Moving In, Through, and Out of the SI Leader Experience

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The Problem

Educators, employers, parents, and students question:

- The quality of learning and acquired competencies (Arum, 2013)
- The value of a college degree (Doyle, 2011; Willie, 2012; Wood, 2011)

Institutional concerns about:
- Accreditation, image, and learning outcomes (Henning, 2012)
Purpose

To address these problems by describing outcomes associated with how students experience their roles as SI leaders.

Use Schlossberg’s (1981) Transition Theory as a lens to reveal characteristics of how students transition from their roles as students to peer educators.
How do students move in, through, and out of the SI leader experience at a mid-sized, private research university located in the Midwestern United States?
Schlossberg’s Transition Theory

- understanding how students develop as a number of factors occur simultaneously

- transition is “an event or non-event that results in change in assumptions and thus requires a corresponding change in one’s behavior and relationships”

- transitions impact people—roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions

- 4 S’s, factors that influence how a person copes with transition—situation, self, supports, and strategies
Supplemental Instruction (SI)

Educational Services for Students is our academic support department at CWRU.
Literature Review

Martin & Wilcox (1996)
- SI leaders have reported developing leadership and communications skills as well as improved academic competency

- appreciation for the diversity of student learning styles
- increased understanding of course material
- greater self-consciousness as a learner
- development of closer relationships with faculty
- application of SI strategies in other courses
- importance and value of collaborative learning
Literature Review

- experience generally positive and a good review of material

Donelan & Kay (1998)
- improved communication and presentation skills
- increase in own understanding of course material
- getting to know other students, facilitating group activities, helping others learn
Literature Review

Congos & Mack (2005)
- valued the positive academic impact on students
- valued the adulation they received from students

Wallace (1992)
- SI leaders performed better academically
- enhanced integration of study skills and the transferability of learning
Literature Review

Stone, Jacobs, & Hayes (2006)
- enhanced relationships with students, faculty, and other SI leaders
- developed a deeper understanding of content
- formed better study strategies
- developed leadership skills and received exposure to teaching

Latino & Unite (2012)
- benefit from academic skills enhancement
Literature Review

Smuts (2002)
- final-year law students developed a sense of personal adequacy, improved communication, relationship building, citizenship, and workplace skills
- helped improve their own grades

Goodlad & Hirst (1989)
- increased understanding of, and interest in, learning and the teaching profession
- personal growth, increased confidence and sense of self-fulfillment.

- SI leaders report improved communication
- relationship building skills
- enhanced personal and professional development.
Group Discussion

1. What reasons have your SI leaders given for wanting to serve as an SI leader?

2. What challenges have your SI leaders reported during their experience?

3. What resources do you feel your SI leaders find most helpful?

4. What expected and/or unexpected skills or outcomes have your SI leaders gained as a result of their SI leader experience?
Case Western Reserve University

- Est. in 1826 in Cleveland, Ohio on 185 acres
- 5,100 undergraduate, and 6,200 graduate and professional students representing all 50 states and 86 countries
- 68% engineering, math, and sciences; 32% management, liberal arts, or undecided
- Graduated our largest class this year with 2,100 graduate and undergraduate students
Case Western Reserve University

- SI in place since mid-1980’s
- Support 24 courses during fall and spring semesters
- Average 32 SI leaders in fall semester and 24 in spring semester
- Most all begin SI tenure as 2nd year students
- 75% of 1st and 2nd year students pass through SI
Methodology

- Phenomenological research design and methods (Moustakas, 1994)
- Combination of purposeful criterion, purposeful intensity, and maximum variation sampling
- Data collected via,
  - Questionnaires
  - Interviews
  - ARCHIVAL RECORDS
  - Focus groups
## Participants (co-researchers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-Researcher</th>
<th>SI Discipline(s)</th>
<th>SI Experience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timothy</td>
<td>Biology, Chemistry, Engineering, Physics</td>
<td>9 semesters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liam</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>5 semesters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucas</td>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>10 semesters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaiser</td>
<td>Chemistry, Physics</td>
<td>6 semesters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heath</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>7 semesters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>4 semesters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ketan</td>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>2 semesters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Chemistry, Engineering, Physics</td>
<td>4 semesters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whitney</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>3 semesters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>5 semesters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haley</td>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>6 semesters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>6 semesters</td>
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*Names listed are pseudonyms.*
## Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Transition and Factors</th>
<th>Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moving In</strong> (situation, self)</td>
<td>Experience with Peer Education</td>
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<td>Academic Success</td>
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<td>Personality Traits</td>
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<td>Personal Interests</td>
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<td><strong>Moving Through</strong> (supports)</td>
<td>Support from SI Team Members</td>
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<td>Preparedness</td>
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<td>On the Job Training</td>
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<td>Time Commitment/ Management</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Moving Out</strong> (strategies)</td>
<td>Interpersonal Benefits</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intrapersonal Benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appreciation of Teaching and Learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Campus Connectedness</td>
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Discussion

Significance of Findings for Parents and Students:
- demonstrate additional value of a college experience in view of rising costs

Significance of Findings for Higher Education Professionals:
- can aid in justifying dedicating resources to SI and similar programs
- contribute positively to institutional image
- meet/maintain accreditation criteria

Significance of Findings for Potential Employers of College Graduates:
- demonstrate quality of learning and competencies
Discussion

Limitations

- The inherent difficulty of duplicating qualitative studies

- Limited generalizability because of single site and participants

- Diversity of SI program model internationally
Discussion

Future Research Recommendations

- Studies that encompass multiple sites, SI program models and SI leader preparation methods to improve generalizability

- Longitudinal studies that follow SI leaders beyond their SI experience to identify additional skills and competencies
Thank You

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References


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