THE ISTA PRESIDENCY 1989-2007:
AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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

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MUNCIE, INDIANA
DECEMBER 2014
The purpose of this autoethnography was to examine the organizational leadership development of three Indiana State Teachers Association (ISTA) presidents between 1989-2007. The primary question examined was: How do these three former ISTA Presidents describe their leadership journeys? Six underlying questions included: (1) How did these three former presidents come to the decision to run for office? (2) Why did they choose to become leaders? (3) How did they lead? (4) What leadership characteristics and abilities were evident in their presidency? (5) How did their leadership characteristics and abilities affect their presidency? (6) What events influenced their leadership development?

The researcher used his life experience as ISTA president to create a self-narrative, which was used with qualitative interviews of two other state presidents to provide data for analysis. To examine the data, a Thematic Content Analysis was employed in order to obtain a descriptive view of the research in a textural form. From this data analysis, five themes, with accompanying subthemes, were found to be important for leadership development for these three presidents: (1) Definition of Leadership (Definition, Integrity, Charisma, Persistence, Leadership Teams, and Style), (2) Leadership Training (Experience, Skill Sets, Mentor/Mentee, Formal Training), (3)
accomplishments, (4) Purpose or Reason for Involvement (Social Justice), and (5) Background (Career, Youth).
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I need to thank Dr. Roy Weaver for the time commitment and effort as he shepherded me through the dissertation process. The time and effort of Dr. Jane Ellery, Dr. Shelly Glowacki-Dudka and Dr. Jennifer Bott, the members of my committee, deserves special commendation. It is a comment on their commitment to their profession to volunteer their time and energy to serve in this capacity. I thank Garrett Harbron and Judy Briganti for sharing their experiences as organizational leaders.

Beyond these individuals are my support group made up of new found friends who have guided and encouraged me from the first class to the completion of this dissertation. Special thanks to Dr. Joe Armstrong who set up my doctoral program. In addition to being on my committee, Dr. Jane Ellery supported and encouraged me as she set up my cognate in Wellness. A special thanks goes to my newfound friend and colleague Lynnea Melham for her friendship and support and to an old friend, Gina Edgehill, who introduced me to Wellness.

I thank all my professors for their interest in me and their dedication to their disciplines and students.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this effort to my wife, Patricia Ervin, my loving partner. Pat is more than a partner or spouse, she is my champion and moral compass; her presence in my life has been transformational. When I have faltered, she has shown me the way.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

My name is J. David Young, and I was the president of the Indiana State Teachers Association (ISTA) from September 1, 1995 to August 1, 2001. Most people say it was easy for me to become president, and I would agree that I was fortunate, but I would never ever say it was easy for anyone to become president of an organization like the ISTA. Rarely, if ever, does a candidate for president just pop into office without the support and encouragement of others. As you will read later, serving as the leader of approximately 50,000 members throughout the state of Indiana and carrying out the policies and positions of the organization has costs, as well as rewards. Being one of the five most important leaders in public education in Indiana is a job not to be taken lightly.

The end of my presidency marked three decades of advocacy. While I found it easy to walk away and retire from active involvement in the Association, it was impossible for me to walk away from 33 years of my life. While the scholarly purpose of this study was to explore leadership development, the underlying motivation was to reflect on my life as an advocate and tell my story.

Leadership requires followers. Leaders and followers exist in context. The context of this leadership development study is the ISTA. The ISTA is an advocacy organization for public school employees and public education in Indiana. It began with concerns about the funding of public schools, and while funding is still an important issue, ISTA has come to include broader professional issues. Starting small, today ISTA has slightly more than 43,000 members and 331 affiliates, including all “non-teacher” local affiliates.
**Brief ISTA History**

The ISTA was established on Christmas Day, 1854, in Indianapolis, Indiana, when educators from across the state answered Caleb Mills’ call to gather in support of Indiana’s public schools. Since its beginning, the ISTA has been a strong advocate for Indiana’s public schools. The book, *Advancing the Cause of Education: A History of the Indiana State Teachers Association* (Association, 2004), divides the history of ISTA into three time periods: 1854-1938, 1938-71, and 1971-2004.

From 1854-1938, the ISTA focused on three fronts: funding, consolidation, and teacher quality. Until the 1920s, Indiana was primarily an agrarian state consisting of small family farms that relied upon their children to work on the farm. The schools were predominately one-room operations. Support for school funding and consolidation was minimal, but the ISTA persevered and made gains in both of these areas. After the Great War, the Association’s efforts to improve teacher quality, through local institutes and eventual state licensing, was realized (Association, 2004).

In 1938, Robert Wyatt was hired as Executive Secretary. Under Wyatt’s long and controversial direction, ISTA began the transition from an organization governed by school superintendents and building administrators to one governed by teachers. After World War II, ISTA became a powerful voice for public schools and public school teachers. In 1950, the ISTA and the Indiana Classroom Teachers Association (ICTA) began holding a Joint Summer Leadership Conference (SLC). A full-time staff person was hired to work closely with the ICTA. In 1958, ISTA dedicated the nine-story office located across the street from the capitol building (Association, 2004).
In the latter part of the 1960s, the Executive Director of the ISTA recognized that the future of ISTA rested with the teachers. He led ISTA’s pursuit of a merger with the Indiana Classroom Teachers Association (ICTA). In 1973, ICTA and ISTA merged. ISTA had become a statewide teacher organization with local affiliates, offices, and staff throughout the state (Association, 2004).

Administrators had dominated and controlled the ISTA since its inception on December 25, 1854; however, with the merger of the ISTA and the ICTA, the transition from an administrator dominated “company union” to a teacher controlled Association began. Concurrently, the Indiana State Superintendents Association and the Indiana State Principals Association withdrew from ISTA (Association, 2004).

In 1972, the ISTA established unified membership which required members to be members of the NEA, ISTA, and their local Association. A teacher could no longer be a member of just the local affiliate, the ISTA, or the NEA. With unified dues, the NEA and ISTA established UniServe, a staffing program. The UniServ program provided professional staff to support state and local efforts. Local UniServ units were established with offices and staff throughout the state (Association, 2004).

District Councils were created to match the UniServ units. The District Councils were made up of local leaders, one State Board of Directors member, and standing committee members who were elected in district meetings at the Representative Assembly (RA). This was the governance organization. The UniServ unit and the District Council were made up of the same people. On paper the District Council and the UniServ were strictly separate entities. In reality, the lines between the two were blurred. (Association, 2004).
For years, the ISTA had sponsored a Conference on Instruction in the fall of the year. The conference was held on the last Thursday and Friday of October. Teachers were required to attend as a condition of their employment. In order to attend, the teacher had to be a member of the ISTA, which made membership mandatory insuring a secure financial base. The ISTA was a strong voice for public education; however, the voice was not that of the teachers. The tacit relationship was one of paternalism. This changed as the governance of ISTA moved from administrators to teachers in the 1970s (Association, 2004).

Part of the UniServ Director’s job description was to advance the political agenda of the ISTA and NEA. Part of the ISTA agenda was to establish the Indiana Political Action Committee for Education (I-PACE) on the state level and local political action committees in each district. ISTA’s political efforts bore fruit in 1973 with enactment of PL 217, the collective bargaining bill for teachers. PL 217 required local school corporations to enter into contract talks with the recognized bargaining agent, the local organization. A few locals and school districts had been involved in contract negotiations prior to the passage of PL 217. However, meet and confer was a common practice which gave an appearance of teacher input. There were a few notable strikes that occurred both before and after the law went into effect. Over time, labor-management strife gave way to more amicable resolution of differences (Association, 2004).

Between 1972-1989, ISTA continued to make major gains. In 1978, the Due Process bill for teachers was passed. In 1983, Fair Share was declared legal. This action allowed local affiliates to bargain for an agency shop. That same year ISTA established “Option Guaranteed,” which required members who did not want to contribute to I-PACE to annually decline their participation (Association, 2004).
Other significant events took place during these years. The ISTA building was expanded, remodeled, and rededicated in 1988. The building served as a symbol of ISTA’s political presence (Association, 2004). However, meeting the expense of the building was an ongoing sore point for some. The building did not turn a profit until the early eighties and was not paid off until after the turn of the century.

There were two periods of great financial difficulty. The first occurred when ISTA established UniServ. They underestimated the cost and over-estimated membership growth. The results were staff cuts and the reduction in the number of UniServ Districts. When the building was remodeled, a major financial problem occurred. Cost overruns, unanticipated costs, such as asbestos removal, and unexpected construction problems caused a severe financial crisis (Association, 2004). As an aside, the National Education Association (NEA) currently owns the building due to a recent financial crisis.

Within the organization, behind the unity of action were the internal politics of the ISTA. As a result of professional staff participation in governance, a cadre of local leaders supported the professional staff when it came to staff/management differences. This fact was especially evident during negotiations with the Professional Staff Organization (PSO). For example, in 1981, local leaders demonstrated in support of professional staff’s bargaining position. Another divisive issue was the tension between professionalism and unionism. These issues contributed to a long-term political division in the Association which impacted the ISTA presidential elections between 1973 and 1999 (Association, 2004).

The preceding overview provides a brief historical description of the evolution of ISTA up to 1989. The years, between 1989 and 2007, represent the era of the three presidents who are

Subjectivity Statement

The context of this study is my experience as an advocate for public school teachers and public schools. I began as a rank and file member in the late 1960s and my relationship with the Association culminated in the state president’s office (1995-2001). I taught in public schools for over 30 years and was actively involved in some level of union leadership for over 20 of those years. I was employed for 30 years as a social studies teacher in Highland, Indiana, before taking a leave of absence to serve as ISTA President in 1995.

My beginning, as an Association leader, was when I kept asking a friend who was on the local bargaining team what was happening. In a friendly way, he asked, “Why don’t you join the team?” Not having a reasonable answer, I joined the team, and as a consequence, I was on the bargaining team when my local Association, the Highland Classroom Teachers Association (HCTA), went on strike. The officers and the bargaining team were jailed for defying a court order to return to work. Collectively, we became known as the Highland Seven. Of the seven, only one other member of the bargaining team, beside myself, was reinstated within five months. The officer finished the school year and left Highland to teach elsewhere. Of the five who were dismissed, two were eventually reinstated, two left teaching, and only one found a teaching position.

After the loss of the elected leadership, the HCTA needed a new leader. I was honored to be the designated interim local president and negotiation’s spokesperson. My only qualification was being the last person standing. Out of chaos, my life was to be redefined.
Except for the three years that I taught sixth grade, I taught U.S. History. As I accepted various leadership roles, my history and social science background helped me acquire essential leadership skills. My learning was more experiential, socially constructed, and gleaned from observation and reflection. Living the life of a leader and being with and around other Association leaders created an interest in leadership and leadership development, which has survived to this day.

After I retired, I decided to return to Academia and work on a doctorate in Adult, Community and Higher Education. In my pursuit of the degree, I was able to extend my understanding of leadership through course work and independent study. I moved from the world of experience to the world of research, theories, academic rigor, and conjecture. As my journey progressed to my current research, I reflected on my experiences.

**Problem Statement**

My study examined the premise that the following concepts may be important to the understanding leadership development: critical or existential event, the individual’s qualities, the individual’s leadership style and competencies, the organizational context, and the nature of the work. In the simplest form, a leader is a person with a unique set of beliefs and abilities who gains from their leadership experience, develops a set of competencies, a repertoire of behaviors and accepts responsibility within a given context and moves the organization forward. The problem of this study focused on three ISTA presidents’ leadership development.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to explore the development of organizational leadership over time and in context. The environment, events, encounters, fellow-travelers, and strangers were a part of the development of our leadership. Through this study the elements of
organizational leadership development were explored to identify common themes in the lived experience of three ISTA Presidents.

**Significance**

The importance of this study lies on three levels. The first level is personal. I spent over three decades in the service of others through various forms of advocacy on the local, district, state, and national level. While my actions could be viewed as altruistic, I could not say that I did not gain from the experience. As we reach retirement, it is not uncommon for us to look for the significance of our lives.

The second level is academic. This study offers information on the organization and its leaders, heretofore, unavailable. The study is also significant because of the approach used. My story, provided through an autoethnographic narrative and informed by qualitative interviews of two of my counterparts, offers a unique vantage point, coming from the inside of the organization as opposed to the perspectives of external researchers. The results may offer useful findings to compare to existing studies of leadership development.

The third level is instructive to others. The document may be instructive for training and mentoring future leaders of ISTA or similar organizations. My story may prompt insights or questions related to leadership development for potential, current, and former leaders.

**Research Questions**

The research questions sought to understand the organizational leadership development of three former ISTA presidents who served during 1986-2007. The primary question was:

How do these three former ISTA Presidents describe their leadership journeys?

Underlying questions included:

1. How did these three former presidents come to the decision to run for office?
2. Why did they choose to become leaders?
3. How did they lead?
4. What leadership characteristics and abilities were evident in their presidency?
5. How did their leadership characteristics and abilities affect their presidency?
6. What events influenced their leadership development?

Other related questions will emerge from the exploration of these questions.

**Definition of Terms**

Association – a common substitute or abbreviation for the Indiana State Teachers Association.

ISTA – the acronym for the Indiana State Teachers Association.

ISTA Board of Directors – meets four times over the year and carries out the business of the organization between the Representative Assemblies.

ISTA President – the highest elected office in the State Association.

Leadership – a personal quality refers to an integrated constellation of cognitive and temperament attributes that foster an orientation toward influencing and helping others, directing and motivating their actions toward collective success (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 414).

NEA – the acronym for the National Education Association.

Organizational Leadership Development – expanding the collective capacity of organizational leaders to engage effectively in leadership roles (Day, 2001).

Representative Assembly – The ISTA Representative Assembly meets twice a year carry out the business of the Association. It is the highest governing body. The delegates elect the officers and standing committee members of the organization. The officers include the president, vice president, treasurer, NEA Board of Directors and Board of Directors.
elected by ISTA district. The NEA Representative Assembly meets once a year and is the world’s largest deliberative body than meets annually.

UniServ – a joint ISTA and NEA service program consisting of offices and staff set up to provide support for local Associations.
CHAPTER TWO

METHOD

Overview of the Method

The research method for this study is autoethnography, which is considered qualitative research. In qualitative research, an interpretive approach to studying phenomenon in a natural setting is used so that the meanings that people make of their experiences are understood (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The approach focuses on process, expressive words or language, and how participants make sense of their world (Creswell, 2003). The intent is to better understand human behavior and experience (Bogdan & Bicklen, 2007).

