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Guidelines for Article Submission

In general, submissions should follow the guidelines of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (latest edition). Submissions should pertain to one of the following areas:

- State of the Field
- Learning Activities
- Instrumentation
- Conceptual or Empirical

Learning exercises should include the following 11 areas: 1) introduction to topic (human service area learning points) and brief review of the literature (conceptual under-pinning to the learning activity), 2) learning activity title, 3) activity goals/objectives/ competencies addressed, 4) group size, 5) time required, 6) required materials, 7) physical setting, 8) procedures/process, 9) cautions (how might the activity be “uncomfortable/threatening” to participants), 10) adaptations, and 11) supportive materials.

Instrumentation articles should include the following nine areas: 1) conceptual background from which the instrument was developed, 2) description of the instrument, 3) intended use, 4) procedures for utilization, 5) data regarding sample norms (if available), 6) reliability, 7) validity, 8) cautions, and 9) a copy of the instrument or how to obtain.

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CONTENTS

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Freda Bernotavicz, University of Southern Maine, and
Nancy Dickinson, University of Maryland

In human services, a field that has been described as "permanent whitewater" (Vaill, 1996) and that faces the retirement of baby boom leaders (Cornelius, Corvington & Ruesga, 2008), there is need for leadership at all levels to provide continuity, stability, and vision (Bernotavicz, McDaniel, Brittain, & Dickinson, 2013). Leadership is an elusive concept. In a special issue of the *American Psychologist* on leadership, Hackman and Wageman (2007) concluded that despite all the research, there are no generally accepted definitions of leadership, no dominant paradigm for studying it, and little agreement about the best strategies for developing and exercising it. However, while there is little agreement on what leadership *is*, there seems to be consensus on what it is *not:* leadership is not an innate talent with which people are born. People can acquire leadership skills through well-designed leadership development programs. This issue of the NSDTA journal contains information about some of the most recent leadership development programs in human services.

There is considerable evidence that well-designed leadership development programs can be effective. Noting the increased interest in leadership development programs and the need for more purposeful evaluation of their effectiveness, Collins and Holton (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of 83 leadership development studies from 1982–2001. They concluded that leadership development programs could be effective in increasing both knowledge and skills if the right development approach is offered to the right leaders. Several authors have identified the characteristics of effective leadership development programs.

In their survey of leadership development programs, Fulmer and Wagner (1999) identified the following best practices: link to agency strategic objectives rather than solely individual development; build on leadership competencies consistent with the organization's values; include action learning using real-life issues; encourage learners to develop answers to tough questions; link to succession planning; provide top-level support; and include ongoing assessment of program effectiveness.

Coloma, Gibson, and Packard (2012) identified similar success factors for leadership development programs in the following three studies. First, Leskiw and Singh (2007) found six key factors: thorough needs assessment, selection of a suitable audience, design of an appropriate infrastructure to support the initiative, design, and implementation of an entire learning system, an evaluation system, and corresponding actions to reward success and improve on deficiencies.

Second, McCauley (2008) noted the importance of the alignment of leadership development objectives with business strategies, top-level executive support, shared responsibility between line managers and human resources staff, manager accountability for the development of subordinates, competency models, multiple development methods, and evaluation. In the third study, Riggio (2008) emphasized the need to fit the requirements of both organizations and leaders undergoing development. The author stressed that the programs need to use proven methods and be theory-driven, integrated into ongoing organizational processes, evaluated for effectiveness, and substantial.

All seem to agree with Leskiw and Singh (2007) that leadership development is one of the most important people-related organizational interventions and it is imperative that it is strategically oriented, linked to the organizational mission and vision. The literature also makes a distinction between individual level "leader development" with its focus on individual knowledge, skills and abilities, and the more generally focused "leadership development" where the process is embedded in the organization and a critical part of the social system (Day, 2001).

Although leadership has been identified as critically important and key to revitalizing child welfare services (Regehr, Chau, Leslie, & Howe, 2002), the professional preparation of human services supervisors and managers rarely includes leadership development (Preston, 2004). Exceptions include a program in Summit County, Ohio, and two long-standing programs in California. The Ohio program identified key transition points in the career development of child welfare workers and provided a structured program to promote the transition from student, to worker, to professional social work, to organizational leader and to leader in the profession (Caplan & Curry, 2001). In the California Bay Area, Austin, Weisner, Schrandt, Glezos-Bell, and Murtaza (2006) have implemented a human service leadership program that includes pre-training activities, application of classroom learning, supervisory support, and post-training assignments to promote transfer of learning.

