personal reflections that they were able to arrive at learnings about themselves, helpful or otherwise. As such, a reflective orientation, as described by Honey and Mumford (1992), which requires processing what happened in the course may be needed to support the graduate students' development so that they are reflecting in a way that is in service of their own continued learning and development. This is consistent with the concerns of Bradford (2019) (b who indicates that experiential learning can sometimes lack the adequate debriefing necessary. Others advocating similar pedagogies join in the emphasis that students must be developmentally ready for these pedagogical practices (Werner et al., 2016)there is an acute need for an evidence-based leadership pedagogy that can bridge the gap between leadership theory and student practice both in the

classroom and beyond its boundaries. This paper will give an overview of the Intentional Emergence Model as a way to teach leadership to emerging adults that specifically addresses this gap between theory and practice. It will discuss the model, research and evaluation data associated with the model, training requirements for instructors and teaching assistants, and the implications for leadership education as a result of the research on, and application of, the model.

Introduction,"author":{"dropping-particle":"","family":"Werner","given":"Linnette","non-dropping-particle":"","parse-names":false,"suffix":""},- {"dropping-particle":"","family":"Hellstrom","given":"David","non-dropping-particle":"","parse-name s":false,"suffix":""},{dropping-particle":"","family":"Chung","given":"Jessica","non-dropping-particle":"","parse-names":false,"suffix":""},{drop ping-particle":"","family":"Kessenich","given":"Kath erine","non-dropping-particle":"","parse-names":fals e,"suffix":""},{dropping-particle":"","family":"Taylor, Jr.","given":"Leonard","non-dropping-particle":"","parse-names":false,"suffix":""},{dropp ing-particle":"","family":"Capeder","given":"Anna"," non-dropping-particle":"","parse-names":false,"suf fix":""}], "container-title":"The Journal of Leadership Education","id":"ITEM-1","issue":"4","issued":{"date-parts":[["2016"]]}, "page":"206-216","title":"Bridging theory and practice in the leadership classroom: Intentional emergence as a modern pedagogy","type":"article-journal"," volume":"15"}, "uris":["http://www.mendeley. com/documents?uuid=a850d850-168d-4169-978a-0b6ba27d9011"]}], "mendeley": {"formattedCitation":"(Werner et al., 2016.

**Looking Forward.** This study is amongst the first to explore the impact of CIP on working professionals. Future studies could be conducted to explore if participants in an executive training program or leadership development program using CIP report similar findings and if it continues to inform these participants' practice in these other contexts. Studies might also explore differences in the

experiences and impact, if any, based on individual learning styles and frame analysis by employment sector. Studies framed in the context specifically of adaptive leadership (Heifetz & Linsky, 2017) could also be employed. Through further exploration of these variations, within different contexts and their effects on individual experiences and perceived impacts, master's programs may be able to further enhance their curricula to prepare professionals who are determined to take on the complexity of today's world.

In summarizing the experiences of students enrolled in a case-in-point course, this study initiates the conversation about the transferability of this pedagogy and the impact it may have on leadership practitioners across the globe. As such, the question for future researchers then becomes: "Where would you like to begin?"

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