Autoethnography is a form of ethnography in which the researcher’s life experience is the research (Reed-Danahay, 1997) and behavior, culture, context, and relationships are interpreted and described (Ellis, 2004). The outcome is an interpretive story or narrative (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). In autoethnography, the researcher is the subject, and the researcher’s interpretation of experience is the data (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). In other words, it is “the process of personally and academically reflecting on lived experience in ways that reveal the deep connection between the writer and her or his subject” (Goodall, 2000, p. 137).

The personal narrative is an approach used historically in a number of disciplines. John Dewey (education), Mark Johnson (philosophy) and Alasair MacIntyre (history), Clifford Geertz, and Mary Catherine Bateson (anthropology), Barbara Czarniawska (sociology and organizational science), Robert Coles, and Daniel Pokinghorne (psychiatry) have argued that narrative inquiry was necessary to fully explore lived experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Dewey was the earliest to recognize that the foundation of social science is experience
In the first chapter of Clandinin and Connelly’s book, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (2000), the authors wrote that they:

began to reflect on the whole of the social sciences with its concern for human experience. For social scientists, and consequently for us, experience is a key term. Education and educational studies are a form of experience. For us, narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience. Experience is what we study, and we study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a key way of writing and thinking about it. In effect, narrative thinking is part of the phenomenon of narrative. It might be said that narrative method is a part or aspect of narrative phenomena. (pp. 18-19)

If one replaces *education* and *educational studies* with *leadership* and *leadership development* in the quote, then Clandinin and Connelly (2000) best summarized the basic view of narrative inquiry into leadership development. My life experience as ISTA President offered a rich source of data for the creation of my narrative.

This personal narrative, which includes both chronological and conceptual views of the leadership development experiences of my presidency and that of my counterparts, falls within the purview of autoethnography (Elllis & Bochner, 2000). But, such narrative inquiry must be more than an anecdotal or autobiographical study (Anderson, 2007). As Anderson and Glass-Coffin (2013) noted, such study “demands a reflexive turn. . . [and] requires careful and rigorous thought, rhetorically constructed to present a personal narrative in all its emotional and intellectual capacities. Such introspection offers an intimate knowledge based upon lived experience with others” (p. 387). Burnier (2006) elaborated on this point, by saying that “personal writing is hybrid” in that it combines “the personal story with [the writer’s] scholarly
story . . . seeking to erase the false dichotomy between the scholarly and the personal. In the end, “the actual scholar is embodied and present, as he or she examines closely the personal, political, and scholarly situations” (p. 412). Such writing is not focused on describing the experience as it actually occurred, but rather on “[extracting] meaning from experience, [grasping or seizing] the possibilities of meaning, [and making] sense of experience over time” (Bochner, 2002, p. 270).

Memory, as a research tool, is critical to the process of reflexivity and accompanying introspection (Giorgio, 2013). “In autoethnography, we begin with memory, but end with a story – memory and story are not the same things. We remember details of an event as moments; when we write, we thread those remembered moments together to make sense of the meaning of the experience” (p. 411). Memory or “headnotes” involves the views, scenarios, and experiences of what is studied that Ottenberg (1990) argued are too numerous to record. These limitless impressions are what only the researcher can hold that give a holistic sense to what is being studied (Lederman, 1990). Headnotes or memories alone have been used for writing entire ethnographies (Marshall, 1970, cited in Sanjek, 1990). It has been argued that headnotes may be more dependable than field notes and written records for a couple of reasons. One is that while the purpose of making notes is to help in recalling experience, in reality, over time, notes may interfere with recall and contradict memory. Another is that when written representations of experience are continually reread and interpreted, the accuracy of the actual experience may be diminished (Lederman, 1990; Sanjek, 1990; Wall, 2008).

Analytic Autoethnography

The particular form of autoethnography that I used is called analytic autoethnography. Analytic autoethnography, as described by Anderson (2007), includes five key features that are
relevant to the creation of the self-narrative: (1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the researcher’s self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis.

**Complete Member Researcher (CMR) Status**

The researcher as subject does not automatically grant full membership in or access to the group being studied. According to Anderson (2006), CMRs who were born into the group, grew into the group, or unintentionally or inadvertently became part of the group have greater authenticity than researchers who become members solely for the purpose of research. At the same time, the autoethnographer must be weary of subsuming the role of researcher to the detriment of his role as a member of the group. The position of the researcher may either inhibit or expand access and understanding (Anderson, 2006). In my case, I arrived as a member of a group of state leaders through life circumstances – not for research purposes. As a complete participant, I was immersed in the life experiences of ISTA leadership in all aspects – political, organizational, social, economic, and cultural. In addition, I was keenly aware of the nuances of the emotional side of the phenomena being studied.

**Analytic Reflexivity**

Analytic reflexivity refers to the researcher’s awareness and analysis of the relationship between those studied and the impact that the researcher’s presence creates (Anderson, 2006). It “involves and awareness of reciprocal influence between autoethnographers and their settings and co-participants. It entails self-conscious introspection guided by a desire to better understand both self and others through examining one’s actions and perceptions in reference to and dialogue with others” (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013, p. 73). At the same time, the author
stressed the importance of open-endedness, recognizing that “social life, identities, and relationships are fluid, not static” (p. 78).

As the researcher and former leader in the Association, I knew the two other presidents for a number of years. In the case of President Habron, early on, I observed his leadership from a distance, having been simply a member of the ISTA. Later, I worked closely with him, serving as vice president and for a period, while he was ill, as interim president. In the case of President Briganti, it was just the opposite, in the sense that I watched her emerge as a member to leadership positions and eventually, assume the presidency after my term ended. Reflecting on our relationships in an intensive, deep way and making meaning as it relates to our leadership development was key to my analysis.

**Narrative Visibility of the Researcher’s Self**

The autoethnographer should make clear the findings or analysis through his narratives (Anderson, 2006) and put himself “at the center of the social context” (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013, p. 73). In doing so a level of engagement and vulnerability should appear. As Anderson and Glass-Coffin explained: “Autoethnographic inquiry calls for personal engagement as a medium through which deeper understanding is achieved and communicated” (p. 74) and is “most successful, when it is evocative, emotionally compelling, and when readers can feel their lives deeply touched.” (p. 75). In the end, it was critical that I focus on my perspective as researcher, making me the center of the study. In the end, revealing those matters that emerged as most critical to leadership development in a manner that was understandable, believable, and evocative was critical.

**Dialogue with Informants Beyond the Self**
According to Anderson (2006), autoethnographers who limit themselves to their own life experience risk self-absorption and may fail to see other views or implications. Interviewing others is an often recommended and used approach, in this regard (Delany, 2004; Didion, 2005; Goodall, 2006; Herrmann, 2005; Eliss, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). In this study, I conducted interviews of the ISTA president who preceded me and the president who followed me. The purpose was both to check my memory of events and developments, but also to understand their life experiences that led to their leadership development. The former was valuable to writing my narrative. The latter was important for exploring and comparing leadership development for each of the ISTA presidents studied.

**Commitment to Theoretical Analysis.** The commitment to theoretical analysis involves expanding our understanding of social phenomena (Anderson, 2006). It is “not simply to document personal experience, to provide an ‘insider’s perspective,’ or to evoke emotional resonance with the reader. Rather, the defining characteristic . . . is to use data to gain insight into some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves” (Anderson, 2006, p. 387). In the analysis of my study, examining the results of leadership development of the three ISTA presidents in relation to theoretical perspectives of leadership development found in the literature addresses this last characteristic of analytic autoethnography outlined by Anderson (2006), who noted: “The definitive feature of analytic autoethnography is this value-added quality of not only truthfully rendering the social world under investigation but also transcending that world through broader generalization” (p. 388).

**Organization Of The Study**

The study has two parts. The first part consists of an inquiry into my lived leadership experience through the autoethnographic narrative. Being both a past-president of ISTA and the
researcher offers certain advantages as well as raising significant concerns. As the researcher, I have the advantage of being in and seeing the whole context of the situation, as well as the emotions associated with the phenomena; however, the lack of subjectivity may bias my perspective and cause me to overlook important details. The second part of the study consists of qualitative interviews of my predecessor, President Harbron and my successor in office President Briganti. The collection of data was organized in this order, so that my narrative was not influenced, by insights of others. Similarly, the review of literature was not contemplated prior to the data collection and analysis so it would not influence my account of my presidency and my selection of themes during my analysis of the data. This approach is not uncommon in research of this nature (Anderson, 2006).

Both parts of the study addressed the same primary research question: How do these three former ISTA Presidents describe their leadership journeys?

Underlying questions included:

1. How did these three former presidents come to the decision to run for office?
2. Why did they choose to become leaders?
3. How did they lead?
4. What leadership characteristics and abilities were evident in their presidency?
5. How did their leadership characteristics and abilities affect their presidency?
6. What events influenced their leadership development?

The Interviews

Anderson and Glass-Coffin (2013) described the autoethnographer as engaging in a self-interview, involving dialogue between one’s past and present selves, at times actively with others
as well, in which memories and understandings about the past are constructed anew” (p. 69). This process is the one that I followed in constructing my narrative.

In addition to the autoethnography, qualitative interviews were conducted of Presidents Harbron and Briganti. The interviews were conducted and analyzed in a method similar to an approach that Hill, Thompson and Williams (1997) detailed in *A Guide to Conducting Consensual Research*. The data were gathered using open-ended questions. In this way, the respondents had the freedom to interpret and answer as they wished. However, the open-ended questions generated some random information. I attempted to keep the interviews focused on leadership development. My engagement with the interviewees mirrored reflexive dyadic interviews or interactive interviews, which “resemble a traditional interview protocol, with the interviewer asking questions and the interviewee answering them, but with the added dimension of the interviewer sharing personal experience with the respondents” (p. 70). “Interactive interviews are collaborative between researchers and participants, in which [they] probe together about issues that transpire, in conversation, about particular topics” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011, p. 5). Such interactive interviews provide an “in-depth and intimate understanding . . . of experiences” (Ellis, Kiesinger & Tillmann-Healy, 1997, p. 121).

The interviews were conducted in June and July of 2013. President Harbron was interviewed on the afternoon of June 10, 2013. The interview lasted an hour and half and took place at his home in Fishers, Indiana. President Briganti was interviewed on the afternoon of July 14, 2013. The interview took place in her home in Baugo, Indiana. The interview lasted just over two hours. Both presidents were open to sharing their experiences and thoughts.

Both interviews were transcribed by a paid third party. I read the transcripts as I listened to the taped interviews three different times to verify their accuracy.
Data Analysis

Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) was employed to analyze data from the participant interviews and my narrative. This method of data analysis is appropriate in order to obtain a descriptive view of qualitative research in a textual form (Anderson, 2007). Integral to TCA is the categorization of thematic content. Since I intended to describe organizational leadership development in terms of commonalities and themes, TCA was an appropriate form of analysis.

I reviewed my narrative and the interview transcripts for common themes that directly reflected the participants’ response. Similar statements were placed together. The actual words used by the participants were preserved intact. Each theme was coded according to the source. For example, a code of D-2-7 indicated that the source of the unit was from document D page 2 and line number 7 of text. Data were subdivided into thematic categories. Categories and themes were revised or redistributed as needed. This process was repeated three times, at which point I was satisfied that the categories and themes reflected the textual data and a clear description of the themes had emerged.

The analysis was undertaken in the order that data were collected. I analyzed my narrative first, President Harbron’s interview second, and the President Briganti interview last.

A synthesis of the steps of TCA follows: As the first step of data analysis, I made electronic copies of my narrative and the interview transcripts. Using the blue Microsoft Word highlighter, I highlighted the relevant descriptions. After this, I identified and labeled each unit relevant to the study.

Next, I electronically copied and pasted similar themes into separate categories and coded each one’s location as noted above. I used key words to label the categories. I identified missing data by themes and source. I sought additional information from President Harbron and
President Briganti via e-mail. President Briganti responded September 9, 2013 and President Harbron September 19, 2013. Their responses were coded and included in the themes using the same procedure as the original documents.

Next, I read through all themes per category and redistributed units if necessary. At this point, the categories were temporarily established. A week later, I reread the original documents. I revisited each step of the process. I was satisfied that the categories reflected the data as a whole and that the categories provided an accurate picture of the data.

**Themes and Subthemes**

The final version of common themes and subthemes that emerged from the data required reorganization prior to accepting the final five common themes of the study. During the first and second stages of the analysis, I organized the themes and subcategories. This procedure set the structural outline for Chapter 4: Findings.

I confirmed the subthemes during the final stages of review. Revisions were made and areas of overlap were explored. In the case of the subtheme of integrity, for example, President Harbron said that integrity was an integral part of the definition of leadership. In the case of the subtheme of charisma, while President Briganti did not speak of charisma, both President Harbron and I briefly mentioned charisma as an aspect of leadership. Other areas of the interviews and the narrative presented situations in which a response could be viewed as addressing more than one of the major themes. Because of this result and variations between the interviews and the narrative, contact was made with the past president via e-mail for clarification. The additional inquiries provided valuable clarification. President Briganti was asked to comment on leadership style, teamwork, and charisma. She responded via e-mail on September 5, 2013, and offered reflections on the three items. President Harbron was asked to
comment on leadership style and teamwork. He responded September 19, 2013, and in addition to leadership style and teamwork, he added that persistence was a leadership trait. This feedback caused me to reflect on my narrative. President Briganti did not speak of persistence per se, but I inferred from her interview and reflection on her career that persistence was a part of her leadership. Working with the two former presidents in this way provided “an occasion for purposefully animated participants to construct versions of reality interactionally, rather than merely purvey data,” an approach recommended by Holstein and Gubrium, (1995, p. 79).

Reliability, Validity, and Generalizability

Traditionally, the quality and rigor of research has been measured in terms of its reliability, validity, and generalizability. Historically, such terminology is embedded in quantitative approaches to research (Golafshani, 2003). While most qualitative researchers do not ignore the importance of these terms, they do argue that these terms have a quantitative bias. Small sample size and less stringent, more fluid and emergent inquiry that are a part of typical qualitative studies mark significant differences in the two methods. Accordingly, qualitative researchers argue that such terms need to be re-conceptualized in the context of qualitative research (Davies & Dodd, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In an autoethnography, questions of reliability “refer to the narrator’s credibility” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011, p. 8). Does it seem reasonable that the narrator had the experiences described? Does “factual evidence” authenticate what is described? Does the understood Wait and position of the narrator seem credible and support the narrative? Does the narrator demonstrate that he or she appears to believe what happened? (Bochner, 2002, p. 86). Questions of validity explore whether or not “the story is coherent [and] evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible. . . . It connects readers to writers and
provides continuity in their lives” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011, p. 8). In addition, questions of the value and utility of the story are raised – how important is it and how might it be used purposefully (Bochner, 2002). In autoethnography, generalizability takes a form much different from quantitative studies where transferability of results based on large-scale studies is the desired result. “The focus . . . moves from respondents to readers, and is always being tested by readers as they determine if a story speaks to them about their experience or about the lives of others they know.” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011, p. 8).