This issue of the NSDTA journal includes two articles that provide updated information on a leadership development program in the San Diego area. In one article, "A Leadership Development Initiative for Eight County Human Service Agencies: Results after Nine Years," Coloma, Gibson, Jones, Packard, Rahiser, and Tucker-Tatlow describe how a consortium of eight county human service directors commissioned the creation and delivery of a leadership development program for 220 managers over the past ten years. The article describes the program and its ongoing evaluation at four levels, methods which are not common in leadership programs and which have demonstrated positive outcomes. The second article on the San Diego leadership development program, "A Tool for Evaluating a Leadership Development Initiative:

From Satisfaction to Outcomes" (Packard & Jones), describes the data collection instruments developed for the evaluation of this comprehensive multi-year program.

Three articles in this issue explore different aspects of leadership development programs: competency-based programs, the effectiveness of online learning, and women in human services leadership. In "Competency-Based Leadership Development," Brittain & Bernotavicz describe the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute's leadership model and competency model and the process of using a competency-based approach to developing and delivering leadership training to child welfare supervisors and middle managers across the country.

In "Leadership Development On Line: Design and Implementation of a Program for Child Welfare Supervisors" (French, Ebersten, Bernotavicz, & Leake), the authors raise the question of whether leadership development can be delivered in an online format. They note that online learning is a cost-effective approach to delivering training to a national audience, yet participants frequently drop out for reasons such as time constraints, lack of support in the workplace, and poor delivery methods. This article describes a blended learning approach to building leadership skills for supervisors in public, private, and tribal child welfare agencies; instructional strategies to promote learner engagement and retention; and how external supports were put in place to support skill development and transfer of learning.

In a related article, "Developmental Evaluation Findings from an Online Leadership Program for Child Welfare Supervisors," Leake, deGuzman, Rienks, and Landsman describe the evaluation of the distance-learning program for supervisors. The study used a multi-method evaluation design, and results showed that participants increased leadership competency from baseline to post-training, with gains persisting a year after beginning the training.

In "Supporting Her Rise to Power: Developing Multicultural Woman-Affirming Leadership," Blitz and Pender Greene explore issues related to gender in human services leadership and leadership development. They note that while most of the human services workforce is female, it is only within the last few decades that significant numbers of women are moving into leadership roles. This article highlights key points of leadership development that respond to the unique relationships among women of color and white women in leadership positions.

This issue also includes two examples of learning activities for developing leaders. In "Bridging the Gap: A Learning Activity on Effective Multidisciplinary Collaboration," Kiana Battle describes a learning activity that demonstrates the leadership principles of collaboration across disciplines.

In "An Example of Leadership Transfer of Learning through the NCWWI Toolkit: Learning and Living Leadership," Charmaine Brittain describes a toolkit that supports the transfer of learning of leadership competencies central to the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute's leadership model, and is also applicable to other leadership development programs. An example from the Toolkit offers a sample of three transfer activities for one leadership competency, *Planning and Organizing*.

Together these articles suggest that leadership development is a vibrant and important area rich with opportunity for training and development professionals to develop well-designed programs that will strengthen leadership at all levels in the human services.

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COMPETENCY-BASED LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Charmaine Brittain, University of Denver, and
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Abstract

Effective leadership in the human services field today requires skills and knowledge in multiple areas and the capacity to balance priorities to attend to people, processes, and outcomes. A competency-based approach provides the structure and language to develop leadership at all levels. Yet, with a few notable exceptions (Austin, Regan, Samples, Schwartz, & Carnochan, 2011; Coloma, Gibson, & Packard, 2012; Caplan & Curry, 2001), the field lacks a coherent, comprehensive, competency-based approach to leadership development. This article describes a competency-based leadership development program in child welfare that has demonstrated effectiveness by developing a comprehensive competency model and using that model to design and deliver leadership training across the country.

Introduction

Need for a Leadership Development Model

The need in the human services field for a comprehensive and unifying leadership model, supported by leadership competencies, and a related professional leadership development program is well documented (Elpers & Westhuis, 2008; Preston, 2004; Preston, 2005; Hopkins & Hyde, 2002). Studies also have shown that child welfare management-development programs often lack a sufficient emphasis on leadership, most often focusing on basic skills for management rather than the macro perspective and strategic skills needed in the current turbulent environment (Preston, 2004). Studies further show that leadership is essential at all levels of the organization to achieve the high performance needed to be effective (Conference Board of Canada, 2004). Within the child welfare field, this suggests the need for a more coherent leadership development process that builds competence incrementally at key career transition points such as the developmental training approach implemented in Summit County Children's Services in Ohio (Caplan & Curry, 2001). To address these issues, Genis (2008) identifies two keys to success in leadership development: focus more on building leadership competencies rather than management skills, and incorporate best practices of adult learning in leadership development efforts.

