HRD—LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR WOMEN ON THE LOWER RUNGS OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL LADDER: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY

DIXIE DUGAN

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY
MUNCIE, INDIANA

March, 2010
DEDICATION

To my parents, Carol Virginia Kelly Dugan and James Foster Chapman Dugan, who gave me life, joy and the desire to help myself by helping others.

To my husband, John Carter Truax, my sister, Sandra Sue Dugan Burnham and my daughter, Kelly Jones Martel, who continue to inspire me to achieve my greatest accomplishments.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My appreciation must first be extended to my husband, John Truax, for giving me the love, encouragement, and space to accomplish this goal. My daughter, Kelly Jones Martel, gave me her words of wisdom and support when I needed it the most. My son-in-law, Nic Martel, assisted with some of my formatting questions.

Aside from these three, there were numerous people who helped me in this educational quest including the following:

Dr. Michelle Glowacki-Dudka, committee chair, and the other committee members: Dr. Joseph Armstrong, Dr. Ronald Dolan and Dr. Jennifer Bott. I appreciate their support during this process.

My extended family for their understanding and love which allowed me to concentrate on the many challenges at Ball State University for the past seven years.

Dr. A.Z. Soforenko and Randy Soforenko, along with my co-workers for encouraging and supporting me along this journey.

All of my friends, for believing in me and giving me the many words of encouragement to help me through this endeavor.

Dr. Peter Murk, for introducing me to the world of adult and community education and for being such an excellent role model and teacher.

All of the speakers who so graciously agreed to be a part of this research project.

The SOS (Students Offering Support) group who promised to keep me accountable throughout this dissertation process. Your pats on the back helped smooth the rough edges.
The purpose of this case study, HRD—Leadership Training for Women on the Lower Rungs of the Organizational Ladder: A Qualitative Study, was to determine the responses of a group of women to a series of classes on leadership development and to perceive what they might have gained from this experience. These classes were modeled after those offered by the Academy for Community Leadership and offered to a group of workers who are not normally slated for this type of training.

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. Given completion of an eight-week program introducing leadership skill enhancement opportunities, how did the participants describe this experience?

2. At the conclusion of the training, what types of leadership opportunities did participants express an interest in pursuing?

3. What barriers did participants note that might prevent them from pursuing their interests?
4. What unexpected outcomes emerged from providing the Academy for Community Leadership model of curriculum to women who typically do not have access to it?

The participants in the study were Residential Assistants working in a group home setting for an organization that provides residential services for adults with intellectual disabilities/developmental disabilities in east central Indiana. The women in the study did not hold a designated leadership position.

Through a series of eight two-hour classes the participants were introduced to various topics related to leadership such as leadership styles, teambuilding, workplace diversity, problem solving, communication and action plan development. The data collection methods included a weekly evaluation, journaling, non-participant observation and a post-session interview.

The results revealed that the participants had increased their self confidence, and they felt better prepared to do their current job. They expressed aspirations to continue their education as well as to seek promotions. They came to understand the qualities of leadership that they already possessed as well as areas for improvement.

The results of this qualitative study suggest that leadership training should be offered to groups such as CNAs, direct support professionals and others on the lower rungs of the organizational ladder who are not typically offered this type of training.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION ................................................................................................................................. iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................ iv
ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................. v
TABLE OF CONTENTS ............................................................................................................... vii
LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................................ ix
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................... 1
  Background ............................................................................................................................... 1
  Women on the Lower Rungs ................................................................................................. 4
  Subjectivity Statement ......................................................................................................... 8
  Statement of the Purpose and Research Questions .......................................................... 11
  Limitations ............................................................................................................................. 13
  Definitions .............................................................................................................................. 15
  Summary ................................................................................................................................. 15
CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW ..................................................................................... 16
  Adult Education .................................................................................................................... 16
  Human Resource Development .......................................................................................... 18
  HRD and Leadership Development ................................................................................... 19
  Leadership Development for Women on the Lower Rungs of the Organizational
  Ladder .................................................................................................................................. 22
  Summary ................................................................................................................................. 24
CHAPTER THREE METHOD ......................................................................................................... 26
  Qualitative Research Method ............................................................................................... 26
  Case Study Methodology ..................................................................................................... 26
  Subjects of Study ................................................................................................................... 27
  Data Collection ....................................................................................................................... 29
  Structure of the Classes ....................................................................................................... 31
  Data Analysis .......................................................................................................................... 33
  Summary ................................................................................................................................. 39
CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS .......................................................................................................... 40
  Session 1: Introductions ........................................................................................................ 41
  Session 2: Leadership Styles ............................................................................................... 44
  Session 3: Teambuilding ....................................................................................................... 46
  Session 4: Cultural Awareness in the Workplace ............................................................... 47
  Session 5: Problem Solving/Consensus Building .............................................................. 48
  Session 6: Vision/Developing your own Action Plan ........................................................ 51
  Session 7: Communication and Leadership ....................................................................... 54
  Session 8: Wrap-up and a Word from the Company President ........................................ 55
  Categories and Themes ......................................................................................................... 58
  Leadership .............................................................................................................................. 58
  Communication ..................................................................................................................... 61
  Teamwork ............................................................................................................................... 63
  General Responses to the Sessions ..................................................................................... 63
  Self-esteem and Self-confidence ......................................................................................... 64
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1  Assigned pseudonyms........................................35
Table 2  Data sources.....................................................36
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Background

Organizations that are committed to investing in their workforce provide opportunities for human resource development. The importance of human resource development cannot be underestimated. A focused effort to develop talent should result in a more productive and innovative workforce which consistently delivers quality customer service (Bolman and Deal, 2003).

When framing leadership development within the context of human resource development (HRD), it may be helpful to examine the many facets of leadership. According to Daft (2005),

Leadership is more than a set of skills; it relies on a number of subtle personal qualities that are hard to see but are very powerful. These include things like enthusiasm, integrity, courage, and humility. First of all, good leadership springs from a genuine passion for the work and a genuine concern for other people. (p. 20)

DePree (1989) also points out that an important responsibility of leaders is to help “identify, develop and nurture future leaders” (p. 14). Unfortunately, those already in leadership positions are often the ones who are selected for further leadership
development. According to Kristick (2009), “leadership development is often reserved for senior executives” (p. 50). Poplin Gosetti and Rusch (1995) wrote

The texts, conversation, writings, and professional activities that construct our knowing and understanding of leadership come from an embedded privileged perspective, which largely ignores issues of status, gender, and race and insidiously perpetuates a view of leadership that discourages diversity and equity. (p. 12)

Theories about leadership continue to evolve. Daft (2005), in *The Leadership Experience*, summarized various theories starting with the great man theory. This theory adopted the premise that all leaders were male and were born with the characteristics necessary to lead. Trait theory followed with the assumption that certain traits such as height or intelligence would identify individuals as having the potential to lead. In the 1950s, researchers began developing the behavioral perspective which considered the behavior of the leader rather than their status or the traits they possessed. The contingency theory followed and examined how leadership was impacted by context or situation. Other ideas included the influence theory also known as the charismatic leader, which focused on the personality of the leader. According to Daft (2005), relational theory examined the relationship between the leader and the followers.

Recent theoretical focus has been on how leaders facilitate change. Eikenberry (2007) wrote that it is important for leaders to be able to “influence, manage, lead, and champion change” both at the individual, team and organizational level (p. 42). One contemporary theory is Robert Greenleaf’s servant leadership, which Daft (2005) explained is leadership turned upside-down. This theory describes the leader as someone
whose top priority is service to their team, the customers, stakeholders and the general public. Some of the characteristics of this type of leadership include “shared authority, empowerment and building a community of trust” (Daft, 2005, p. 230). Greenleaf believed that, “true leadership emerges from those whose primary motivation is a deep desire to help others” (Beazley, Beggs & Spears, 2003, p. 15). This theory is similar to the cultural practice of the Native Americans, who traditionally focused on “self-mastery, inner strength, and the development of individual abilities that contribute to the well-being of the tribe. In essence, the concept of leadership from an American Indian perspective is one of service—to and for the betterment of the community” (Portman & Garrett, 2005, p. 287).

Parks (2005) in her book, *Leadership Can Be Taught*, explained “that people cannot simply be told what they need to know in the complexity of practice. They must learn to see for themselves” (p. 5). She suggested the opportunity to practice leadership; to learn by doing. She outlined a method where a class itself becomes an opportunity to learn from the social group that develops. Even though traditional teaching methods are utilized such as lecture, readings, videos, group discussion, reflective writing and coaching, she goes beyond this to use the group itself as a sort of laboratory to discover the strengths of the students.

Resilience is another factor to consider in developing leadership skills. “Resilience has been described as the ability to thrive despite harmful or risky circumstances or experiences” (Baldwin, Maldonado, Lacy and Efender, 2004, p. 5). Some participants in their research study described resiliency as being competitive, committed, positive and determined.
Bolman and Deal (2003) presented leadership in what they described as four frames: structural; human resources; political; and symbolic. The structural frame suggested that the leader is primarily concerned with the task to be accomplished, concentrating on the facts and logic. The focus is on the process or structure necessary to get the job done. The human resources frame firmly placed the people at the center of the enterprise. This type of leader views his/her job as primarily a supportive and empowering role (for example, the servant leadership model). The political frame recognized power as the driving force between all interactions in the organization. And finally, the symbolic frame depended on the leader’s application of meaning and insight to the organizational values.

Women on the Lower Rungs

The opportunity for leadership training for women on the lower rungs of the organizational ladder is limited. They may not see themselves as having the potential to assume leadership responsibilities. Women in this group may not have the opportunity for non-formal leadership development training.

In this dissertation I described, using a case study method, the experiences of a group of women employed on the lower rungs of the organizational ladder as they progressed through a leadership curriculum. According to Merriam and Simpson (2000), “case study has been used to describe and/or evaluate the efficacy of a new program or new approach to ongoing problems” (p. 111). I observed the struggles that the group was faced with as well as how they coped with the issues as they emerged (Stake, 1995). There were opportunities to observe the leadership styles of the participants in this group as well as how those styles might have been enhanced during the eight-week course.
According to Stake (1995) “the real business of case study is particularization, not
generalization” (p. 8). I set out to capture, describe and analyze the experiences of one
particular group of women. This group was treated as one single case study.

Leadership Training Options

There are few leadership development classes available to those who are typically
not offered leadership development through their work environments. Rarely does an
individual self-enroll and pay the class fee themselves (N. Norris, personal interview,
July 7, 2009). There are a few local programs that provide leadership training to the
community and are possible models for the curriculum of this study. In Muncie, Indiana,
LEAD ECI offers a series of eight classes providing leadership training at the cost of
$700.00 (LEAD ECI website, 2009). Employers typically pay for leadership training for
those who have already attained a leadership position within the company; this is not
often the case for employees who are not in a leadership role. Russell Martin Associates
in Indianapolis, Indiana offers another option, the Leadership Academy. This is an all-
day training activity, presented over four days, focusing on leadership competencies,
interpersonal relations, managing change and action planning. The cost of this training is
$695 (Trainingliveandonline website, 2009).

Another possible avenue for leadership development for women on the lower
organizational rungs is a program based on the Academy for Community Leadership
(ACL) training. The Academy for Community Leadership prepares individuals to assume
leadership roles within their communities. Founded in 1979, the non-profit Community
Leadership Association acts as the clearing-house for various programs offered
throughout the country. Their headquarters is at the University of Georgia in the Fanning
Institute. Their members include leadership organizations at the local, state and national levels (Community Leadership Association website, 2008). These programs were previously referred to as Community Leadership Programs (CLPs).

CLPs were the focus of a dissertation by John Roush at Ball State University in 1991. He noted that only two previous research studies of CLPs had been completed prior to that time. According to Roush, CLPs were intended to “identify, recruit, motivate, prepare, and place potential volunteer leaders from business and the professions” (Roush, 1991, p. 1).

The Academy for Community Leadership program has been offered in Muncie, Indiana since 1976. It is currently co-sponsored by Ball State University and the Muncie-Delaware County Chamber of Commerce (Chamber of Commerce website, 2009). Employers, as with the LEAD ECI program, almost always pay for enrollment and classes are comprised of individuals who have been identified as emerging leaders within their organization. The fee for attendance at the Muncie ACL is currently $295 for members of the Chamber of Commerce or $345 for non-members (Chamber of Commerce website, 2009). These training opportunities would most likely exclude those on the lower rungs of the organizational ladder.

This researcher has found scant literature on the effectiveness of Academy for Community Leadership programs, such as the one offered in Muncie, Indiana. Carol Spalding (2003), in her dissertation entitled *Community trusteeship and critical reflection: A qualitative case study of community leadership program alumni*, was interested in determining if participation in the ACL subsequently led to greater
involvement in the community. The individuals who participated in her study had been nominated by their employer or could personally afford the fee.

John Roush’s study (1991) intended to identify trends related to planning, implementation, and evaluation as well as look at the relationship between ACLs and community leadership, adult education, and community education.

Some prior research that investigated programs similar to that offered by the Academy of Community Leadership included an investigation by Grasso and Haber (1995) on leadership training at a senior center. They described a course of eight sessions to improve leadership attitudes and skills. This study detailed a leadership program that provided training to a marginalized group (low-income older men and women).

Trigg (2006) described a Rutgers University program to develop the leadership skills of college women. This program combined classroom training, research projects and internships with independent social action projects. This model is similar to that offered by the Academy of Community Leadership. Galambos and Hughes (2001) wrote about a leadership development project that included the assignment of female participants to a community activist project. Similarly, the ACL model requires participants to plan a project that would improve the quality of life in the community.

Women on the lower rungs of the organizational ladder would not typically be offered the opportunity to participate in a program such as the Academy for Community Leadership. For this dissertation, a curriculum similar to that offered through the ACL was designed and implemented for a targeted group of women in the Muncie, Indiana area. This program was expected to benefit this group by furthering their leadership
development. Participation in these classes may help these targeted individuals increase their confidence level to assume leadership roles in their community and at work.

Women on the lower rungs of the organizational ladder are often excluded from opportunities to gain the skills, knowledge and abilities to become leaders. In the case of the ACL, they would not typically be identified as emerging leaders, which could result in exclusion from nomination to the ACL. According to Cohn, Khurana and Reeves (2005), governing boards generally focus on CEO succession and do not attend to leadership development further down the organizational ladder.

