

The Impact of the Fulbright Programme on Participants' Leadership Capacity

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Foreword

Fulbright alumni have achieved distinction in government, science, the arts, business, philanthropy, education and athletics. Thirty-seven Fulbright alumni have served as heads of state or government, and 59 Fulbright alumni from 14 countries have been awarded the Nobel Prize. British alumni include the likes of William Campbell – winner of the Nobel Prize for Physiology 2015, and Mary Hockaday – Controller of World Service English at the BBC. And then there are those who have not necessarily got their own Wikipedia page, but who are making meaningful contributions in our schools, hospitals, businesses and communities every day.

And yet, when you have some of the brightest students in the country applying, those showing early signs of leadership and boasting a seemingly endless stock of curiosity, optimism and energy, is it any wonder these people have been successful? How do you demonstrate that Fulbright had anything to do with their successes, when they were so clearly on an uphill career trajectory before they even made their Fulbright application? And what is it exactly, that Fulbright contributes?

On my first meeting with Bernd Vogel, Director of the Henley Centre for Leadership and Professor in Leadership at Henley Business School, University of Reading, I was struck by his passion for leadership and his visible fascination with the Fulbright programme and its mission. His colleagues, Dr Ana Margarida Graça, Lecturer in Leadership, and Dr Amal Ahmadi, Post-Doctoral Fellow in Organisational Behaviour, joined our lively meetings and their meticulous and reflective contributions helped us sketch out a plan. What seemed an impossible task quickly become an achievable and exciting project: to capture and evaluate the long-term impact that the experience of the Fulbright award has on participants' leadership capacity. Jim Weight, an alumnus looking for a way to give back to Fulbright, very kindly offered to support the project. It's predictable that a Fulbright award will positively impact the individual, but it's perhaps harder to assess if that individual has a positive impact within their community or workplace as a direct result of their Fulbright award. It's interesting therefore, that the findings of this study suggest that it helped participants to interpret and navigate work and leadership situations they faced after Fulbright. Even more fascinating was the evidence of more direct, lasting effects on the participants' practice of leadership.

So, would our Fulbright awardees have gone on to become heads of state or government, Nobel Prize winners and achieve distinction in their given industry, if they hadn't received a Fulbright award? Possibly. But what the Fulbright programme evidently succeeds in doing is shaping those high-achieving individuals into a particular type of leader; the kind that embraces diversity, exhibits humility and empathy and carries a deep sense of moral obligation.

Amy Moore

Director, Fulbright Awards Programme, US–UK Fulbright Commission

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Executive summary

The Henley Centre for Leadership at Henley Business School, University of Reading, partnered with the US–UK Fulbright Commission, UK, to conduct a study with the aim of capturing and evaluating the impact that the experience of the Fulbright award has on its students' and alumni's leadership capacity – both during the award period and in the mid to long term, over the alumni's careers. This research explores: the extent to which the Fulbright award helps to develop leadership capacity in programme members; what type of leadership capacity and tangible leadership behaviour is developed during the award; and how Fulbright students and alumni use this learning in their areas of responsibility and influence. The study utilises in-depth interviews with thirty-nine UK and US Fulbright students from a range of backgrounds and industries. In doing so, the study takes into account individual, contextual and programme factors that influence the impact of the Fulbright programme.

The study derives the following headline insights:

- Part 2 shows that none of the interviewees had originally considered the enhancement of leadership capabilities to be part of the Fulbright experience. Nevertheless, the study consistently found that Fulbright influences the development of both **personal growth in underlying developmental factors (such as core beliefs, confidence, experimentation, proactivity and identity)** that function as generic precursors of leadership capabilities, and **leadership capacities of attitudes, skills and behaviours**.

Such development builds not only on activities, events and processes **directly provided by Fulbright**, but also on the studies and experiences that are **made possible by Fulbright** through their award programmes.

Fulbright alumni also collectively show a **distinct understanding of what leadership means** to them along a set of individual and relational attributes, as well as an understanding of leadership as a collective process with broad focus and outcomes (see Figure 1, page 8, for an overview).

- Part 3 highlights findings of how the Fulbright programme (pre, during and post award) influences the development of leadership capacity (see Figure 2, page 43, for an overview). The findings show:
 - how the Fulbright experience helped students to develop **how they see themselves as leaders** (heightened self-awareness; self-confidence; personal purpose and career trajectory; experimenting, autonomy and risk taking; proactivity; and resilience);

- how the Fulbright experience helped students to develop **leadership in situations of working with others** (empathy; relationship skills; inspiring and involving others; speaking up; supporting others; and building confidence in others);
- how the Fulbright experience developed students' **leadership regarding wider society and intercultural diversity** (multicultural diversity and inclusion; legitimacy for voice and action; multidisciplinary diversity; tolerance; critical and independent inquiry; purposeful and outward-focused research; and humility and gratitude, for giving back to society).

Furthermore, findings point to the **impact of students' changes in leadership capacity on their lives and careers**. These findings revolve around students' identity transformations, their personal and professional trajectories, and their continuous preference for experiences with multicultural contexts. The findings also revolve around Fulbright being a continuous resource with long-term impacts on inclusive, multicultural leadership capacity.

- Part 4 offers a set of **distinct conclusions and recommendations** separated into the following periods:
 - **pre-programme** – for example: encourage students who see themselves as a non-fit to apply; identify candidates' motivation to experiment with leadership; sustain multi-layered diversity in cohorts
 - **during programme** – for example: create awareness of leadership learning at programme start; provide a Fulbright 'philosophy of leadership'
 - **post-programme** – for example: strategic shift of Fulbright activities to the post-award phase; leadership learning element of programme debrief; continuous post-programme reflexive activities for personal growth

These conclusions provide a springboard to consider future initiatives that advance the leadership capacity outcome of the Fulbright journey (see Figure 3, page 46).

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Part 1 – Scope and aims of the study

1.1 Motivation to explore leadership as part of the Fulbright experience

The US–UK Fulbright Commission (henceforth, ‘Fulbright’) and its awards and programmes were established with the mission to:

increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange... to promote international cooperation for educational and cultural advancement; and thus, to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the United States and other countries of the world (SRI International, 2005: 2)

The Fulbright programme offers grants for postgraduate study or research, as well as postdoctoral teaching and research abroad, thus providing opportunities for educational and cultural exchange in another country (SRI International, 2005).

In offering opportunities to study, teach or research abroad, Fulbright is assuming that the awards have an impact on the leadership capability of its students, who are seen to have ‘grappled with new ideas and methods, established contacts with the wider intellectual and business communities... and returned to their home countries ready and able to become leaders, both in their respective fields and in their communities at large’ (SRI International, 2005: i). This assumption includes an implicit (that is, not officially stated) expectation that students and alumni may show an enhanced leadership capacity, both during the award period as well as following its completion.

In preparation for this study, Amy Moore, Director, Fulbright awards Programme at the US–UK Fulbright Commission, stated, as a preliminary perspective, that

we seek leadership qualities, because we want our scholars to be in a position of influence. We hope they will find a platform in which they might better endorse mutual cross-cultural understanding, and share our message of peace and collaboration. We want people who will challenge what’s being discussed on a national level, using their comprehensive international understanding.

At the time, Fulbright had limited evidence to support this expectation. Therefore, this research explores the extent to which the Fulbright awards help to develop leadership capacity in students.

The assumptions are in line with research suggesting that in a world of continuous change, it is vital to incorporate a global perspective into education. Doing this will raise students’ sensitivity and ability to benefit from a global network of cultures, economies and political systems (Biraimah & Jotia, 2012).

Likewise, one of the most effective means for preparing citizens for this global community is by actual travel and immersion in other cultures (Hadis, 2005). Research shows that international, cross-cultural immersive experiences – or ‘cultural trigger events’ – may initiate growth in the cross-cultural competencies of individuals (Reichard et al, 2015) and broaden or enhance an individuals’ perspective on their situations or identities (such as their sense of ‘otherness’) (Reichard et al, 2015: 467). Interestingly such ‘stretch experiences’ (Reichard et al, 2015) that push students out of their comfort zones for the purpose of achieving deep learning are used in leadership development (McCall, 2004, 2010; Van Velsor, McCauley & Ruderman, 2010) to create leadership capacity.

Integrating these perspectives, the overall motivation of the present study is to explore how the Fulbright awards that have enabled students to study postgraduate programmes in the US or UK have helped in terms of developing leadership capacity. Thus, this research looks at the impact of the Fulbright experience on the development of students’ and alumni’s leadership capability and behaviour over time.

1.2 Aims of the study

This research explores to what extent Fulbright awards may help to develop leadership capacity in students. More specifically, the study seeks to understand: whether and how leadership capabilities may have been developed through participating in Fulbright programmes; how these capabilities may manifest; what type of leadership capacity, and what type of tangible leadership behaviour in particular, is shown; and how students and alumni use this in their areas of responsibility and influence.

In particular, the study aims to investigate the extent and the nature of the impact of Fulbright on the leadership identity, attitude, thinking, feelings and skills of the students, looking at the development of the individual, yet considering both the intrapersonal and interpersonal capabilities.

In doing so, the study seeks to understand the impact that such extended leadership capacities have on the students' activities in the short term during the award period, and in the mid to the long term, as alumni along their career and further development. Thus, the study seeks to understand the possible effect of an extended leadership capacity on the students' academic activities and beyond.

Specifically, this study pursued the following research questions (RQs):

- RQ1: What is the impact of the Fulbright programme (pre award, during award, post award) on the short-term and long-term development of leadership capacity at the individual and social levels?
- RQ2: How does the process of building and showing leadership capacity unfold across pre, during and post award periods?
- RQ3: Which individual and contextual factors influence the development of intra- and interpersonal leadership capacity of students and alumni?
- RQ4: Which individual, contextual and programme factors influence the impact of the Fulbright programme?

Based on the research findings, the report provides a set of conclusions and recommendations for Fulbright to advance the personal growth of students and alumni through building their leadership capabilities pre, during and post scholarships.

1.3 Research design and methodology

The study utilises qualitative in-depth interviews with Fulbright alumni. Data was collected using a semi-structured interview guide, using critical incident and self-narrative techniques to capture Fulbright alumni experiences, leadership learning and behaviour.

Interviewees were invited to recall their Fulbright experiences through the lens of leadership; because experience *per se* criss-crosses and bridges the individual, the interpersonal and the social levels of human interaction, it is a particularly fruitful methodological and conceptual research device for exploring the impact of Fulbright on students' leadership capacity. More specifically, the interviews involved questions around the influence of Fulbright on short- and long-term leadership development, behavioural change and personal growth, and its contribution to individual and social outcomes, as well as individual factors and contextual conditions that influence development and impact.

Thirty-nine interviewees aged between early twenties and late seventies were recruited via a Fulbright database of alumni. The research team selected a sample that consisted of:

- a wide range of industries including, media, medicine, entertainment, law, education, computer science, journalism, finance and the arts
- fourteen female and twenty-five male interviewees
- fourteen UK nationals and twenty-five US nationals
- interviewees with different lengths of time elapsed since their Fulbright award:
 - 10 interviewees from more than 25 years ago
 - 8 interviewees from 16–25 years ago
 - 16 interviewees from 6–15 years ago
 - 5 interviewees from 5 years ago or less
- represented Fulbright cohorts ranging from 1953 to 2013

The remainder of the report details the study findings: Part 2 – Initial observations and participants' understanding of leadership; Part 3 – The impact of Fulbright (pre award, during award, post award) on the development of leadership capacity; Part 4 – Conclusions and recommendations.