Why Use a Competency-Based Approach?

The United States Office of Personnel Management defines a competency as a “measurable pattern of knowledge, skill, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics that an individual needs to perform work roles or occupational functions successfully.”

Use of competency models compels organizations to attend to job-related information and employee skills when constructing training programs (Campion, et al., 2011). Too often, leadership and management development programs take a topic-driven approach without any coalescing framework. Use of competency models helps to position organizations to change and innovate by focusing not just on topics but also the organization’s desired future state (Shippmann et al., 2000). Leadership competencies are not innate talents (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002); but they can be developed through well-designed leadership programs.

A competency model approach links to outcomes through deductive reasoning, that is starting with the desired outcomes (Campion et al., 2011), such as the ability to lead people and moving to the skills necessary to achieve that outcome such as developing others, managing conflict, and building teams. Competency models may also capture the skills and knowledge necessary to excel at present and in the future, both individually and collectively as an organization (Shippmann et al., 2000; Campion et al., 2011). For example, as agencies increasingly become tech savvy, “flexibility” may become an even more important competency, necessary to adapt to rapidly changing technical environments. Competency models become the harbinger for the agency’s future orientation so agencies can build those skills in an intentional way.

Another advantage to using competency models is the promotion of a common language to describe the skills seen as necessary for leadership. A competency library with standardized language can be useful as certain competencies have been found to be universally important and are stable over time (Rodriguez, Patel, Bright, Gregory, & Gowing, 2002; Campion et al., 2011). Competencies then become the vocabulary linking human resource applications from job descriptions to professional development offerings to performance evaluation, resulting in a fuller understanding of expectations and measurement of outcomes.

Competency-based approaches offer three main advantages over a more traditional topic-oriented approach: *clarity, consistency, and connectivity* (Conger & Ready, 2004). First, they provide *clarity* by setting clear expectations about the knowledge, skills, and attitudes relevant for a particular job. Second, a competency model offers *consistency* by articulating a common framework and language for communicating and implementing a leadership development program. Last, competency frameworks supply *connectivity* to other human resource processes such as job descriptions, training, and performance evaluations.

Thus, a leadership competency model should be sufficiently simple, practical and forward thinking to address today's practice environment and tomorrow's realities while attending to leadership at all levels. Competency-based training links job competencies to professional development and human resource functions. Job competencies become the "competency" in competency-based training.

Competency-Based Training

Competency-based training builds on job competencies, and is an approach to conceptualizing, developing, and delivering training that differs from traditional topic-centered training in two ways: focus on the core abilities (competencies) needed to perform a given job, and emphasis on the linkage between training components. Competency-based training is designed around essential competencies established for each job to minimize the distance between in-service training and "real life" job performance.

Similarly, training competencies and job competencies focus on knowledge and skills but they differ in their ultimate intent. Training competencies, distinct from job competencies, refer to the content covered only in the course, and make a statement about the knowledge or skill to be achieved by the conclusion of training. They can be categorized into four levels: first, awareness; second, knowledge; third, understanding how the training content relates to the job; fourth, skill—the ability to apply the information in job-like settings (Rycus & Hughes, 2000). The levels indicate a progression, but not all training does or even should advance to the fourth level; it depends upon the overall goals of the training. *Clarity* about the training competency level then informs the training's content.

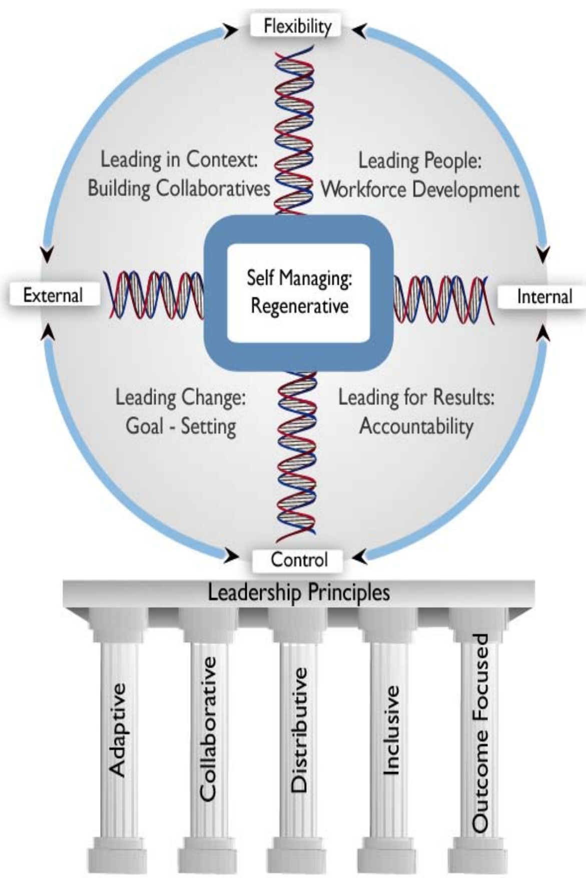
Effective competency-based training attends to adult learning principles and transfer of learning, and may include classroom, coaching, peer learning, and webinars for incremental development. Distance learning is most amenable to awareness and knowledge-level training competencies. Training at the awareness and knowledge levels is oriented towards building a context for an issue and teaching core concepts and basic knowledge. A distance-learning environment offers a cost-effective and consistent way to deliver awareness and knowledge content, ensuring that a wide audience of learners has access to the same foundational knowledge. Classroom training may then focus on the third and fourth level competencies of application to the job and skills. Blended learning combines these approaches (Derouin, Fritzsche, & Salas, 2005).