Writing the Narrative

Once the data had been analyzed and the themes and subthemes developed, I focused on my narrative, which follows in the next chapter. I used guidelines outlined by Alexander (2013) to establish context through critical self-reflection. In writing the narrative, I focused on:

1. the who, what, when, where, and what;
2. the most important elements of the experience;
3. the power structures that need to be understood;
4. the location, place, or positionality of the researcher in the experience;
5. other players in the experience and their roles and connections with the researcher; and,
6. how others [would] be characterized, with ethical consideration in mind. (p. 547)

In writing the autoethnography, I was aware of the connections made from the autobiographical and personal to the cultural and social (Ellis, 2004) and how these connections brought together the personal through multiple layers of consciousness (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).
CHAPTER THREE
PERSONAL STORY

The study of leadership and leadership development is not new to me. My investigation of leadership and leadership development has been both informal and sporadic. When I became involved as a leader, my interest was self-initiated as my life experience dictated. I read a book here, a book there; I took advantage of trainings and workshops. My aspiration to succeed as a leader motivated me to set goals and self-reflect. After returning to academia in 2006, I completed an independent study of leadership in the spring of 2010. I presented my findings on leadership to the EDAC 698: Seminar in Adult and Community Education class on three occasions. My present endeavor continues what I began over three decades ago: the quest for understanding organizational leadership and leadership development.

After 10 years out of the public education arena, I look back over 33 years of leadership as a teacher and public school advocate. I began my teaching career in 1961 and left teaching in 1995 to serve as president of the Indiana State teachers Association. During the last three decades of my career, I was active in the Association. My advocacy began in the early 1970s when I became active in the HCTA and ended in August, 2001 with the completion of two terms as president of the ISTA. Yet, there were experiences early in life that influenced my leadership development and contributed to my service as ISTA president.

My Era

I came of age in the 1960s. I was there at the beginning of the big computers based on vacuum tube technology. Transistors were just beginning to find commercial use. My world was analog. It was a quarter past ten not ten-fifteen. Self-winding watches were new. My generation was becoming familiar with the Cold War. The summer of 1968 was a tense time.
Vietnam's Tet Offensive, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and “Black Power” and “Women's Liberation” made their mark on the American psyche (Gitlin, 1987, Gitlin 1998, Singleton, 1999). Overseas, French students tried to topple De Gaulle, and the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia. In Mexico, 500 students were massacred before the Summer Olympics (Fink & Gassert 1998, Kurlamsky 2004, Sherman 2013).

Many Americans were shocked when three African American Olympians, after receiving their medals, raised their black-gloved fists (Hartman, 2003). The Kent State Shooting in May of 1970 marked the watershed of popular opinion (Fraser, 1998). The nation divided hard between those for social change and justice and the “establishment.” Change was in the air on many fronts (Thompson, 2010).

Teachers and their organizations were involved in *emancipatory* change. On the national level, the NEA underwent a critical transformation in the mid-1960s. Prior to this point, the NEA had Black participation in the organization; however, their southern affiliates were segregated. In 1943, NEA ruled that NEA conventions were to meet only in those locations with desegregated facilities, and yet as of 1961 the NEA had not endorsed the Brown v. Board of Education ruling (Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483 1954). This changed in 1966 with the merger of the Black American Teachers Association (ATA). In 1968, the delegates from four southern states were sanctioned for their states’ failure to merge their White and Black organizations. NEA became a champion of civil liberties, advocating for social justice, as well as public schools and their teachers.

In the late Sixties and early Seventies, the NEA instituted a by-law requiring state and local level associations to become affiliates of the NEA and one another. Teachers were to pay unified dues and become members of all three. The impact on membership was astounding,
NEA’s membership burgeoned, and the state membership remained relatively stable; however, the local Associations lost membership. The State Associations established UniServe, guided and partially funded through NEA grants. The UniServe program provided professional staff to support state and local efforts. This development created within the ISTA another level of organization – the District. The District was both a service area and a governance organization. Governance is the “political” or representative part of the Association. There are two co-existing structures – Staff and Governance. On paper there is a line between the two. Staff is hired; governance is elected. Governance sets policy; staff implements policy.

The ISTA and my affiliate, the HCTA, were transforming into teacher-run organizations for the advancement of the teacher interests. Like ISTA, the HCTA spurned administrators and went a step further by denying them membership. No doubt the influx of new teachers to meet the number of baby boomers reaching school age bolstered the movement from the old patriarchy. As Bob Dylan (1963) sang, “the times they are a changing.”

Prior to the passing of the bargaining law, the HCTA and the School Town of Highland had engaged in what was termed professional negotiations and had arrived at a contract referred to as the Highland P-N Agreement in 1968. The Highland P-N Agreement would be grandfathered under PL217, the new bargaining law. This meant that what was bargained before the law was enacted had to be bargained in the future. The Board took a hardline in opposition to much of the current P-N Agreement so there would be less grandfathered language. HCTA responded with a hardline defense of the P-N Agreement. What was once touted as a reason to come to Highland to teach became the School Board’s anathema. The breach was too great, and the HCTA went on strike in the fall of 1973. The strike was long and bitter.

Back to the Beginning
I am getting ahead of myself. What prior to those warm fall days laid the framework for who I was to become as a leader? The strike and being a member of the Highland Seven (the seven leaders who were jailed for leading the strike) was the end of the beginning, not the beginning of the end. Why didn’t I duck and run? Prior to the strike my style would have been neither one of leadership nor followership. Where did these damn convictions come from that impelled me into the limelight? Perhaps, I was seduced by the infamy or a victim of my own convictions? (As an aside, I did not vote for the strike, but a good friend sat next to me at the meeting and balloted for it. He was back in the building by noon, while I returned to the building four months later still committed to the cause.)

Where did the first understandings of leadership begin? My best recollection is when I worked as an usher at a local movie house. I learned that being the tallest of the ushers confers perceived leadership from others. Then there were all those fictional and non-fictional heroes I read about in my childhood and adolescence. My father also contributed to my understanding of leadership. He was an officer in the U.S. Navy and my personal hero. This is to say that the core values that supported my growth as a leader were laid within my childhood and adolescence.

**Childhood.** I remember on three occasions my father’s quick reactions saved a person’s life. The first time an older child had fallen into the flooded basement of a building under construction across the street from where we lived. The child yelled for help while his mates stood stupefied. Just arriving home, my father jumped from his car, raced across the street, and pulled the sputtering kid from the deep water. The second time, my uncle Arlee and his family were visiting. Uncle Arlee had a cleft palate, and while they were playing cards in the kitchen, among all the laughing and talking Uncle Arlee stood up suddenly and fell unconscious in the
dining room doorway. His wife screamed and darted out the backdoor. Before the door had a chance to close, my father was administering artificial respiration. Uncle Arlee had drowned on pickle juice, but my father’s quick reaction saved him. Lastly, my father saved my life. We had gone fishing in late fall or early spring. The lake where we were fishing was exceptionally high and was partially intersected by a fence that we needed to cross to get to the desired fishing spot. In climbing over the fence and working along it, I slipped. The water was well over my head. My heavy winter mackinaw was heavy with water and pulled me down. Of course, my father’s quick action pulled me from the lake like a wet kitten.

**Media.** In addition to my father, there were other real and fictional heroes that I admired and aspired to be like in my youth. Real heroes like Chuck Yeager, who was the first to break the sound barrier in Glamorous Glennis, a Bell XS-1 rocket research plane. Less glamorous, but very impressive to me were “Todd Moran” and “Captain Jinx” who came alive in the fictional writing of Howard Pease. Over time, they were replaced by Joseph Conrad’s *Lord Jim*. I cannot recount how many times I have read *Lord Jim* or watched the excellent 1965 film version. The romantic in me scores T.E. Lawrence, known as Lawrence of Arabia, high on the real hero list. That is as real as the fictionalized 1962 movie version makes him. I must not forget John Paul Jones (1747-1792), who had “only just begun to fight,” winning the British vessel as his own ship sank.

**Growing up in an age of movies and radio.** As soon as I was in high school, I graduated from mowing lawns and pulling weeds to working at a local movie theatre, the Rivoli. I soon became the head usher. I set my own hours and was the doorman on Saturdays. My responsibilities were minimal, but they were responsibilities. The side benefits of the job were passes to the other movie houses in town and watching human behavior.
In the summer of 1956, my job was to work as the doorman every morning and all day Saturday. This meant opening the house, which entailed pulling the fire curtain, switching on the giant fans and air conditioner, checking doors and at the end of the day reversing the procedure. Since this was the summer of *The Ten Commandments*, the theatre opened at 10 a.m. and closed around midnight. The film was four hours long with an intermission. The movie ran the entire summer. After a few shows, I could tell the time of day from the dialogue.

Without a doubt, the movie heroes of the age affected my concept of leadership and followership. Gregory Peck, as Ahab in *Moby Dick*, presented a powerful example of charisma gone amuck. Humphrey Bogart and Van Johnson in the *Caine Mutiny* explored ethical questions of leadership. In *Mr. Roberts*, James Cagney showed the dynamics of the leader invested in himself, while Henry Fonda exemplified being invested in those he led. Jack Lemon portrayed Ensign Frank Pulver, who in the end proved the hero. In 1956, The Hollywood version of *War and Peace* came to the screen. I was enthralled with the characters and their strengths and weaknesses and Tolstoy’s view of history.

The Radio shows of the 1940s and 50s abounded with detectives and cowboys. With sad satisfaction, I feel comfortable saying that they had only a marginal effect on my leadership development. While Gene Autry and Roy Rogers were not as memorable as the Lone Ranger and Straight Arrow with his golden palomino, they were all super heroes of my radio west fighting for justice and the American way. Being honest, fighting for what is right, and showing respect for others were some of the values that I learned and that later became important to my leadership.

**The safety patrol.** In 1949, President Harry S. Truman won the presidential election, and I became a safety patrol boy – an uncommon honor for a fourth grader. Patrol boys were the
crossing guards of that era. The safety of the school children crossing the streets around the school was our responsibility. This was the first position in which I had responsibility for the well-being others.

Truman was an impressive leader, but at the tender age of 10, I only knew of him through hearing adult conversations. (I was a part of the generation of children who were expected “to be seen and not heard.”) Truman’s legacy of legend and myths shaped more of my beliefs and views of leadership than the realities of the time.

In days of old, poker players used some object like a knife to keep track of who was dealing. It was referred to as the “buck,” because most cowboy knives had buckhorn handles, and if a person chose not to deal, he passed the buck to the next person (Bartlett 2003) President Truman had a sign on his desk which read “the buck stops here,” meaning the President’s responsibility as the leader was to make decisions, a message he brought home in his farewell address (Mathews, 1951). An example of his courage as a leader was when Truman fired the popular General McArthur during the Koran War, which was an incredibly unpopular decision, but the action illustrated that leaders are responsible for making tough decisions with which the majority may not agree (Donovan, 1982; McCoy, 1984). The adage that “the buck stops here” was always in the back of my mind as a leader.

When I think of Harry S. Truman, not just through the eyes of a history teacher, but through those of a leader, I recognized beliefs and behaviors that I as a leader strove to maintain. Truman summed it up best in his Farewell Address Given on Thursday, January 19, 1953.

Good Evening, My Fellow Americans:

Next Tuesday, General Eisenhower will be inaugurated as President of the United States.

I will be on a train on my way home to Independence, Missouri, to become a plain
citizen. Inauguration Day will be a great demonstration of the Democratic Process. I am glad to be a part of the peaceful transfer of the vast power of the Presidency from my hands to his. There is no job like it on the face of the Earth. I want you all to realize how hard it is and to give Ike all the help he will need. The Cold War and the "hot war" in Korea will be great tests of his strength. How will the Cold War end? It will end someday because of the great weakness of the Communist system. I have not a doubt in the world that a great change will occur. I have a deep and abiding faith in the destiny of free men. With strength and courage, we shall, someday, overcome.

When Franklin Roosevelt died, I thought there must be a million men more qualified than I to take up the presidential task. But the work was mine to do. But always, I knew that I was not alone. I knew that you were working with me. And now, the time has come for me to say goodnight and God bless you all. (Mathews, 1951, p. 601)

According to the polls and the Chicago Tribune, Harry Truman wasn’t to be elected in 1948, but he won. He conducted a cross country whistle stop campaign. At the stop in Harrisburg, Illinois a supporter called out, “Give ’em Hell, Harry!” To which Truman replied, “I don't give them Hell. I just tell the truth about them, and they think it's Hell” (Golway, 2011). While Truman probably did not mold my character as a pre-teen, he certainly affected me as I grew older and up.

The dark years of leadership. My dark age, my teens and twenties, were enlightening; however, I showed or practiced little leadership outside of my work. I held no offices or belonged to any social organization in school, and I didn’t join any after college. The only leadership I exhibited was in the classroom. My life was occupied with teaching, family, backstage work at the local civic theatre, gardening, and home projects with one exception.
When I taught at River Forest Elementary, joining either the AFT or the Association was mandatory. My wife and I belonged to the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) local, which was perceived as the smaller and less powerful organization, at least in this community. My wife and I would have joined the Association except for a bad experience with an autocratic trustee. The Association was less caring than it was powerless. While teaching at River Forest, I did attend the area AFT council. My participation was perfunctory at best.

As mentioned earlier, in 1965 I began teaching at Highland High School in Highland, Indiana. In the U.S. History courses that I taught, I was assigned the middle level ability group. Like most first year teachers, mastering the classroom and the subject consumed most of my time. There was a serious generation gap between the veteran teachers and the newcomers, and the ideological divide between the social studies department and the rest of the school. This divide was only minimally due to our subject area, but largely because most of the members of the department were new or younger male teachers. For six years, I showed up for work and carried out my responsibilities. When the janitors went on strike, unlike some of my colleagues, I did not volunteer to clean the school after work. History, if nothing else, taught me about the labor movement and passive resistance. I could not overlook the power of ideas and social justice when reading about Thoreau and Gandhi.