Part 2 – Initial observations and participants’ understanding of leadership

2.1 Initial observations and assumptions

We start with five initial observations and assumptions:

First, when asked about what they expected in terms of the impact of or outcomes from the programme, none of the interviewees had originally considered the enhancement of leadership capabilities to be part of the Fulbright experience. This was not part of their initial sense-making of the programme. Nevertheless, all interviewees reported a resultant development in their leadership capacity in some form and at some depth. This did not differ between interviewees from different Fulbright cohorts. This suggests that a more direct emphasis on what students can expect from their time on the programme, particularly regarding the impact it will have on their leadership learning, could present a fertile opportunity for Fulbright, especially in the pre-awards phase.

Second, the study consistently found that Fulbright facilitates and cultivates a set of individual, interpersonal and social experiences in students. This can trigger changes in various facets of leadership capacity with regard to personal attributes, which then act as a foundation for leadership capacity, leadership with others, and/or leadership regarding wider society and intercultural diversity.

The study found that Fulbright influences the development of both personal growth in underlying developmental factors and direct leadership capacities.

- **Personal growth in underlying developmental factors** concerns the generic precursors of leadership capabilities. Underlying developmental factors – such as core beliefs, confidence, experimentation, proactivity and identity – also influence other spheres of students’ lives beyond leadership. At the same time, these factors provide the basis for the specific notion of leadership as pursued by Fulbright.
- **Direct leadership capacities** manifest in experimentation with and adoption of new behaviours, both in general and in relation to leadership. They also become apparent

in changes in attitudes, skills and elements of identity, as referred to by interviewees when discussing leadership or leadership-related world views.

Third, the study surfaced that the Fulbright experience is a deeply immersive process. This is why Fulbright can elicit learning at different levels in students and alumni, ranging from knowledge about leadership and changes in skills or behaviour (more surface structures), to transitions in their deeper personal structures such as self-worth, self-confidence, mind-sets or identity.

Fourth, we reiterate that we can, in the following, distinguish between the following:

- Activities or processes directly provided by Fulbright – for example, candidate identification, decision to be awarded a Fulbright stipend, the local Fulbright cohort of students and so on – and how those impact on the above-mentioned leadership facets
- Activities or processes that were made accessible via Fulbright awards but that Fulbright is not directly involved in – for example, the actual research studies and programmes the students participated in, the cohorts of those programmes, and the specifics of the local environments. With regard to such activities and processes, Fulbright functions more as a facilitator of access; it is more difficult to influence these aspects of the Fulbright experience via its network of relationships and agreements.

Fifth, while we separate aspects when we present the results (for example, the impact on how students and alumni see themselves as leaders; the impact on leadership in situations of working with others; the impact on leadership with regards to the wider society and intercultural diversity), those aspects are interconnected and can build on and positively influence each other.

In addressing these aspects, we integrate insights from RQ3 (Which individual and contextual factors influence the development of intra- and interpersonal leadership capacity of students and alumni?) with insights from RQ4 (Which individual, contextual and programme factors influence the impact of the Fulbright programme?). These two areas are better explained holistically and are thus integrated to optimise knowledge creation and practical insights from the present study.

2.2 Fulbright Alumni's understanding of what leadership means to them

One aim of the study was to identify Fulbright alumni's implicit understanding of leadership. This implicit understanding is a springboard from which people make sense of dealing with other people. It influences how people engage in leadership, which expectations towards leadership they strive for and how they notice leadership in others (or not). We therefore asked interviewees what leadership meant to them.

It emerges from this sample, and corresponds with other research, that leadership as a topic or perspective is not present and initially meaningful to all alumni when they go about their professional and personal lives. It is very important to note that **people can engage in leadership without recognising it as such**. They might engage in leadership, possess leadership attributes or find a context that is supportive to leading without calling such activity leadership or being at all familiar with the terminology. Correspondingly, later in the report we surface insights regarding leadership, even if the interviewees themselves do not portray, call or relate some of those attributes, processes or factors to leadership.

From our question 'What does "leadership" mean to you?', we can note, as a first observation, that some interviewees were slightly worried or nervous to come up with something. To some, this seemed to be a domain they would not self-subscribe to – perhaps indicative of a hesitancy to equate their own activity with the leadership of great, known or outstanding leaders.

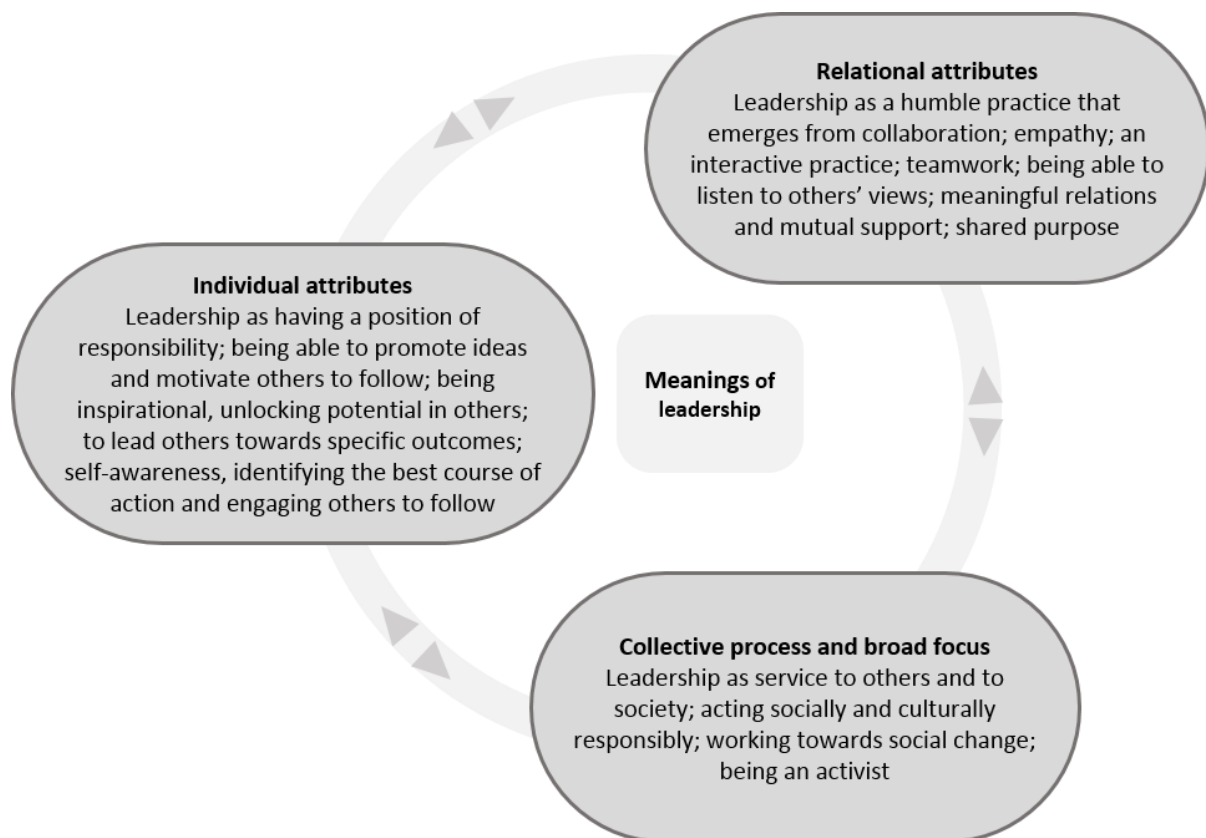
I wasn't in an organisation that required me to be a leader. I guess, I was probably honing the skills of talking to diverse people, understanding perspectives and understanding [that] within a year we're going to go back and we're going to go in many different directions and I want to be able to be there to support and also to be pushed, but I guess I never thought of it as leadership. (Khizer Husain, Cohort 1999)

As other interviewees offered a range of leadership understandings, some interviewees did not use language of leadership; they may have not encountered the terms or language in their different sphere of life. This has implications on how to introduce more leadership thinking, practice and development into Fulbright activities of recruitment, selection or

education. Fulbright may consider how to bridge students' great diversity in understanding leadership with the leadership perspective, language and instruments emphasised at Fulbright.

We received a diverse set of answers from the interviewees about what they think leadership refers to. Some presented more traditional perceptions of leadership – focused on **individuals' attributes** as leaders, for instance – while others provided more complex and inclusive understandings that focused on **relational attributes, leadership as a collective process involving the many**, or its **broader impact and focus**. Figure 1 shows key facets for the three different domains of how leadership was depicted.

Figure 1 Meanings attached to leadership by Fulbright alumni



2.2.1 Individual attributes

Interviewees referred to Individual attributes that range from leadership as being able to promote ideas and motivate others to follow, to unlocking potential in others and being self-aware.

It also emerged that leadership can be adopted by anyone; due to a sense of responsibility, for instance, certain leadership behaviours or internal strengths are not exclusive to the few.

I think everyone has the ability to be a leader. Some just get to hone that skill more than others. It's a capacity or skill that is not something that you are born with, but a quality you develop and continue to be good at. (Julie Markham, Cohort 2013)

2.2.2 Relational attributes

Relational attributes are apparent in aspects such as humility with regard to others, empathy or shared purpose. Our findings also point to leadership in relationships that can manifest as leadership without formal roles or titles.

There are so many things that we do without the title – without the power that comes from title. Leadership is being able to carve out power without the title. And you do that through a vast array of tools. So, leadership, you can think about it as a cultivation of tools that allow you to premiere power without title. (Alberto Herrera, Cohort 2008)

2.2.3 Leadership as a collective process with a broad focus and outcomes

In the study, leadership was understood as pursuing a broad focus with a range of possible outcomes. It can emerge as a collective process and practice that is highly interactive and can involve many people, not just one person, being equated with leadership. As such, leadership can be seen in activist roles, can surface as service to others and society and as pursuing (social) change.

Leadership should be contagious. Not to sound infectious, but it should be something that you feel from someone and it's something you want to take and give to somebody else. (Jordan Covey, Cohort 2011)

While three different categories emerged from the data, interviewees' own examples about and recollection of engaging in leadership activities or leadership related practices, depicted leadership as a complex, multi-layered and embodied activity that involved attributes across all categories.

Part 3 – The impact of Fulbright (pre award, during award, post award) on the development of leadership capacity

The following subsections address RQ1: What is the impact of the Fulbright programme (pre award, during award, post award) on the short-term and long-term development of leadership capacity at the individual and social levels? Figure 2 provides an overview of the elements and process.

3.1 How the Fulbright experience helped students to develop how they see themselves as a leader

This section outlines how personal attributes of Fulbright students have developed and how they are directly or indirectly supportive of future leadership capacity. Most interviewees highlighted that the Fulbright experience had brought about a deep and positive change to who they are and how they go about things with regard to leadership (see also section 3.4 for the long-term implications).