The authors were part of a team that used these concepts of leadership competency development in a national program to develop leadership in the child welfare field.

The NCWWI Leadership Competency Model

Funded in 2008, by the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth, and Families, the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) provides a competency-based approach to build leadership capacity throughout the child welfare system. Activities began with developing a leadership model that became the central axis for all leadership development activities within NCWWI. The model provides *clarity* on what knowledge and skills are important for child welfare leadership; offers *consistency* by articulating a common language for leadership development; and potentially can *connect* human resource processes including classroom and online learning. The model, shown below as Figure 1, also offers flexibility for agencies to customize its application based upon the audience and the organizational context.

Figure 1. National Child Welfare Workforce Institute Leadership Model



The NCWWI Leadership Model recognizes that being an effective leader requires a constant balancing act of competing values (Preston, 2005). Leaders need to change and keep order, make the numbers and nurture people, open up to the community and run a tight ship (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2003). The outer circle of the graphic suggests the leader's world is a constant act of balancing countervailing forces (internal flexibility, external flexibility, internal control, and external control). To be effective, leaders need a way to hold the big picture in mind, with all of its seeming contradictions and competing forces, and have the skills and mind-set to deal with the task-at-hand. At the model's center are the concepts of self-knowledge and regeneration. Emanating from self-knowledge is the capacity to manage one's own behavior, recognize strengths and challenges in oneself, and, from a repertoire of models and skills, select the most effective response to a situation. Effective leaders are also regenerative; they model continuous learning and develop the capacity of others to lead and self-govern. The NCWWI Leadership Model rests on a solid foundation of five values or principles (*Adaptive, Collaborative, Distributive, Inclusive,* and *Outcome Focused*), which appear as "pillars" in the illustration. The four quadrants of the circle in Figure 1 illustrate the four leadership domains (*Leading Change, Leading in Context, Leading People,* and *Leading for Results*).

The four domains of leadership represent the four dominant perspectives and responsibilities of child welfare leaders.

> **Leading Change.** Inherent to this domain is the ability to establish an organizational vision and to implement it in a continuously changing environment.
>
> **Leading in Context.** The role of the leader in this domain is to engage the external environment, effectively and proactively. This involves engaging in advocacy, boundary spanning, and working with the community.
>
> **Leading People.** This domain reflects the role of leaders in managing and inspiring people within their organizations. The focus is on developing individuals and groups within the agency and emphasizes relationships, people, and processes.
>
> **Leading for Results.** With an internal focus aimed at control, this domain emphasizes workflow processes and various forms of work-related information and data. This domain emphasizes an analytical mind-set and using data to inform decisions to promote accountability.

Linking the four domains is a double helix symbol illustrating that leaders at all levels are involved in a constant balancing act—between external and internal demands, between action and reflection, between control and flexibility. The symbol also captures the regenerative nature of leadership, the process of revitalization, and the creation of new energy.

After designing the model, NCWWI team developed the Leadership Competency Framework based on work by the U. S. Office of Personnel Management (2006). Table 1 lists the competencies by domain.

Table 1. Leadership Competencies by Domain

Leading in Context: Building Collaboratives	**Leading People: Workforce Development**
Competencies Partnering Political savvy Influencing/negotiating	*Competencies* Conflict management Developing others Team building Cultural responsiveness Leveraging diversity
Leading Change: Goal-Setting	**Leading for Results: Accountability**
Competencies Creativity and innovation External awareness Flexibility Strategic thinking Vision	*Competencies* Capacity building Service orientation Decisiveness Entrepreneurship Financial management
Fundamental Competencies	
Continuous learning Effective communication Initiative Interpersonal relations Integrity/honesty Resilience Personal leadership Socially responsible	

Competencies within the NCWWI Leadership Model and Competency Framework provide proficiency indicators at four developmental levels from worker to executive. NCWWI promotes the view that staff members at all levels of a child welfare organization are leaders. Consequently, the competencies associated with effective leaders are similar across job levels; however, proficiency levels progress. As leaders assume greater job responsibilities, their sphere of influence increases, requiring that their proficiency in the various competencies also expands.