While there are many different leadership styles to be considered, Robert Greenleaf’s idea of servant leadership (Keith, 2001) provided a bridge to this particular group of women at this organization and addressed a key motivator, which is their desire to serve. It is worthwhile to emphasize to this group of women that their desire to serve reflects a respected and admirable leadership trait. The purpose of this study was to provide a learning experience to enhance the leadership skills of one particular group of women. By encouraging them to reflect on the experience, their beliefs about their leadership skills may have been altered and, in some cases, enhanced.

Subjectivity Statement

The subject of leadership development for women on the lower rungs of the organizational ladder is of particular interest to me. Some positive experiences early in my career opened the door for me to assume various leadership roles. This happened almost accidentally. While working for the South Central Community Action Agency in Bloomington, Indiana, I was invited to join a board to oversee a nutrition program for senior citizens. I could have been better prepared for this challenge. In fact, I recall being
very scared about other’s expectations of me. I lacked the self-confidence to fully participate and contribute to the success of this group.

In spite of my auspicious beginning in leadership, I later accepted an invitation to serve as President of the Hoosier Hills Food Bank Board in Bloomington, Indiana, 1984-1986. After moving to the Muncie area, I was asked to join the board of the Muncie-Delaware County League of Women Voters for six years, serving as President in 1997. I also served as the President of the Muncie Branch of the American Association of University Women for two terms, in 1999 and 2001. Through my work responsibilities, I have served as Chair of a statewide Training and Professional Development Committee of the Indiana Association of Rehab Facilities (INARF). I have continued to serve on this committee for the past 12 years.

My formal education in the Master of Social Work program at Indiana University, 1986, prepared me to see ways to encourage women to recognize their own strengths. All of these experiences and others have helped inform my curiosity regarding leadership and leadership development, particularly for groups who are not “normally” identified as potential leaders.

I designed a research project to explore how a group of individuals on the lower rungs of the organizational ladder, who currently work for a private for-profit corporation located in east central Indiana, might respond to a leadership development opportunity. This is a company that I have had the privilege to help lead for the past 22 years. The company prides itself on empowering the individuals that we serve (our clients) to reach their highest potential. Less emphasis has been placed on human resource development, especially for those employees who are on the lower rungs of the ladder within the
organization. The individuals who were invited to be a part of this study started out as entry level direct support professionals—Residential Living Assistants (RLIs). The very nature of the entry level position as an RLI requires a commitment to serve those who are unable to navigate their own lives independently.

Development of this study began with the following self-reflective questions, which helped frame my research: Will they (the participants of my study) realize that they can increase their self-confidence to improve their leadership potential? Will they learn that they could be capable of assuming leadership roles within this organization or in the community? Could this training help position them for promotion? My good fortune to have been associated with people who informally helped me develop leadership skills led me to the desire to examine possible sources for such development in others. I was curious to know if curriculum similar to that provided by the ACL could offer such support. The ACL offers leadership development focused on contributions to the community and individual growth. For my study I planned to focus on the individual’s growth as a leader. I modeled this study’s curriculum after those portions of the ACL training that focus on individual leadership enhancement.

My participation in the Academy for Community Leadership program in Muncie, Indiana in 1999 was sponsored by my employer. In 2007 I attended, without sponsorship, the Randolph County Leadership Institute in Winchester, Indiana to further explore this topic for research. My participation in these programs offered me the opportunity to assess, identify and enhance my leadership skills. These learning experiences confirmed my belief that this particular community leadership model could enable groups not
typically slated for leadership development to become more active members of their communities and develop leadership skills for their work environments.

**Statement of the Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of the study was to describe the experiences of those participating in a leadership skill development class utilizing the Academy for Community Leadership curriculum, with some modifications. The findings of this research study provide justification for offering this curriculum to other groups, such as Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) in nursing homes, home health aides or other direct support professionals in the field of intellectual disabilities/developmental disabilities.

The participants in the study hold entry-level assistant positions within a small service company in east central Indiana. Such positions are typically filled from within the company by individuals who have been providing hands-on support to individuals with intellectual disabilities or developmental disabilities within a group home setting. They were promoted to the position of Residential Assistant, providing administrative support to the Residential Coordinator at each group home. Each group home serves eight clients. The study participants are not officially charged with the responsibility to provide supervision to the direct support professionals at their work site (between 10-14 staff); however, they are looked to for guidance and other leadership qualities by the direct support professionals.

By providing leadership training to this group of employees and assessing their experiences, this study addressed the following research questions:
1. Given completion of an eight-week program introducing leadership skill enhancement opportunities, how did the participants describe this experience?

2. At the conclusion of the training, what types of leadership opportunities did participants express an interest in pursuing?

3. What barriers did participants note that might prevent them from pursuing their interests?

4. What unexpected outcomes emerged from providing the Academy for Community Leadership model of curriculum to women who typically do not have access to it?

**Rationale and Justification**

Organizational succession planning typically focuses on the top positions with an emphasis on how the organization can replace leaders who might move on to other positions or retire. This study provided an avenue for those at the lower rungs of the corporate ladder to enhance their leadership skills. This type of training may help this particular group realize their promotional potential in this organization or choose a more active role in their community. This study intended to discover emergent themes for this group by describing the participant responses to this experience. The thick description could help others understand this experience from the participants’ perspective (Stake, 1995). The study increased understanding of the experiences of this particular group of women by examining their reflections on the eight-week course along with their perceptions of their increased leadership abilities.

The eight week class was held one time per week for a two-hour period at the Alumni Center on the Ball State University campus in Muncie, Indiana. Two supervisors
from the company acted as facilitators of the sessions. I observed each session, not taking an active role as a participant, presenter or facilitator.

The class curriculum consisted of an introduction and discussion on characteristics of an ideal leader, leadership styles, teambuilding, cultural awareness in the workplace, problem solving, developing their own action plan, communication and then a wrap up session (see Appendix F).

This qualitative study described the experiences of the participants in this leadership development class. Their experiences were varied and included unanticipated outcomes. Participation in research activities can result in feelings of discomfort or anxiety. It can also result in increased self-awareness and insight. The methods may have had both positive and negative effects for the participants.

Limitations

This qualitative case study was limited in scope. Participation was limited to those currently employed as Residential Assistants (RAs) at a local for-profit corporation in a residential group home program, located in Madison, Delaware, Johnson, and Henry counties. Since the company currently has 17 group homes in the four-county area, with only one assistant at each site, the maximum number for this study was 17. Since participation in the study was voluntary, the number of RAs who agreed to complete the study was 12.

This research project described the experiences and responses to the curriculum offered to this particular group of employees. While not intended for generalization to a larger group, the results could possibly be transferrable to a similar group of employees within this company or other health care service organizations.
Another limitation of the study is the eight-week training time frame. It is likely that outside influences impacted the depth of the participants’ involvement with this learning activity. These outside variables could not be determined or their impact minimized intentionally in any manner by this researcher.

Management offered this training to the participants on similar terms to other types of in-service training; they participated on company time, including travel time to the training site, and there was no cost to participants. Training attendance was mandatory; however their decision to participate in the research activity was voluntary. Participants had the option to withdraw their consent to participate in the research at any time. Choosing not to participate in the research had no negative ramifications to the employee’s working relationship with me or any other employee or supervisor. They were expected to attend all sessions, just as they would any other in-service training offered to them.

The final potential limitation of this research study is my relationship with the participants. I am not their direct supervisor nor in the supervisory line of authority for their department. My classroom involvement was minimal as I was present only to observe and take field notes. All sessions were facilitated by others, with outside speakers presenting the content. During the eight-week training period, participants did not know the specific interview questions I planned to ask them after the conclusion of the classes. This may have led to trust issues and increased anxiety on their part.
Definitions

Subjectivity—“understanding (interpretation) of reality is formed through personal experience, interaction, and discussion” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 40).

CIQs—Critical Incident Questionnaire as developed by Brookfield (1995).

Residential Coordinators (RCs)—responsible for the overall operation of a distinct work team at a specific group home. Group homes provide residential services for adults with intellectual disabilities/developmental disabilities. The RCs are responsible for supervision of all staff at the group home, including the RAs.

Residential Assistant (RA)—provides assistance to the Residential Coordinator and carries out specific operational functions at the group home, including grocery shopping, taking clients to doctor appointments, training new hires, and providing supervision and support to the clients. The RA has no supervisory function but is looked to as the team leader by the Residential Living Instructors.

Residential Living Instructors (RLIs)—direct support professionals providing the hands-on care and support for the clients at each group home. The RLIs are responsible for teaching and training the clients to be as independent as possible.

Summary

This qualitative case study provided an eight-week series of classes for a specific group of women to help them improve their leadership skills. This study described and analyzed the participants’ experiences to discover common themes. It is hoped that the findings support the notion of extending the reach of leadership training to those on the lower rungs of the organizational ladder.
In considering the purpose of this study, this review of the literature focused on adult education, human resource development (HRD), leadership within the HRD context and HRD leadership development for women. In addition, the researcher sought studies regarding HRD leadership training for women on the lower rungs of the organizational ladder.

**Adult Education**

Education of adults differs from the traditional view of preparation for life in that it “is an agitating instrumentality for changing life” (Lindeman, 1926, p. 165). Rogers (1986) noted that adult education meets learner needs for “self-fulfillment, social roles and our assigned roles and vocations” (p. 68). Freire (2007) wrote “education, while not being able to accomplish all, can accomplish something” (p. 67). The work of Myles Horton at the Highlander Folk School on the broad subject of adult education is also relevant. Thayer-Bacon (2004) summarized Horton’s work and philosophy while exploring the concept of democracy and adult education. She suggested that Horton … wanted to find ways to help poor, rural people in the South, and particularly in Tennessee, become empowered to think and act for themselves and change their lives. He knew these people very well and had a great deal of love and respect for them, for he grew up in rural Tennessee with the mountain folks of the
Appalachians. He knew that these people were suffering from the violence of poverty, due to lack of employment, because his own family suffered as well. Horton was raised in a Christian family, by a grandfather who taught him a strong biblical sense of the differences between rich and poor, by parents who taught him the value of an education, and by a mother who taught him the importance of love and service, and that education is meant to help you be able to do something for others. Myles took these lessons to heart and sought to use his education to help his neighbors find ways to improve their lives. His focus was on social justice. He sought to help make America a more democratic nation through an adult education center. (p. 7, 8)

Longo (2005) wrote that education and democracy have been connected through American history. He examined the work of Jane Addams at Hull House, the civil rights movement and its connection to Myles Horton and Septima Clark at Highlander, as well as the Neighborhood Learning Community in St. Paul, Minnesota. He wrote that these three programs “produce ideas and concrete practices for recognizing the role of community in civic education; and help us see the possibility for connecting learning with civic learning. This creates a culture of learning: seeing ordinary people as producers, not consumers; actors, not spectators, and teachers, not students” (p. 9).

A way of viewing education for adults is by the three categories credited to Coombs (1973): informal education, formal education, and nonformal education. He explained that informal education is gained from the everyday experiences of life presented through family life, in the marketplace and in the community at large. Formal education as defined by Coombs includes all of those structured grades through primary
school to the university as well as any specialized technical training. His definition of non-formal is represented in this study as:

…any organized educational activity outside the established formal system—whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity—that is intended to serve identifiable learning clientele and learning objectives. (p. 11)

Merriam and Brockett (1997) defined adult education as “activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception define them as adults” (p. 8). From this brief review of adult education we move into the arena of human resource development.

**Human Resource Development**

Human Resource Development (HRD) is a recent term falling under the umbrella of adult education and it is “in reference to the training, education, and development of employees in the workplace” (Merriam and Brockett, 1997, p. 9). The question is posed by Cunningham (2000), “Who is served in HRD?” (p. 578). She suggests that adult education began in the workplace to serve the workers, but HRD is often viewed now as serving the purposes of the corporation. She writes,

There are a growing number of adult educators who identify their practice as nonformal education, which has emancipation as its goal. For many of these educators, emancipation goes beyond the western vision of building a more democratic society to one that positions human societies in harmony and conversation with the natural world. . . .The relationships in civil society between social movements and adult education require further investigation, for they can
well enlighten us about ways in which adult education has been co-opted by the economic sector and develop our practical insights into the inequities of power and privilege. (p. 583)

Holford and Jarvis (2000) note that work-based learning “promises both to transform day-to-day workplace activities—conducted for normal business reasons—into learning experiences, and to encourage employers to contribute to the costs of learning” (p. 652). Banks and Nafukho (2008) suggest that, “the field of human resource development as an area of study consists of three core areas—organizational development, training and development, and career development.” They also wrote “exploring and understanding the elements of employee development, change, economic, and career stability may add value to the life of the employees, their community and the workplace” (p. 47).

**HRD and Leadership Development**

Senge (2004) has written that, “the great leader myth absolves us of responsibility for developing leadership capabilities more broadly. In learning organizations, the burden is shifted; a perceived need for leadership can be met by developing leadership capabilities in all members” (p. 4).

Dean, Murk and Del Prete (2000) wrote that, “professional development can contribute to organizational effectiveness. If the people who work in an organization are better trained and prepared to do their jobs, then the organization will be more efficient and effective in delivering its services” (p. 1).

In the book *Leadership Magic*, Valore-Caplan (1999) discussed attributes of a successful organization. He addressed the culture, communication, and rituals as well as
development of leadership capabilities throughout the organization. When he wrote about vision he suggested using the following model.

- **Tell a powerful story**—the leader chooses a true story about the organization’s impact on someone whom it is designed to serve. . .

- **Line the story to the vision**—connect it to the vision or mission of the organization. Be able to answer ‘so what? What has this got to do with our purpose?’ This is the moral of the story.

- **Link the vision to the upcoming activity**—once the story has been connected to the vision, bring them both back to the upcoming activity.

(p. 181)

He suggested delegating this ritual to teach leadership skills to others. He pointed out that, “good leaders not only guide people but also teach them leadership skills so that they can lead themselves and help lead the organizations (Valore-Caplan, 1999, p. 47).