**The watershed.** In 1971, I joined the HCTA bargaining team. Seven teachers comprised the bargaining team and the officers of the organization. We became known as the Highland Seven when we refused to obey a court order to return to work. The day after the order was issued, we seven, voluntarily appeared with our attorneys in Judge Pinkerton’s court. Our attorney explained to the judge that we would rather be in contempt of court than in contempt of our convictions. Not impressed with our effrontery, Judge Pinkerton ordered us arrested and
transported to the historic Lake County Jail until we recanted and agreed to return to work and required a $500 fine to be paid (approximately $2,500 in today’s dollars).

The night prior to our voluntary appearance before Judge Pinkerton, the HCTA leadership decided to put the question before teachers: return to work or remain on strike and defy the court order. I spoke to the teachers for the first time. The gist of my statement was that the decision as to whether we went to jail or not was theirs. Our responsibility, my duty, was to serve them. They made the decision to remain on strike, and we ended up in jail with strengthened resolve. Prior to the membership meeting, we considered alternatives to jail. The alternatives were to end the strike and return to work or remain on strike to evade arrest by hiding out in nearby Illinois. I was adamantly opposed to either plan. Pragmatically, either choice would put us in a bad light. Most importantly, these choices contradicted my convictions. My choice was to return to court and surrender, which is ultimately what we did.

The strike and being a member of the Highland Seven marked a watershed moment in my life. My leadership development began before 1973 and continued afterwards. There was a sudden realization that a mantle of leadership had been placed upon my shoulders. I could have ducked and run. I wasn’t made that way. My speaking at the strike rally felt like a moment of self-realization. I had established a moral principle or purpose for the leadership team and the body of strikers. I emerged from being a bargaining team member as a leader.

The deputy sheriffs who ran the Lake County jail were sympathetic to us and to our cause. They were almost apologetic. The three women were incarcerated in the sewing room in the women’s section of the jail. The four men were housed with the trustees, who were inmates that worked in the kitchen, delivered food, and cleaned. The head trustee referred to us as political prisoners. We, like the other trustees, were not locked in our cells, but had some
freedom within our cellblock. Still, jail was not easy. After the first day, we were given whites
clothes and assigned jobs in the kitchen. Life became a little more tolerable. Our fate was
simple. Either we folded, the strike folded, or the school board fired us. As we sat in jail, one of
the other leaders announced almost gleefully, “we could not ask for anything better for the
cause.” The publicity was incredible – pictures in the paper and Chicago television coverage.
The Town of Highland was getting a big black eye.

**The last leader standing.** The HCTA accomplished a settlement and preserved the
contract intact, but it was at a cost. Five of the Association leaders were dismissed. The
president, first vice president, second vice president, secretary, and bargaining spokesperson
were gone. Friendships and professional relationships were broken. Marriages were stressed.
The faculty was split, the School Board defensive, and the administration passive aggressive.

The local Association was in disarray. Five of the Highland Seven had been dismissed.
Two of us had been reinstated, but the other reinstated leader was not interested in further
involvement and was intent upon completing the school year and moving on to another school
corporation. In a literal sense I was the last leader standing, and I was volunteered to the
leadership position of interim HCTA President, bargaining spokesperson, and grievance chair.

To this day, my memory of this is a blur of standing somewhere talking to the UniServ Director
and a few teachers. There was no chance or reason to say “no.”

As the interim president, I had the responsibility of organizing and collecting signed
representation cards, the first step for recognition as the bargaining agent under the bargaining
law. Interestingly, a good number of non-members signed the cards. As bargaining
spokesperson, I had to put a bargaining team together. The creation of the bargaining team was
easier than I thought it would be. As bargaining progressed, we worked effectively as a team.
Bargaining

There are several perspectives on bargaining. Some observers see bargaining primarily as a problem solving process, while others see it as adversarial, and still others, myself included, see at as analogous to a game – a zero sum game of *quid pro quos*. Negotiations or bargaining is certainly more often transactional than transformational. My experience tells me that bargaining transformational outcomes requires more trust than hope, because without trust there is no hope. The issue is not so much the perceived relinquishment of power as it is the fear of having to operate with new rules. For my part, I took part in a packaged NEA bargaining training based upon a series of statements that certainly worked well on paper and in the training session, but in the long run the canned rubric proved to be a *pro forma* tactic. There was no training in the logistics of bargaining or in strategy. The experience of bargaining contributed to my ability as a leader.

Negotiations taught me much about personal organization and developed discrete skills. From bargaining, I learned to prepare a proposal and develop cogent arguments in support of it and to anticipate my opponent’s arguments. I learned to think on my feet and not allow my emotions to show, unless I wanted them to show. I learned the importance of listening carefully to my constituents, as well as to my counterparts. Working with the bargaining team, I gained experience with team building. Nothing builds for success like planning and preparation.

Steps to the Presidency

In 1992, my local, the Highland Classroom Teachers Association nominated me for the prestigious ISTA Pacesetter Award. As part of the nominating process, a narrative and supporting material were submitted to Pacesetter committee. The narrative and supporting documents were used to refresh my memory for part of the narrative. As stated earlier my first
step in leadership development began with the Highland strike in 1973. Subsequent to that event followed a series of events and activities by which I arrived in the presidency in 1995. My leadership skills were developed in multiple Association arenas and levels. This may be viewed in a horizontal and vertical construct. The vertical levels are the local, district, state, and national. Horizontally, at each level there are comparable arenas: bargaining, political action, teacher rights, governance, and service. It would be an oversimplification to consider each a silo since there is an overlap in membership. It is not unusual for a person to hold multiple positions on multiple levels. I served on I-PACE, Lake-PAC, the NEA Board of Directors, and ISTA Board of Directors.

The Bargaining Years (1973-1995)

Between 1973 and 1995, I successfully bargained all but three of the Highland P-N Agreements, including a successful, albeit meaningless fact-finding procedure. I think one of the most significant compliments I received was when a member of the bargaining team told me she never thought we would gain back what the former spokesperson had given up. The superintendent told me later that it was almost embarrassing how much contract language the he could buy for a $50 raise. During my last round of negotiation, I resigned as spokesperson when the Board made my vice-presidential leave subject to concluding the bargaining. This was their prerogative, but my agreeing to language from which I alone would benefit was not acceptable because it would damage my integrity as a spokesperson and as leader. As the spokesperson, I became involved on the district level. I was an HCTA Representative on the District Council, the bargaining council, and Lake-PAC.

The Vice Presidency 1981-1983
After a district meeting, someone suggested that I run for ISTA Vice-President in the spring, 1981. I was flattered, but declined. On the way home, I reconsidered and returned to the meeting and agreed to run. The campaign was exciting in an anxious way. This was my first campaign and my first run for office. It was interesting to execute the election plan. I had volunteers from the Highland Local who made 500 wire-stemmed paper roses to be distributed by volunteers as delegates arrived at the Representative Assembly. I was in awe as many delegates pinned them on. Thanks to friends, supporters, and artificial flowers, I won the vice-presidency.

The concept of a leadership team was not yet part of the organizational culture. The vice-president was a title with minimal obligations; however, President Affeldet did appoint me to chair the ISTA bargaining team that negotiated the contract with the Professional Staff Organization, to chair the Affirmative Action Committee that created ISTA’s first Affirmative Action Policy, and to chair the committee that developed ISTA’s first Due Process Policy. I also learned more about the internal workings of the Association, parliamentary procedure, and the need for better communication skills, especially in the area of public speaking.

In addition to the committee experiences, I received other valuable training. At the Summer Leadership Conference, I received training on race and women’s issues. I attended state officers’ meetings and political action training on the national level. During the summers, ISTA offered political action workshops. I called it Politics 101. The principles of campaigning that I learned were invaluable. They easily transferred from party politics to organizational politics. I learned about making effective campaign material – appearance is as important as content, and colors have meaning. Targeting potential voters is extremely important when it comes to allocating resources. For example, in general elections it is important to identify safe precincts
and swing districts to get the vote out in one’s safe districts, avoid the opponent’s safe districts, and campaign hard in the swing districts. Getting your name out builds name recognition and leads to trust; publishing endorsements builds support and cements commitments. In organizational elections the same targeting applies. Fortunately, the ISTA keeps track of attendance at the Representative Assembly by district, making it possible to see which districts traditionally have many of their delegates actually attend. Looking at your opponent’s endorsements and your own, you can gain a sense of where you and your opponent have support and where you need support.

When I recognized a drawback, I sought training. For example, my biggest drawback was public speaking. I needed to become a good public speaker. Fortunately, a speech teacher at Highland High was a good friend and an excellent speech coach. With her help I became a good public speaker. She worked with me after school for several weeks. I owe a great deal of my success as a candidate to her. With practice, I became more confident, and with confidence I became a better speaker. After my retirement, I remember receiving ISTA’s human relations award, and after my acceptance speech the following presenter opened his remarks with “You never want to follow a David Young speech!” I had learned to speak from my heart and stick to my core values and those of the Association.

The ISTA’s Phillip Carey Award for Human Relations is awarded in recognition of significant contribution to advance human relations in education. Phillip Carey was chair of ISTA’s Minority Affairs Committee. He was motivational and inclusive. I found receiving the award in 2004 a humbling experience. There was no single or clear act or contribution, but I believe it was given in recognition of many small acts. For example, at the NEA Representative Assembly, I always contributed to the GLBT Caucus, and I always wore the ribbon signifying
my membership. It was usual for Presidents to join, but not to wear the ribbon. I am aware of
this fact because one of the members of Indiana delegation, who was gay, told me that he
appreciated the fact that unlike other presidents, I wore the ribbon in support of their caucus.

While serving as vice-president, I decided to run for ISTA President in 1983. I had two
opponents. They ran excellent campaigns and had strong local leader support. The winner won
on the first ballot by a slim margin. The runner-up pulled a third of the vote, while I garnered
perhaps one-sixth. In 1983, I was exiled to Lake County; I no longer held a state position. In
January 1984, I ran for a seat on the Indiana-Political Action Committee for Education (I-
PACE), a position elected by the ISTA Board of Directors and won. This was a fun learning, but
meaningful experience. The main function of I-PACE was to interview political candidates for
Indiana Governor and Superintendent of Public Education. I was Vice-President when I-PACE
endorsed Evan Bayh for Secretary of State, one of the few cases where the Association showed
forethought, since Evan Bayh went on to become Governor and Senator. I remember meeting
him at Summer Leadership. He had a phenomenal memory for names. From him, I learned the
importance of recognizing people by name.

I began filling out my political skill set and earning points by walking (campaigning) for
endorsed candidates across the state. I participated in Knock and Drops for IPACE endorsed
candidates. Knock and Drops consist of walking door-to-door for the candidate knocking on the
doors and leaving literature. I learned to work the tables in a room by engaging people in
conversation. I was able to see and hear informal speeches given by candidates, enabling me the
opportunity to see what was effective.

In 1985, I decided to run for vice-president against an able, well-respected incumbent
who won. I was devastated; however, the loss focused my attention. This loss really hurt
emotionally, but I was determined to “repackage” myself with the goal of being ISTA president. When my District’s Board of Director’s seat became open in 1986, I ran for the seat and won. From there on I worked to improve my position and recognition within the Association.

After the fall 1986 membership drive, ISTA’s membership numbers made the state eligible for a third seat on the NEA Board of Directors. From my seat on the ISTA Board, I pushed the organization to claim the third seat on the NEA Board and hold an election at the spring ISTA Representative Assembly. There was resistance to having the election. Without an election the president could appoint an interim NEA Director to serve the following year who would then be an incumbent when the election was held the following year. Fortunately for me, the board did not see it the president’s way, and the election was held that spring.

I won the election and began serving on the NEA Board Directors. From this position, I was able to be visible as a leader. I was able to learn from others. I learned about the NEA. During the time I was in Washington D.C. to attend the NEA Board meetings, I would join the other Indiana NEA Board members who lobbied the Indiana Senators and Representatives on educational issues. I enjoyed and learned from these trips. I practiced, observed, and experienced leadership. I served on the State Delegations Leadership Team and on the NEA Representative Assembly’s new business item review committee. It was this committee’s responsibility to look at the financial impact of each new business item on the budget. I have held many positions, and I agree with President Harbron that being the ISTA President is the best one ever, but when it comes to prestige and perks, the best is serving on the NEA Board of Directors. The title of NEA Board Direbargaingctor carried weight with the ISTA Board and the ISTA Representative Assembly.
The next part of my strategy to become president was election to the office of vice president in 1989. If the incumbent won re-election, there would be no incumbent in the 1991 president’s race, and if the contender won, I would serve as his vice-president, and run for the presidency in 1995. The latter turned out to be the case.

**My Second Time as Vice President (1989-1995)**

The most meaningful training was being President Harbron’s vice-president. President Harbron made sure that I knew the “what” and the “why” of the presidency. Unlike some, he was willing to give me many opportunities to take center stage. One notable example of was when he cut his 20-minute Representative Assembly speech to 10 minutes and allowed me to speak for the remaining 10 minutes. I gave my “who is that knocking on the schoolhouse door speech.” The context of the speech was current reform proposals of charter schools, vouchers, and high stakes testing. I opened the speech referencing the picture of the barefoot boy late to school knocking on the door of the one room schoolhouse. Many history textbooks use this illustration. The delegates used my speech as a basis for their own remarks before the Assembly. I had succeeded in being seen by the delegates as an articulate speaker and a capable leader.

When the Indiana Professional Standards Board (IPSB) was established 1992, President Harbron submitted my name to Governor O’Bannon, and I was subsequently appointed to the IPSB. President Harbron could have recommended other leaders to bolster his own position, but he felt it was important that the ISTA Vice President serve on the new Board. I invited members of other professional boards who were at the NEA Representative Assembly to meet informally in the hopes of increasing communication and the exchange of information. The head of the NEA’s Instruction and Professional Development Department was obviously threatened by my audacity.
While President Harbron was not able to act on his vision for ISTA because of the organization’s financial problems, he was the right person to be president for that time. He was calm and confident during the financial crises. He garnered the members’ trust in the financial recovery plan. President Harbron made the time to mentor me so that I was better prepared to become president. These mentoring sessions often took place as we traveled across the state to attend district meetings.