To reflect this progression, examples of proficiency indicators were developed for each of the competencies and organized by position level (worker, supervisor, manager, and executive). As a result, the NCWWI Leadership Competency Framework provides a ladder illustrating how competencies manifest at progressively higher levels of responsibility within a child welfare agency. More information on the model and its development can be found at www.ncwwi.org.

Application of a Competency Model

The Leadership Model and competencies provided the conceptual framework for the competency-based curriculum and learning activities of the NCWWI Leadership Academy. The Leadership Academy offers two training programs to participants from public, private, and tribal child welfare agencies: Leadership Academy for Middle Managers (LAMM), managed by Portland State University, and Leadership Academy for Supervisors (LAS), coordinated by University of Southern Maine, which provides online leadership training to experienced supervisors of front-line child welfare workers. The goal of both is to develop leadership for the implementation of change.

Using the Competency Model to Develop the Curricula

The process of developing the curriculum was a juggling act akin to the practice of leadership as the team balanced attention to topics such as implementation science, adaptive leadership, and workforce development, with attention to leadership competencies to develop specific training competencies and objectives. The quadrants of the Leadership Model provided the framework for the curricula and the team ensured that the classroom and online training addressed all relevant competencies within the quadrants. Thus, the competencies became the markers for judging the adequacy of the curricula to address the full Leadership Model.

Both the LAS and the LAMM begin with an online introductory module providing an overview of the key issues in the child welfare field and a preview of the Leadership Academy with training competencies relevant for the awareness and knowledge level. Subsequent units cover concepts related to the four domains of the *Leadership Model: Leading in Context, Leading People, Leading for Results,* and *Leading Change*. Each unit or module draws on values from each of the leadership principles. The training competencies and objectives match the Leadership Model and Competency Framework as shown in Table 2 from the LAMM and the LAS. The intent is that by the training's conclusion, participants will achieve the skill level for multiple competencies.

Table 2. Examples of LAMM and LAS Training Competencies and Learning Objectives

Leadership Academy for Middle Managers (LAMM)
Unit 10: Leading in Context Training Competency: Understand the importance of developing partnerships internally and externally in implementing sustainable systems change. ***Objectives*** • Review personal strengths in influencing and apply to *Leading in Context* quadrant and building partnerships in implementation process. • Apply a systems perspective to map key partners in the agency's external environment. • Apply concepts of partnering, negotiating, and influencing to engage key partners in the agency's external environment.
Leadership Academy for Supervisors (LAS)
Unit 2: Leadership Skills in Building Collaboratives Training Competency: Describe the application of a range of leadership skills in the partnering process. ***Objectives*** • Describe a continuum and range of skills in the partnering process from communication, coordination, collaboration, negotiating, and advocacy. • Provide examples of supervisory leadership skills in the partnering process. • Apply the concepts of the partnership process continuum to own change initiative.

Both curricula include real-life examples from the jobs of child welfare managers and supervisors and follow case examples to illustrate the competing forces and competency requirements for each quadrant. This competency-based training design coalesces with the Leadership Model and addresses the real-world responsibilities of child welfare managers and supervisors. Both the LAMM and LAS also include both pre- and post-training activities to promote transfer of learning, and, ultimately, acquisition of the job competencies.

Effectiveness of the Competency-based Approach for the NCWWI Leadership Academy

From 2009 to 2013, 406 public, private, and tribal managers attended the LAMM training and over 1,500 supervisors participated in the LAS. The Butler Institute for Families at the University of Denver developed and implemented a comprehensive evaluation of the LAMM and the LAS, which included a formative evaluation of the curriculum, pre/post questionnaires, and follow-up questionnaires at three months, six months, and twelve months after training. Self-report questionnaires measured training satisfaction, attainment of knowledge and skill competencies in training, the transfer of learning from the training environment to the work environment, the application of skills to change initiatives, and, finally, the participant's self-assessment of success as an agent of change. Evaluators also conducted telephone interviews with randomly selected participants.