- Leaders relentlessly upgrade their team, using every encounter as an opportunity to evaluate, coach, and build self-confidence.

- Leaders make sure people not only see the vision, they live and breathe it.

- Leaders get into everyone’s skin, exuding positive energy and optimism.

- Leaders establish trust with candor, transparency, and credit.

- Leaders have the courage to make unpopular decisions and gut calls.
• Leaders probe and push with a curiosity that borders on skepticism, making sure their questions are answered with action.

• Leaders inspire risk taking and learning by setting the example.

• Leaders celebrate. (p. 63)

Buckingham and Clifton (2001) proposed that individuals “will excel only by maximizing strengths, never by fixing weaknesses” (p. 26). In the context of this research study, providing a series of leadership classes may have helped this particular group of women begin to identify their strengths. Buckingham and Clifton (2001) further suggest that leaders “capitalize on strengths; manage around weaknesses” (p. 27). Parks (2005) proposed the following in her book, Leadership Can Be Taught.

… as the meaning of leadership is shifted from a narrow focus on an individual’s exercise of individual talent and power and turns toward mobilizing the group to make progress on their toughest problems, the individual learner becomes more than a mere consumer of knowledge and technique and becomes instead an actor in a complex system and an active participant in her or his own learning. (p. 232)

There is a multitude of ways to define and describe leadership. Can leadership be carried out by only those in designated leadership positions on the upper rungs of the organization? “Leadership is an improvisational and experimental art. . .these dual tasks can—indeed, should—be practiced by people who do not happen to be at the very top of an organization” (Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky, 2009, p. 65).

Kanji (2008) developed a Business Excellence Model and noted that, “leadership is responsible for driving the organization in every area towards quality and excellence” (p. 421).
Leadership Development for Women on the Lower Rungs of the Organizational Ladder

Why provide leadership training to a group of employees who are not currently in designated leadership positions? Covey (1989) recommended in his book, Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, that companies “always treat your employees exactly as you want them to treat your best customers” (p. 58). One way to do this is to provide opportunities for personal and professional enhancement to those who typically do not have the opportunity to participate in such training. Heifetz, et al (2009) described a program created by Best Buy called WoLF.

WoLF (Women’s Leadership Forum) packs in which women, from store cashiers to corporate executives, came together to support one another and to generate innovative projects by drawing on their collective experience …More than 30,000 employees joined WoLF packs. The company says the initiative strengthened its pipeline of high-potential leaders, led to a surge in the number of female job applicants, and improved the bottom line by reducing turnover among female employees. (p. 66)

They went on to note that, “you must use leadership to generate more leadership deep in the organization” (p. 68).

Kanj (2008) wrote about what is termed a participative style of leadership. He recommended that one not:

…restrict leadership to senior management but leave leadership as an organization-wide concept influenced by a common set of forces irrespective of where it is employed. Leadership, therefore, has to be all pervasive and not the
particular preserve of those at the apex of the organization pyramid but a concept manifested through behavior at all organizational levels. (p. 418)

Fenwich (2008) completed a study of learning that occurs in the workplace, focusing on women. His findings, which follow, are relevant to this study. Suggests that questions of self underlie women’s development through their work experiences. Struggles of identity affected their daily work choices, the levels of energy and creativity with which they participated, the relationships they cultivated, and the knowledge and values they claimed to have developed. Many insisted their most valued workplace learning was coming to name, appreciate, and recover the power of their ‘authentic self.’ They talked of learning to trust the inner voice of this self, of breaking free of workplace structures that repressed this self, and above all learning how to compose a coherent, strong self amidst the chaotic environments of workplaces. (p. 299)

Gerlicher (1998), in her article Women in the Working World—from Welfare to Leadership, noted that women “did not value their own skills and could not recognize the new skills they had learned through life experience. The women tended to look at their skills as though no changes had occurred in their lives and as if they were as unskilled as they were from high school” (p. 3). Gerlicher’s insight provided a lens for this study. Through analysis of the participant responses, this researcher found that they not only enhanced their leadership skills but may have discovered some already existing strengths and abilities.

Rejecting the metaphor of the glass ceiling, Eagly and Carli (2009) suggest instead a labyrinth.
The labyrinth is an image with a long and varied history in ancient Greece, India, Nepal, native North and South America, medieval Europe and elsewhere. As a contemporary symbol, it conveys the idea of a complex journey toward a goal worth striving for. Passage through a labyrinth is not simple or direct, but requires persistence, awareness of one’s progress, and a careful analysis of the puzzles that lie ahead . . . all labyrinths have a viable route to the center, it is understood that goals are attainable. The metaphor acknowledges obstacles but is not ultimately discouraging. (p. 2)

What might be some participant core skills or competencies that could be enhanced through this research study? Valore-Caplan (1999) suggested that, “through communication, we can strengthen or destroy relationships, and, through relationships, we can strengthen or destroy organizations” (p. 123).

The topical areas delivered during the eight-week series included an overview of leadership styles, team building, cultural awareness, problem solving/consensus building as well as communication and leadership. One speaker was asked to encourage the participants to write their own action plan for further leadership development. Finally, during the last session, the president of the company joined the group to share some of his leadership experiences and insights.

Summary

Why focus on teaching leadership skills to a group of women on the lower rungs of the organizational ladder? “Research indicates that when women and men work together on group tasks, the men are quicker to claim leadership roles—even when the women are better qualified” (Van Vugt, Hogan & Kaiser, 2008, p. 193). Cocchio (2009)
conducted a literature review looking for a competency model for women seeking executive leadership roles. She noted that the “literature review did not yield a single competency model for women aspiring to executive leadership … The literature review also points to the value of an investigation that proposes focusing on a singular group of women with similar demographics” (p. 17). By offering this leadership series to women on the lower rungs of the organizational ladder, I hoped to gain insight into how they experienced this particular training. Using a human resource development perspective, the intent of this research project was an examination of the lived experiences of this group of women employees. The curriculum addressed some of the needs and topic areas noted in this literature review.
CHAPTER THREE
METHOD

Qualitative Research Method

This is a qualitative study using a descriptive case study method. Qualitative research methods are considered subjective attempts to describe social phenomena. Rossman and Rallis (2003) list assumptions about this type of research to include “contextual dependency, ‘working understandings’, getting close to the participants, focus on understanding subjective experience, comparative logic, case study designs, researcher as ‘instrument’, interpretive analysis and data in the form of words” (p. 39). Human resource development serves as the underlying framework for this particular study with this particular group of individuals. This qualitative inquiry described the experiences of workers holding non-leadership roles at a private for-profit corporation located in east central Indiana who engaged in leadership training. Marshall and Rossman (2006) suggest focusing on three major areas: “the individual lived experience …society and culture … language and communication” (p. 3). This study emphasized the individual lived experiences of the participants.

Case Study Methodology

This research project was a case study. According to Stake (1995), a case study has similarities and uniqueness to other people and programs. As a researcher, I wanted to understand the experiences of those who are not normally provided with leadership
training opportunities. I attempted to put aside my assumptions while I conducted this research. I had certain expectations of what this experience would be like for this particular group of women. I intended to be aware of my expectations both during the observation period, the journal reviews, and the interviewing phase of the research process as well as during the analysis. Merriam (1998) wrote,

…because the primary instrument in qualitative research is human, all observations and analyses are filtered through that human being’s worldview, values, and perspective …one of the philosophical assumptions underlying this type of research is that reality is not an objective entity; rather, there are multiple interpretations of reality. The research thus brings a construction of reality to the research situation, which interacts with other people’s constructions or interpretations of the phenomenon being studied. The final product of this type of study is yet another interpretation by the research of others’ views filtered through his or her own. (p. 22-23)

Subjects of Study

According to Stake (1995), “case study research is not sampling research. We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one” (p. 4). The participants in this case study were individuals who attended the leadership training and agreed to participate in the research. The participants in this study are Residential Assistants (RAs) who work in a group home setting, providing supervision and support for adults with intellectual disabilities/developmental disabilities. The individuals hold non-leadership positions, providing administrative assistance to the
Residential Coordinator. The RAs do not supervise any staff. However, direct support professionals (RLIs) look to them for guidance and as role models at each work site.

The RAs range in age from early twenties to late fifties. All of the individuals in my study are women. Their educational backgrounds range from having a GED, being a high school graduate, to having had some college level classes.

The RAs have held this position from a period of less than one year to over four years (when this position was created). Some of the RAs have worked for this company in other capacities (e.g., Residential Living Instructors, Residential Managers, or Lead Staff) for several years and even up to 20 years. A few in the group have had management positions either at this company or in unrelated fields.

The RAs within a given area may work together on community outings or other special events, but essentially work within the confines of their own team at separate locations. The RAs from other areas have had very little contact with each other and did not know each other well. This leadership training was their first opportunity to interact with each other. Those traveling from Johnson County, approximately 75 miles, had the opportunity to spend time together while carpooling, as did the group from Henry County, approximately 20 miles from the training site. These two groups also chose to have lunch together after the class each week. On the other hand, the RAs from Madison and Delaware Counties did not carpool and did not have this time together to either anticipate the upcoming session or debrief afterwards.

This study offered this group a leadership class to explore whether they believe that they have enhanced their leadership skills and/or interest in serving both the company and their community. There have been and may continue to be the opportunity
for Residential Assistants to be promoted within the company. This study hoped to
discover that some of the participants would express increased confidence in their ability
as well as an interest to advance within the company.

Data Collection

The participants were given a homework assignment to complete the Myers-
Briggs Personality Type Indicator survey online. According to Rutzick (2007), the
Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) was designed in the 1940s by Katharine Briggs and
Isabel Briggs Myers, a mother-daughter team. They based the assessment tool on Carl
Jung’s psychological types. The MBTI categorizes 16 personality types in a combination
of Extrovert-Introvert, Sensing-Intuiting, Thinking-Feeling and Judging-Perceiving.

Each study participant was asked to complete an online evaluation through the
internal e-mail system within 48 hours after the conclusion of each class. The questions
were those presented in the Critical Incident Questionnaire as developed by Brookfield
(1995):

1. At what moment in the class this week did you feel most engaged with what was
   happening?
2. At what moment in the class this week did you feel most distanced from what was
   happening?
3. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find
   most affirming and helpful?
4. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find
   most puzzling or confusing?
5. What about the class this week surprised you the most? (This could be something about your own reactions to what went on, or something that someone did, or anything else that occurs to you). (p. 115)

The responses collected through the internal e-mail system were not anonymous. The answers were utilized as one source of documentation for the analysis of this research study.

Journals were distributed to each participant during the first class. The participants were asked to make at least one entry in the journal each week. The researcher explained that the journals would not be collected and retained, but that they provided a source of data for the study through journal summaries. The Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) as described by Brookfield (1995) was utilized as a guide for the journaling but the participants were not limited to these questions in documenting their impressions. They had been informed that the researcher would use their journal summaries as one means of documentary evidence during the analysis of the research results. As noted by Prior (2003), “narratives are a particularly useful form of discourse to social researchers and their analysis never fails to yield insight into the manner in which people organize accounts of their lives” (p. 161). These summaries were used as one source of data, termed material culture. Material culture includes journals and other artifacts that “provide the researcher with insights into actions and their meanings in a setting” (Rossman and Rallis, 2003, p. 303). The data from study participant CIQs and journals were read, bracketed, and sorted into categories by the researcher along with the other data sources.
Structure of the Classes

This research project offered a series of classes to the Residential Assistants (RAs), one time per week, over an eight-week period as outlined in Appendix F. The RAs were required to attend the leadership class, just as they would any other in-service training offered to them by the company. However, participation in this research portion of this study was voluntary. The classes were held outside of the corporate office at the Alumni Center at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. These classes lasted approximately two hours each week. This was during the participants’ regularly scheduled work day. The participants were offered this leadership training course as part of their career enhancement at the company and as a means of gathering data for this case study. There are 17 group homes in the four-county area, with each group home having one RA. The number of participants in the class ranged from 16 to 17, depending on staff vacancies during the time of the research project. However, the final number agreeing to participate in this research project was 12.

The introductory session was used to explain the course requirements and the topics to be covered. They agreed as a group on the ground rules, including such areas as confidentiality, respect, and openness to alternate communication styles and differing expectations. The two facilitators, who hold management positions within the company but are not the RAs direct supervisors, led a group discussion on the characteristics of an ideal leader. The facilitators used information from Parks’ (2005) book, *Leadership Can Be Taught*, to cover the difference between technical and social skills. Parks described the “three E’s of leadership (energetic, ability to energize others and edge—between the familiar and the emergent)” (p. 210).
The second session focused on an overview of different leadership styles. The participants learned about the Myer-Briggs personality types and the results of their assessment. The speaker pointed out how this information might be helpful as a leader. The speaker helped them appreciate their unique personalities. The discussion was also intended to help the participants begin to identify the areas that they might consider opportunities for growth.

The third session addressed team building. The speaker led the group in experiential activities to illustrate the concepts shared with the class on group formation and productivity.

The fourth week focused on cultural awareness in the workplace with the speaker sharing her experiences and observations about this important aspect of leadership.

The fifth session addressed problem solving techniques and consensus building. The speaker provided activities for the group to practice both problem solving and then consensus building.

The sixth session began with a video to follow up on the topic of problem solving, “Extraordinary Vision” by Dewitt Jones (Dewitt Jones.com, 2009). The guest speaker then concluded with a discussion and activity regarding developing your own action plan for leadership (Covey, 1989). She gave the group a homework assignment to come back the following week with their own action plan for one area of professional development and one area of personal development.

The next session focused on communication and leadership. A MS PowerPoint presentation and lecture were utilized for this class.
The last session was a conclusion of the eight-week training with both facilitators present. The facilitators encouraged the participants to share some of their thoughts about the class. The session ended with a one-hour informal discussion with the president of the company (see Appendix F).

Materials utilized included the Myers-Briggs instrument, journals for each participant, and certificates of completion for the graduation ceremony.

Financial support provided by the researcher included: the cost associated with the Myers-Briggs survey, stipends for some of the speakers, the journals, and the cost of the certificates of completion.

After the conclusion of the eight-week course, a post-program interview was conducted, within two weeks, with each individual. This was a semi-structured interview designed to encourage the participants to describe what this experience was like for them (see Appendix B). Seidman (2006) noted, “at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 9).