At the beginning of my term in office, there were no funds to provide released time from teaching for the ISTA Vice-President or Treasurer; however, by the end of my term as vice president, money and policy were in place for both the ISTA Vice President and Treasurer to be released from teaching. I was instrumental in getting the by-laws changed to have the ISTA President and Vice President term of office to three years instead of two years, to eliminate the past-president’s position, and to change the term beginning date from September 1 to August 1. Under the two-year term, the newly elected officer had one year to gain footing before running for re-election. Changing from two to three-year terms eliminated running for election a third time. The position of past president was a hold-over from the time when the president did not have released time and the past-president could act as a mentor. When an opposition candidate wins against an incumbent, it was not a positive situation to say the least. Previously, the officer’s term coincided with the membership year, which was set when the school year began after Labor Day. With school resuming in August instead of September, it made sense to change the beginning date to August 1 to allow the officers to assume their duties earlier.

The National Council of State Education Associations (NCSEA) and NEA provided leadership training for state officers. The training included leadership and organizational skills, as well as informational sessions on current issues, such as court cases, education reform, and
federal legislation. The NCSEA training was held the week of Thanksgiving and the NEA training was held in mid-July. During my time as president, the presidents organized training sessions around the NEA Board of Directors’ meetings, and we, also, began meeting as state presidents once a year for training and problem sharing. In addition, there was time for informal interaction among the officers. These informal occasions provided ample opportunity to discuss common issues and directions. NEA also offered Regional Training, which was attended by the state presidents and members selected by the president. These annual Regional Trainings moved from state to state year to year. While providing valuable training for future and current leaders, they primarily served to promote the NEA and to provide a means for the president to reward supporters. As vice-president, I did serve as interim president while President Harbron was on a 10-week medical leave during January, February, and March of 1994. A benefit of the experience was being seen in the role of the president. I kept his schedule of meetings with a dozen district councils and presented his response to a Nation at Risk. In 1983, President Ronald Regan’s National Commission on Excellence in Education released A Nation at Risk: the Imperative for Educational Reform (1983). The commission was charged with comparing America’s schools to other advanced nations and, thus, began the ranking of school success by test scores. The commission could have used other criteria to measure student success, but they took the easy way and one that would yield the results they wanted. This was the beginning of the international test competition and the concentrated attack on public education. The Edison School Corporation was launched; vouchers were touted to share the billions of dollars expended on public education with private enterprise.

ISTA President’s Duties and Responsibilities
The ISTA President is a full-time position. The Representative Assembly is comprised of delegates from the local affiliates and elects the president. A 6-year term limit is placed on the presidency. President Harbron was elected to three 2-year terms. The ISTA by-laws were amended in 1994, and Presidents Young and Briganti were elected to two 3-year terms.

The ISTA President’s numerous duties and responsibilities are spelled out in the ISTA bylaws. The ISTA Board of Directors prescribes additional duties and responsibilities. The duties fall into 12 areas with 58 specific items. The ISTA President is the chief spokesperson for the Association and the chief elected officer (ISTA Handbook, 2012. pp. E-24-27).

The leadership duties of the ISTA President are played out in multiple arenas: bargaining, teacher rights and responsibility, political action, and membership. Each arena demands a different focus and gives local leadership and members a number of different views of the president. Most members and local leaders have a limited or single view of the president; only a few may have the opportunity to see the president in multiple roles. The president is the one common participant in all the arenas and contexts. There are visible and invisible dynamics of leadership. While leadership action in an arena is visible, the preparation for that action may not be visible.

The duties of the president are played out in an ongoing flow. There are deadlines, but there are no endings. There is always the next time, the next event. For example, every summer the NEA holds a Representative Assembly that is attended by state delegates. Even before the annual NEA Representative Assembly begins, plans for the following year is underway. This is true of every annual event. Before an annual event occurs, next year’s is being planned.

Geographically, the work of the ISTA president is centered in Indianapolis, Indiana, but meetings take place throughout the state. Four meetings a year take place in Washington, D.C.
Other meetings, conferences, and trainings take place across the country. The ISTA President calendar typically involves 100 overnight trips and a minimum of 30 Saturdays a year. Only over the winter break is it possible for the president to have a week with the preceding and following weekend free; however, during the six years of my presidency, emergencies interrupted two of the winter breaks: the death of an employee and the executive director’s serious illness.

**My Time as President**

I was not a charismatic leader; however, with the office came a degree of charisma. I call it the awe factor; some are in awe of the office and transfer that to the leader. The awe factor or appreciation of power can get in the way and prevent the leader from seeing the truth. Rather than admit to a problem, a member will deny it or gloss it over.

I tried to lead by consensus, example, education, and encouragement. I had my critics. When I felt certain association values were betrayed, I made unilateral decisions. I canceled a summer leadership program because the hotel hosting the event used its influence with the local police department to disband an employee organization’s legal demonstration. I ended ISTA’s Conference on Instruction. The attendance had dropped significantly over the years because most local associations agreed to drop the days as paid days in their contract language. The teachers from those locals, which kept the days as paid, generally just put in an appearance at the conference site, to pick up any free materials, and extend their weekend.

Being able to plan in advance, mentally rehearse, and create a picture of the outcome are invaluable abilities in a leader. President Harbron applied his math mind; I applied my social science mind in analyzing situations. I listened and adjusted my behavior accordingly. I respected the roles and duties of my fellow officers and the staff. I tried to give my fellow
officers projects that would broaden their experience and give them exposure. I endorsed the appointment of Vice President Briganti to the Indiana Professional Standards Board and appointed Mike Zulich, ISTA treasurer, to the DARE board. Upon leaving office, Treasurer Zulich indicated I had allowed him to carry out his duties without looking over his shoulder.

Over the course of my presidency my leadership changed. I started as a procedural leader and ended up being more of a transformational leader. I would like to think of myself as an authentic leader, who acted with integrity. The most difficult fact to realize in hindsight is that some situations would have been better if done differently. For example, when ISTA changed the Options Guaranteed contribution amount from $12 to $24, the staff lost interest in member involvement in political campaigns. If I had foreseen PAC dollars replacing member involvement, I would not have supported increasing the contribution amount. Looking back, this was a huge mistake. As ISTA stopped organizing, its lack of influence in the State House declined. The recent success of State Superintendent Glenda Ritz’s grassroots campaign in the 2012 election is evidence of the importance of grassroots campaigning. Hindsight is always clearer than foresight. Failure provides an opportunity for humility and learning.

I was fortunate as president to have a vice president and treasurer who were capable and reliable. I could ask them to take on a project with confidence that they would complete it. In terms of hierarchy, I was, ultimately, responsible to and for the organization. In carrying out these duties and responsibilities, I relied on a several over-lapping teams. The executive officers formed one team. The executive committee was another team that included board members selected by the board of directors and the officers. When we dealt with the NEA, the team was made up of the officers and the NEA Board Members and members of the NEA Resolutions Committee. In all my dealings I tried to be open to the input of others.
I am not sure where the team concept goes in the scheme of organizational development, but it was an integral part of my leadership style as president. Working with and relying on teams was important. I oversaw the development of teams consisting of both governance and staff to make recommendations for action in several program areas, such as political action, rights and responsibilities, special services, and membership. For example, a joint governance and staff team was formed to plan the ISTA’s membership campaign. Prior to the formation of this committee the professional staff would plan the membership campaign. There was no teacher leadership involved in the planning. Incorporating teacher leaders provided a “customer’s” perspective to the organization and gave the teacher leaders an understanding of the organization at work.

My Philosophy

(Campaign brochure, 1981)

I wrote the following statement over 30 years ago when I ran for vice president, and as I reread it today, my beliefs and commitment have not changed.

Our Association brings teachers together. It unifies us to achieve common goals – better lives, better places to teach, a better profession.
My commitment to these goals and to this Association has led me from smoke-filled rooms to real conflagrations. It has seen me sent to jail, yet that same commitment has also set me free. Dedication to my fellow teachers and my local association has carried me through some hard times and invaluable experiences, nurturing my growth as an Association leader and my deeper understanding of educators' problems.

You have my promise I will work with the same determination and integrity to represent you at the state level, just as I have always given my best to any area of involvement. I know teachers; I know what they need, and I am committed to working for the best possible quality of our profession in Indiana.

With your trust – and your vote – my goals will be to continue striving for a better life, a better place to teach, and a profession where pride, accomplishment, and a true sense of worth will be paramount.

That old saying is true – we need each other – and right now I need you in a special way. Will you help me now so I may work for you in the months and years to come? (Campaign brochure, 1981)

If I were to run for office today, my campaign statement would be very much the same. It speaks to integrity and the importance of working together to achieve common goals.

**Highlights of My Presidential Experience**

My first term began September 1, 1995. I had moved into an apartment in Indianapolis a week before. The apartment was within walking distance to the office. The president’s office was on the ninth floor and overlooked the state capital. With floor to ceiling windows, the view was
grand. The only hot issue, at the time, was unhappiness on the part of some members and local leaders about a NEA Resolution passed at that summer’s NEA Representative Assembly that was deemed to be pro-homosexuality. As a result, I spent many hours talking to various members, both in person and on the phone, clarifying the NEA Resolution. Conservative organizations, such as Phyllis Schlafly’s Eagle Forum, had a field day spinning the NEA Resolution to benefit their coffers.

The calendar of work was fairly consistent from year to year. The first board meeting for the incoming president is the August board meeting. This is an organizational meeting of the board of directors for the following Association year. Board members are elected to the executive committee, and the board management committee.

In September, the major task was setting committee charges, appointing chairs and committee members, followed by preparing for the first board meeting. I would appoint over 75 committee members and a dozen or so chairs. Appointees were happy; the people they replaced were generally not so happy. This was especially true of the board members who had served on the representative assembly rules committee. The rules committee was highly visible, facing the delegates. I thought the board members should sit with their delegation. Accordingly, I did not appoint board members to the rules committee.

I approached preparation for the ISTA Board Meetings as I did negotiations. In preparing for a bargaining session, I tried to anticipate possible problems and outcomes. I would review and set goals and objectives for the session. In preparation for meetings the agenda items were set, and a board book was prepared for the members in advance. I set the agenda with tentative breaks so the meeting would flow smoothly. I ran a highly organized meeting. The meetings, especially the business portions, were meant for business. Two weeks prior to each
board meeting the executive committee met. The executive committee consisted of the three officers and six members elected by and from the board of directors. Prior to my presidency, the executive committee adopted positions on the business items. I ended this practice; I decided that the executive committee members were not elected to think for the board, but to speak for it. This decision was well received by the executive committee and the board of directors. I instituted the practice of having each member of the executive committee, except state officers, have an informal lunch meeting with an assigned group of board members. When the board meeting resumed after lunch, the first item of business was a report from each of the executive committee members on the discussion. I benefited from this practice in several ways. Giving the executive committee members individual time to speak to the board made them feel more valuable. By shuffling group assignments, members had a chance interact with new people and hear the different perspectives. The lunchtime discussions and the subsequent report out afforded the board members an opportunity to be more engaged.

The next event was the Fall ISTA Representative Assembly (RA). The agenda was mostly determined by the by-laws. Most action items originated in standing committees and came through the board to the RA. The meeting was scripted to ensure the proper flow and completion of the business of the ISTA RA. Prior to the meeting, I prepared my president’s address, a 20-minute speech. Over the course of the year, I would gather speech worthy ideas, and in the week before the RA, I would use them to write my speech. The president’s speech is the only time when most of the delegates are fully engaged. The president’s speech gives the president the opportunity to reach a large number of local leaders with his views, philosophy and goals. It is the president’s Bully Pulpit. Giving a great speech that interests the delegates gives an unforgettable rush and for me that was the mark of a successful leader.
Previous to my presidency, the representative assemblies were fairly grim with the acrimony of the factions within the Association. While presiding strictly by Robert’s Rules, for parliamentary procedure, I strove to make the RA a more positive experience. I took the time to help people follow parliamentary procedure with humor, where appropriate, and with an even temperament. As a leader, I saw it as part of my responsibility to help the delegates present their views and aspirations regardless of my personal perspectives. Several delegates expressed appreciation of the way I conducted the RA. Even the professional parliamentarian that ISTA hired to assist me wrote several letters over the years, citing that my skill at presiding were a benefit to the organization. As I reflect today, the ISTA Representative Assemblies were among the most enjoyable duties of my presidency.

The ISTA presidency is not all perks and positives. The NEA Representative Assembly is extremely taxing. The president participates in preliminary meetings and a reception. On the morning of the first session, the ISTA-NEA leadership team meets for a breakfast meeting at 5 a.m. to prepare for the first Indiana Caucus meeting that begins at 7 a.m. The state caucus meets until 9 a.m., when we adjourn to make the 10 a.m. session. There is a lunch break, and the afternoon session runs until 5 or 6 p.m. As president, I stayed on the floor and attended to the business at hand. This day was repeated three more times, except on the last day, when the afternoon session ran until all business was completed.

The evenings at the NEA Representative Assembly were typically taken up with social events. While I was president, I made it a rule to retire to my hotel room as early as possible to get as much sleep as I could. This was the only time I was not visible and acting as the president during the NEA-RA.
There were notable exceptions to the upside of the presidency. When a dear friend and mentee misused her association expense account, I found it necessary to remove her from her position on the ISTA Insurance Trust Board. Another incident that caused furor occurred when I did not reappoint a long-time member of the Insurance Trust Board. He had served on the Trust Board for as long as I could remember. Being a Trustee on Insurance Trust Board was a cherished position. I decided not to reappoint this long-term trustee. I began the policy and made it part of the by-laws that a person could not be appointed to more than 2 three-year terms.

I believe the Association has an obligation to be an inclusive organization; however, there are leaders who sometime shockingly let the organization down. One particular incident was the negative feedback I got after I appointed a vocal minority to the Minority Affairs Committee. A local leader from that area of the state also referred to Arabs as “Sand Niggers” in an Association Legal Defense Panel meeting. Needless to say he never received an appointment of any kind from me.

I also had to make the difficult decision to remove a committee member because she had filed a lawsuit against the Association. It would have been easier just to wait and not re-appoint her, but I felt the conflict of interest was too great.

More sad than difficult were the times when a member who I knew would call asking for help. It was not easy, but necessary to refer them to the appropriate staff person and to follow up making sure they received assistance. The difficult part was hearing the difficulties and sharing their pain. As president, I worked diligently to be inclusive. In the process, I came to know good people with diverse backgrounds. We had members who taught in the prison system. In meeting with them I became friendly with a gentleman from a foreign country who taught at the Pendleton Correctional facility. He called me once, upset because he had been searched. He
wanted to give me all the details, to which I declined because our conversation would not be
privileged. I promptly referred him to the appropriate staff person. The point is that I would
have liked to have listened to him and perhaps ease his pain.