Findings from both the LAS and LAMM programs showed a high level of satisfaction with the training's relevance and most importantly, significant gains in participants' self-assessment of their learning in all competency areas from pre- to post-training. Furthermore, participants reported that they continued to develop their skills on the job, as subsequent perceived competency levels continued to increase compared to baseline. Self-reports also suggested that participants used these skills to implement change initiatives and that they felt the training improved their own leadership skills. These results illustrate the effectiveness of a competency-based approach for increasing knowledge and skills as well as promoting change.

Conclusion

Competency-based approaches to leadership provide a structure for leadership development while focusing on the qualities most significant for the organization's future success. Proficiency ladders further offer the opportunity to cultivate leadership at all levels. Since leadership grows within the agency, a designated professional and leadership development program based upon competencies may see the agency's future become more predictable, succession planning occur more naturally, and individuals achieve more satisfaction and competence. A competency-based approach lays the foundation for improved leadership and professional development.

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LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ON LINE: DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A PROGRAM FOR CHILD WELFARE SUPERVISORS

Crystal French, Sue Ebersten, and Freda Bernotavicz, University of Southern Maine, and Robin Leake, University of Denver

Abstract

Distance learning provides a cost-effective approach to delivering a consistent message and skill set to a national audience. A blended learning approach (combining asynchronous with synchronous learning) promotes learner engagement and retention and increases the effectiveness of the program. This article describes the Leadership Academy for Supervisors (LAS), a national program to develop leadership skills for the implementation of systems change. The experience showed that careful attention to the internal design factors of the overall blended learning approach and including learning events within the curriculum to promote engagement and relevance resulted in satisfaction with the training and increased competencies and transfer. However, the participation rate of national self-directed participants and state-coordinated cohorts showed dramatic differences. Fewer than five percent of the self-directed participants completed the training compared to over ninety percent in the state-coordinated cohorts. Online learning can be an effective method of developing human services leaders if external supports are in place to prevent dropout.

Introduction

Many human service agencies are turning to online learning as a cost effective and efficient way to deliver training. This approach, in response to a 2008 mandate from the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth, and Families (hereinafter referred to as Children's Bureau), for a national leadership program for child welfare supervisors, aimed to build organizational leadership to implement systems change. As part of the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI), the LAS draws on a leadership competency model, best practices in adult education and online learning designed initially to reach child welfare supervisors nationwide in a self-directed approach. This article focuses on the design and implementation of the online program and the accommodations made to support supervisors to complete training. It explores the questions of the efficacy of online learning for teaching leadership skills and the local organizational supports needed to support learners and provide the link between leadership development and local systems change.

Background

Traditionally, leadership development programs are "structured, off-the-job events that bring individuals together for shared learning and development experiences" (McCauley, 2008, p. 24). Can leaders also be developed through online, self-directed learning? This was the challenge faced by the LAS, funded by the Children's Bureau to design and implement a national online leadership program.

At the time the LAS was developed (2009), online social work courses were already in place and producing positive results. Beginning with the Florida State University College of Social Work online MSW program in 2002 (Wilke & Vinton, 2006), distance learning had been used successfully in teaching a variety of courses including social work practice skills, assessment and interviewing skills, and child welfare practice (Siebert, Siebert, & Spaulding-Givens, 2006; Bellefeuille, 2006; Seabury, 2005). Studies comparing traditional classroom instruction with the distance education format showed no differences in grade outcomes, skill development, overall satisfaction, and field performance (Schoech & Helton, 2001). Additionally, Bellefeuille, Martin, and Buck (2005) suggested that the field of child welfare embrace the new opportunities afforded by technology-enhanced learning and the exploratory activities that are unique to the online learning environment.

Since that time, online education has continued to expand and take different forms. In addition to online asynchronous learning, such as the Florida State University model, other distance learning programs are 'blending' asynchronous distance learning with real-time synchronous interaction, either in classroom face-to-face settings or through live discussion groups online. This blended learning approach takes advantage of the best of what both online and traditional social work education can offer (Ayala, 2009), and achieves cost savings, efficiency, and effectiveness in training transfer (Bonk & Graham, 2006). Although existing blended models have primarily been a blend of face-to-face and online study, Rossett, Douglis, and Frazee (2003) suggest that virtual synchronous sessions, such as live e-learning events or discussion groups, are also a valid design approach. In fact, Singh (2003) found that completion rates increased from just over 50% when asynchronous learning was used exclusively to 94% when complemented with "live e-learning" sessions.