Data Analysis

Throughout the process, I used two techniques to support my analysis from the many data collection points. I carried out methodological triangulation as described by Stake (1995) through direct observations during the sessions, the class discussion newsprint notes, review of the content of the individual journal summaries, the responses to the critical incident questionnaires, the one homework assignment on developing their own action plan, and the individual interviews after the completion of the course. I also kept a researcher’s journal during the time of the research study.
The post-program interviews, along with the other sources of data, were analyzed for themes and patterns in the following manner. I first read all of the documents as the data were collected (CIQs, journal summaries, and the action plan assignment). Each week I entered the CIQ answers into a MS Word document. I also took notes in my researcher’s journal each week during the classes. I collected the newsprint from the discussion during the first and last sessions.

At the conclusion of the eight-week series, I scheduled an interview with each participant within two weeks of the last session. Morse and Richards (2002) noted that, “in semi-structured interviews, participants are all asked the same questions in the same order in search for patterns of answers” (p. 175) (See Appendix B).

Once the transcripts were prepared, I shared a copy of their interview with each participant in the study. I asked them to review the transcript to see if it matched with what they recalled saying during the interview. The member checking did not include validation of the analysis and interpretation portion of the study. They merely reviewed the rough draft to check for “accuracy and palatability” (Stake, 1995, p. 115).

After making any suggested revisions or corrections, I combined all of the transcripts into one continuous document and added line numbers to this document. I then made copies of all data for use in coding the data.

I next established a numbering system for data identification by person and source of data. I assigned numbers 1 through 13 for my participants and myself. I then assigned numbers 1 through 6 for the sources of the data. My data sources were numbered as follows: 1 = CIQs, 2 = participant journal summaries, 3 = homework assignment, 4 = researcher’s journal, 5 = interviews and 6 = ideas shared in class and documented on
newsprint (Bales, 2000). In addition to this, I assigned a pseudonym to each participant for use in Chapter 4 and 5 (see Tables below).

Table 1. Pseudonyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Participant Numerical Identifier</th>
<th>Research Participant Assigned Pseudonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Louise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kaye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Scarlett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Colleen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Samantha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>April</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* I assigned myself the number 13 to designate my researcher’s journal as a data source.
Table 2. Assigned Numbers for Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Critical Incident Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Participant Journal Summaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Homework assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Researcher’s Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Newsprint notes from class discussions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After identifying the numbering system, I re-read the copy of all data and marked “with brackets the passages” of interest (Seidman, 2006, p. 117). While doing this I began jotting down possible categories in my researcher’s journal. I next highlighted the bracketed passages and labeled each passage to identify the source (e.g., 1:3) (Bales, 2000). I then cut the passages and sorted them by color into the possible categories. Additional categories emerged during this process. Some passages fit into more than one category. In those cases, I cut from an additional copy that particular passage in order to have it in both categories.

The data were then coded to retain and learn from the various sources. Richards (2005) recommends you “keep revisiting it until you understand the patterns and explanations … coding is not merely to label all of the parts of documents about a topic, but rather to bring them together so they can be reviewed, and your thinking about the topic developed” (p. 86). Morse & Richards (2002) wrote that, “coding is linking rather than merely labeling. It leads you from the data to the idea and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea” (p. 115). They went on to note that, “analytic coding is used
to make, celebrate, illustrate and develop categories theoretically. It is labeled analytic because in creating categories you go on, not just linking them to the data but also questioning the data about the new ideas developing in the new codes” (p. 119). Morse and Richards (2002) also noted that, “there are many ways of coding and many purposes for coding activities across the different qualitative methods. They all share the goal of getting from unstructured and messy data to ideas about what is going on in the data” (p. 111).

I began reviewing the passages within the categories searching “for threads and patterns among the excerpts in those categories and for connections between the various categories that might be called themes” (Seidman, 2006, p. 125). According to Stake (1995), the “important meanings will come from reappearance over and over” (p. 78). Van Manen (1990) noted that the “theme is the experience of focus, of meaning, of point” (p. 87). He goes on to write that the “theme is the process of insightful invention, discovery, disclosure. Theme is always a reduction of a notion” (p. 88). Van Manen (1990) also wrote that, “in determining the universal or essential quality of a theme, our concern is to discover aspects or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is” (p. 107).

The post-program interview questions sought to identify strengths that participants discovered about themselves during the course as well as how this knowledge may help them both at work and in their community. According to Grafanaki (1996), “the use of qualitative methods of collecting data promotes reflexivity, self-awareness and empowerment of the parties involved in the research, by giving voice to people to tell their stories in their own words” (p. 6).
The researcher’s journal was utilized to provide another source of input regarding the learning process, which was expected to unfold in an unpredictable manner. I used my journal to record field notes before and during each session. I also noted my impressions following each individual interview. Here I recorded my “impressions, insights and emerging hypotheses” (Rossman and Rallis, 2003, p. 195).

Through a constant comparison of the data, the themes begin to emerge. Marse and Richards (2002) wrote that, “the researcher uses constant comparison in comparing indicator with indicator, concept with concept. This enables the researcher to identify patterns and thus to label similar incidents as a category and to identify the properties of the category” (p. 158).

One challenge as noted by Bailey (2007) involves determining what details were important and which details were irrelevant to my study. “When you seek to understand and describe a setting, part of the analytical work involves your ability to decide what to include and how much detail to provide” (p. 137). This process of eliminating irrelevant data proved quite difficult. I had to remind myself that even though a particular passage was interesting, it possibly did not speak to my research questions.
Summary

The data sources helped explore the effectiveness of using a curriculum based on the Academy for Community Leadership to provide leadership training to a group of women on the lower rungs of the organizational ladder. These women work at a small service delivery company in east central, Indiana.

This qualitative study provided a series of leadership classes to a group of employees who typically are not slated for leadership development. Through observations, document review, and interviews, I attempted to discover common threads and themes describing this experience through the participants’ eyes.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.” - John Quincy Adams

The purpose of this study was to provide a leadership training experience to a group of women who, at least in their work environment, would not be identified for such an opportunity. I wanted to understand what this experience was like for them and to have them describe it in their own words. I also hoped to find evidence to support the use of the Academy for Community Leadership model for other groups who generally do not have access to this type of training; those on the lower rungs of the organizational ladder.

To examine the results of this study, I will begin with describing the context of this research project. These classes were purposely held away from the corporate office to delineate this training from the usual offerings that are required by federal regulation, such as CPR, suspected abuse, and active treatment training. The Ball State University Alumni Center was chosen to more closely align this training within an academic setting. After the classes concluded, an interview was conducted with each participant who had agreed to be a part of this study.

I assigned pseudonyms for the participants in this study (see Table 1, p. 36). I also assigned a number for each participant as well as a number for the source of the data, as
indicated in Table 2 on page 37 that was used during the coding and sorting process (Bales, 2000).

To appreciate the context in which the data were collected, what follows is a brief overview of each session from my researcher’s journal. Some of the initial responses to the training obtained through the weekly Critical Incident Questionnaires (Brookfield, 1995) appear at the end of each weekly description. Following the summary of the eight weeks, the results of the other sources of data including the interviews are shared, along with the emerging themes that have been identified.

Session 1: Introductions

The first session was held on October 6, 2009. In my observations of the class I focused on how the group developed over the course of the eight weeks. What strengths became evident? Who emerged as the leaders of this group? How would they describe this experience? Would they identify any opportunities or barriers for future leadership development? What unexpected outcomes might emerge during the course of the training? I was curious about how the participants would describe the experience of leadership training.

As the group filed in for the first session, the RAs were very subdued and quiet as they took their seats. One county group was a couple of minutes late. I was already having difficulty with my role as observer only. I would have done more to energize the room as they arrived. One of the facilitators began with a joke and introduced herself, the other facilitator, and me. She referenced my research project and then instructed the group regarding an icebreaker activity. They were asked to share their name, length of time in their position, which group home they worked at, and the first word that came to
mind when thinking of leadership. After a few minutes the facilitator had to emphasize that participants were to get this information from the person sitting next to them as a means of getting to know each other a little better. I was sitting in the corner and suppressing my inclination to jump in the middle of the process.

The leadership words mentioned included example, outgoing, respect, teamwork, guidance, assisting together, accountable, go-to person, strength, attitude, good listener, and role model. Strength was mentioned twice and example three times. One facilitator wrote these words on newsprint and posted the list. The other then passed out the agenda for the eight weeks. The group was still very quiet.

The facilitator made some housekeeping announcements and then began a discussion on class rules and expectations. This included confidentiality, being on time, taking bathroom breaks when needed, not bringing any food or drinks (an Alumni Center rule), establishing connections with each other, and learning from each other. The group discussed these rules and expectations and also agreed to have fun. They were each given a three-ring binder for handouts. During this time there were several small jokes and laughter.

The facilitators then showed the group a video from YouTube on leadership. The facilitators further discussed leadership and finally got the group to offer their opinions. Some qualities they offered included intelligent, persistent, ability to motivate, dynamic, powerful, listens, forgives, compassion, willing to say what she believes, she is always out there, laughs, and is honest. The facilitators then asked the group to list some leaders that come to mind. When ‘mom and dad’ were mentioned, everyone seemed to come to
life. Kathy offered that leaders need to be involved; willing to make mistakes; and
inspiring to others. Participants started to confer with each other and agree.

The facilitators next asked the group to describe their roles at work as RAs and
the qualities needed. They mentioned approachable, flexible, good example, respectful,
willing to help, responsible, good attitude, versatile, proactive, trainer, teacher, good
listener, sense of humor, optimistic, and non-judgmental. They also mentioned the need
to have good time management skills. How did this list compare to what they mentioned
about leadership? The facilitators encouraged them to compare the lists. There were still a
few members not participating. Soon everyone was engaged as one facilitator
summarized the content and pointed out how they are leaders as RAs. Both facilitators
were very encouraging and stressed the importance of the role as RAs. They mentioned
the team work that is necessary.

One facilitator showed the group a slide regarding leaders and then introduced the
concept of the three ‘e’s of leadership -- energy, ability to energize and willingness to be
on the edge (Parks, 2000). The group did not appear to be very engaged during this
discussion. The other facilitator then attempted to help the group see what they offer to
the families of the clients and the community. One participant noted that good leaders
take into consideration the human condition. The first class ended with handing out a new
journal for each participant. There was a brief discussion about the expectations that they
record their thoughts in their journal, as well as answer the Critical Incident
Questionnaires within 48 hours after the class each week. The group was also instructed
to complete a Myers-Briggs personality assessment online before next week’s class.
From the CIQs, Kaye noted that she was surprised when “we went over well known leaders and then went over our role as a leader. It’s interesting to see how much they are alike but also how much different they can be, too.” Kathy wrote that she was surprised “that most of the RAs spoke right up to add suggestions for the lists, usually people are way too shy, but this group seemed pretty comfy with each other, which I was glad of, but it was surprising.” When Samantha responded to this inquiry about what surprised her the most, she wrote, “I guess realizing how important we are when it comes to helping the RC run a smooth group home.”

Session 2: Leadership Styles

The second class began on a high energy note, even though the participants were again very subdued as they arrived. All were on time this week. The presenter took the opportunity to meet each one individually and chatted briefly with them before the class actually started. Once underway, he continued with his joking, resulting in many smiles and much laughter. The group appeared to be more at ease this week.

I had requested that the presenter review the results of the Myers-Briggs assessment that each participant had taken prior to coming to this session. He shared his results and read a detailed description of one of the styles. He shared ideas about left brain/logical and right brain/creative. He then reviewed another profile. I was wondering about the group’s interest level. Some participants were looking rather distracted. A few did not complete the Myers-Briggs in time to have the results with them, so they may not have been as interested in this discussion. The group was looking disengaged or maybe overwhelmed with information about the various personality types. Sue asked about a result that indicated she was not good with details. She seemed surprised at this. The
presenter asked for feedback from the group and made a joke to lighten the mood. He then switched gears and asked the group to list three to five characteristics of a leader. This discussion seemed to move slowly but the groups did eventually work on the task at hand.

The presenter shared ideas about transformational leadership and shared a slide presentation. He pointed out that the RAs are part of a learning organization (possibly referring to this class). He went on to share ideas on appreciative leadership and offered the quote “an organization is a mystery to be embraced.”

He then introduced three scenarios and asked each person to self-select which one they wanted to explore. The groups formed slowly but were able to address the questions posed quite effectively. There was much laughter throughout this class. He wrapped up with explaining that his father always asked him “what did you learn in school today?” and suggested that for leaders the question should be “what did you ask today?”

When answering the first CIQ question regarding level of engagement, Mary wrote “from the time class started and the speaker came around introducing himself and speaking to each and every one of us. He made me feel welcomed.” Sue noted that she was surprised by how much she is “looking forward to Tuesday.” When answering what surprised her the most, Kaye wrote about the results of the Myers-Briggs assessment and the subsequent discussion. “There were a lot of things that were said about the certain personality I have from the test that I was very interested in.” Kathy was “glad that the speaker pointed out that there were no right or wrong, good or bad, just different personalities, just the way that we see the world. That was good to know!”
The next scheduled class had to be cancelled because the scheduled speaker had a family emergency, so it was two weeks before the group reconvened. I noted in my journal on 10/27/09 that I was anxious to see what the mood would be like after that unexpected break.

Session 3: Teambuilding

The group listened intently to the introduction of the speaker. She began by asking the group what came to mind when working with a team. Their response included: co-workers, family, shared goals, support, sports, and community. She noted that leaders emerge in each group; they speak up and find their own voice. The group seemed subdued in the beginning of the class. The speaker used a slide show to help the participants identify their individual personality types. They were next asked to divide into groups with different types in each group and build a tower out of plastic straws. This activity was a competition amongst the teams. Some of the groups were working intently on this, while others were taking a more light-hearted approach.

The speaker reviewed the stages of team development (forming, storming, norming, and performing) and gave them a handout on each stage of team development. The class ended with a discussion (after announcing the winner) and much laughter.