As president I was compensated monetarily for my time, but more importantly my work
in the Association gave me opportunities to learn, travel, and grow both as a leader and a person.
I am grateful for having had the opportunity to serve as president and to serve in other capacities
as well. Only others can truly judge if I made a difference. I, however, can truly claim that the
journey made a difference in my life, and I am all the better for it.
CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS

“As a first step toward a mature view of leaders, we must accept context and complexity” (Gardner, 1990, p. 5).

“Leadership is, above all, a performing art with a range of leadership roles that must be filled and enacted in different situations. Oft times a single leader is called upon to fill these many varied roles” (Pearce, 2007, p. 357).

Introduction

In this chapter, I identify and explore the themes that emerged from my personal narrative and the interviews of Presidents Harbron and Briganti. In exploring the themes, I share perspectives from the review of related literature. As noted in Chapter 2, in this form of autoethnography the literature review occurs after the collection of data. This approach is used so that the themes may evolve naturally, void of preconceptions that might otherwise occur by prior literature review.

Emergent Themes

The following themes were derived from my narrative and the interview transcripts of Presidents Harbron and Briganti. Themes were derived using Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) (Anderson, 2007). The five themes, which emerged from the data, were “Definition of Leadership,” “Leadership Training,” “Accomplishments,” “Purpose or Reason for Involvement,” and “Background.” Subthemes and areas for additional inquiry were identified. The Definition of Leadership yielded six subthemes: “Definition,” “Integrity,” “Charisma,” “Persistence,” “Leadership Teams,” and “Style.” Within “Leadership Training,” four subthemes were
identified: “Experience,” “Skill Sets,” “Mentor/Mentee,” and “Formal Training.” The “Purpose or Reason for Involvement” yielded the theme of “Social Justice.” The last theme, “Background,” included two subthemes, “Career” and “Youth.” A composite of major themes and subthemes is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Common Themes and Subthemes.

**Organizational Leadership**

For the purpose of this study, an organizational leader is the person by virtue of appointment or election who is charged with carrying out the organization’s mission, objectives, goals, and policies. Most often framed in the context of business organizations this term is used interchangeably with management or administration. In the context of the ISTA, the president of ISTA must lead the organization and represent the membership.
Definition of leadership. Integral to the definition of organizational leadership is the concept of clear goals and vision. The organizational leader must articulate the vision and goals and move others to achieve these goals.

Each president expressed the importance of clear goals and vision. President Harbron expressed it best, saying:

[Leadership is] having a clear view of goals, not only personal goals but more importantly, goals for the larger group. And, then being able to communicate those goals. Being able to see a path for achieving them and communicating that path and having . . . I guess charisma would be the word, to sufficiently bring others along.

In my case the essence of leadership is “articulating clear goals, defining the path, and helping others to achieve those goals.”

President Briganti focused on others as a source for leadership, saying: “For me . . . first, you have to have something you’re believing in to lead. So it’s a shared vision that you have with a group of other people.”

Leadership literature supports the sentiments of the three presidents. The heart of leadership is the clear articulation of the organization’s and the leader’s goals. Many noted authorities on leadership (Kouzes & Posner 2012; Northhouse, 2012; Yukl, 2005) speak to the importance of the leader’s ability to articulate goals and move people to achieve those goals. Managers manage resources within an organization; leaders guide or direct people to achieve the organization’s goals. A transformative leader needs to identify and articulate a vision and foster an acceptance of the organization’s goals (Lowe & Gardner, 2001).

Integrity. All three presidents stressed the importance of being known for commitment to the principles of the organization. All three of the interviewees spoke about integrity.
President Harbron stated it this way:

One quality that is very important for a leader, and maybe the most important one, is integrity. And I mean that in a very broad sense. Integrity to one’s values, integrity to the Association’s, that is, the organization’s values. In the case of state teachers and the Association, integrity in regard to the values of the nation in the terms of public education. But personal integrity as well, that is when you say something it is meaningful and can be trusted.

President Briganti put it simply: “The most important thing to me to leadership is to have integrity, honesty in your dealings with others.”

In my narrative I specifically referred to integrity in three ways that underlie its importance to one’s stance as a leader. I resigned from the Highland bargaining team at one point to protect my integrity. In my campaigns, I underlined the importance of my integrity as a potential leader. Lastly, integrity is key to my concept of the authentic leader.

People usually define integrity as being true to one’s own principles. Northouse (2012), in his book *Introduction to Leadership: Concepts and Practice*, identified six leadership traits, including integrity, which effective leaders exhibit. Integrity includes honesty and trustworthiness. When leaders do what they say they will do, they build trust. Just as honesty builds confidence in the leader’s word, integrity “undergirds all aspects of leadership” (Northouse, 2012, p. 33).

Watts (2012) identified four dimensions of integrity: identity, authenticity, alignment, and accountability. Under identity, Watts included not just having clear purpose and values, but being aware of one’s weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Authenticity includes being true to one’s values and those of the organization. A leader needs to align values and actions. The leader
and/or the organization cannot espouse one thing and do another. Accountability also includes looking for ways and opportunities to act on the values and goals.

Integrity and authenticity play an integral role in the recent theory of authentic leadership. George (2003), a highly successful CEO of Metronics, wrote in *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value*, that leadership is authenticity. Leadership includes being one’s own person, developing a leadership style, and knowing oneself. George identified five essential qualities of authentic leadership: understanding the organization’s purpose, consistently exhibiting sound values, speaking and acting from the heart, connecting with others, and exercising self-discipline.

**Charisma.** There is consensus that charisma plays a part in organizational leadership to move people toward the organization’s goals; however, the three past-presidents were not in agreement on the source of charisma, just its role as a motivator.

President Harbron and I mentioned charisma. President Harbron posited charisma as part of the ability to move people to achieve organizational goals. I viewed charisma not as a trait or ability, but something that came with the position. I did not see myself as charismatic, but as people came to interact with me as President, I gained popularity and their trust. President Briganti stated that “having charisma means having exceptional powers of persuasion that can inspire others to action. Respecting others and being trustworthy are key to the positive use of one's charisma.”

Much attention is given to charisma as a leadership trait (Northouse, 2012). Northouse (2012) included charisma as one of the six leadership traits. He defined it as a “special personality characteristic that gives a leader the capacity to do extraordinary things. In particular, it gives the leader exceptional powers of influence” (Northouse, 2012, p. 30). A
leader either possesses or lacks this rare trait. However, Northouse identified several behaviors that charismatic leaders have, such as communicating clear goals and strong values, modeling those values, and inspiring others. Charismatic leaders also possess the transformational leadership traits of idealized influence, inspiration and intellectual stimulation (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Other researchers view charisma as the product of the relationship between the followers and the leader rather than a personality trait (Gill, 2011). Eatwell (2006) builds his discussion of charisma around the European dictators of the 1920s and 1930s, namely Hitler and Mussolini. Eatwell defined charisma as an inexplicable emotional commitment that connects the followers to the charismatic leader. This is a special affective relationship that should not be confused with the adulation of super stars or iconic “personalities,” the author points out.

Eatwell (2006) singled out four main charismatic leader traits relevant to the charismatization of the followers. Charismatic leaders have a missionary vision of their life. They have a sense of being here to carry out a special mission in life. They present themselves as just an ordinary person, one of the folks. The third trait involves demonizing of the non-members of the followership, such as scapegoating to establish an “us/them” mindset. Lastly, the charismatic leader has a singular characteristic that sets the person apart from others, with an exceptional personal presence.

According to Eatwell (2006), during times of crises followers often turn to charismatic leaders. Running for office provides a theatre for the charismatic leader to gain renown; however, presidentialism and charisma may not be connected. While it is debatable whether all or any of the ISTA presidents exhibited charisma or even manifested exceptional personal presence, the three presidents gained enough renown to achieve the office. Without knowing the
heart of those who voted us into office, we can only speculate to the degree to which our leadership grew from transformational to inspirational to charismatic. It is noted that after the struggle is over charismatic leaders often fall from their position of leadership. Eatwell (2006) also pointed out that it is hard to distinguish between personal charisma, institutional charisma, and office charisma. Perceived power is a powerful aphrodisiac for some. I am not charismatic; however, I do believe I gained renown and presence while ISTA President, and I learned from that experience.

Eatwell (2006) coined the term trenchcracy to denote the special bond of the charismatic leaders with their followers as a result of their participation in WWI. I mention this because being a member of the Highland Seven and going to jail allowed me to capitalize on that experience.

**Persistence.** In the pursuit of organizational leadership, persistence is often the key to success. Synonyms such as determination, perseverance, and grit also come to mind.

President Harbron explained the importance of persistence, in his case, saying:

I was thinking about leadership characteristics a while back, and one that I don't think I mentioned in the initial interview, but that was always very important to me, was perseverance. I attribute a lot of my success, both as a leader and in life generally, to that particular characteristic.

In reflecting on my narrative, I concurred with President Harbron’s statement. After losing my bid for president in 1981 and vice-president in 1983, I could have walked away as many losing candidates have; conversely, each loss made me even more resolute.

President Briganti was silent on the importance of persistence.

perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Grit entails working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress. The gritty individual approaches achievement as a marathon; his or her advantage is stamina. Whereas disappointment or boredom signals to others that it is time to change trajectory and cut losses, the gritty individual stays the course. (pp. 1087-1088)

**Leadership teams.** Presidents work with leadership teams in the pursuit of organizational goals. All three presidents participated in leadership teams; however, the results were mixed. Both President Harbron and I saw them as resources and allies, while President Briganti focused on the importance of trust to their success and usefulness. President Briganti supported teams, but ran into major obstacles. Her ability to govern was undercut by the Executive Director as she explained:

My leadership “teams” would have been the officers, executive committee, or board of directors. For the most part, all were effective until severe issues with and interference of the Executive Director. He did his best to stir up conflict. Trust eroded and stress levels
were immense. Without his interference, their effectiveness would have continued to be a positive influence on the organization and its work.

President Harbron gave a different perspective: “I saw the members of the leadership team as partners in moving the ISTA agenda forward, as well as individuals worthy of my respect and guidance as they asserted their roles and ambitions.”

In my case:
The team concept was an integral part of my leadership style as president. I used various elected positions depending upon the task. For example, the Executive Director and I worked as a team occasionally. The vice-president, treasurer, and I frequently acted as a team. I had an NEA-RA leadership team which included the Officers, the Indiana NEA Board of Directors members, and the Indiana NEA Resolutions Committee members.

A distinction must be made between leadership teams and team leadership. The former refers to the use of teams within an organization; the latter refers to leading a team (Kezar, 1998). Team leadership was beyond the scope of this inquiry since questions about team leadership were not addressed. The focus of the narrative and the interviews was on the concept of the teams within the leadership structure. Neither President Harbron nor I criticized the use of leadership teams under our presidencies; however, President Briganti spoke about problems with leadership teams as they related to trust and negative leadership involvement.

Teamwork became part of the Association lexicon in the 1990s. On all levels the Association had a plethora of committees and the occasional task force, and these teams made sharing influence and power possible. The president and the executive director were expected to work as a team. The officers were expected to work as a team. The extent to which these expectations were accomplished depended on the parties’ involved.
Generally speaking, leadership teams are formed to carry out specific tasks. In the case of the ISTA these tasks ranged from planning, decision-making and communicating. Well-managed teams provide positive outcomes both internally and externally (Zappulla, 2003); however, as noted by President Briganti, teams may fail unless the proper environment is established. A key element of that environment is trust (Ilgen, Hollenbeck, Johnson, & Jundt, 2005).

**Leadership style.** One commonality in our leadership style was clear communication to the leaders, members, and education stakeholders. In addition, all three of us mentored other leaders and helped them advance their efforts, both within their profession and the Association.

In response to the question, “How would you describe your leadership style?” President Harbron said:

You know, I never really thought much about my leadership style, but as I reflect back on it, I would say that it was that of a communicator. I worked very hard and drove a lot of miles to keep local leaders informed as to what was going on, and I also worked hard to communicate the ISTA point of view to the public and public education stakeholders. I'm not sure exactly where "planner" fits into leadership style, but I also believed strongly in planning for the future, setting goals, and communicating those plans and goals throughout the organization.

President Briganti provided a list of ten items to describe her leadership style:

1. Energetically inspire others to support the organization and its mission.
2. Demonstrate a strong work ethic and personal integrity.
3. Build coalitions within and outside the organization.
4. Seek and support talented leaders with tools and training.
5. Provide clear written and oral communication.

6. Develop strategies to promote creative problem solving and/or planning for the future.

7. Serve others ahead of self.

8. Take personal and/or professional risks when necessary for the good of the organization.

9. Celebrate successes and engagement, and

10. Be positive.

In my case, my leadership style changed over the course of my presidency. I started as a procedural leader and ended up being more of a transformational leader. I would like to think of myself as an authentic leader, who acted with integrity.

Gill (2011) and Northouse (2012) describe multiple types of leadership styles beyond transactional and transformational: achievement-oriented leadership, action-centered leadership, autocratic style, authoritarian leadership style, bureaucratic, charismatic leadership, consultative style, delegate style, democratic leadership style, developer, directive leadership, laissez-faire leadership style, micromanagement, participative style, supportive leadership, theory X and theory Y, and visionary leadership.

While Presidents President Harbron and Briganti did not speak directly to authentic leadership, I wrote in my narrative, “I like to think of myself as an authentic leader, who acted with integrity.” President Briganti explained that a leader needs “honesty in . . . dealings with others and to uplift others to leadership roles and to look for their strengths and where there are other areas that one can do that to help them to bring about their organizational strength.” She also wrote, “. . . leadership can be learned, but it has to be genuine.” Much of authentic
leadership depends on the perception of the followership. For myself, I see what we claimed as our leadership style more of what we strived to be than perhaps what we were; however, as one who witnessed Presidents Harbron and Briganti in office, I deemed them to be authentic leaders.

Reflecting back over the years that I knew and worked with Presidents Harbron and Briganti, I drew the following inferences. President Harbron’s leadership style was cool, methodical, and well thought out. President Briganti was very much a people person. Her leadership style included making everyone comfortable and inviting engagement. My leadership style was to present “big ideas” and to provide training and opportunity. No value judgments should be made on the differences mentioned since personality plays a part in leadership style and what works with one person may not work with another.