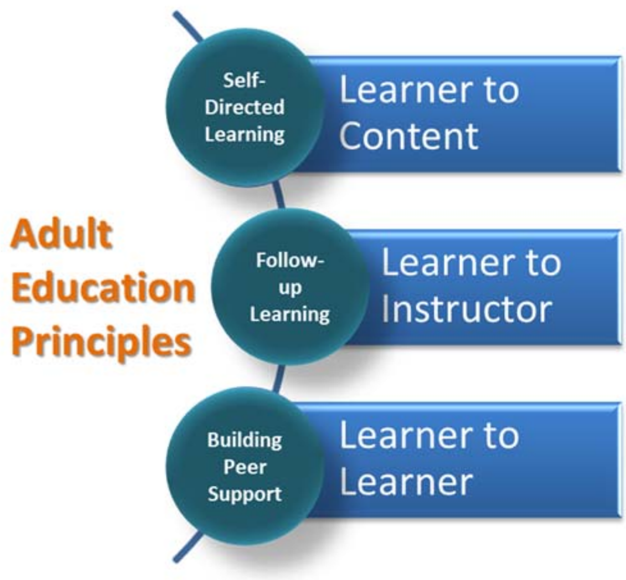
Blended learning also has been used effectively in leadership development. For example, Lewis and Orton (2006) developed a three-phase blended learning program for leadership and management that combines online leadership skills training with face-to-face human interaction. The program includes: Phase I - 26 weeks of self-paced online learning for developing understanding and information; Phase II - five-days of in-person, face-to-face sessions for experiential, higher-order learning; and Phase III - 25 weeks of online learning with more complex content and focus on application of skills and knowledge. An individual development plan and organizational action plan are developed in Phase II. The ten-month blended learning process achieved positive results on all levels measured: Reaction, learning, transfer, business impact, and return on investment. The authors note an additional benefit to the organization of this approach: by making the content available worldwide, they helped establish “a greater consistency of language, knowledge, and company culture” (p. 71).

According to Ayala (2009), blended learning has the ability “to facilitate constructivist learning strategies like collaborative, self-directed and active learning by allowing students increased time and opportunities for interaction, broadening the array of resources available, giving students increased responsibility for their own learning and producing a more individualized environment to suit students’ differing needs and styles” (page 278). Adult learning reminds us that adults are self-directed learners, have a lot of experience to share, are usually “ready to learn,” are problem-focused, and are internally motivated (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998). Adult learning research recommends a constructivist approach that assumes that learners control their own knowledge by actively participating in the learning process with the caveat that what one person learns is not always the same as what a peer might learn. Moreover, a constructivist approach builds on what the learners already know. It recommends authentic problems and situations, which require adults to reflect on the validity and application of their past practices. In short, the learning process must be specially designed, ensuring that it is interactive, social, reflective, and relevant to the needs of the learner (Doolittle, 1999). For supervisors, this translates into a learning approach based in real case scenarios, small group learning over time, team-based problem solving and practice, and learning reinforcement (National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement, Fall 2007).

Leadership development in particular requires more than understanding new concepts. Learners need practice and opportunities for reflection, setting goals, identifying challenges, applying new strategies, and changing behavior, ideally in the context of their work (Day, 2001). Lee (2010) describes a management leadership development program offered by a corporate university in Korea that transformed from a face-to-face delivery to a blended format. Results showed that the program was effective in terms of learning and transfer. Principles for instructional design of blended learning included: online learning for knowledge acquisition, two-day face-to-face practice and capability building, post-training on-the-job support, and utilizing work-based problems/cases in all components of training. Antle, Barbee, and van Zyl (2008) found that relevance of the training to the trainees combined with learning readiness, reinforcement of the training in the form of follow-up training, and organizational support of the training, are key components to transfer of learning.

The LAS development team recognized that although the proposed leadership program would be online, as mandated by the Children’s Bureau, opportunities for peer and instructor interaction, as well as practice and feedback, would be integral to program success. Given that face-to-face training was impractical, the LAS is designed as a blended learning program that includes online self-directed modules, followed by instructor-led online synchronous discussion sessions, and related learning activities to promote transfer to the job. Similar to the Lewis and Orton (2006) approach to leadership development, the program had two major streams: development of leadership competencies in a personal learning plan and implementation of a change initiative to support an agency systems change. Focusing on the internal factors in the design of the program, the team incorporated best practice in instructional design and adult learning, using the Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate (ADDIE) model (Driscoll, 2002), to develop a blended learning approach that maximizes the benefits of each modality (Bellefeuille, 2006) as shown in Figure 1.