When answering the CIQ question about being most engaged, Kaye noted that she “loved the part where we got in our groups of 4 and worked on the straw towers.” Jane wrote also that she felt most engaged “when we were doing teamwork on the straws. I thought this was a lot of fun.” She went on to write that she was most surprised “that we won building our tower out of straws. I honestly don’t see how we did it but we did and we worked as a team. It was definitely a team effort.” On the other hand, Mary offered
that she noticed that, “everyone was having a good time and laughing was surprising but also that there are people that are so set in their own thinking and not willing to listen to another’s point of view. Was also surprised about my reaction to it, as I just stepped back and did what I was told. Well not so surprised about that as I often find myself doing that.” Mona mentioned that she felt most engaged “listening to the speaker explaining about teamwork, the different personalities it takes to make a good team.” She went on to write that she was surprised by “how much [she was] enjoying the classes and possible learning how to be a stronger team player.” When Scarlett answered the question on being surprised she added, “The class itself surprised me. This class was very much activity oriented and that was a great change. I enjoy speakers who speak and tell stories, but I also enjoy speakers who present activities to get everyone involved.” Kathy responded to the question about what was most affirming with writing, “I have enjoyed taking a look at coworkers and myself, all of us being very different, yet each having valuable abilities working towards common goals.”

**Session 4: Cultural Awareness in the Workplace**

The next class on November 3, 2009 was to be on the topic of cultural awareness in the workplace. The speaker who was scheduled for this session was unable to attend but had arranged for a substitute. The substitute speaker quickly jotted down a brief biographical sketch so that the facilitator could introduce her. She started by asking questions about cultural awareness and asked how cultural awareness had affected the class. She then proceeded to go from person to person asking about their background and about their connections to diversity. There again was a great deal of laughter. Several in the group talked about their family background, sharing more than they had with each
other up to this point. The speaker noted that she hoped she “hadn’t been too intrusive.” She then went on to ask if the group thought racism was still alive in Muncie, Indiana. She asked them what ‘passing’ meant and no one in the group seemed to know. She did explain this to the group.

Colleen then offered a story about how one of the group home clients came home from school one day and shared that he has been told he was dressing White. The group talked about freedom of expression and went on to discuss the “N” word. The speaker asked ‘are we being too sensitive?’ All in the group seemed to be listening intently.

When responding to the CIQ question about being most engaged, April wrote that she “felt most engaged when everyone was sharing their diverse cultural connections or lack thereof.” She went on to respond to the question about being most surprised by writing, “when I’m sitting in class, I forget that I’m with my co-workers because it’s not the typical [company] training. I’ve really enjoyed it.” On the other hand, Sue wrote that, “The speaker was interesting under her situation of filling in but could tell she was not in the zone of exactly which way or exactly what she wanted to share.” Kathy noted, “I guess I did not see things as being just a black and white problem. When I think of the topic, I think of male/female, old/young, education/non-educated, religious/agnostic, wealthy/poor, just so many other differences other than just the black and the white/racial.”

Session 5: Problem Solving/Consensus Building

The next session began with the group in a different room this week, the Board Room of the Alumni Center. Even in a different room, the groups seated themselves by county, sticking with the familiar.
The speaker started with some joking and lightened the mood in the room. The topic, problem solving and collaboration, was introduced by the speaker asking the group to write down a couple of current challenges they are facing at work. This “inside expert” (she is in a management position in the company, an excellent trainer and known to everyone in this group) is coming at the perfect time in the series. Last week there was some frustration that the speaker didn’t seem to know what we do. This week’s speaker has been an RLI, a trainer, and a coordinator during her tenure at the company.

She proceeded to give the group a problem to solve with instructions to talk to each other or work it out alone. Everyone seemed to be working independently. I was waiting for them to start working together. Eventually two started conversing about the problem. Then Louise and Samantha started working on it together. There was some laughter from the ones who were collaborating. The other side of the table looked very serious and intent on solving this independently. The speaker walked around observing and maybe assessing where they were with the process. Next Colleen and Mary were whispering, but I was not sure they were helping each other. I wondered what they each (especially the quiet ones) were thinking during this activity. The group was given a second problem but the speaker didn’t repeat the instructions. She simply said, “I’m going to let you work on that one for 5-10 minutes.” Sue and April were discussing this. Three were joking quietly and seem to be working independently. Two others were whispering—maybe they were helping each other. This problem looked so confusing and overwhelming to me. I noted that I would love to know what they were thinking right then. Next, Sue and April compared their answers. Some seemed to have stopped
working or were they finished? The speaker shared that, “sometimes you are working on something and it feels like you are not getting anywhere but you are.”

The class finished with a group collaboration activity, and they each had an assigned role. Most were speaking up and some were making jokes. The group was very much into this activity as it was based on a possible work experience, planning a party for the clients. Some were silent—were they agreeing or just reluctant to speak up? The speaker talked about creativity—looking at everything from a different point of view. She then brought the group back to the beginning of the class when they listed their current challenges at work. One challenge was getting people to work together as a team. She asked the group to solve this problem. She talked about creating consensus; encouraging others to share. She said, “Listening makes us stronger, not weaker.”

April wrote in her weekly CIQ that she “felt most engaged when [they] were discussing as a group the plans for the resident party. It was very interesting to see everyone’s point of view and it was fun pretending to actually have that much money to spend on a party.” She went on to share that she was most surprised by “the whole point behind [the speaker’s] training was to figure out our method of problem solving: thought processes, how long it takes, is there a better method, etc. It surprised [her] to realize that during the process of elimination, much is already decided in [your] head with giving it little to no thought.” Louise was most surprised that, “everyone agreed on the party.” Samantha noted that she was surprised by “the fact that time went by quickly. It helps when you’re interested in what’s being taught and the instructor was very good about getting the class to talk and involved.” Kathy answered the question on feeling most distanced by noting that she was “wondering where the puzzles were going to take
[them]. Pretty sure it was showing [them] how that each has their own method in getting to the same conclusion, so that none of the methods were necessarily wrong or right, but they worked, which was what was wanted.” Colleen noted that she “liked it when everyone was working together to solve the problems.” Scarlett noted that she was most distanced “when [one participant] told her there was an easier way to write that on the board. . .I wanted to tell [the speaker] of the way I had done it (which was the same way as the other person), but I wanted to let her have a chance to portray her idea fully.” Mary noted that she was surprised “with the class discussion on the outing that the entire room worked on. Going from trying to save money to spending it all. I also realized that not everyone will agree on the decision but that concessions need to be made for the good of everyone.”

Session 6: Vision/Developing your own Action Plan

The next class on November 17, 2009 began once again with the group seeming quiet and subdued. There is some laughter. They were all still sitting in the same spots as the last time we were in this room, grouped up by county. The morning began with the video “Extraordinary Vision” by Dewitt Jones (2009). Some points shared in the video included:

- Reframe problems to opportunities
- Imagination to imagination
- Focus your vision
- Put yourself in the place of most potential
- Be open to the next right answer
- You take it all in and give it all back
When I weave, I weave

After the video, the facilitator asked them to discuss the film. There was no reaction whatsoever.

The speaker then arrived as planned for the second half of this session. She began by spreading various magazine pictures on the floor and asked each participant and the facilitator to pick out a picture that spoke to them. She then had each participant explain why they chose a particular picture. Scarlett spoke about taking everyone’s opinion into account. Kathy talked about the different personality and no right or wrong one. Kaye mentioned that everyone could be a leader. Louise talked about how we all have different personalities. Samantha mentioned the different leadership qualities. Fay talked about the personality types and teamwork. April noted the friendships developing. Sue talked about how it takes a team. Mona mentioned that it takes all of us to make one team. Mary talked about being a little more open. Colleen talked about what it takes to be a team.

Next the speaker introduced an activity and asked them to count off by four, breaking up the familiar groups. She asked where do we go from here [with our leadership development]? She wanted them to discuss in their smaller groups a professional goal as well as a personal goal, steps to get there and who would be involved. The group seemed unsure about what they were supposed to be doing. Some were laughing, others talking quietly. One group was sitting all the same direction and looked a little uncomfortable. She then had the groups get back together and started a discussion on servant leadership. She mentioned Robert Greenleaf’s 1970 essay saying “the servant-leader is servant first …it begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first, then there is a conscious choice that brings one to aspire to lead”
(Hollis presentation, November 17, 2009). She then asked the group to identify someone in their life they would consider a servant leader. Some mentioned their mother, grandfather, husband, pastor and teacher.

She finished the day by having them do the mirror exercise. They were asked to put their name on the top of a blank piece of paper and start by listing one characteristic that they have. They were then instructed to pass the page to the person next to them so that they could add a characteristic about them. The pages circulated completely around the room. Some didn’t seem to understand what they were expected to do, but there was lots of laughter anyway. This didn’t seem to be flowing well. Flow is apparently quite important to me. Again, I wanted to take over and facilitate this activity. Sitting back and observing was proving to be very difficult for me.

Kaye responded to the CIQ question on what surprised her most by writing that she “was very surprised how you can take a plain picture that someone else picked out and tell something about yourself from it. Also, how we had to name something about each person in the class. I have learned a lot about the other RAs through this.” Mary noted that she “still can’t seem to open up. I’m still backward as far as speaking out in front of a crowd.” Sue was surprised by “how much of a journey [she] still has.” When asked about her moment of being most distanced, Kathy replied, “well, at first, when the screen came out to show, shall we say, a documentary of some sort, I thought, groan …but I was wrong about it. He was a great speaker, loved hearing his adventures, and made me want to be a little more daring myself. The influence that he put on us was one of yes, I can do that too!” She went on to note that she was most surprised by the realization that, “instead of looking at our faults, we looked at the good qualities in
ourselves, and how others might perceive us. It was a lot of fun, yet gave us some inner insight that yes, maybe others do like us after all!” Fay mentioned that nothing really surprised her. “You can just see all the different personalities and different lives people live. Some people are vocal and some are timid.”

*Session 7: Communication and Leadership*

On November 24, 2009 the class learned about communication and leadership. As we waited for the class to begin, RAs from different counties were actually talking across the table to each other. The facilitator asked for the homework assignment from last week. Not one person brought theirs.

The speaker began with a MS PowerPoint presentation about the definition of leadership. Some group participation was occurring. She then discussed barriers to communication. One county group appeared to not be engaged at all. Others were taking notes. The speaker finished the presentation discussing passive, aggressive, passive/aggressive, and assertive communication styles. She encouraged the group members to be aware of their own body language, tone, and inflections. She mentioned the value of thinking before you speak and respecting other opinions.

The facilitator closed this session by informing the group that their assignment for the next week (the last class) would be a group presentation on things they learned in the class. Each area/county would be expected to plan, rehearse, and perform a skit, poem, song, or other type of activity for the rest of the group at the beginning of the last class. This announcement seemed to unnerve several participants, while others appeared to be somewhat excited about the prospect. Most expressed concern about having enough time to get this prepared.
The responses to the CIQs for this session indicated that Colleen was surprised “to find that I have a lot of work cut out for me because I am not the greatest communicator. I really want to work on this.” Mona indicated that she was “surprised at [her]self over not really thinking how [her] body language sends a message.” Mary was surprised by the quote shared by the speaker that, “nothing is so simple that it cannot be misunderstood.” Jane found most puzzling the homework assignments, but said, “I am sure I will figure it out.” When Kathy answered the last question she wrote, “I was amazed at the body language communication analysis. I had never noticed how much we read that way, yet have done it for so long without noticing. We all do it, without even thinking about it. So now, [I] am most conscious of it when speaking to another.” Samantha was surprised “when [the facilitator] asked for our homework from the previous week. The training made me more aware of different areas of communication that I need to work on.”

Session 8: Wrap-up and a Word from the Company President

The last class on December 1, 2009 began with the group presentations, after the facilitators had collected the first homework assignment regarding their action plans. The first group had made up two songs, a rap song (see Appendix G) followed by one to the tune of Mickey Mouse. They were having fun and sharing a great deal of their experiences from the past eight weeks at the same time. The second group discussed examples of different leaders and talked about effective leaders. They had prepared a word scramble game and that was distributed but not completed as a group activity. The last group used the information from Myers-Briggs and matched it with things about themselves.
The facilitators then led a discussion to wrap up what the participants had learned during the series. They also asked for suggestions for improvement. One idea was to mix up the seating! They stated that they would like to continue meeting as a group. The group then reviewed their work role as RAs from the newsprint developed during the first class. They wanted to add patience, using different personalities to make the team, being both open minded and forgiving.

The facilitators asked which session had been their favorite, and they agreed that it was the one on teambuilding. Samantha suggested we have a list for the monthly team meetings in the group homes for ideas to continue to work on teambuilding. They liked the video, the information on the different personalities, and some enjoyed the journaling.

For the last hour, the president of the company joined them and shared his ideas on leadership. Essentially he posed that there are three types of leaders: trait, crisis, and transition. He shared that the trait theory holds that the person inherently has leadership characteristics such as being dynamic, being a trail-blazer and using creativity. The crisis leader is drawn to leadership through events. He gave the responses to the terrorist attacks of 9/11/01 as an example of this type of leader. His third category, transition, results from being taught how to become a leader.

He finished his talk by having the RAs introduce themselves and identify which home they work at. He then told stories about things that happened in the 1980s when each home was being built and opened.

At the end of his talk, we adjourned for a catered lunch. The RAs seemed to enjoy having lunch with the President, the CEO, and other team professionals who had been invited to this last session. For some of the RAs, it was the first time they had met the
President of the company. Certificates were presented to all attendees. I felt bittersweet about this being the last class. I was happy that it had appeared to have gone so well. I speculated that I could see growth within the group. They seemed at ease, willing to share, more confident and energized.

In the weekly CIQ Fay wrote that the most affirming part of this last session was “when [the president] spoke about good leadership and what it means.” She noted that when he “talked about when each group home was built, [she] thought that was very interesting and surprising.” Samantha agreed that, “it was nice to hear [the president] talk about starting his company. A lot of times at this level we don’t get to hear [the president or CEO] talk about the company.” April noted that she was most surprised by the president’s stories. “I had heard bits and pieces before, but I’d never heard [the president] tell the stories about building the group homes and the resistance they encountered. It’s amazing how drastically things have changed since the [19]80’s.”