There is something to be said about how it changes you as a person. You know, the discomfort that you have in that experience which is really good for your growth. But, it's so hard to explain. (Jordan Covvey, Cohort 2011)

The following section focuses in detail on the changes in personal attributes to show the development of Fulbright students in how they see themselves as leaders. The section presents the following six themes:

1. Heightened self-awareness about own functioning and 'who I am'
2. Self-confidence and sense of validation
3. Exploring and adjusting professional and personal purpose and career trajectory
4. Experiencing a sense of experimentation, autonomy and risk taking
5. Proactivity and taking initiative
6. Heightened levels of resilience

3.1.1 Heightened self-awareness about own functioning and ‘who I am’

Most interviewees indicated that Fulbright enabled them to learn more about themselves, their character, sense of being, or capacities. In addition to the academic progress and achievements they made, interviewees were consistent in sharing that being abroad, in a different environment, with diverse groups of people helped them learn more about how they function as a person and who they are. These findings were consistent across the cohorts in the sample.

Those folks around you suddenly draw attention to aspects about yourself you never really gave much thought. Your accent, your history, your world view (...). And I guess that mirror that they hold up to you, suddenly makes you realise, how you present yourself to the world. And then learning how to use that to maybe get people to look at things a little different. (James Ellis, Cohort 1999)

Heightened self-awareness, understanding and mindfulness are important developmental aspects for engaging in leadership, providing people with more clarity about themselves, which is important for identifying purpose, for instance. These things are also helpful in helping students to understand how they will be seen by others, which is important for building durable relationships with others – a core element of leadership. This also comes through when we address personal purpose and career choices (see section 3.1.3).

3.1.2 Self-confidence and sense of validation

Self-confidence emerged as a fundamental theme of the study. Self-confidence and a sense of validation from Fulbright and from others related to the programme appeared persistently in the interviews, independent from the year of participation in the programme. Nearly all our interviewees mentioned at some point during the interviews the impact Fulbright had had on their levels of personal confidence with regard to engaging in leadership.

From the moment I was named a Fulbright student my sense of who I was as a leader changed. Because I feel like if I had not gotten it, I would have been less sure of myself, I would have been less sure of my leadership capacity (...) Just knowing that the Fulbright community saw something in me, with the potential for leadership – it's a self-fulfilling prophecy I think. It made me feel like 'Hey, maybe I am a leader, an aspiring leader?' So that's one way in which the Fulbright programme just planted that seed. (Fulbright Alumnus, Cohort 2002)

Many interviewees linked the growing sense of confidence they experienced as an effect of being a part of the Fulbright programme directly with their attitude and ability to engage in a range of typical leadership behaviours. The following excerpts exemplify this:

I think leadership it has to start internally, within you. And, if you don't believe in yourself, then having other people trying to buy into that is impossible. So, that was the first time, I think, I actually truly believed that I knew what I was doing and I was comfortable with what I was doing. (Jordan Covvey, Cohort 2011)

I was able to learn such a great deal, I now have so much more sort of confidence in things like delegating, in communicating, in giving speeches, in liaising with a much wider variety of people in my professional environment. (Jasdeep Bhalla, Cohort 2011)

Importantly, we also consistently noticed a sense of humility and gratitude from most of the interviewees. We will expand on this finding in section 3.3.7. However, it is worth noting that confidence can also transition into an over-confidence that may have less beneficial impacts. Nevertheless, we could not detect this in our interviews. A sense of humility and gratitude possibly buffered a growth in confidence beyond beneficial levels.

Developing and sustaining self-confidence was a dominant theme when looking across the award period (pre, during and post). The following section highlights processes that elicited heightened self-confidence and provided experiences for validation as a person **before** and **during** the award period.

The influence of Fulbright on self-confidence before the award period – receiving a Fulbright scholarship as a source of confidence and validation

The interviews surfaced a key mechanism that happens before students start their Fulbright scholarship. The study shows the profound effect that just the fact of being awarded a Fulbright scholarship seemed to have on people, particularly for those students who tend to question themselves, their skills and worth. At the beginning of this section one interview excerpt vividly pictures the association between being awarded and elevated confidence. Others described the Fulbright award as a ‘magic shield’ that takes away the doubts about herself. The following excerpt similarly shows the immediate impact of being awarded a Fulbright scholarship:

I think I gained a lot of confidence from just being picked to be a part of Fulbright in the first place. I never expected I would get one. So, it was a huge honour. (Hazel Sheffield, Cohort 2011)

The influence of Fulbright on self-confidence before the award period – receiving a Fulbright scholarship, in view of perceived social or economic disadvantage

It emerged that the effect on confidence and validation seemed even stronger when students initially perceived themselves as socially or economically disadvantaged. Many interviewees did not at all expect or imagine to be awarded a Fulbright scholarship, because they questioned if they would fit in the programme due to their perception of possessing a relatively underprivileged background. Facets of a perceived limiting background refer to social status, reputation of education or economic status.

The programme’s socio-economic inclusiveness was not anticipated and therefore had a big effect, as exemplified in the following excerpt:

I was trained at regular state university. I had always been a good student but very middle class, not very prestigious, just a regular student. So, I kind of always just assume[d] that sort of thing was out of reach for me. Nonetheless, I decided to give [it] a shot and apply for it. (Jordan Covvey, Cohort 2011)

This finding may pose a dilemma to Fulbright regarding recruitment. On the one hand, this experience of unexpectedly receiving the award enables a huge initial positive jump in personal growth. On the other hand, not expecting to be successful for socio-economic reasons may prevent many potential candidates from applying in the first place.

The influence of Fulbright on self-confidence during the award period – navigating in groups of people perceived as superior and outstanding

The findings indicate that during the scholarship period, similar mechanisms kicked in, yet with different initiating factors. Interviewees shared that they initially felt adversity because they saw themselves as not fitting in with others in their cohort of the programme; they initially perceived their peers as superior, outstanding and higher achieving people. However, being ‘thrown in’ and developing a sense of having something to contribute to the cohort and networks actually instilled positive self-validation and heightened their levels of confidence.

I was kind of thrown in with rather elite folks and was exposed to some social circles that I had never been exposed to before. The Fulbright provided an entrée to those circumstances and situations, and I was able, after that, to come back and not be intimidated by leaders. Those would ultimately go on to be some of my mentors and it made me not afraid to ask to be a protégé. (James Ellis, Cohort 1999)

I always felt that other people were much smarter and more able and more sophisticated because I came from a small rural town. Many of the boys in school would be from the city and would be much more sophisticated. So, I was always sort of trying to keep my head above water and always trying to catch up. (William C Campbell, Cohort 1953)

Interestingly, the same interviewee who had initial doubts explained later in the interview that he then realised that his Fulbright peers actually appreciated him for his extensive knowledge in his field. The validation of his ideas and the positive interaction with his cohort filled him with a confidence that he carried with him throughout his career.

The influence of Fulbright on self-confidence during the award period – being granted relevance and seriousness

Similarly, Fulbright seems to grant students a sense of relevance and a regular perception that they are being taken seriously, even at a young age. The faith and the trust that Fulbright puts into students' capabilities during the programme becomes a galvanising experience for students, as revealed in the following excerpt:

Then have people take your thoughts seriously, even if it's outside of your discipline. Before that time I never had that sort of opportunity, so I think there is some sort of seed of leadership that comes from that. But like I said leadership, you have to see leadership in action and you have to practice that and for me that was largely in the workplace. (Khizer Husain, Cohort 1999)

The influence of Fulbright on self-confidence during the award period – dealing with the unknown as a result of living abroad

Moving to a different country to live and study for at least a year, and subsequently dealing with new everyday situations, emerged as another source of confidence. For some interviewees, living abroad was an entirely new experience, perceived as being 'out of their comfort zone'. Mastering everyday challenges also seems to have elevated students' sense of confidence.

[T]here might [be] barriers and blocks to doing things, but I always think 'if I figured out how to get a mobile phone in the UK with no credit history and all these things... when I had a landlord taking money from me, and all the crazy things that happened to me. I look [at] all that, and I say, I can tackle anything. (Jordan Covvey, Cohort 2011)

As noted earlier, a few interviewees reflected some level of self-awareness (possibly in hindsight) regarding the fact that confidence may not only have a positive impact. Still some shared that the Fulbright experience and the personal journey and changes from it can instil confidence that may reach a tipping point where it becomes unhealthy with unintended consequences.

For a time, certainly coming straight out of that experience, I was probably a bit, a little bit too haughty, maybe a little too self-assured. (James Ellis, Cohort 1999)

Overly high levels of self-regard or over-energy may block awareness to listen and accept other people and their contributions and likewise counterparts could self-limit their contribution over time, which in turn risks an inclusive leadership understanding.

3.1.3 Exploring and adjusting professional and personal purpose and career trajectory

Exploring, adjusting or strengthening professional and personal purpose and career directions emerged as a personal impact that interviewees referred to consistently as an immediate and lasting outcome of their Fulbright experience. Interviewees were using Fulbright to find, explore or challenge purpose or meaning for themselves and in their professional and career development. This seems to happen both before and predominantly during the actual award period. Fulbright enables and encourages students to work on their sense of identity and direction.

Your vision is turned into 'HD vision' when you are in Fulbright. Before you just have cartoons and then there you are just like 'Boom, here we go.' (Alberto Herrera, Cohort 2008)

From a leadership lens this is a facet of self-leadership which underpins the ability to set direction and to take initiative for the own course of action, which subsequently helps to inspire and lead others.

The outcomes of those processes ranged from developing and revising to radically **broadening or changing career focus** and professional purpose. Most students were relatively young when they received their Fulbright scholarships. Fulbright represents a wide spectrum of possibilities for professionals to clarify or alter their career goals within or beyond particular domains.

For some interviewees it was an opportunity to develop or further clarify which career trajectory to follow:

I wasn't sold on becoming a clinician or not, and so this would be an important data point for me to understand where my professional trajectory would be... I knew of the Fulbright programme through an office attached to our study abroad programme at the university. So I knew of the mechanics and the prestige associated with the programme and I figured that it was a good way to invest a year of my life to make that decision.
(Khizer Husain, Cohort 1999)

For other interviewees, Fulbright provided an opportunity to challenge their career paths at the time and decide whether to **adopt new career trajectories**. One of Fulbright's advantages mentioned in the interviews is that it opens career development beyond one's own disciplinary background. Subsequently, interviewees stated that they moved from architecture to urban planning or from private law to human rights organisations, for instance. Others made more radical transitions from linguistics to law or from history to film making, for example. The following is an excerpt for exploring a more radical change of professional purpose through the Fulbright experience:

Then I applied for a Fulbright scholarship to switch my career path, to some extent, into documentary filmmaking full-time, as opposed to psychology research. (Jonathan Goodman Levitt, Cohort 1999)

In addition some interviewees reported a challenging observation about reconnecting to their profession when returning home. While the change is in general beneficial, some interviewees also found it to be a challenge that they themselves had moved on – that they had repositioned their careers or developed into a different type of person in their academic or professional domain. While this can elicit productive disconnections, it can also lead to frictions because others in the professional domain or area of study will not have had the opportunity for transformative development. Similarly, some interviewees had the feeling, due to the absence, that on returning to their home country their non-Fulbright peers still had gained a competitive advantage over them despite their limited home experience.