Leadership Training

Yukl (2005), in his chapter on developing leadership skills, categorized three ways to acquire leadership competencies: self-help activities, developmental activities, and formal training. There is marginal overlap among these categories. While keeping in mind that Yukl is addressing his work to leadership in a management context, much of the discussion is relevant to elected leadership. Most successful leaders take it upon themselves to seek out experiences which will enhance or provide new skills and knowledge.

Prior experience. President Harbron and I did not have leadership experience prior to our involvement in the Association. President Briganti had earlier experience as a leader in her high school and community prior to her experience as an Association leader.

Leadership neither exists nor develops in a vacuum. Neither I, nor President Harbron, referred to any leadership positions or experience prior to their involvement in the Association. Neither of us was active in clubs or athletics. On the other hand, President Briganti was very
active in her high school, Girl Scouts, church and college activities before her involvement in the Association. President Briganti stated:

Well, I was a leader in school because there were only 52 in my class. I organized the first public dance in the town, and I got shunned by everyone that wasn’t a Methodist.

And I used to hold dances at my house, because you couldn’t, didn’t have a place to have them.

Fullan (2001) pointed out that the development of leadership takes experience over time. Fullan explained that this is not repeating the same experiences over time, but meeting and coping with new leadership problems that test and expand the leader’s abilities. Despite the books and articles that attempt to deliver the requisite knowledge and skills, leadership must be learned in context.

Leadership refers to the acquisition of those attributes for leadership. Blunt, (2001) a senior executive with the federal government and leadership teacher in the Excellence in Government Fellow Program, stated:

leaders are grown not by the lessons of the “classroom” of experience – lessons gleaned from challenging and varied job experiences and from significant relationships built with senior leaders. It is through these impact experiences and significant relationships that practical leadership capacity is learned and where character is observed and shaped in the crucible of reality. (p. 45)

**Personal skill sets.** President Harbron and I had extensive experience in negotiations. While President Briganti had experience negotiations, she was more experienced in political campaigning and lobbying. President Harbron and I were active in campaigning and lobbying but not to the extent that President Briganti was involved. President Harbron and I credit our
negotiations experience as providing leadership skills, such as organization, communication, and cognitive skills (thinking in the moment and reacting appropriately).

While each of us had our strengths, we all had leadership skills that came from doing. I said, “most of my leadership development was gained through experience and both formal and informal training” and the other two presidents agreed that once in the office, there was a steep learning curve adjusting to the demands of the office.

Gill (2011) described a negotiative leadership style that encompasses both bargaining and political skills. Khanchandani and Gillam (2013) listed the development of negotiating skills as an essential organizational skill – an attribute also supported by Gill (2011) who said: “Political skill enables leaders to network, influence, and control people and situations effectively” (p. 89).

**Mentor/Mentee.** Mentoring others and being mentored was valued and an important part of leadership. President Harbron took great pride in being a mentor. He mentioned specifically two individuals he had mentored, ISTA President Nate Schnellenberger and Superintendent of Public Instruction Glenda Ritz. I felt a special obligation to make sure my fellow officers were aware of the expectations of their office and opportunities for additional experience and training. Beyond the officers, I tried to encourage and support interested members and leaders to take more responsibility. President Briganti referred to the importance of supporting and mentoring fellow and future leaders.

At some point, having learned from others, leaders will mentor or assist future leaders. There are no formal mentoring systems in ISTA. The leader may provide the protégé an appointment to a committee or a chairmanship (Eaton, 1995). For example, as president I took it
upon myself to make sure my vice president was familiar with the duties and obligations of the presidency, just as President Harbron had done for me.

**Formal training.** The Association Presidents took part in many formal training sessions prior to and after being elected president. The National Council of State Education Associations (NCSEA) and the NEA provided excellent and meaningful training. Additionally, Presidents Briganti and I cited the importance of interaction with state officers from other states as being important learning experiences. President Harbron also noted these experiences as important saying: “Once I was in place as a state leader, I had a number of opportunities provided by the Association and in a few cases from outside the Association to assist me.”

Both the NEA and the NCSEA provided leadership training of state officers. The training offered covered a wide spectrum of leadership and organizational skills. As I recall, “there was time for informal interaction among the officers. These informal occasions provided ample opportunity to discuss common issues and directions.”

During the summers of 1980 and 1981, ISTA held a campaign training camp for interested members. Both President Harbron and I attended the camps. The summer camps trained members to campaign for the election of endorsed candidates. The concepts and skills learned also applied to campaigning for Association offices. Politics is politics, regardless of the type of election.

NEA established the “Campaigning to Win” school to train women to run for Association offices. President Briganti was selected to attend the campaign school. Her intent was to learn how run other members’ campaigns, but she ultimately decided to run for state office.

Nesbit (2001) noted the importance of training, explaining:
As unions grow in size and the issues they deal with become more complex, elected officers become full-time employees, services to members are expanded, and more staff members are hired. Officers have an ever-widening range of responsibilities, which fall mainly into three broad functions: servicing and representing union members, organizing and recruiting new members, and representing and promoting the policies of the union. In addition, they are expected to inspire and build union solidarity. Officers are expected to keep up with technological, economic and legislative changes. Their work is greatly affected by legislative and economic changes. (p. 4)

Many U.S. labor leaders acquired their leadership skills by the “sink or swim” method. Trial by fire or emersion is the rule. While unions in general do not provide leadership programs, there are several programs across the United States that offer training programs for trade and industrial unions; however, the ISTA and the NEA do not have training programs established with colleges, such as the one at Harvard or like the George Meany Center’s National Labor College, Silver Springs, Maryland (Eaton, 1995).

Susan Eaton wrote an excellent paper, *Union leadership Development in the 1990s and Beyond* (1995), focusing on traditional trade and industrial unions, with findings applicable to the leadership in the ISTA. According to Eaton (1995), most leaders had varying experiences on the local level, before moving to higher leadership positions. The most common and honored career path involved climbing the organization’s leadership ladder. This means winning elections and winning elections means politics. The leader must campaign for office and then face opposition while in office and in subsequent elections. The effectiveness of the organization depends on the unity. This creates a tension between maintaining unity and staying in office.
Eaton (1995) described five stages of leadership development. Each stage is both unique and blurred. Stages three through four include elements of formal training. Stage one deals with recruitment of potential leaders, and stage five discusses the role of mentoring.

**Stage One: Entry into leadership.** According to Eaton (1995), two kinds of experiences promote aspiration to union leadership. Leaders are often the product of organizing campaigns and strikes. Frequently, fellow members or local officers will recruit or encourage potential leaders. This was true in my case. The leaders’ family background often influences many to seek leadership. For example, they may come from a union family or one with a strong sense of social advocacy. Aside from these two motivations, an act of injustice will often be the catalyst for involvement in leadership especially when the union has been successful.

**Stage Two: Orientations to the Union.** Union orientation includes acquainting the new or potential leader with the structure and goals of the organization. The degree and manner to which the union provides orientation varies from organization to organization. Some organizations provide formal programs and/or provide notebooks containing the organization’s philosophy, goals, objectives, policy, rules, regulations, and expectations. Generally, however, most leaders receive their indoctrination through emersion (Eaton, 1995). In the case of ISTA’s three presidents emersion was the rule. Part of the emersion process was finding that ISTA’s values were ours and that through the organization we could make a difference.

**Stage Three: Training.** Training is different from orientation. The purpose of formal training is to provide a specific skill set such as negotiations or a body of knowledge such as laws and regulations affecting the members. However, much of the training occurs in informal settings or in the context of doing (Eaton, 1995).
Stage Four: Work Experience and Advancement. “The most common union approach to mastering a union role is to learn by doing, without much help or encouragement from anyone, and without formal training” (Eaton, 1995, p. 17). An important sub-set of leadership development is learning about union politics. To achieve positions of leadership, leaders must win elections. Most leaders acquire these skills informally. There is little difference between government elections and union elections. In some cases, the organization will provide specific training for women and minorities in order to increase their participation in leadership roles (Eaton, 1995). The ISTA has provided summer leadership training for many years. This training takes place over an extended weekend in August. The curriculum is informational rather than skill oriented. The ISTA provided a bargaining conference that was motivational and informational oriented.

Stage Five: Passing Leadership to Others. People in positions of leadership are often resistant to providing leadership training for new leaders; however, at some point having learned from others they will mentor or assist new leaders. Mentoring may include a simple word of encouragement, lengthy conversations or sage advice. The leader may appoint a potential leader to a committee, a chairmanship or training opportunities (Eaton, 1995).

Accomplishments

Accomplishments come in two forms. There are external gains made by the organization while the president is in office, and there are internal changes in the organization. The first, for example, would be the implementation of the Standards Board or full-day Kindergarten. The latter includes the establishment of a long-range plan or teams.

President Harbron. When asked to speak of his accomplishments, President Harbron spoke about laying the groundwork for alternative schools for “troubled teens” and for early
childhood education, which were Association goals. The Professional Standards Board was established during President Harbron’s Presidency.

President Harbron created a long-range plan. He developed and carried out a program that built consensus among a large number of local and district leaders. The most important contribution of President Harbron was navigating the ISTA through economic recovery. He came into office faced with a financial crisis. With his leadership, the Association created a plan of action and implemented it, which led to a decade of growth and stability. Unfortunately, the financial crises prevented President Harbron from aggressively pursuing transformational professional programs.

President Harbron proposed and achieved four significant changes in the president’s term and compensation. First, the president’s term was changed from three 2-year terms to two 3-year terms. Next, the position of past president on the board of directors and executive committee was eliminated. The term of the office was changed from September 1 to August 1 to coincide with the school year. The final change was to create parity between the president’s salary and the executive director’s. This was an important symbolic gesture. The president and the executive director were seen and treated as equals in the Association.

President Young. I worked to bring about released time for the ISTA Vice-President and Treasurer, allowing them to make a greater contribution to the achievement of ISTA’s organizational goals. During my presidency, the Indianapolis teachers regained their bargaining rights, which the Indiana General Assembly had limited. I worked to pull the Association together and increase membership and participation. I arranged for a professional political campaign manager to come to Indiana and train the board of directors and staff about messaging. I worked with the executive and board of directors to create staff and member committees to
work collaboratively in the program areas of Association. For example, one group was charged with promoting membership.

**President Briganti.** In talking about her greatest accomplishments, President Briganti said, “Seeing other people step in, up [to] the cause” and doing “what was right for the organization over what was right for me.” She instituted “book club” as an item on the ISTA Board of Directors’ Agenda. At each Board meeting a current book of interest was discussed. President Briganti saw the implementation of full-day kindergarten.

The three presidents enjoyed a period of political influence that enabled the ISTA to achieve favorable legislative action. The three presidents enjoyed a period of membership growth and of financial recovery and health. The value placed upon an accomplishment is usually qualitative and not quantitative. Some accomplishments are difficult to measure. A long-range plan has little value if it is not implemented. Achievements may mean little if they are lost.

**Purpose or Reason for Involvement.**

Just as there is the unique opportunity where means, motive, and opportunity for a leader to emerge, there is a unique combination of reasons for seeking leadership positions. The reasons for involvement, to be a leader, are as varied as the leaders themselves. The reasons may be extrinsic, such as money, power, or fame. Or, they may be intrinsic, such as feeling of a job well done, serving others, and self-satisfaction.

There exists a kinship between the ideals of the leader and that of the organization or movement led. There may be cases where the leader cares nothing for the cause and seeks only position. For example, the teamster leader, Jimmy Hoffa: Was Hoffa for the money or for the truck drivers? In the case of the Association, all elected leaders are members and generally the
professional staff is recruited from members. There is buy-in on the part of the would-be Association leader to the goals and aspirations of the organization.

**Social justice.** All three of the presidents spoke in their own way of recognizing and being concerned about social injustice and correcting perceived wrongs. President Briganti expressed it as “the cause for children.” President Harbron spoke about alternative schools for troubled teens and after leaving the presidency, he worked for a time in an alternative school.

When asked why he became actively involved in the Association, President Harbron said:

"It goes back a long way. Well, first of all, I’ve always been acutely aware of my perspective of the way things ought to be. The reason I ended up running is only because I believe in the cause. But when you start, and you do the same thing David, when you help people become leaders, they see you as a leader and they encourage you to lead more. So you combine all that with a type A personality and a strong competitive instinct. Whenever I had a major turning point, it was really as a response to what I perceived to be a need."

From my perspective:

"Today, I would call it social justice and determination. Teachers need to be treated with respect and dignity, meaning they should be treated fairly and have a voice in their profession and professional practice. Part of my involvement was motivated by my desire to see teachers empowered as well as protected. Further, I believe in and support quality public education. The strike and the period following the strike was my beginning point and along the way when I lost the election for vice-president, I was emotionally devastated. But through it I set my sight on becoming ISTA President. I was determined to “repackage” myself and succeed."
President Briganti reflected:

I had seen some of the things we didn’t feel were quite right. We wanted to make it change. I also believe that there were big inequities for children, having taught in the inner-city in Elkhart and having taught here. The discrepancies were so great, I thought, “There’s got to be something better.” That’s what really inspired me and then, I liked the people. The people that we were able to associate with by and large in their union were people who believed in the cause for children. So it gave you energy.

Social justice literature provides strong support for the perspectives the three president’s shared. A first-year Superintendent who provided an autoethnography of his work experience stated:

I learned that it is not easy to be a leader for social justice. Leaders for social justice consistently challenge the hegemonic culture, and this often results in an adversarial relationship between the superintendent and those who use their power to demand and create privilege. (Garza Jr., 2008, p.176)

Upon reading this statement, I was struck by a similarity between the Association’s goals on many levels with Garza’s experience and how the efforts of those who advocate for social justice find themselves in adversarial situations as they work to bring about change.

Fraser’s (1998) discussion paper, Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, Participation, had the greatest impact on my thinking on social justice. Efforts for social justice fall into two types: claims for the redistribution of resources and claims for the recognition of cultural differences. This is evident in the complex relationship between “interest and identity, economy and culture, class and status in contemporary globalizing capitalist society” (Fraser, 1998, p 1). On the one hand, the Association sought
economic equity in the form of higher compensation and, on the other hand, the Association sought recognition as a professional body.

Another perspective emerged from Lonne’s (2009) article, *Social Justice and High-Quality Human Services: Visioning the Place of a Contemporary Professional Association*. The role of those professional organizations that advocate for social justice need to constantly search for ways to take collective action and effectively establish and maintain the ability to drive social agendas. This view reminded me of Presidents Harbron’s and Briganti discussions about their leadership being motivated by perceived inequities.