Sue felt most affirmed when she heard how the president started the company noting “that [the president] started all of this when he was 55—being 55 myself opened my eyes that it is never too late.” She was most surprised to “see firsthand how real and hardworking [the president] is and how strongly he feels about what we are doing as a result of his hard work.”

When responding to the question about being most engaged, Scarlett added “[the president] is a wonderful speaker …he always encourages everyone there to take a look at themselves and where they want to be.” She went on to share, “I was surprised and enlightened about [the company’s] history. It was absolutely great when [the president] went around and met all of the RAs and which home they worked at and then proceeded
to explain how each home came to be and the problems they had with the communities. This all was a wonderful experience and I appreciate the opportunity for these trainings.”

Categories and Themes

After this brief overview of the context and the initial responses of the participants through their answers to the weekly Critical Incident Questionnaires, the other sources of data were gathered and sorted into categories as detailed in Chapter 3. Several themes emerged from these categories. As participants described their experiences they indicated an increased knowledge of leadership, teamwork and communication. They also seemed, in most cases, to have increased self-awareness and self-esteem.

Leadership

Sue wrote about the importance of recognizing “the different personalities and what it takes to get to the same goal.” Mona also wrote about this in her journal summary and added the importance of “utiliz[ing] the different ethnic backgrounds and personalities to come together to become a more professional team.” Along these same lines, Sue mentioned in her interview that we “sometimes butt heads and because of the different personalities that’s why you’re butting heads. They’re more of a doer, you’re more of task, you know, they’re more of that. So, okay, I’ll work with you. I’ve got mine and you’ve got yours and I’ll let you have yours.” This information about recognizing different personalities hit home with Louise. She wrote in her journal summary that it is important to “watch staff and see where their strong points are and to give them jobs to fit their personalities.” Mona also wrote that she wanted to “enjoy and accept all the different qualities.”
There were other qualities of a leader that the group noted. Louise wrote in her homework assignment that she wants to “teach and train the staff to reach their full potential at their own pace.” The homework assignment to develop a professional goal resulted in Fay aspiring to “set expectations for herself and her co-workers.” April set a goal to “pay attention to the details as well as the big picture.”

When asked during the interview about some leadership strengths that she is now aware of, Sue talked about her “patience and openness to accept other people.” Along those same lines, Jane mentioned “stepping up and doing the best that [she] can and making sure that [she’s] fair with everybody.” In a more lighthearted vein, Scarlett noted that she learned that, “to be a leader you have to be kooky enough to have the ideas and to have somebody else follow you to pull it off.” [She was quoting the company president].

Mona wrote in her journal that she strives to “be a looker, looking at the ordinary to see the unusual.” She went on to write that she wants to use “an open mind to choose the best, not settling for just any answer.” Other qualities of a leader Louise noted included the desire “to teach/lead them [clients and staff] to do the right thing.” Kathy also mentioned the necessity of “the wearing of different hats on different days, depending on needs.” Mona expressed her ideal of a leader by writing in her journal summary “that the full measure of a person is not to be found in the person himself, but the colors and textures that come alive in others because of him.” She went on to elaborate that this includes “[taking] initiative when there is a need, to do something about it. To seize the moment, recognize what your team members need, and help them to do the best they can. Thinking ahead, anticipate what problems might arise and know
what it will take to reach the objective. Spend time wisely, get ahead of deadlines or help someone else. Recognizing and doing what needs to be done before you are asked, to take action, launch a goal.”

Samantha noted qualities that she learned more about included “problem solving; [being] flexible, respectful and always willing to help others.” Jane wrote about similar qualities in her journal, giving the example of “loving what you do and having a positive attitude. . .being respectful to yourself and others. . .making decisions.” She also wrote that a good leader includes “being cooperative, compromise, and being creative.”

Samantha wrote that, “the first thing in any problem is recognizing that the problem exist[s] and approach[ing] it with a positive attitude.” She also reminds of the “significance of pat[ting] people on the back more often.”

At least four of the participants mentioned the information shared about Servant Leadership. April wrote that the presenter “spoke on what it meant to be a servant leader which is so true and I’m glad I was able to hear this.” During her interview Colleen noted that she liked hearing about servant leadership and “it made [her] feel that [she is] more of a servant leader than anything.” During her interview Mona noted, “there was quite a bit that I noticed about myself because I do have quite a few leadership qualities. I’m more of a quiet person so I’m not a loud leader but more of a quiet leader and just my personality type. I like to help people and that doesn’t mean you get walked all over. You can help people.”
**Communication**

In the area of communication Louise noted that, “we also learned that good communication isn’t just speaking; its body language, writing, signs, videos, illustrations as well.” Fay noted that it is important “to communicate what is expected and follow through with it.” Samantha reflected in her journal about “just how much your body language says to people.” Fay, during her interview, shared that she has learned about “communication and teamwork. I know that I’m trying to use that, especially with the transition that we are having. I mean I think it’s great. We’re starting fresh and I’ve even used some of the quotes with my [Residential Coordinator] today.”

Scarlett talked about communication and some of the things she has learned from the speakers. She noted, “He really showed me how to talk to somebody and grasp what you are really trying to say and to let somebody else feel it too. And that’s what leadership is about. The class told us it’s basically letting somebody know how you feel and making them believe it, too.” April stated that, “communication is key in leadership.” Kathy wrote that she had learned “real communication goes in both directions. And she added ‘nothing is so simple that it cannot be misunderstood.’” [This was a quote from the presenter on communication].

April wrote in her weekly CIQ after the communication session that she “felt most engaged when [the speaker] was talking about the differences between men and women and how to better communicate in a conversation or discussion with men and women present.” Fay shared that she learned that she “needs to start expressing [her]self so that way [she gets] to be heard.” Scarlett talked during the interview that she “usually likes to see how everybody interacts with everybody else at first and then I kind of jump
in, cause I’m more of an observer at first. I’m not really shy but I am so I kinda learned a little bit more about that. I’m trying to really open myself up more to speaking.” She went on to share, “I’ve taken quite a few leadership courses before and, but they weren’t so involved as this one was and that was the great thing about this one. It’s that you actually got to speak to the people who were speaking. Cause the things that I went to before for high school and things like that, it was just a big auditorium of people. So you don’t get the one-on-one or five-on-one teacher. I mean it’s not involving or engaging as much as this was. So I feel it helped me be able to learn from other people in the group and listen to what they have to say. More than just tell them what to say or tell them what to do. So, it helps you be a better listener.” She talked further about communication and shared, “you have to know how to talk to the clients to express what they are feeling and how to listen to what they are feeling and observe what they are feeling.”

April noted that the class helped her “mostly from the communication standpoint different things that [she] need[ed] to work on …and being more of a leader when [she] communicate[s].” She went on to note, “We can express ourselves, we just don’t have to be in charge.” Samantha spoke of “body language as far as how people read you. You don’t realize just how much you are saying.” Colleen stated, “I’ve learned, I think, to become a better listener.” Mary noted, “I have to speak out more; they can’t read my mind.” Sue reported that she feels she is “able to communicate more so on a bigger picture.”
Another topic that seemed to have a huge impact on the participants was teamwork. Mona enjoyed “listening to the speaker explaining about teamwork, the different personalities it takes to make a good team.” Kaye discussed “talking about teamwork. Leadership is what we used to think as being one person stepping up and taking over, which it really is but if you have a whole team that is backing you up it helps. . .we can all do it together.” Mary wrote in her journal summary that teamwork results are often different than individual results. Don’t be afraid to compromise on some things.” Mona shared her definition of teamwork: “learning to work off each other, learning each other’s strengths. To open our minds to include others in decisions, to increase and develop relationships.”

General Responses to the Sessions

There were other general responses to the eight-week leadership enhancement class such as Scarlett’s observation that, “there were great speakers and great participators, which made this class a great experience.” Samantha shared that, “any kind of training makes stronger employees.” Kaye wrote in her CIQ that, “group participation and hands on activities are always a plus!” Sue noted that, “it takes all points of view to get to a solution that works and sticks—everyone needs to be on the same page.”

Several mentioned the Myers-Briggs, and during her interview Jane noted, “That test that we took … it explained what kind of leader you were. I liked that part, cause that explained what kind of leader I was.” She went on to share that, “you can learn from other people who are in the same position you are. You learn different ideas on how they handle things maybe you hadn’t thought about.” Kaye found that, “there are things that I
need to improve in as a leader. It helped me on my job.” Louise noted that, “even the RLIs are actually leaders.”

Samantha shared that she was “learning more of her strengths and weaknesses in her RA position.” She said the experience was “an eye opener. A lot of different information … You don’t think about the different leadership things, even the way you approach people.” Mona also shared that, “it opened up the thoughts of backgrounds, the ethics of it and just everybody coming together with all the different ideas to value our jobs.” April said that she “got something from every class. I learned a lot about myself and I learned some about other people.”

Sue noted, “I guess just being hands on every day, you just don’t really see the big picture. You know you are so engrossed in what you are doing. I think just bringing it to light and kind of reflecting on everything.” She shared, “You don’t really reflect on how you are getting there, you’re just doing it. Then to stand back in a classroom—how did we come to that and you’ve got somebody over here helping you and somebody over there helping you and all of a sudden you’re goal is done. And that is good.”

**Self-esteem and Self-confidence**

Other general responses to the training centered on self-esteem and things that participants had learned about themselves. Samantha wrote in a weekly CIQ that she realized “how important we are when it comes to helping the RC run a smooth group home.” While Louise noted she “had not differentiated [her]self as a leader so much and [is] starting to do that now.” Kaye shared in her interview that she “can actually be a better leader.” She also shared, “It showed me where I need to improve and that I need to
step out more.” She liked one quote from the second speaker “be yourself, don’t be the shadow.”

Kathy wrote in a weekly CIQ that, “sometimes a person does not see in themselves what others do, so it is surprising and good to hear, as a person sometimes might feel they fall short of what they need to be doing.” Louise, during her interview, admitted. “I sort of came out of my shyness in talking to people.” While Colleen shared that, “I can talk a little better than I thought I could.” Fay said, “I have found I have more like, you know, enthusiasm. You know, like it got me to thinking I can do this.” Kaye talked about the class “help[ing] [her] figure out where [she] can improve and … some areas [she] personally think[s] [she] do[es] pretty good in.” Scarlett mentioned that she “steadily gained more confidence.”

Colleen shared this important point when she said, “It made me realize that even though deep down I might feel that it’s right, I’m never going to know unless I speak up and say something about it.” Mary realized that, “we’re leaders in a lot of different ways.” She also noted that, “I’m not too old to learn …everyday is a learning experience.” She said, “No two days are the same, not in our field anyway. [You] have to be flexible, have to be a role model.” April said the leadership classes “made us feel important.” Mona talked about her increased confidence and said, “I mean it really woke me up to realize that you don’t have to just sit back. You can really voice yourself, be beneficial.”

Kathy spoke during her interview about the fact that, “everybody has some good in them. Everybody’s got something to bring to the table.” She went on to say. “I probably am a pretty good leader.” One thing that Sue liked about the class was that,
“[they] had input, and they weren’t just walking in and [told] ‘this is how it’s going to be. Our goal is to do this and what do you want out of it?’ She reported that she appreciated that, and said, “It was a really good overall experience.” She also shared in her interview that she “thought it was a really great thing that you guys thought enough of us to help make us more confident in our positions.” Scarlett noted that, “everybody’s ideas should be involved and heard.”

Sue mentioned in her interview that this class “kind of brought to [her] attention that as a person how [she has] evolved since high school.” She also added “the journey is not yet over.” Scarlett suggested in her journal summary that she had learned that, “there is no wrong angle or perspective … just different ones.”

Mona noted that she has more “confidence in [her]self.” She added during the interview “I think that we can succeed in anything we do now.” In addition, she offered “I’m ready to take off.”

*Learned About Self*

Other things that they shared that they had learned about themselves through this experience included Kathy writing that she “noticed this in the van on the way back, how different each of us are, yet we each perform the same job.” April wrote in her weekly CIQ that, “when the president of the company spoke, it reminded me why I started working for this company to begin with.” During her interview she shared that the training “made us take our responsibilities more seriously …it made us concentrate more on the important things.”

Mary noted that she is “more of a leader in [her] everyday life than [she] even considered.” She shared that she “was surprised most by the fact that she hadn’t realized
just how much of a role model each of us are in our personal lives as well as our professional lives.” Colleen wrote that she “learned a lot about herself and she learned to believe that nothing is impossible.”

Aspirations

I hoped to discover that the RAs, through their exposure to leadership ideas and perhaps increased self-esteem, would indicate an interest in moving into leadership roles. When sorting the data, I identified a category I labeled aspirations. Mary noted in her homework assignment that she has a goal for “further education and to move up the ladder …possibly to become an RC or Area Residential Coordinator.” April listed a goal to “obtain a degree.” Kaye also listed a goal to get a “degree in psychology.” Mona listed “training and school.” Kathy did so as well by noting “more education.” She also wrote about getting her “own business.”

Mona talked during her interview about wanting to “be more understanding …I don’t ever want to be a dictator. I want to be one that works along side everybody to be a stronger teacher. I want to be able for everybody to depend on me. To realize that this is a team, it’s not just one person sitting back and handing out all the orders. That this other person is going to be right in there with you.” Samantha shared that she wants “to be able to grow with the company.” She later said, “I always had the hopes and dreams but never did anything to make it happen.” Jane shared that she is “trying to work her way up to being an RC.” Louise has the same goal and stated, “I’m probably capable of doing higher jobs like even RC.”

Others mentioned continuing their education as an aspiration; Fay shared that she “already picked out a college.” Kathy talked about how she keeps thinking about taking
classes “and this put it in my head.” Samantha wants to “take more management classes.” She added that this “just reverts right back to my education and it makes me want to do more.” Mona wrote about her desire to “not just take the first easy answer, keep on continuing to find the right answer. As a leader we need to put out the best we have to offer, not only in our work place but in the community doing acts of kindness, all through our journey of life.”

**Barriers**

The barriers that might prevent the participants from pursuing their goals have been noted above through their comments about wanting more education. Sue asked herself “why haven’t you taken a class, why haven’t you done this, why haven’t you done that?” Mary shared that she’s “a little bit backward and on the quiet side.” Samantha talked about the fact that, “a lot of times I don’t ask for help.”