I think that when you've done [Fulbright] and you come back, you're already different.
(Sanchia Berg, Cohort 1985)

I think when I came back, I was competing against people who had gone to graduate school in the US and had built their connections here, and so it took me longer to find a full-time role than I would have hoped. (Yaron Schwartz, Cohort 2011)

3.1.4 Experiencing a sense of experimentation, autonomy and risk taking

The theme of experiencing a sense of educational experimentation, autonomy and risk taking emerged as a further personal attribute from the Fulbright journey, particularly during the duration of the actual scholarship. The interviewees expressed that Fulbright provided the boundaries, safety and access to more flexible educational modes for more experiential, autonomous and self-driven educational approaches. Compared to the more traditional forms of education they had experienced prior to Fulbright, interviewees were able to experiment with new settings and programme types, travelling and exploring new locations of educational value. Fulbright offered the opportunity for students to learn in spaces beyond the classroom, thus instilling a self-driven educational approach and nurturing a sense of autonomy and independence.

I don't recall what I expected to learn. What I remember is that when I applied, I was eager to get out of my home context – to travel and live in another place. I wanted to be among other people – both within the context of the Fulbright programme and the context of the University – who were bright and ambitious and oriented toward making the world a better place. (Carrie Brunk, Cohort 2002)

For me personally, it was a tremendous growth opportunity: learning to take risks and turning up and living in a foreign country. (Julie Markham, Cohort 2013)

The perceived sense of overall safety of Fulbright's institutional framework and of the local social relationships allowed for an experiential attitude and the taking of risks. While interviewees themselves did not link these to leadership, experimentation, autonomy and risk taking are important individual capacities for successful leadership. They also add to the growth of student confidence.

3.1.5 Proactivity and taking initiative

Our data shows that students' strengthened feelings of confidence about themselves and their skills helped them to be more proactive in taking initiative than they were before Fulbright. Our findings revealed that acting confident involves de-mystifying and overcoming challenges and barriers, being proactive and taking initiative, improvising, challenging norms and interacting with others in more open and productive ways.

I think in my Fulbright cohort... there is this person. He was in the middle of his medical training when he was doing his Fulbright at a business school... After Fulbright, I think his plan was to finish the few month's study he had left in his medical training and then join McKinsey & Company. When I fast forward five years from there, I was looking at the company that the person developed... It was helping to strengthen the healthcare system in Africa... I think about him because he would have had this grand career being a practitioner but something pulled him away and he was able to master his confidence... I guess what Fulbright has done for me in terms of leadership, it has been this confidence that if I am in the right networks of individuals and I am thinking deeply about problems, then I can bring to bear and pivot away from something that is comfortable to something that is risky and still build something that will be fulfilling for me. (Khizer Husain, Cohort 1999)

We can link proactivity and taking initiative directly with growth in people's leadership capacity. Also to be proactive and take action instead of being a passive recipient was for most of our interviewees a core ingredient of leadership.

3.1.6 Heightened levels of resilience

Resilience emerged as another personal attribute that interviewees referred to consistently as an outcome of their Fulbright experience, particularly from their actual scholarship period. Resilience describes a person's capacity to bounce back or recover from difficult or adverse situations. While some people might falter, individuals who have developed higher levels of resilience will not let setbacks influence their confidence and conviction, and they function well under pressure. The following excerpts show how Fulbright helped to grow resilience in students.

I would say that's something I did take forward – not just to try things, but also not to be too downhearted if they don't quite work out the way that I anticipated. (Sanchia Berg, Cohort 1985)

What the programme helped me do is really deal with that pressure and cope with it and remain productive and have a kind of clarity of thinking in incredible stressful positions. (Jasdeep Bhalla, Cohort 2011)

I was able to working very intensely away from home in a foreign environment; there's no doubt that sort of influenced my personal resilience. (Jasdeep Bhalla, Cohort 2011)

Heightened levels of resilience is a personal capacity of sustained leadership. Pursuing purpose, experimenting, taking initiative and risk taking are typical functions of a leader (as described above) that can be accompanied as much by setbacks as by success. Hence, strengthening resilience as a result of experiencing Fulbright can provide students with another intrapersonal capacity to aid them in leadership. Resilience, once developed, also tends to sustain itself and as such provides a long-term impact for students.

3.2 How the Fulbright experience helped students to develop leadership in situations that involve working with others

This study aimed to look at how the Fulbright students have developed leadership capacities in relation to situations that involve working with others. This section explores in more depth the following six themes that emerge from the study:

1. Other-awareness and heightened empathy
2. Relationship skills
3. Capacity to inspire and involve people
4. Capacity to speak up
5. Leadership as supportiveness and service to people
6. Building confidence in others

3.2.1 Other-awareness and heightened empathy

The study surfaced perceptions and learning of other-awareness and heightened empathy from the interviews. These can be considered positive precursors for more inclusive leadership behaviour and the embrace of diversity.

While some interviewees refer to those perceptions in a more general sense, other interviewees connect their development more directly to a type of empathetic leader who understands and relates to the situation and feelings of others when leading.

I honestly think that I wouldn't be as effective in that if it wasn't for Fulbright; if it wasn't me going through that experience; me understanding these feelings; me having a perspective of different people and how they handle things, how they think through things. I think it has made me more empathetic leader; it has made me more tolerant leader. (Jordan Covvey, Cohort 2011)

I suppose a broader challenge is people who go on Fulbright programmes and become leaders tend to be intelligent people... And intelligent people don't always read their audiences, read the teams. They try to lead or they are supposed to lead and think that they can communicate in their own language... Over time I've led and built teams of people... and understanding them and being able to converse, lead and empathise with, in a position of leadership, is a great privilege. But to talk their language and to be accepted is perhaps part of that. So if I was to think about the extension of that small level conversation, it's know your audience and if you can't take them with you on that journey you're not leading. (Jeremy Seigal, Cohort 1984)

3.2.2 Relationship skills

Interviewees reported a strengthened ability to relate to others. An obvious positive strength, relationship skills can be considered vital for inclusive leadership understanding and practice. The ability to connect with others, navigate links with more advanced people and develop supportive friendships, support a leadership capacity that builds on interactions in mature and reciprocal relationships.

The following excerpts exemplify this theme.

That was one of the things, when I look back, I am like 'oh something is changing' in terms of my ability to connect with people. (Alberto Herrera, Cohort 2008)

The ability to learn how to build a network and engage with others that were further along in their career and seek out a mentorship, learning opportunities, and like just 'how did you get to where you are?' (Julie Markham, Cohort 2013)

Before Fulbright I always hadn't had a lot of close friends. I had one or two, three friends and with them I would do everything... Before that it was hard for me to make new friends. There were a lot of people that I was just like 'I don't really like you', 'I don't really wanna talk to you' [laughter]. And with Fulbright it was different, because it was the first time that I got along with everybody. (Alberto Herrera, Cohort 2008)

3.2.3 Capacity to inspire and involve people

The study surfaced a set of other-directed behaviours towards leading and working with others that were advanced with Fulbright participation. Fulbright allowed students to advance behaviours around involving others and convincing them to join activities. Some also referred to learning to understand that when working with others, a leader does not have to have all the expertise. Leadership includes being able to admit to being incomplete and, as such, to seek to deeply involve others.

For me gaining that experience and being in that space and time is where I really developed the skills of both getting people on board and feeling confident in my visions, and also not feeling like I need to have all of the answers to be a leader... I think this can-do, inspiring attitude is a gift that I feel that I can share with others. (Julie Markham, Cohort 2013)

3.2.4 Capacity to speak up

Being in a Fulbright programme is seen as a vote of confidence and validation for the ability to contribute in a distinct way. By having the opportunity to navigate and being accepted in outstanding societal circles, Fulbright seems to enable students to develop a sense of inner strength and conviction to speak up and freely express concerns and ideas.

I found no reason to bite my tongue, and I realised that there is no monopoly on good ideas and not to stand on ceremony. Just because things are the way they appear to be, doesn't mean you can't speak up and try to help people about it. (James Ellis, Cohort 1999)

The practice of influencing and leading upwards – that is, of driving collective, for-the-good-of-the-many aims and endeavouring to influence organisational higher-ups in this regard – has played an ever more prominent role in recent years. Leading upwards, as well as accepting influence from all arenas and levels of an organisation, are as crucial for an inclusive understanding of leadership as guiding and inspiring one's own team or project.

3.2.5 Supportiveness and service to people as leadership

The study shows that student engagement in helping to make the Fulbright cohort a success was one element that led to students developing their behaviour. With their experience of transitioning into an unknown context, students grew in their understanding of others and in their desire to act in the service of others and to consider other people's situations and need for support.

There were two more cohorts that came after me that I had some involvement with. But to some extent I felt a bit like a leadership tendency with those people because I was already there. People were coming to my city; in my university, I already had gone through that whole transition period. So, I had the opportunity to kind of serve a little bit in a leadership capacity and help them to get settled and go through all the things.
(Jordan Covvey, Cohort 2011)

3.2.6 Building confidence in others

Heightened levels of confidence or positive feelings of validation are important for leadership because people tend to read certain cues when they interact with others and to use these cues as directives in relating to and trusting them. Seeing confidence in others can help people to more easily learn from that person and consider them a role model. Our study shows that the Fulbright experience and its impact has a good chance of making such relationships more likely.

Furthermore, it emerged that experiencing the development of confidence in themselves motivated students to engage in the building of confidence in others. We could identify Fulbright's impact on a typical aspect of what successful leaders engage with.

There was a reason you were there, there's a reason you're in the room, you have something valuable to contribute. And that experience really helped me when I would have to manage younger individuals that I saw promise in. To really take them aside and say, 'Don't think about you're just a kid from Oklahoma or you're just 25 years old or this is just a small project right now.' It gave me a narrative, a story that I could pass on: 'Some day you will be more important than you realise, don't lose sight of that and don't undercut your capacities.' (James Ellis, Cohort 1999)

3.3 How the Fulbright experience develops students' leadership regarding wider society and intercultural diversity

One aim of the study was to explore whether and how the Fulbright experience might influence students' capacity and mindset for leadership regarding wider society and intercultural diversity. This aspect indicates a broadened scope in the understanding and purpose of leadership among interviewees and relates particularly to Fulbright's overall ambition.

In this area of the study, interviewees did not always relate their insights and development directly to leadership capability. The study surfaced a set of aspects that show how students perceive that the multicultural and inclusive experiences of Fulbright facilitated personal growth towards more open-mindedness and towards an inclusive, multicultural and responsible approach that oftentimes directly relates to leadership engagement.