Social justice requires the will to advocate for social, as well as economic change. An advocacy organization, such as the Association, requires stalwart leadership regardless of the level the Association. The three presidents exemplified stalwart leadership.

**Background**

Two areas of background information that rose to the level of contributing to the findings: career and youth. There is literature relating childhood experience to later in life leadership actions and qualities. These studies are based upon the lives of the individual and, in general, do not identify common childhood experiences with specific leadership qualities or goals. Bennis and Thomas (2002) in their research identified the commonality of a life changing experience in the lives of the leaders studied. They referred to this experience as the crucible. Other than the crucible, there were no common incidents across the leaders’ experiences. The main focus of the biographical studies have been to identify common leadership characteristics, a good example of which is Bass and Farrow’s (1997) *Quantitative Analysis of Biographies of Political Figures*. 
The three of us were first and foremost career teachers. This is evidence of commitment to public education. Many reasons are given for the appeal of teaching to those who chose teaching as a career (Watt & Richardson, 2007). While a few see teaching as a fall back career, most fundamentally see teaching as a way to make a difference while providing an appealing life – time for children and job security being formost.

**Career.** Our teaching area was reflected in leadership styles. President Harbron was a high school math teacher. He was teaching at North Central High School in Indianapolis when he began his leadership journey. I was teaching social studies at Highland High School when I began my advocacy work. President Briganti was an elementary teacher in Baugo and Elkhart when she began her career. What we taught is reflected in our leadership.

President Harbron was analytical and methodical in his approach to problems and seeking solutions. My social science background, especially in United States History, provided many examples of successful leaders and organizational principles. George Washington’s maxim – No permanent allies, no permanent friends – served as good advice in working with other interest groups. President Briganti was very much a people person like many elementary teachers. Her concern for the feelings of others was shown in working with others.

**Youth.** The broad brush strokes of growing up for the three of us on the surface seem similar. We three presidents grew up in the Midwest: two from Indiana and one from Iowa. President Briganti grew up in a rural small town, while President Harbron and I grew up in cities. The reality of our lives was different. President Harbron and I faced adversity due to our parent’s divorcing and being raised by a single parent. My father settled in California, and my mother died of breast cancer when I was 18. President Harbron and I displayed resilience and
independence growing-up. We were raised by single parents during an era when divorce and
single parents were not the norm.

President Harborn said he “had a terrible childhood.” His parents divorced shortly after
his birth. As he reflected:

In high school, I was, on the record, the smartest kid in my high school class, in a class of
255 kids, tremendous underachiever. I had to work. I had a really good job working for
the newspaper. Left school an hour early for the job, and so they scheduled my study hall
the last period of the day, and I clocked in at 2:10 every afternoon.

In my case, my parents separated and divorced while I was in junior high school. My
childhood and adolescence were comfortable, but I was very much a loner. Like President
Harbron, I worked all during high school. I had a “cool” job working at the largest local movie
house as the head usher and doorman. In high school, I was more of a non-achiever than an
underachiever. I was an avid reader. During the summers, it was not unusual for me to read a
book a day.

President Briganti had what she described as a small town upbringing. She did piece
work for her father who owned a furniture factory. In her hometown dancing was not allowed in
the schools, so President Briganti would organize dances at her home for her classmates that
were allowed to dance.

Over a fourth of the 44 Presidents of the United States lost a parent in childhood.
Experiencing trauma or potentially traumatizing events doesn’t make one stronger nor is it a
prerequisite for leadership, but it is not that uncommon among leaders. According to Gladwell
(2013), tragedies affect people on a continuum from destruction to little or no effect. One
possible effect is the development of resiliency. This is true in the case of President Harbron and
myself, and like a disproportionate number of leaders with difficult situations growing up, we became leaders later in life (Gladwell, 2013).
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Summary

The purpose of this autoethnography was to examine the organizational leadership development of three Indiana State Teachers Association (ISTA) presidents between 1989-2007 – Harbron, Young, and Briganti. The primary question examined was: How do these three former ISTA Presidents describe their leadership journeys? Six underlying questions included: (1) How did these three former presidents come to the decision to run for office? (2) Why did they choose to become leaders? (3) How did they lead? (4) What leadership characteristics and abilities were evident in their presidency? (5) How did their leadership characteristics and abilities affect their presidency? (6) What events influenced their leadership development?

The researcher used his life experience as ISTA president to create a self-narrative, which was used with qualitative interviews of two other state presidents to provide data for analysis. To examine the data, a Thematic Content Analysis was employed in order to obtain a descriptive view of the research in a textural form. From this data analysis, five themes, with accompanying subthemes, were found to be important for leadership development for these three presidents: (1) Definition of Leadership (Definition, Integrity, Charisma, Persistence, Leadership Teams, and Style), (2) Leadership Training (Experience, Skill Sets, Mentor/Mentee, Formal Training), (3) Accomplishments, (4) Purpose or Reason for Involvement (Social Justice), and (5) Background (Career, Youth).

Research Questions

Question 1 – How did these three former presidents come to the decision to run for office?
While the three presidents arrived at their decision by various routes and spans of time, one underlying theme was the belief in the Association as a means to better the profession and address the issues of fairness and integrity. All three recognized an element of self-assurance and self-confidence.

President Harbron acted on a perceived need to address issues of integrity and fairness. He had self-confidence or self-assurance in making decisions. With his strong competitive instinct he also perceived running for office as a personal challenge and having a strong competitive instinct.

President Briganti’s decision to run also had an element of self-confidence and self-assurance, which was bolstered by her friends’ and colleagues’ vocal support and the NEA campaign training. Her belief in the Association served as motivation. Further, she described her decision as a natural progression in her career.


**Question 2 – Why did you choose to become leaders?**

Each president gave different explanations for the decision to become a leader. Three commonalities were evident. First, the decision evolved over time. Second, they sought to improve the lives of teachers. Third, they had a strong belief in the Association.

President Harbron identified two factors. First, he wanted to improve the lives of his colleagues. The second was the realization of his leadership abilities. President Briganti identified her belief in the importance of the Association to the lives of teachers and the
profession. She, like President Harbron, came to see herself as a leader motivated by her belief in the Association. I came to identify myself as a leader as I gained training and support. As I wrote in my narrative, “I had this expectation of myself not to walk away from principle of serving those who trusted in me.” Working to improve the lives of teachers motivated me.

**Question 3 – How did you lead?**

There was no common theme in the Presidents’ responses. President Harbron offered a fairly structured, traditional approach when he said, “I believed strongly in planning for the future, setting goals, and communicating those plans and goals throughout the organization.” In contrast, President Briganti shared a more horizontal and cooperative approach, in which she referred to engaging others in decision-making and promoting collaboration and problem solving inside and outside the organization. She recalled a commitment of personal and professional excellence and integrity with passion and heart. She reflected, “I believed I led with authenticity, as a servant leader from the standpoint of serving the interests of others.”

As a leader, I endeavored to lead in a spirit of collaboration and as president and a local leader my goal was to bring about positive changes. I was not always successful since membership wished to maintain the safety of the status quo. The best example of this occurred when I brought a position paper to the Representative Assembly dealing with a number of professional issues, such as the certification of teacher aides, were voted down.

**Question 4 – What leadership characteristics and abilities were evident in your presidency?**

President Harbron’s included the characteristics of developing and using communication skills, understanding both financial issues, and a need for an organizational compass, i.e., a plan
for what the organization should become and including broad ownership in the plan, and having perseverance.

President Briganti’s response included inspiring support for the organization and its mission and building coalitions within and outside the organization. She provided clear written and oral communication and celebrated successes and the engagement of others. She emphasized the importance of a strong work ethic and personal integrity.

In my narrative, I discussed several issues. Integrity – the effort to represent the ISTA on the basis of its philosophy and principles – was central. I used my ability to listen, to plan and to lead members/leaders to think about the future. I mentored others by encouraging them and providing experiences for future leaders.

**Question 5 – How did your leadership characteristics and abilities affect your presidency?**

Because the environmental conditions were different during each presidency, the president’s leadership characteristics impacted each presidency differently. President Harbron recalled that his finance, budgeting, and communication skills were instrumental in his work and stated:

At the onset of my presidency, the Association was in deep financial trouble. An abrupt change in direction was necessary. With my financial and budgeting skills, I was able to affect a recovery plan, using my communication skills. I travelled the state educating our members to the need for the recovery plan and successfully “sold” the plan to the membership. I was able to lead the Association by establishing its first strategic plan with broad stakeholder participation.
He also indicated that he used his communication skills to increase the awareness of public education stakeholders on issues regarding improvements in public education.

President Briganti recalled her commitment to principle as most applicable to her leadership. She remarked:

I effectively led the organization and made positive contributions to my profession and public education. At times my judgment was clouded by misplaced trust. My passion for ethical decision-making and leadership integrity created personal stress when others did not demonstrate those values.

In my leadership, I moved quickly to act on issues, with the care of the members and the organization in mind. I acted on principle with expediency rather than ignoring a problem when difficult or controversial issues arose. I always expressed concern and interest in the views of others, even when their views were in opposition to mine or the organization’s. My background helped me to understand or see the other person’s position and articulate a response.

**Question 6 – What events influenced your leadership development?**

Each of the three Presidents identified what they considered to be the most critical events that led to their leadership development. President Harbron reflected:

More than anything, I suppose it was a felt need to advance the lot of teachers and to defend public education. Shortly thereafter, I saw public education under attack in the legislature. This motivated me to develop more broadly, i.e., to step outside the realm of my local school district.

President Briganti listed the following:

- All leadership interests came a result of my desire to be of service to others or to support a cause/need.
• Problem solving situations during local leadership roles.

• ISTA and NEA provided tremendous leadership development opportunities.

• Working with David Young who encouraged me to use my strengths and creativity in leadership.

• Indiana Professional Standards Board experience.

• NCATE training opportunities and six years of college visitations.

In my narrative, I wrote:

The most significant event was the Highland Strike and the subsequent experience of bargaining. Losing the elections in 1981 and 1983 focused my efforts and caused me to develop and acquire leadership knowledge and skills. I liken this to infrastructure – the lattice of support to lead. For example, in my case, I learned to write and give a good speech. I mastered Robert’s Rule of Order. I became knowledgeable on current educational issues.

Limitations

Potential issues of validity may arise when the researcher and the research subject are one in the same person. Social or cultural constructs push, pull, and shape our perceptions. This interaction between culture and others creates judgments about meaning, which Crotty (1998) called symbolic interactionism. As both researcher and subject, I interacted with my past and that interaction itself allowed me to make judgments about my past and afforded me the opportunity to create new meanings and new responses, as well as validate earlier ones. Through the presentation and interpretation of incidents in my life, I depict a picture of leadership development. The two other ISTA presidents, who reflected upon their development and lived experiences, faced similar challenges.
The fact that the study focused on just three presidents of the ISTA posed another limitation. Given the small size of the sample and the narrow examination of this single organization, the findings are not generalizable to other leadership positions in other similar educational organizations.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study provided an initial exploration of organizational leadership development related to the ISTA. A more in-depth study that would include multiple methods for collecting data might enhance the understanding of development of leadership for these three presidents. Surveys of the general membership at the time, along with subordinates who served in leadership positions, would provide data to confirm or question the self-perceptions provided by these three presidents. In addition, document analysis – letters, meeting minutes, notes, reports, newspapers, photographs, recordings – would offer yet more extensive data for analysis of their leadership development.

In developing this study, I debated whether to focus the study on my own experience or to include others for comparative purposes. Using my personal narrative as a foundation, more extensive research focused solely on a personal autoethnography might have been as valuable or more. This approach, which Marechal (2009) referred to as *subjectivist experiential autoethnography*, focuses on “life stories narrating the subjective meanings . . . of lived experience, usually as first-person narratives . . .” (p. 44). The author goes on to say, “subjective experiential autoethnography investigates subjectivity as a distinct phenomenon, in all its emotional, cognitive, and behavioral density.” (p. 44). More elaboration of my life story would represent this form of inquiry.
Would an independent researcher, one who had neither knowledge of nor association with the ISTA, find similar results after interviewing the three presidents? This question came to mind as I immersed myself in collecting data. Having an “outsider” study the same phenomenon would offer another approach to examining the research question. It would be worthwhile to determine the extent to which my findings might be confirmed.

Another thought that I had early in my exploration of a dissertation study was to take a theory of leadership development as a framework for examining leadership development of these three presidents. For example, using Gill’s (2011) four dimensions of leadership development a set of interview questions and document analysis might guide inquiry to develop a rich description focusing on the intellect, emotion, spirit, and behavior of these three leaders. In this case, these four theoretical dimensions would set parameters on data gathered and would explore the extent to which each of these presidents reflected the dimensions as they developed leadership.

Finally, taking one of the themes that evolved from this study, such as social justice, and using it as a way for framing the study might be enlightening. Asking the three presidents to identify specific illustrations of issues of social justice during their terms of office and using these as the basis for in-depth study, using a mixed methods approach, might provide an important contribution to the literature. In other words, the focus of the study might be on ways in which these three presidents leadership addressed equity concerns in ISTA related to race, class, gender, ethics, culture, LGBTQ, and access.

**Epilogue**

My initial interest in this study was to reflect upon my life experience, which brought me from the person in the back of the room to the presidency of a 50,000 plus state Association over
the span of 30 years. There were periods of exponential growth, moments of loss, and yes, pain coupled with periods of working, maintaining, and waiting. One of my most difficult college courses was speech. Today, I am not even sure why I took it. After all, I did not see myself as a public speaker. Necessity said otherwise, if I were to be president. Today, one of the events I miss most is giving the president’s speech at the Representative Assembly.

On the path to the presidency, I had interesting stops and side trips. There were perks like time in Washington D.C. to roam the mall and the Smithsonian. I was able to attend the Inauguration of President Clinton. The biggest perk was the opportunity to learn not just about leadership but how to lobby, how to win elections, how to negotiate, how to speak, and how the world works among other things.

Today, I have the opportunity to look back over those years and bask, and I do bask, in a feeling of accomplishment and awe. I marvel at the happenstances, those incidents in time, where a different action or outcome would have delivered me to another place. If President Moore had won instead of President Harbron in 1989, I may have been President three years sooner; but I may have never won the presidency. As President Harbron’s vice-president, I learned a great deal. How much did the simple act of going to jail for a cause contribute to my public persona and electability? I suspect significantly!

As my father quipped, “Ah! America. What a wonderful place! Go to jail. Become president.”
References


Young, J. D. (1981). *Campaign brochure*. Committee to Elect J. David Young: Highland, IN.