**Unexpected Outcomes**

Some unexpected outcomes from this leadership training came to light during the review of the data. Perhaps the bonding that occurred and the fun that was shared and expressed should have been anticipated. April discussed her recognition that they share many of the same struggles in their current roles. “We were able to talk to all of the other RAs and they all have the same exact issues and that kind of took a load off right there.” Kaye noted how she “could relate to others in the class through seeing what their personality types were.” Samantha seemed to appreciate that, “we talked about our roles as RA. I don’t always stop and think about what our roles really are.” Scarlett mentioned that it was “a chance for all of us to get better acquainted.” She went on to note that she was “able to meet [her] co-workers and enjoy the day of learning, communicating and
fun. This is a great way to see what are everyone’s talents and strengths in a group setting."

Samantha wrote in her journal summary that, “it was interesting to see how we all work for the same company, doing the same job, but we’re all so different.” Jane noted that, “everyone has different ideas and when in a group you learn a lot more.” April wrote about the Briggs-Myers by noting “I think taking this personality testing into consideration has made the other RA’s that I work with and myself look at each other a little differently. It’s easier to understand how we can all be so different and we can learn from each other’s strengths.”

Most mentioned the opportunity to meet each other as a positive aspect of having a class like this. Scarlett talked during her interview about getting to “see how everybody involves and engages with each other.” She also talked about the time spent traveling to and from class. “Riding there and riding back, we were talking there how the class was going to be maybe and then when we got there it was totally different than what we expected. So on the way back, we would have something else to talk about. It was great.”

Several mentioned the bonding that occurred over the course of the eight weeks. Sue mentioned the bonding even though “a lot of the people are younger than I.” Kathy talked about “meeting different people and seeing how they work together.” Samantha shared that she liked “the idea that they had the RAs getting together. I mean I thought it was good for us to finally meet. And, it’s even true in the counties, you know, because a lot of times we are all so busy. We know each other but we don’t know each other. Like the ride up there was good for us to all get acquainted.” She also mentioned how the group bonded.
The group decided on the first day, when they were discussing the rules, that they would have fun. It was evident that they were having fun during the classes and this was mentioned numerous times during the interviews, in their journal summaries and the CIQs. Kathy noted in her journal, after the third class had to be postponed, “class was cancelled. [I] was actually a tad disappointed, having grown to really enjoy going, learning a thing or two and having lots of fun.” Jane shared in a CIQ that she was most engaged “when we were doing teamwork on the straws …I thought this was a lot of fun.” Kathy wrote in her interview that, “group participation made the class lots of fun, and put us at ease, too. Rather than being talked to, she talked with us, making us do some thinking.” When Mary was asked via the CIQ what surprised her about herself during the course she said, “that I had fun. I guess that’s the biggest thing.”

Others That Might Benefit

During the interviews the participants shared ideas on others who might benefit from a leadership training program. Five of the participants mentioned the RLIs. Kaye noted that the RLIs need to learn how to lead our clients. Kathy remarked that everybody [all employees] would benefit because “I think there’s a lot of self doubt on abilities on RLIs.” Other groups that they thought might benefit from similar training included the RCs, RAs that might aspire to become RCs, and other professional team members. Kaye said that she thought this training would even benefit our clients.

Summary

Several themes have emerged. Morse and Richards (2002) noted that, “researchers often seek more abstract ideas or general themes in data. By a theme we mean a common thread that runs through the data” (p. 113). Most of the participants
expressed surprise and appreciation that the learning process was fun. They discussed learning from each other and finding out that they share common issues. They expressed the realization that we all have the potential to be leaders. The essence of this realization is that leadership is not dependent on a designated role but is a set of characteristics that can be enhanced through training. Another theme is that education and training often reinforce the desire for further education and increased self-esteem. A final theme was the desire for further education and promotional advancement.
CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“The real act of discovery consists not in finding new land but in seeing with new eyes.”
- Marcel Proust

Interpretation and Discussion

This qualitative case study set out to examine the responses of a group of women on the lower rungs of the organizational ladder when provided with a series of leadership classes. These classes, based on the Academy for Community Leadership model, were presented over a course of eight two-hour sessions. The classes covered such topics as leadership styles, personality traits, teambuilding, cultural awareness, problem solving and consensus building. Other topics included communication and developing their own action plan for further leadership development.

Several sources of data were collected during and after the training sessions. These sources included having the participants complete a Critical Incident Questionnaire (Brookfield, 1995) after each class, the group discussion notes during various classes, some homework assignments, my researcher’s journal entries, the participants’ journal summaries and the interviews held shortly after the last class. The intention of using these varied sources was to provide for triangulation as described by Stake (1995). Richards (2005) noted that, “triangulation is a term widely used for research designs where
different sorts of data or methods of handling data are brought to bear on the research question” (p. 140).

The participants described not only how they were learning about various aspects of leadership but what they were learning about themselves as well. They talked about their ideas of leadership as well as their own leadership traits that they would like to enhance. In *Talking Leadership*, bell hooks (1999) described a model of leadership that says “I can be a better leader to the degree that I am healthy, emotionally well and self-actualized” (p. 115). Part of this self-actualization rests on the identification of those leadership traits that leaders wish to further develop.

The results shared in Chapter 4 were analyzed in relation to the emerging categories and themes and positioned within the relevant literature review from Chapter 2. This is followed by my conclusions, recommendations for practice, and recommendations for future research.

*Research Question One*

*Given completion of an eight-week program introducing leadership skill enhancement opportunities, how did the participants describe this experience?*

*Differences.*

The participants described their responses through the CIQs, their journal summaries, and during the interview process. One theme was their surprise as they learned about their own personality styles. This led them to speculate about the differences and similarities with their team members at work. Sue talked about the “different personalities and what it takes to get to the same goal.” Others noted that they wanted to help identify duties that matched the strengths of their team members. This
idea to “enjoy and accept all the different qualities” seemed to resonate with the group. This reflects Portman and Garrett’s (2005) observation that in the Native American culture there is a focus on developing those individual abilities “that contribute to the well-being of the tribe” (p. 287).

Further education.

One idea that emerged related to the topic of leadership enhancement for women on the lower rungs of the ladder is the desire for more education. The participant comments reflected a strong desire to continue their education. As noted earlier, Freire (2007) wrote that, “education, while not being able to accomplish all, can accomplish something” (p. 67). By having this opportunity to experience non-formal education, the participants became more conscious of their desire to use the avenue of continued education to advance themselves. They also realized how much more they have to learn about leadership. Colleen mentioned, “I have a lot of work cut out for me.”

Research Question Two

At the conclusion of the training, what types of leadership opportunities did participants express an interest in pursuing?

The RAs in this study began to realize how they could impact others at work through their improved leadership characteristics. As Banks and Nafukho (2008) pointed out, “the field of human resource development as an area of study consists of three core areas—organizational development, training and development, and career development” (p. 47). In addition to providing training for the RAs, this opportunity appeared to spark the participants’ interest in advancement at work. Mary noted that she wants to “move further up the ladder …possibly to become an RC or Area Residential Coordinator.”
Several listed a desire for further education to be positioned for advancement into a professional position. Others talked about growing with the company or even starting their own business. This excitement and sense of empowerment was suggested by DePree (1989) when he talked about the important responsibility of helping to “identify, develop and nurture future leaders” (p. 14). Daft’s (2005) idea of leadership included a “shared authority, empowerment and building a community of trust” (p. 230). This idea was present with this group of learners as they expressed the confidence to advance in their careers. Louise even noted, “I’m probably capable of doing higher jobs like even RC.”

Research Question Three

*What barriers did participants note that might prevent them from pursuing their interests?*

Some of the participants recognized that they would need additional education to pursue their career goals. Sue shared that she had asked herself “Why haven’t you taken a class?” She mentioned that this class “kind of brought to my attention that as a person how I have evolved since high school.” This was interesting in light of Gerlicher’s (1999) statement that women, “did not value their own skills and could not recognize the new skills they had learned through life experience. The women tended to look at their skills as though no changes had occurred in their lives, and as if they were as unskilled as they were from high school” (p. 3). This learning opportunity seemed to encourage the participants about the possibility of advancement. Even when prompted during the semi-structured interviews, the participants noted few barriers, other than lack of education. Several spoke positively about continuing their education, with Fay noting she is already enrolled.
Buckingham and Clifton (2001) wrote that individuals “will excel only by maximizing strengths, never by fixing weaknesses” (p. 26). This series of classes appeared to help the RAs recognize the abilities they already possess and others that they feel capable of enhancing.

Research Question Four

What unexpected outcomes emerged from providing the Academy for Community Leadership model of curriculum to women who typically do not have access to it?

Bonding.

Another theme emerged related to the participants’ appreciation of the time spent together with their cohorts. Learning from each other, as well as learning from the various speakers, is one of basic foundation blocks of adult education. Human Resource Development addresses the more formalized aspects of training employees in the workplace. Through this structured series of classes, the participants had an opportunity to experience a culture of learning as described by Longo (2005). He noted that through community education, we can see “ordinary people as producers, not consumers; actors, not spectators, and teachers, not students” (p. 9). This time together allowed the group to create their own community of learners. Scarlett mentioned that they have had “great speakers and great participators.” This class gave participants an opportunity for personal reflection and to learn about their peers. This led to a greater appreciation of their role as an RA. They also began to appreciate the support they can offer to each other. The idea that we are all in this together was shared by Jane when she mentioned that, “you can learn from other people who are in the same position you are. You learn different ideas on how they handle things maybe you hadn’t thought about.”
Fun.

Many in the group discussed the idea that learning can be fun. This notion of enjoyment was evident to the researcher and expressed by each of the participants. This atmosphere may have contributed to their increased self-esteem and confidence in their abilities to carry out the duties of the RA and also to look at advancement in their careers as a distinct possibility. In his study about workplace learning, Fenwich (2008) discussed women in the workplace. He touched on “learning to trust the inner voice …of breaking free of workplace structures that repressed this self” (p. 299). By agreeing to allow themselves to have fun while learning about leadership, the participants in this study were receptive to the notion of enjoying this process. Kathy noted that, “group participation made the class lots of fun, and put us at ease, too.”

Everyone can be a leader.

Most of the participants seemed to realize that they are leaders in their current positions and that everyone has the potential to be a leader. Leadership is more about individual qualities and skills than a designated position or responsibility. Everyone in an organization can be a leader by exhibiting and enhancing the type of qualities that were discussed during this eight-week series.

Mona noted that, “the full measure of a person is not to be found in the person himself [herself], but the colors and textures that come alive in others because of him [her].” Several in the group mentioned the importance of recognizing others and celebrating achievements.
They also reflected on the Servant Leadership discussions and seemed to embrace this particular model of leadership. Servant Leadership has been written about since the theory was first developed by Robert Greenleaf in a 1970 essay. It has even been represented in fiction with one great example, which follows, shared by Keith (1999).

Hazel-rah, the Chief Rabbit in the novel Watership Down by Richard Adams.

This is a wonderful fable about a group of rabbits who set out to find a new home. Hazel-rah becomes the Chief Rabbit, not because he is the biggest rabbit in the group, or the cleverest, or the most clairvoyant. He becomes the leader because he is willing to listen, and he often asks for advice from others. He knows the different strengths of the other rabbits, and draws out those strengths for the good of the group. He is able to identify the needs of the group, and make decisions and take action in a way that unites the rabbits in seeking to achieve their common goals. And he is willing to pitch in and take personal risks on behalf of the group.

The rabbits face hard times, and are severely tested, but with Hazel-rah’s guidance, they work together as a team, and they succeed in finding a new home. (p. 17-18)

Keith (1999) goes on to describe two models of leadership. The first is the power model, which “assumes a hierarchy shaped like a pyramid. Only a few people have power—those at the top of the pyramid. In the service model [the servant leader], the hierarchy doesn’t matter. That’s because anybody in a family, organization, or community can be of service. Anybody can identify and meet the needs of others. Anybody can be a servant-leader” (p. 30).
Conclusions

This case study attempted to discover the responses to training provided to a group of employees who would not normally be selected for leadership training. Leadership development is typically reserved for those who are already in a designated leadership position within an organization or those who are being groomed for such. By analyzing the responses to this leadership development class, it appears that leadership training could be beneficial to all segments of the organization, not just those at the top. The enhancement of leadership characteristics should not be confined to a select few. By broadening the reach of this type of training, the notion of servant leadership could be introduced as “shared authority, empowerment and building a community of trust” (Daft, 2005, p. 230).

Recommendations

In qualitative research it is not important or even possible to generalize the results of the research. The concept of transferability is more closely aligned with this approach. Could the research suggest other similar groups who might benefit as well? In this particular organization, the Residential Coordinators might be selected to attend a workshop on some aspect of leadership enhancement. The possibility that all would be selected is highly unlikely. The RCs would probably benefit in similar ways by recognizing their strengths as well as the areas they might need to continue improving upon. They may also realize that they would like to further their education. Another outcome could be the bonding and relationship development that can occur through a structured class carried out over a series of weeks, regardless of the topic.
Other groups in this organization who might benefit would be the RLIs. They could learn that they have the capacity to be leaders, regardless of their position and perceived lack of authority. The characteristics and traits shared during this training are exactly the characteristics and traits that would be beneficial within any organization regardless of the position of the employee.

Perhaps the clients of the studied organization could benefit from some of these leadership topics as well. Several of them belong to a self-advocacy group and learning more about such topics as teambuilding, communication and personality types could help them become more active in this group as they explore the possibilities of advocating for themselves and their peers.

Direct support workers in similar organizations, such as CNAs or home health aides could potentially benefit from a series of classes on leadership. Introducing these concepts could help them understand their potential leadership abilities that could be enhanced through an adult learning experience in a non-formal setting.