This section presents in more detail how students' leadership capacity has advanced in relation to engagement with wider society and intercultural diversity. It explores in more depth the following seven themes that emerge from the study:

1. Global ethos and appreciation of societal and multicultural diversity and inclusion
2. Perceived legitimacy for voice and action when returning home
3. Embracing multidisciplinary diversity and diversity of ideas
4. Heightened tolerance
5. Critical and independent inquiry for greater clarity
6. Pursuing purpose-rich and outward-focused research
7. A sense of humility and gratitude as a driver for giving back to society

3.3.1 Global ethos and appreciation of societal and multicultural diversity and inclusion

Interviewees were surprised about the broad variety of aspects of diversity they faced through Fulbright and acknowledged the positive impact and lasting impression that this had had on them. Interviewees described Fulbright as an inclusive and dynamic platform facilitated through the cohort and via access to programmes spaces populated by representatives of diverse disciplines, age groups, ethnicities and nationalities – which includes different layers of local differences and international diversity in the host regions.

The study surfaced that Fulbright had a transformative effect on social and global awareness regarding the specifics of both one's own and other peoples' contexts and how this impacts behaviours and thinking patterns in often-unnoticed ways. The study indicated heightened levels of a global, multicultural ethos among Fulbright students and alumni as a precursor for more culturally sensitive and empathetic behaviour and leadership.

I think in the Fulbright programme, my leadership skills were kind of honed in learning how to gain greater global empathy. (Julie Markham, Cohort 2013)

Immersion in a multicultural environment seems to help Fulbright students and alumni to contextualise ideas, practices and choices in a way that they would not be able to if they had stayed in their home countries.

Similar growth regarding global ethos and appreciation of inclusion across eras of Fulbright

Importantly we found the above-mentioned effects were similar across time. This means that development and growth in professional and personal terms was similar for all Fulbright cohorts, from the early 1950s to the present day. It seems that although technological progress and cheaper, less complicated travel have made other countries and cultures increasingly accessible to a greater number of people, there is still, according to our data, a significant advantage for personal and social development to living in different societies for an extended period of time and immersing oneself in new experiences.

The following excerpts exemplify similar insights by interviewees from different eras:

Well, just much more aware of other people and other lands as opposed to just having another sort of information that one learns about in geography. This was about actually meeting people from different countries. I had been to France as an undergraduate student which was rare in my environment. None of my family had done anything like that. So I had already had the experience of going on an exciting vacation in France. I was totally unaware of other countries. And then in the Fulbright programme you are thrown constantly into a mix of international students, as well as the students who live in the land you go to; and that is by definition a new experience. (William C Campbell, Cohort 1953)

I think it's led to a much more international career and much deeper engagement across cultures than I would have had otherwise, if I had instead remained in the United States and started to pursue a career in filmmaking. On a basic level, the last five projects that I've been involved in feature participants who are from five different continents. I don't think that would be the case if I hadn't had the experience of getting to know people from different cultures and existing in that multicultural international space from so early on in my career. And frankly, without the validation from Fulbright at that stage, which supported development of my first feature nearly 20 years ago, I'm not sure whether I'd even be a filmmaker. (Jonathan Goodman Levitt, Cohort 1999)

I think the Fulbright year was very good at doing that. Like, 'Where is the academic argument here? Where is the personal argument? Where is the real life argument? What is this person thinking, because they came from this other place?' Also, it exposes you to things that you never knew, like subgroups, right? I always knew where Cyprus was but I didn't know that there are Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots... When people share that with you in a very particular way, it forces you to really question, 'Wow, my so called expertise on this is really very basic'. And so, you really need to do a bit more work to understand it better. (Alberto Herrera, Cohort 2008)

I met people from very different backgrounds from very different countries, very different cultures during my year as a Fulbrighter. And that has to inform you as a person... The fact that I can sit here and say this person from Brazil absolutely changed my thinking about the way Southern American cultures relate to Machismo. (Fulbright alumni, Cohort 2010)

3.3.2 Perceived legitimacy for voice and action when returning home

In addition to understanding and embracing a more multicultural perspective towards events and a global ethos, interviewees also reported that they had adopted an active role in transferring their learning and growth when they returned to their home countries. Interviewees shared a sense of authority and legitimacy to express more inclusive views on multicultural questions and to provide a more global and broader perspective on societal issues in general. These things are the hallmark ingredients of an inclusive type of leadership.

For me that has provided a sense of leadership coming back here, because I am able to correct a lot of misconceptions. You know, I am able to have first hand experience and commentary on things. Again, I know it might be peripheral to the idea of leadership, but I think these things are important for a leader because they give me a voice, and it gives me a basis for that voice and a credibility for that voice. (Jordan Covvey, Cohort 2011)

It's made me much more I guess, politically activated you could argue, because I have more of a regard of our political nuances and what sort of things I think are important things that were not important. It's motivated me to become a member of a political party, write about specific political issues. (Jasdeep Bhalla, Cohort 2011)

3.3.3 Embracing multi-disciplinary diversity and diversity of ideas

One facet of experienced inclusiveness that surprised, moved and influenced interviewees emerged at cohort level. Interviewees pointed to mutual appreciation in Fulbright cohorts for their different academic disciplines. This stimulated more mutual respect and inclusiveness for different intellectual domains among students and accompanied the experience they had with cultural diversity.

One interviewee shared, 'What I had not anticipated was that the environment would be so collegial' (Khizer Husain, 1999). People that considered themselves relatively 'unconventional Fulbrighters' reported they felt welcome by the Fulbright community and enjoyed the respect from others and the multiple sources of knowledge.

The main thing that I really expected was solitude... But I learnt a lot about the relationship between my area of Circus Arts and a lot of other fields. Other Fulbrighters in the cohort had other areas of interest, but they all really respected my domain. Part of the reason they respected it was because Fulbright had respected it. So that was a really powerful thing. I was thinking, I'm going to walk in and be the strange person that does Circus Arts and people are going to be like 'How the hell did you get this, we are all scientists!' But that wasn't really the case, they were like 'Wow'. And this appreciation for my field carries on today. (Amy Cohen, Cohort 2010)

This immersion in and acknowledgement of ideas and practices across disciplines can, with time, elicit leadership behaviour that embraces complementary strengths and contributions, leading to a more inclusive and responsible approach. It also impacts precursors of leadership such as the underlying personal capacities we explore in more detail in the following.

3.3.4 Heightened tolerance

Interviewees regularly reported that they had become more accepting of others and of their views, cultures and different norms, and thus that they had developed higher levels of general tolerance for difference and diversity.

The personal aspect - the person I became I think and the tolerance I developed as an individual I think that's probably an important thing. (Jordan Covvey, Cohort 2011)

I think I grew up a lot in terms of tolerance because, as I said, before Fulbright I was almost very judgemental. (Alberto Herrera, Cohort 2008)

I'm sure it made me more adaptable and open than otherwise, yes. (Sanchia Berg, Cohort 1985)

3.3.5 Critical and independent inquiry for greater clarity

We could also detect that experiencing and accepting multiple perspectives, views, cultures and norms that allowed them as students and alumni to develop a more independent and critical mindset over time. This seems to enable them to query situations or assumptions more deeply and they aspire for more clarity and multi-faceted views on situations.

I think the Fulbright experience helped me become a critical thinker who approaches things from a multitude of different perspectives... Spending time in another country exposes you to different school of thoughts and helps you recognise that there are different ways of approaching issues outside of the American perspective. Having this understanding while working at a global firm is invaluable to my professional success. (Yaron Schwartz, Cohort 2011)

I could create a dotted line to come back to being at Fulbright. I don't know, but there's something in there about learning and pushing away from these comfortable technical structures to understanding what's at the heart of the issue? What does this person really need and care about? Trying to push away biases and have a clear look and sometimes showing where individuals or institutions have blind spots. (Khizer Husain, Cohort 1999)

A positive critical inquiry and the aim to reach broader clarity on topics, situations and decisions can be seen as a foundation for a leadership that aims to be true to its purpose. These capabilities also enable people to challenge and change situations and the status quo – a fundamental function of leadership.

3.3.6 Pursuing purpose-rich and outward-focused research

Various interviewees emphasised the importance of not allowing academia to become dominated by an inward focus. Instead they referred to the Fulbright episode as opening their identity as scientists towards making vital connections between the scientific world and the public and wider society. It emerged that, especially when in a leadership position in the field, one's mindset and role has to go beyond personal advantages via an outward focus towards the societal contributions of academic work. The following extracts exemplify this point:

For me it was about 'I need to get a degree at the end of this'. That was the immediate goal. But ultimately I believed that what I was doing to be important call. (Jordan Covvey, Cohort 2011)

I became very, very concerned really, that we as scientists, as a community, were totally failing to communicate with the public. And unfortunately most of us are rather expensive individuals, not in terms of the salaries we earn, but in terms of what it actually costs to do the science that we do. Research in my subject is really expensive and if people are going to put their hands in their pockets and pay for what you say you want to do, they want to have some idea why it's worth doing... I realised what a very bad job we do at that... So I set up a scheme – a competition – at our University here, basically insisting that all our final-stage graduate students had to put some time into preparing a presentation to the lay public, which was run as a competition with real judges and a real lay audience... In fact, quite a number of them said after the experience, they said 'you know that's one of the most useful things we've done in our entire time here. (Paul Engel, Cohort 1968)

3.3.7 A sense of humility and gratitude as a driver for giving back to society

One dynamic emerged from the interviews that prompted interviewees to engage with proactive behaviour and leadership for the sake of the wider society. They expressed and

felt a sense of humility, gratitude and moral obligation, which in turn, seemed to function as a driver for giving back to various spheres of society way beyond personal interests.

Many interviewees felt rather humble about what they brought to the programme; they were at times accompanied by feelings of insecurity or initial doubt about themselves and their worthiness for the Fulbright programme. Hence, quite a few interviewees emphasised how honoured they felt to be awarded the scholarship and become a part of such a great community of people.

I think it was nice to speak with other people who won the award. Everyone was like, 'Why have they chosen me?' And all of us felt really honoured to be afforded this gift which was nice because everyone was very humble. (Hazel Sheffield, Cohort 2011)

I wouldn't be where I am today without the Fulbright experience. I look back with such fond memories and such appreciation and gratitude. (Julie Markham, Cohort 2013)

Interviewees expressed a sense of being given an incredible and privileged opportunity that only few people can enjoy in their lives. While one could expect a sense of entitlement in highly selective programmes like Fulbright, interviewees to the contrary often emphasised the level of gratitude they felt and stressed the need to make the most out of this exceptional opportunity and then give back generously to Fulbright and beyond.

As I mentioned previously I also felt a sense of gratitude to Fulbright programme. They invested a lot of money in me. They took an opportunity – like I said, I appreciate the fact that I wasn't a person that on paper looks super prestigious. (...) And I kind of felt that I had not just my personal obligation to fulfil that goal, but also to give back to that programme and let them know that the investment they made in me was a worthwhile one. (Jordan Covey, Cohort 2011)

If someone invests in you at a formative time in your life you have that opportunity, perhaps responsibility that you can reciprocate that... To me Fulbright was status, money and responsibility. I had to come back to the UK. I think in accepting the Fulbright scholarship it gave me a perspective or reinforced the perspective – whilst I was in the United States that I would return to the United Kingdom... There was a moral obligation which I chose to take. (Jeremy Seigal, Cohort 1984)

This element of generously giving back manifested in a proactive engagement with responsibility, and at multiple layers:

The desire to give back was elicited by high levels of personal attainment in the programme, as some interviewees indicated that having this extraordinary opportunity was a drive at a personal level to utilise the programme as much as possible.

It also makes you think, 'I've been given this great opportunity and I must make sure that I make the most of it.' (Sanchia Berg, Cohort 1985)

The desire to give back was expressed as interviewees wanting the people around them to be positively impacted by the growth that had been made possible through the Fulbright programme. Interviewees expressed that having the opportunity to be part of Fulbright programme encouraged a sense of obligation towards the people in their personal network – and the belief that they should also benefit from their Fulbright experience.

I felt an obligation, not just to use the leadership capacity for my own personal development, but for the people that, I knew, could benefit from my work. (Jordan Covvey, Cohort 2011)

Giving back also manifested as engaging in social and global questions and communities. Some interviewees developed a drive to engage in leadership for the sake of the bigger picture; this is a typical attribute of leaders. Being proactive and an activist around a common purpose is one facet of how leadership is expressed and is independent of formal roles or authority. For instance, one interviewee highlighted that Fulbright has influenced her to become a world citizen. This continues to emerge in the person's work relating to the promotion of mutual understanding between different domains of society.

3.4 The impact of students' changes in leadership capacity on their lives, careers and on themselves

This section summarises results and findings for the question: What was the impact of such changes in your leadership capacity on your life, your career, yourself as a person? As noted earlier, because there can be various factors that can influence a person's life, career and leadership capacity over time, it is difficult, at the outset, to single out the Fulbright impact over the mid- to longer term. Also, while in the present case we separate individual aspects of mid- to long-term effects, it is worth remembering that in reality those facets are interwoven and not necessarily independent.

Furthermore, as noted elsewhere in the report, not all facets are direct elements of what is conventionally thought of as leadership. However, from a process and developmental perspective, students' personal attributes are crucial precursors or ingredients for their leadership behaviour and practices, and hence can help us to recognise how their overall leadership capacity has shifted towards a more contemporary and inclusive leadership notion and practice.

In the following we develop in more detail the longer term influence of the Fulbright experience on students along a set of six themes:

1. Fulbright as long-term influence and continuous resource
2. Student identity work and identity transformations
3. Personal purpose, career and professional trajectories
4. Continuous voluntary engagement in multicultural contexts and stretch experiences
5. Continuous preference for experiences with multicultural context and stretch
6. Long-term indirect and direct impact of Fulbright on inclusive, multicultural leadership capacity

3.4.1 Fulbright as long-term influence and continuous resource

Various interviewees expressed that the experience facilitated by Fulbright has had a long-term influence and is also an ongoing resource for their activities.

My time with Fulbright is a gift that keeps on giving. (Olivia Lichtenstein, Cohort 1980)

I feel like there are seeds of the Fulbright experience that kind of pop up at various times – even though it’s been a decade and a half, and one of those has been this idea of transformative impact. (Khizer Husain, Cohort 1999)

Basically Fulbright was a domino that knocked over into a lot of my follow-on success. I can trace almost every significant interaction back to that experience. (James Ellis, Cohort 1999)

Well, I think everybody, every Fulbrighter I talk to says ‘Fulbright changed my life’. And that’s absolutely true for me. I think it changed my life in a number of ways... It definitely had a very big impact on my choice of professional path and career... On a personal level, it really helped me open up my views and understanding of the world. If I had just stayed in the US and just worked in the US, I would have a very different understanding of life and the world, and as a result – ever since the Fulbright – I probably spend more than half my time living abroad. I’ve become very interested in and excited about living in different countries and exploring how people think differently. (John Sargent, Cohort 1994)

3.4.2 Student identity work and identity transformations

Taken together, the interviews indicate development and growth in students across various areas. Many of those areas point to transitions in deep personal attributes that overall show that students experienced the Fulbright journey, whether intentionally or not, as identity transformation.

Students went through some level of transformation regarding how they see and define themselves – both in general and, at times, in relation to aspects of leadership. This was

often related to long-lasting impact and could result in more proactive involvement in their areas of interest and society at large, hence indicating a transformation towards an inclusive and proactive leadership understanding and engagement.

I think that for me that was such an important experience to know that you should own who you are and how you come to be. (Julie Markham, Cohort 2013)

I am a Muslim, but I had to go abroad to build this vocabulary around what does it mean for me... I felt like I had discovered new aspects of my identity in those informal conversations, again something that was new to me... On a parallel track to my professional trajectory, it was building, I guess, an awareness of my identity and then the vocabulary to communicate that with a larger circle of people. I went on to lead at a national non-profit called American Muslim Health Professionals (AMHP). (Khizer Husain, Cohort 1999)

I have no doubt that there have been numerous benefits, but it's more changing the way I kind of identify with myself, the way I interact with others. It's incredibly broad. (Jasdeep Bhalla, Cohort 2011)

3.4.3 Personal purpose, career and professional trajectories

In various cases, Fulbright radically changed the personal and professional purposes and career trajectories of those interviewed, as well as their perceptions of engaging in leadership. The excerpts below describe how students felt Fulbright had worked as a purpose-creating process. Building on a pre-existing sense of social responsibility, one interviewee, for instance, shared that Fulbright had further stimulated her and given her the courage to define a leadership stance and to follow a more activist career. Others underline the ongoing effect that the Fulbright period continues to have on their career.

At the time I applied, I was very engaged in student activism at a local and national level. Through the Fulbright programme, I went to study in the UK and also had the opportunity to travel throughout southern and eastern Africa. The perspective I gained from leaving the US and traveling abroad deepened my commitment to social change. I gained clarity about the opportunities in front of me to follow a more academic track or a more activist track. I feel so clear now that I'm on purpose in the work that I'm doing, engaging with other leaders and supporting their work in the world, leading in the way that I am. Even if I wasn't completely conscious of the magnitude of the choice I was making at the time, I see it very clearly now. (Carrie Brunk, Cohort 2002)

I know I've kind of touched on this, but because it was so prominent in my experience, I wouldn't be where I am today without the Fulbright experience. (Julie Markham, Cohort 2013)

It did change the whole trajectory of my career and at that point I was young. (...) From a professional side of things, I swear that this will probably follow me my entire life. (Jordan Covvey, Cohort 2011)

3.4.4 Continuous preference for experiences with multicultural context and stretch

Some interviewees report that having once broken with an understanding and interpretation of events dominated by a one-country perspective and instead having adopted a more multi-faceted view, had influenced an ongoing preference to look for multicultural, multi-dimensional settings in life and work.

Fulbright is so special and powerful, because it allows you to learn about another country in a deep and meaningful way. And you bring that skill back with you to the United States and maintain a less American-centric perspective. That is truly valuable. I think it also inspired me to seek out new opportunities, similar to the Fulbright scholarship, to push the envelope further in terms of how to think and act in ways not only informed just by American views. (Yaron Schwartz, Cohort 2011)

3.4.5 Long-term indirect and direct impact of Fulbright on inclusive, multicultural leadership capacity

The interviews surfaced different ways in which personal development from the Fulbright experience indirectly, but in a fundamental way, helped students to interpret and navigate the work and leadership situations they faced after the programme. The study also revealed more direct, lasting effects from Fulbright participation and the impact of its inclusive, multicultural and multi-faceted experience and philosophy on the students' practice of leadership. The excerpts below exemplify some of the findings.

Obviously it wasn't named the leadership academy of Fulbright or whatever it is. But all these things are part of those aspects we were talking about, that need to be cultivated in order to become an effective leader. (Alberto Herrera, Cohort 2008)

I developed most of my senses of leadership based on my studies and at my first five years of working at my main professional job, after that programme. I really had an up-close view of what leadership means and I was well prepared for that by the Fulbright.

I'd say in terms of leadership, for me, I don't think it was something that I was born with. I think it's a journey... And so, for me, it's been sort of a life long journey evolving into a leader, of which the Fulbright experience was absolutely critical to that.

(James Ellis, Cohort 1999)

How did Fulbright impact my leadership style? We – I founded [a company] with my best friend, also a Fulbrighter from medical school... We had started as a social impact company, or social entrepreneurs. Our whole aim was to improve access to healthcare, to underserved populations globally, but by trying to bring a lot of innovative, private sector approaches... And what happened was, the team that we had built were primarily all [locals], who came from these communities and who had a lot of work in community sort of healthcare and fieldwork. And their view of the world and how you do things was radically different from ours... It was a very nice reminder – life reminder – that the way you work in New York as an American in a crazy consulting company doesn't actually work in most of the world... I think that sort of brought me back to the Fulbright and the value of what I got from it. It was a very important lesson. (John Sargent, Cohort 1994)

3.5 How the process of building and using leadership capacity and its precursors unfolds across pre, during and post award periods

This section addresses RQ2: How does the process of building and showing leadership capacity unfold across pre, during and post award periods? We found that Fulbright offers a space in which students' identities become more malleable and hence more open to changes. This malleability of identities enables a set of transformative processes that crisscross the personal, professional and social aspects of their lives, careers and ambitions, and that cultivate leadership capabilities. The chance for mobility, the intercultural experiences, the leap of faith in its students' ideas, the extracurricular activities, the encouragement of autonomous and independent educational modes, the mixing of different academic disciplines and industries, the dynamics developed among the Fulbright students – all of these work together to shape the conditions that our interviewees identified as being nurturing of their leadership capabilities. In other words, it is the conjugation of all the above that produced life transformations in students, including the enhancement of leadership.

As reported above, the enhancement and development of leadership capabilities was not an initial expectation of the interviewees with regards to their Fulbright programme. Similarly, Fulbright itself lacks a fully developed ambition regarding a specific notion of leadership and its practice. Even so, one key insight of the study is that the interviewees shared an advanced and contemporary understanding of leadership (see section 2.2). Moreover, the present analysis and insights reveal not only some connections between the Fulbright experience and enhanced leadership capacity, but also enriched with personal attributes of students that function as precursor of heightened leadership capacity. The report also shows, as in the previous section, that transformations in these two areas had an impact on the continuous, long-term trajectory of a student's life, career and identities regarding leadership capacity.

The shared experiences of the interviewees have powerfully shown that Fulbright facilitates an inclusive, diverse, meaningful, mutually supportive, generative and developmental platform and process to enable the above. Fulbright does this **directly** with their activities

and the environment it provides for their members and cohorts, and **indirectly** by facilitating the financial, logistical and social support so that students can join academic programmes.