The opportunity for training similar to that provided in this study could help dispel the notion described by Gerlicher (1998) that women, “did not value their own skills and could not recognize the new skills they had learned through life experience. The women tended to look at their skills as though no changes had occurred in their lives and as if they were as unskilled as they were from high school” (p. 3). Eagly and Carli (2007) pointed out that for women,

The route to leadership winds through a labyrinth, where they find themselves diverted—sometimes by doubts about their competence, sometimes by doubts about their warmth, and sometimes by resentment of their very presence. . .these
problems are more intense in some leadership roles than others, particularly in roles ordinarily held by men and at higher levels in organizations. Where women have become more numerous as managers, as they have in many areas, women and men are treated more equivalently. In these circumstances, the double bind loosens. Especially in more culturally feminine occupations, such as those in education and social services. (p. 117-118)

Hartman (1999) interviewed women in the book *Talking Leadership* and spoke with Anna Quindlen, a well-known journalist and author, about a female model of leadership. She shared that,

I found that people working with me would respond best to what I’d responded to best as my mother’s daughter—constant encouragement, a sense that we were in this together, a sense that we all wanted to do the right thing, as opposed to a sense that I alone know what the right thing is. I did think of them as working with me, as opposed to working for me, which I think is a female model of leadership. So we have to broaden the idea of leadership and acknowledge the extent to which leadership takes place on a micro level every day in our own homes. To the extent that leadership on a macro level is more like that of families, it is better, I think. It can take us more places that we need to go. I feel that a good family is the kind of model that can teach us everything we need to know about life and that a good organization works on the same principles as a good family. People have roles to play, various roles are accepted and it’s not necessarily hierarchical, although people have different amounts of power at different times. (p. 177)
This point supports the notion that anyone within an organization could potentially benefit from the opportunity to learn more about the qualities of a leader. They may learn how they might improve in these areas for any role at work, within their family and in the community. Leadership development training does not necessarily have to be restricted to only those providing social services in the helping professions. Leadership training focusing on personality types, communication, problem solving, teambuilding and embracing a more participatory leadership style could benefit people joining or working within any organization. This type of training could also support those recently unemployed as they prepare to reenter the workforce. By examining the definition of leadership in a larger context and not just restricted to those already in a designated leadership position, the traits and attributes necessary to succeed in any role could be enhanced through such training.

Freire (2007) encouraged us to ask the following:

1. Whether education has been indeed one of the priority means in the process of cultural change or whether, to the contrary, it has been an efficient instrument for status quo maintenance;

2. Whether education can really come to be a transformation factor toward the liberation of men and women;

3. And how it will erect itself into this force for cultural transformation given that it is, at the same time, an expression of culture. (p. 16)

This points to the question, was this experience of leadership training designed to enhance the participants’ leadership abilities to provide a transformative experience? The purpose of this training was to evaluate the participant responses to such training with
this particular group of women. As Merriam and Simpson (2000) pointed out “case study has been used to describe and/or evaluate the efficacy of a new program or new approach to ongoing problems” (p. 111). Now that the research has been concluded, it appears that this was an effective means to enhance the leadership capabilities of this particular group. The question as to whether it was transforming for this group could not be answered adequately without further research.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research in this area could center on providing this format and content to women on the lower rungs of the organizational ladder in similar service organizations. It also might be interesting to conduct a follow up assessment of the perceived impact of this training on this particular group, after a length of time such as six months. This would yield additional data and perhaps different conclusions. I am also curious as to whether the participants might consider this to be a transformative learning experience. Merriam (2004) wrote that the goal of transformation learning is independent thinking. She mentioned “that in transformational learning, one’s values, beliefs, and assumptions compose the lens through which personal experience is mediated and made sense of” (p. 61).

This researcher had an expectation that the subjects of this study would practice the leadership skills as they went through the class, but this was not represented in the data. Parks (2005) described a method where the class begins to demonstrate and practice the skills within that group. I did not see evidence of this. The format or length of time both weekly and for the entire series may have impacted that. It would be interesting to
design a research study to encourage this development based on the life cycle of a team—forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning (Champagne and Tausky, 1978).  

Summary

This research project, providing leadership training for women on the lower rungs of the organizational ladder, allowed me the opportunity to change my understanding of leadership. I began the project with the belief that the Resident Assistant participants in the study may not see themselves has having the potential to assume leadership responsibilities. After concluding this study, I see that I was defining leadership as attached to a particular role or position within an organization. This study has revealed to me that leadership skills and attributes are not restricted to a particular position; that anyone within the organization can develop leadership characteristics. In that sense, this research study has been transformational for me. I have studied leadership in the formal academic setting, through non-formal learning settings, such as conferences and seminars, and in an informal way through observations of leaders. I have previously attached “leadership” to a particular position within an organization or in the community. This study has led me to believe that leadership is a much broader and more inclusive cluster of attributes that can be enhanced for anyone in any setting.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Consent for Study

**Study Title** HRD—Leadership Training for Women on the Lower Rungs of the Organizational Ladder; A Qualitative Study.

**Study Purpose and Rationale**
The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of those participating in a leadership skill development class using a case study design. This study, if the outcome is positive, could illustrate one model that could be applied to a broader audience. This could support the notion that inclusion of marginalized groups for leadership development may be warranted. Succession planning for organizations typically focus on the top positions. This study will provide an avenue for those at the lower rungs of the corporate ladder to enhance their leadership skills. The study intends to describe this experience for this particular group of women.

Human resource development (HRD) is a term that has come to refer to the “training, education and development of employees in the workplace” (Merriam & Brockett, 1997, p. 10). The question is posed by Cunningham, “Who is served by HRD?” (2000, p. 578). She suggests that HRD is often viewed as serving the purposes of the corporation. This study will provide an opportunity for leadership development for a group that typically would not have access to such training. Senge noted that there is now a perceived need for leadership development for all members of the organization (2004).

**Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria**
To be eligible to participate in this study, you must be a woman currently in a Residential Assistant position at Occazio, Inc.

**Participation Procedures and Duration**
For this project, you may be asked to participate in a one-hour interview as well as be observed during a leadership development training series of eight, two-hour sessions. It will take approximately one hour to complete the interview. You will also be asked to complete a short questionnaire after each weekly session and also to keep a journal during the eight-week timeframe of the class. The short questionnaire and journal entry should take no more than 30 minutes to complete each week. This project will also require you to travel to the location of the classes from your normal worksite, which could involve up to and additional three hours each class day.

**Audio or Video Tapes**
For purposes of accuracy, with your permission, the interviews will be audio taped. Any names used on the audiotape will be changed to pseudonyms when the tapes are transcribed. The tapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s office until the end of the research project (March, 2010) and will then be erased.
Data Confidentiality or Anonymity
All data will be maintained as confidential and no identifying information such as names will appear in any publication or presentation of the data.

Storage of Data
Paper data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s office until the end of the project and will then be shredded. The data will also be entered into a software program and stored on the researcher’s password-protected computer until the end of the project in March, 2010 and then deleted. Only I, as the principal investigator, will have access to the data.

Risks or Discomforts
The only anticipated risk from participating in this study is that you may not feel comfortable answering some of the questions. You may choose not to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable and you may quit the study at any time.

Who to Contact Should You Experience Any Negative Effects from Participating in this Study
Should you experience any feelings of anxiety, there are counseling services available to you through the EAP at 1-800-634-4633

Benefits
The possible benefits include an increased understanding of leadership skills, further development of your own skill set and the opportunity to experience this training with your peers.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at anytime for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this form and at any time during the study.

IRB Contact Information
For one’s rights as a research subject, you may contact the following: Research Compliance, Sponsored Programs Office, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070, irb@bsu.edu. Study Title: HRD—Leadership Training for Women on the Lower Rungs of the Organizational Ladder; a Qualitative Study.
Sample Consent Form

Consent
I, __________________, agree to participate in this research project entitled, “HRD—Leadership Training for Women on the Lower Rungs of the Organizational Ladder: a Qualitative Study.” I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion criteria for participation (described on the previous page) in this study.

________________________________  _______________________
Participant’s Signature  Date
APPENDIX B

Interview Guide

1. Describe some things you have learned about yourself during the class.

2. What are some of your leadership strengths and abilities that you are aware of now?

3. What types of leadership roles do you now feel prepared to undertake as a result of this training?

4. How might this class help you in your role as a Residential Assistant?

5. What surprised you about yourself during the course.

6. What do you see as the pros and cons of attending this class?

7. What else would you like to tell me about the experience?
APPENDIX C

Permission Letter

September 14, 2009

Dr. Leonard Kaminsky
IRB Chair
Human Performance Laboratory
Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

Dear Dr. Kaminsky:

This letter serves as permission for Dixie Dugan to interview and observe staff at Occasio, Inc. regarding the topic “HRD—Leadership Training for Women on the Lower Rungs of the Organizational Ladder; a Qualitative Study.” This research will be conducted during the period October 6, 2009 to December 15, 2009. The individuals who will participate in the research will be attending a series of leadership training classes from the period October 6, 2009 to November 24, 2009. I understand that this research will be for purposes of Ms. Dugan completing her dissertation in Adult, Higher and Community Education.

If you have any questions or need further clarification, I may be contacted at 765 521-0320.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Randal S. Soforenko, COO
APPENDIX D

Sample Letter to Speakers

This letter is to invite you to consider assisting with my study on leadership development for women on the lower rungs of the organizational ladder. This research will be for my dissertation in Adult, Higher and Community Education through Ball State University. I am designing a qualitative study to describe the experiences of a group of employees. They will be attending a series of leadership classes patterned after the local Academy for Community Leadership (ACL). Just as the ACL utilizes speakers from various fields, I am planning to do the same. This invitation is to ask you to be one of the speakers that would be presenting.

My study will focus on the leadership development of a small group of employees who are not currently in designated leadership positions at work. Through interview and observations, I plan to describe what the leadership training experience was like for this particular group. The topics to be covered include:

- Leadership Styles
- Communication and Leadership
- Team Building
- Cultural Awareness
- Problem solving/consensus building
- Telling your own story and developing your own action plan

I would very much like for you to consider presenting on the topic of: The sessions will be held at the Alumni Center, Ball State University, from 10:00a.m. to noon on Tuesdays, beginning October 6, 2009, pending committee and IRB approval. I may need to adjust the beginning date.

I will be offering a small stipend as well as pay for any travel expenses. Beyond that, you would have my undying gratitude. I honestly believe that having you as one of my speakers for my research project will not only benefit the participants, but would also be a great honor to me.

Please let me know if this is something that you would consider. I would be happy to answer all questions that you might have.

Best regards,

Dixie Dugan
Doctoral Candidate, Ball State University
Dear RAs,

I mentioned briefly to most of you at the August inservice that I am planning a series of leadership development classes for RAs to begin in October. I wanted to fill you in a little now and will be providing additional information later this month.

This is a series of leadership classes offered to you one time a week for about two hours starting on October 6, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. The classes will be over at noon each Tuesday, with the classes meeting on Oct. 6, 13, 20, 27 and Nov. 3, 10, 17, 24. The classes will be held at the Alumni Center, Ball State University. I will get the exact room number to you later. I have invited different speakers to come in and share their knowledge, experiences and words of wisdom. This should be very beneficial to you—and interesting as well.

Some of you will be invited to be a part of my research project for my dissertation in Adult and Community Education. Your participation in the research project will involve describing what this leadership training experience was like for you. I will be conducting individual interviews shortly after the last class. No pain, I promise!

While your participation in the research is voluntary, your attendance at the leadership training is not. It will be treated like any other inservice training offered by the company. You will be on the clock from the time you leave to travel from the group home until you return after class. I am hoping that those of you out of town will plan to bus together. Talk to your RCs about this. They have been informed of this opportunity but they don't have many details yet either (other than the timeframe and dates).

For those of you participating in the research project, I will be contacting you to go over the details and to ask you to sign a consent. This process is required by the university.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call me or simply reply to this scomm. I will greatly appreciate your participation in this.

Best regards,

Dixie Dugan (dd)
APPENDIX F

Class Agenda

Week One:  Introductions and icebreaker activity
Orientation and overview of the classes and expectations
Group discussion on characteristics of an ideal leader
Technical and Social Skills
The three “e”s of leadership (Parks, 2005)
Wrap-up

Both facilitators present

Week Two:  Leadership Styles
Guest Speaker

One facilitator

Week Three:  Team Building and Development
Guest Speaker

One facilitator

Week Four:  Cultural Awareness in the workplace
Guest Speaker

One facilitator

Week Five:  Problem Solving/Consensus Building
Guest Speaker

One facilitator

Week Six:  Video
Developing your Action Plan
Guest Speaker

One facilitator

Week Seven:  Communication and Leadership
Guest Speaker

One facilitator

Week Eight:  Wrap-up session
A word from the President

Both facilitators present

Note: For detailed information on the sessions, please contact dldugan@bsu.edu
APPENDIX G

Leadership Rap Song

Our training started off with a Little Intro.
Let’s make some rules before we start the show.
Confidentiality, be on time.
If you gotta pee please don’t waste our time.
No food or drink unless you got a lid.
It’s a smoke free campus, so we don’t take that *****.
Turn your cell phones off! No exceptions!
Except if your RC has an infection.
Have some fun and meet your team
Cuz we’re all pursuing the same dream.
Next thing you know we’re hit with handouts
And learning what leadership styles were all about.
What is a leader? What do they do?
Well here’s some conclusions we all came to
Approachable, flexible & optimistic
The go to person with impeccable instinct.
Dr. Murk came in and politely presented
Leadership styles all good but different.
Authoritarian meets deadlines with a quickness.
Unskilled staff need the rules and task lists.
Democratic leadership is not sporadic.
The leader is a moderator with a good tactic.
Vicki came in to teach & train
She had us all using our brain.
We were in teams to build a tower.
Nothing but straws but we all had the power.
Forming, storming, norming and performing;
These are the stages for idea developing.
Maude was next and she used to tell jokes.
Now she’s here lecturing us folks.
She spoke of diversity and opening your mind
And doing all that knowledge you will find.
Tracy stopped by and gave us a few problems.
But it wasn’t no thang, we were quick to solve ‘em.
Prioritize, eliminate and organization
Are all the tools for a better situation.
We need to remember the 3 c’s, do you recall?
Cooperation, compromise and creativity.
Now we’re getting down to the nitty gritty.
Take it all in and give it all back.
Extraordinary visions is where it’s at.
Then we had a speaker from Houston, Texas.
She showed us that not all leaders drove a Lexus.
Servant leaders is what we all do
because we don’t do the job for a Thank You.
Last thing of all communication is endless.
That’s the rap up and we hate to end this.

Henry County RA
December, 2009