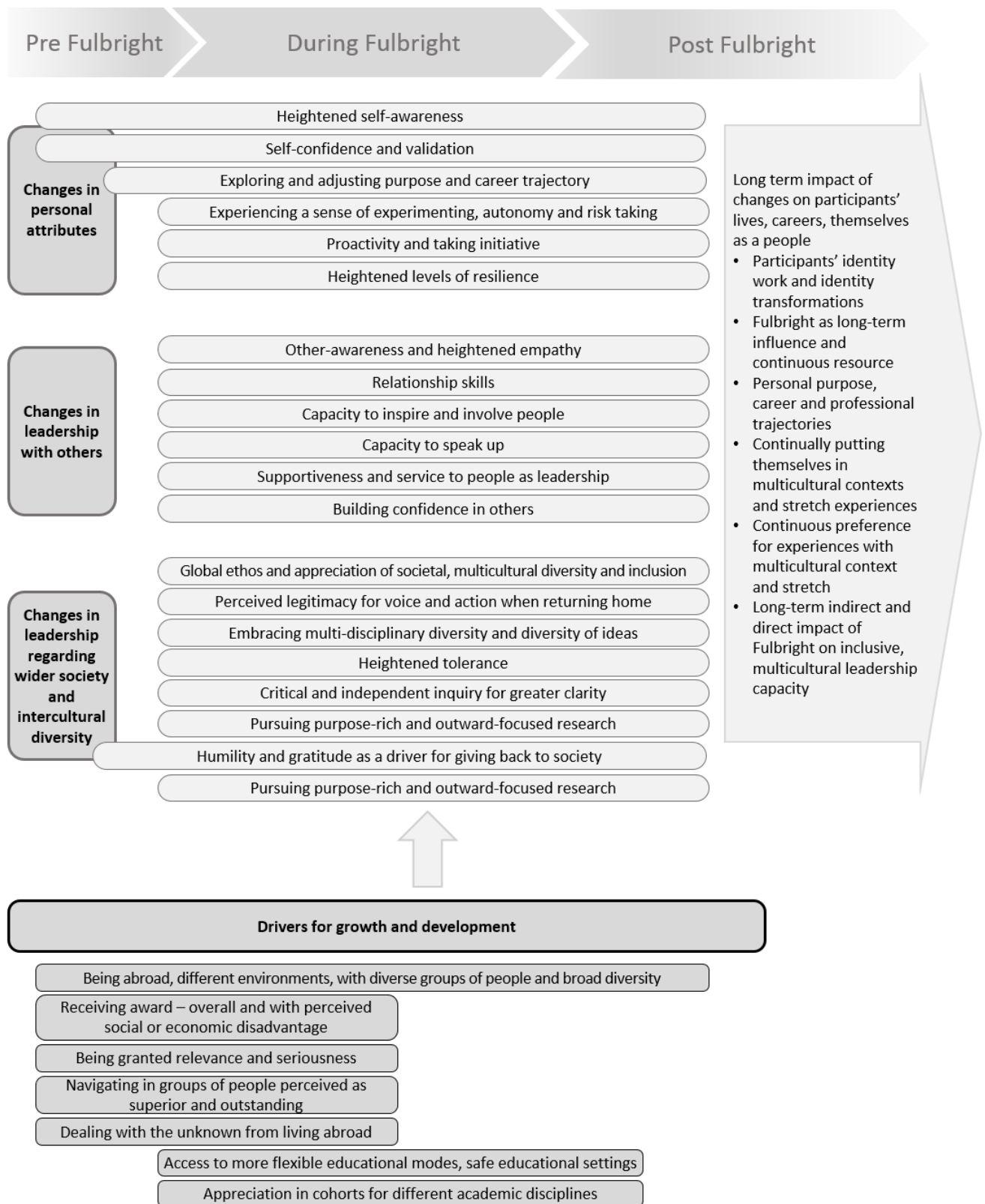
While we distinguish different drivers and elements of the development, students experienced their own personal and leadership-related development often as the interplay of a diverse set of lived and immersive experiences. The following exemplifies this.

Through the interstitial moments and the side conversations I was able to have with other Fulbrighters about anything – the most mundane things to really, really deep subjects – and being able to find ways to just relate in a way that I had never experienced before. (MaSovaida Morgan, Cohort 2012)

Such a context has a transformative impact on Fulbright students and their leadership potential. Consequently, an interviewee responded to the question as to whether the Fulbright experience had helped them develop leadership capabilities with: Oh yes, without a doubt.

While the previous sections looked in detail into the different aspects of the drivers, dynamics and impact of the developmental process, this section provides a temporal overview. While it is impossible and unnecessary to have a fully accurate positioning, we aim to locate the development of specific facets along the journey of Fulbright students and its different phases – pre, during and post scholarship.

Figure 2 Process of building and using leadership capacity and its precursors across pre, during and post award periods



3.5.1 Changes in personal attributes

- From a temporal lens, growth in specific personal attributes seems to start early in the **pre-Fulbright phase**, sometimes even before applying for and being awarded the Fulbright award, for instance heightened self-awareness or self-confidence.
- From the study it emerges that in general the facets such as heightened levels of resilience start their development later **during the actual Fulbright experience** and the phase abroad.
- We can assume from some interviews that the development of aspects such as the above continues to an extent **after finishing Fulbright** because of application and continued reflection.

3.5.2 Changes in leadership with others

- Most of the effects of the Fulbright experience regarding leadership in situations that require working with others started **during the Fulbright scholarship phase**. We can assume that this is because these underlying strengths and leadership capacities require some level of interaction with other cohort members, as afforded by the broader context and setting of the scholarship, rather than being the product of the sort of reflective sense-making typically achieved at the individual level.
- As the main impetus for growth might stem from the actual exchange, these capacities will undergo some level of continuous development in the **post-Fulbright phase** because students, the as Fulbright alumni, will experiment with the acquired skills and put them into action.

3.5.3 Changes in leadership regarding the wider society and intercultural diversity

- Most of the advancement in personal and leadership capacity with regards to wider society and intercultural diversity was initiated **during the Fulbright scholarship phase**. To influence those facets in students it seems to need some level of intense and immersive experience in new social environments and societal challenges.

- As an exception, we consider the facet of ‘Humility and gratitude as a driver for giving back to society’. Here the roots for sustaining or developing humility and gratitude towards Fulbright actually start in the **pre-Fulbright phase**, when students are being selected for a scholarship. This initiates the ambition, and its attendant activities, to give back to broader causes directed towards the wider society.

3.5.4 Long-term impact of changes on students’ and alumni’s lives, careers and on themselves

In Figure 2 we position the areas relating to the long-term impact on students’ life, careers and themselves as starting in the post-Fulbright phase. Most of these areas can, however, be traced back to facets of growth and development in students’ personal attributes and leadership capacity initiated in the pre- or during Fulbright phases.

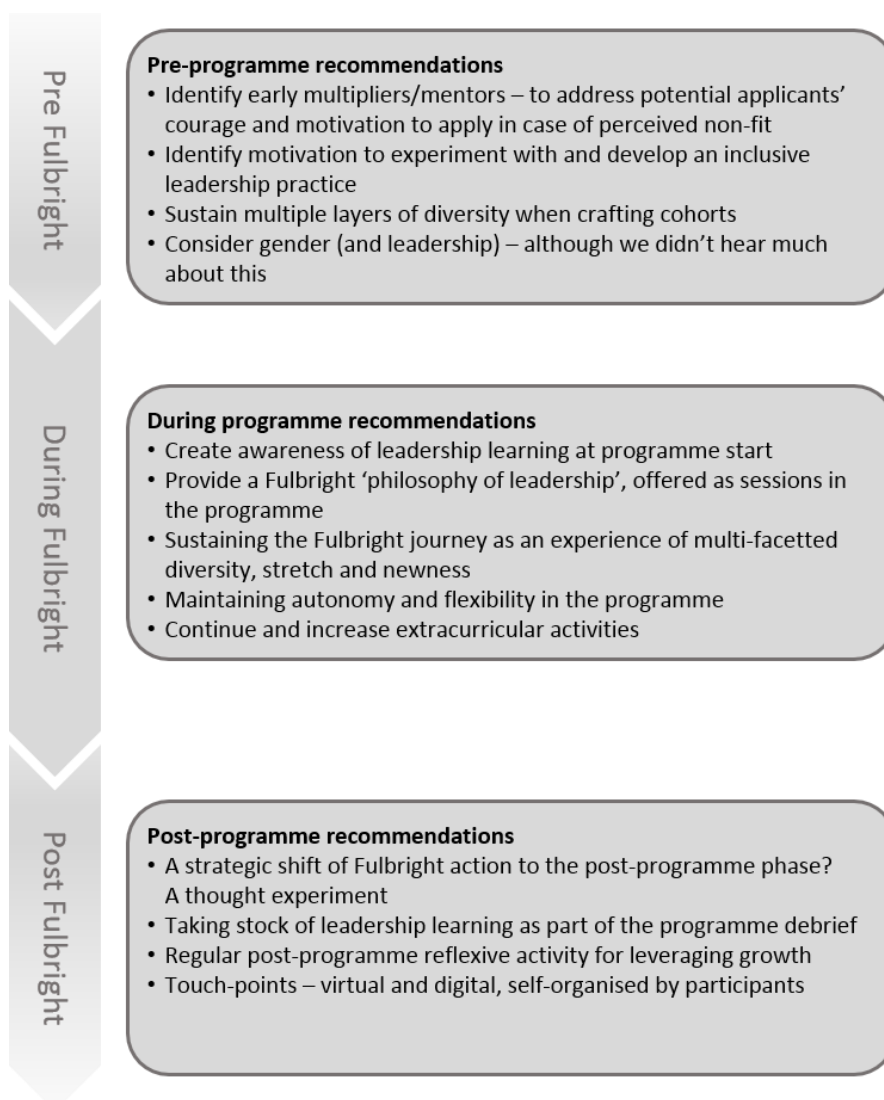
As shown above, we can identify an ongoing interwoven process: first, the building and growth of students’ capacity, and, second, the impact on the various spheres of their life. These episodes are probably at times reciprocal and mutually supportive and generative.

Part 4 – Conclusions and recommendations

This part of the report aims to provide Fulbright with a starting point for reflection and a way to identify future initiatives for the Fulbright programmes that could help in strengthening student leadership capacity as a further outcome of the scholarship journey. We present a combination of recommendations from interviewees, addressing constraints they perceived, and suggestions derived from the study insights. We note that, overall, the interviewees either did not at all mention or rarely mentioned constraints they felt Fulbright had put on them that had restricted their learning journeys. We focus on recommendations around leadership as the main aim of this research, but we are aware that further conclusions can be drawn for other areas of activity.

We provide suggestions for pre, during and post programme phases (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 *Conclusions and recommendations along programme phases*



4.1 Pre-programme recommendations

4.1.1 Identify early multipliers/mentors – to address applicants' courage and motivation to apply in case of perceived non-fit

Several times from interviewees, we heard that they would not have applied to Fulbright by themselves due, for instance, to a personal preconception of being a poor fit for the programme or lacking the skills and achievements necessary for a successful bid. Other people had the advantage of encouragement from an undergraduate lecturer or early mentor – someone instrumental in helping them to take the first step in overcoming such self-limiting beliefs.

Fulbright might consider how to reach out to such multipliers or mentors – such as faculty or school teachers – who could function as a link between potential applicants and Fulbright.

For a contemporary view of leadership practice it would be helpful to continue to have different types of students in the cohorts, representing a range from naturally driven and confident students to those who have more self-doubt, but who have the potential to grow immensely during the programme. In broad terms, the former might experience the Fulbright programme as a humbling journey while for the latter the programme will have an impact on how they work with others and enable those in their networks in the future, both of which are key features of modern, multi-faceted and inclusive leadership.

4.1.2 Identify in candidates the motivation to experiment with and develop an inclusive leadership practice

The development of inclusive leadership capacity may be one way to leverage the impact of the Fulbright programme. If this were to become a pillar of the Fulbright experience, then the selection process could specify desired aspects of potential applicants. Recruitment could aim to identify people with a motivation to develop on a personal level and to experiment with and to develop an inclusive leadership practice. These would be people

with a growth mindset who appreciate the opportunity to learn leadership in congruence with and in service to both the mission of Fulbright and society at large.

Again, careful consideration needs to be given to identify those who, perhaps because of socialisation or other factors, are unable to see such qualities in themselves or who are just not familiar with the terms, language and ideas of personal development or leadership, but who nonetheless have the potential to grow and to become influential.

4.1.3 Sustain multiple layers of diversity when crafting cohorts

We would also encourage Fulbright to continue to favour and bear in mind the diversity of its applicants with the understanding that multiple possible facets of diversity can signify inclusivity and that the maintenance of a diverse cohort offers a first layer of multicultural and diverse experiences for students.

I would recommend that, because they've invested so much into diversity of people and diversity of programmes, they continue to make sure that they opportunities are available to everybody. (Jordan Covvey, Cohort 2011)

As the data shows, encounters with a diverse group of people in the cohort, the educational programmes and the local context of the programme all offer sources of learning and an opportunity to develop one's personal, professional and social abilities, helping the individual to navigate and engage in leadership.

One specific facet highlighted by one of the interviewees is that the Fulbright commission should continue to 'push for even more socio-economic diversity' (James Ellis, Cohort 1999). In other words, Fulbright has to balance the provision of elite opportunities and experiences without leading students to become elitist themselves. Achieving this would ensure that Fulbright students could strongly engage with their sense of purpose, proactivity and inclusiveness. As leadership resides in the perception of others, it is likely that this ability to engage would be undermined if people perceived Fulbright students as excessively self-focused or detached from others. Such a perception would inevitably hinder the individual's ability to develop high-quality leadership rapport with others and so their impact as leaders

would be greatly diminished. However, interestingly for Fulbright, our sample has not surfaced this potential problem.

4.1.4 Consider gender topics – also in view of leadership

Gender-related facets did not surface as part of this report; interestingly, only one interviewee raised it in some depth. We are aware that this one voice is the exception that proves the rule regarding the significance of gender in this study. However, we highlight it here to offer an important and timely perspective, and also because of the deep impact that Fulbright had had on this one individual in this regard.

During the interview, the person spoke about the contrast in their life experience before and after Fulbright. Before the programme she often felt patronised and undermined by male employees and colleagues who considered her little more than a young girl with nothing important to contribute. The Fulbright episode was, for her, one of the first times that she was acknowledged as a well-rounded person and not belittled because of her age or gender. The award itself, the validation of her ideas and abilities, and the meaningful interactions with other students and alumni continues to have a sustained impact on her post-Fulbright life to this day.

Given this silence about gender related issues overall and with regard to leadership capacity, Fulbright could:

- further explore the role of gender in the Fulbright journey
- create an early awareness around gender and inclusivity among Fulbright students

4.2 During programme recommendations

4.2.1 Create awareness of leadership learning at programme start

Fulbright could work with the initial expectations of the students and create awareness of leadership learning at the beginning of the programme. When we asked interviewees about what outcomes or impact they expected from the programme, none considered the enhancement of leadership capabilities to be part of the Fulbright experience. Similarly, they did not necessarily anticipate the level of personal growth that they went on to experience (a typical precursor to leadership capacity). Such considerations do not seem to be part of their initial sense-making when they start the programme. Nevertheless, all interviewees reported some form of development in their leadership capacity. We found that this outcome did not differ between recent and latter day cohorts

To leverage this opportunity, Fulbright could do the following in the early phase of the student journey:

- More directly and openly create an awareness of expectations around impact on students' leadership learning
- Sustain or intensify efforts to create more explicit opportunities for students to advance leadership skills and attitudes
- Implement a regular panel study to assess Fulbright students' leadership learning, starting at the time of scholarship award and continuing for a number of years after the programme

4.2.2 Provide a Fulbright ‘philosophy of leadership’

– offered as sessions in the programme

If the expectation of Fulbright is to grow sustained leadership capacity in students (and to thereby enable a specific leadership philosophy), then, to complement students’ preparation for their scholarship journey, Fulbright could add specific sessions to the programme to emphasise its leadership ambition.

To that end, Fulbright could do some preparatory work to define in more detail its approach and vision for leadership according to the philosophy it favours. To do this, Fulbright could build on the insights from this report, which provides the perspectives of a sample of Fulbright alumni, as well as on the work that the Fulbright Commission had carried out in preparation for this study. Both pieces of work pointed broadly towards an inclusive, culturally sensitive, purpose-rich sense of leadership for society (see Figure 1 for more details). Taken together, this is a fruitful starting point for Fulbright to schedule work that looks more clearly into defining an ambitious, contemporary, action-oriented and sustainable notion of leadership, reflective of the philosophy and principles of the organisation. Building on the above, Fulbright could schedule in sessions early on and during the programme in which students are shown cases, stories or reflections from alumni in the sample and beyond.

However, the introduction and the language of these activities and reflections would need careful consideration. Students join from various disciplines and social spheres; leadership is not necessarily a concept that everyone is familiar with, can relate to or has the confidence to engage in.

4.2.3 Sustain the Fulbright journey as an experience of multi-faceted diversity, stretch and newness

The findings show that the various layers of diversity, such as those regarding ethnicity, culture or socio-economic background, provided many triggers for profound personal growth and leadership learning.

In a world that is, for many students, more globalised and connected than ever before, one challenge for the Fulbright Commission, and a point worthy of future observation, is to sustain the opportunity for students to experience those levels of diversity, positive stretch and newness during their programmes. Our findings show that there is no difference for cohorts from across the decades – that the advantages of experiencing diversity are a perennial benefit to students. This might indicate that, despite a more globally connected world (thanks to significant advances in technology and travel), the immersive character of Fulbright seems always to have offered a unique dimension of multicultural and personal learning that can advance mutual understanding.

Also it should be noted that, depending on socio-economic background, not all students will have access to the globalised world, and hence for them not much has changed with regards to accessing Fulbright growth opportunities.

4.2.4 Maintain autonomy and flexibility in the programme

Experiencing autonomy and flexibility during Fulbright gave students a sense of confidence with lasting effects on proactivity, purpose and resilience, all of which act as precursors for leadership capability. As such, the commission should focus on maintaining this autonomy and flexibility – or sustaining, in the words of one interviewee, Fulbright’s attitude of openness, generosity and faith towards the individual.

Fulbright will still need to navigate the dilemma of providing limited constraints and a great sense of flexibility, without at the same time inadvertently eliciting in students a sense of having been neglected or denied access to pastoral care. The tendency to interpret levels of autonomy in different ways will of course depend on the personal attributes of each individual.

4.2.5 Continue and increase extracurricular activities

The final suggestion was initiated by interviewees. They advocated for a continuation and increase of extracurricular activities. In offering activities that not everyone typically has access to – such as the parliament, dedicated art spaces, laboratories, lectures by outstanding people, opportunities to travel, to contribute to social services and so on – the

Fulbright programme provides its students with much more than a scholarship. By continuing to offer the above-mentioned activities, Fulbright can remain a cultivator of the sorts of life-changing experiences that can help students to become more empathetic and well-rounded leaders. Distinct extracurricular activities could allow students to encounter leadership role models who personify Fulbright's leadership philosophy and principles.

4.3 Post-programme recommendations

4.3.1 A strategic shift of Fulbright action to the post-programme phase? A thought experiment

For Fulbright, the focus is on creating the academic output and learning *during* the programme. With regard to the Fulbright mission and the ambition to focus on how students' and alumni's leadership capacity can further this mission *after* the actual programme, activities that revisit and reinforce the personal strengths and leadership capacity post programme can be a valuable route.

Overall, Fulbright could carry out a thought experiment and consider whether there may be a slight but strategic shift from focusing on the pre and during phases, to include the *post*-programme phase more as well. There are two potential areas of engagement:

Continuous development of alumni after the programme: As observable in many examples from the interviews, Fulbright enables many long-term effects in its students and alumni. The additional focus on post-programme activities could continue to generate and sustain personal growth and advance leadership capacity, contributing to a life-long individual developmental journey.

Leverage continuous impact on the wider society from the students' and alumni's academic output, personal growth and leadership capacity: Fulbright could adopt a more active stance in providing activities that utilise and leverage the students' and alumni's academic output, personal growth and leadership capacity, to create more impact and change in the wider society based on Fulbright principles and philosophy. Fulbright could help to cultivate a post-programme network for mutual activity, contributing towards a more inclusive, multicultural and diverse society.

4.3.2 Taking stock of leadership learning as part of the programme debrief

This element might technically be relevant to the during-programme phase. But we position it here, after the programme, due to a recognition of the benefit that time can afford; time after the programme allows students to digest the experience and resettle into their lives.

Fulbright could provide a stock-taking process or activity as part of the debrief, focusing on leadership learning. This would build on the conception of leadership as developed by Fulbright, as suggested above. It asks students to reflect on their progress and thereby to surface or leverage personal growth and leadership learning. This may also be a source of stories and narratives that showcase the Fulbright impact in this area of activity, both immediately after and over time, by revisiting the students and their stories.

4.3.3 Regular post-programme reflexive activity for leveraging personal growth

One of the observations from the study is that the alumni enjoyed the study interviews and used them for reflection. They regularly expressed the personal value of recollecting precious Fulbright memories, experiences and learnings. They did not expect this positive impact when agreeing to the interviewees.

Subsequently, Fulbright could employ a form of reflective interviewing, perhaps five years after the end of their study. This would give alumni the opportunity to re-surface personal learning and focus on the impact that the programme has had on them and their network. It could be carried out by Fulbright alumni.

This would reconnect former students with the Fulbright community and rewire affiliations and mutual support. Fulbright would further establish itself as a continuous learning partner and creator of long-term impact.

4.3.4 Touch-points – virtual and digital, self-organised by students and alumni

Overall our interviewees consistently suggested more regular touch-points and extra-curricular activities to re-connect with Fulbright. Some of them suggested that Fulbright should take greater advantage of social media, while others recommended more physical gatherings. Fulbright should carefully consider the location of such touch-points, ensuring a variety of possible locations, with particular concern to meet the needs of those outside of London. While financial restrictions will always be a factor, it is important to bear in mind Fulbright's philosophy of inclusivity, which aims to create mutual understanding via physical and virtual multi-locality in the US and UK.

Fulbright might consider how to leverage self-organised activities by previous and current students to achieve this. A huge share of programme students have developed a deep bond and gratitude towards Fulbright, as we have reported. Fulbright might be able to further draw on this goodwill to support long-term personal growth and leadership impact.

This final quote offers a nice reminder of this deep relationship; it also captures the value to Fulbright of having such diverse and interesting groups of people passing through its programmes over the years.

What I like about Fulbright is what it stands for, and its origins in promoting mutual understanding. I felt that was much more appealing than a purely technical scholarship... The benefit was definitely that rounded experience, both directly through the Fulbright Programme, and indirectly through the ethos it cultivated.

(Stephen Frost, 2003)

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