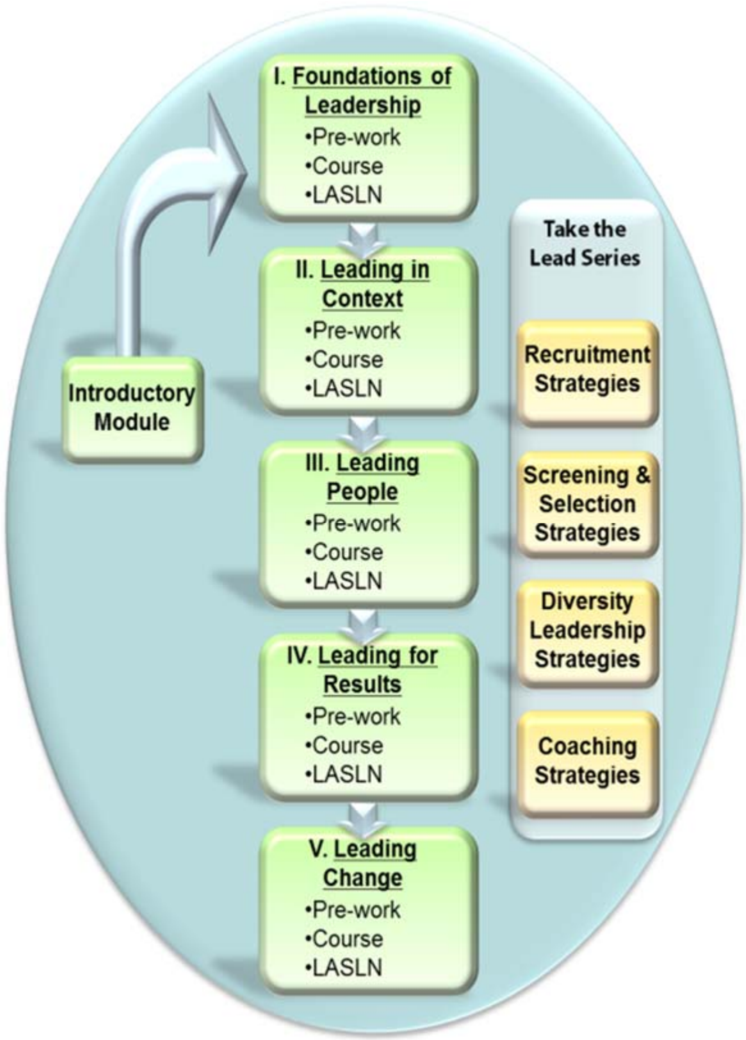
Figure 1. LAS Blended Learning Model



Program Design

Figure 2 shows the LAS online training program. The core-training program, which was based on the NCWWI Leadership Model (Bernotavicz, McDaniel, Brittain, & Dickinson, 2013), consists of six online asynchronous modules, each followed by a 90-minute synchronous session (interactive webinar). Trainers with in-depth knowledge and understanding of the child welfare field and decades of experience as supervisors facilitate these LAS Learning Network sessions (LASLNs).

Figure 2. LAS Curriculum of Online Modules



In addition to the core curriculum, the LAS developed the *Take the Lead* series consisting of four 60-minute stand-alone modules that supplement the core training. These optional skill-based modules offer specific strategies in the topic areas of recruitment, screening, coaching, and leading a diverse workforce.

Although supervisors are allowed to take the core modules in any order, the LAS recommended a progression through the core curriculum in order, since subsequent modules build upon concepts covered in earlier lessons. To encourage completion, certificates were awarded at the end of each module (including participation in the LASLNs) and certificates and continuing education units (CEUs) were made available at the end of the full 30-hour program.

The LAS paid careful attention to the instructional design of each module and based the design upon current best practices in the field of adult learning. Figure 3 illustrates the design components included in the LAS that Trivette, Dunst, Hamby, and O'Herin (2009) identified as success factors for adult learning.

Figure 3. Success Factors in Adult Learning (Trivette et al., 2009)

Characteristics	Practices
Introduce	▪ Pre-work/exercises; readings; instructional content
Illustrate	▪ Simulations to reinforce applicability
Practice	▪ Case studies, problem solving, feedback, application to change initiative
Evaluate	▪ Strengths and learning self-assessment, knowledge checks
Reflection	▪ Journaling, learning plan, learning portfolio
Mastery	▪ Self-assess mastery of training material

To best adhere to adult learning principles and e-learning best practices, each online module includes the following critical design elements.

Multimedia. To better support learner engagement and increase recall and assimilation of material, the LAS incorporated short video clips to help explain or frame a particular concept. Modules feature videos of national experts in the field of child welfare presenting key points and providing continuity. Some topics, such as coaching and performance evaluations, are heavily supplemented with case studies presented using video.

The LAS uses avatars (as seen in Figure 4 on the next page) to help frame or introduce a new section. In traditional face-to-face courses, an instructor would naturally do this. The incorporation of avatars in this role offers visual motion, a personal connection, and audio interest to capture attention and help set the stage for the upcoming material.

Figure 4. Example of Avatar

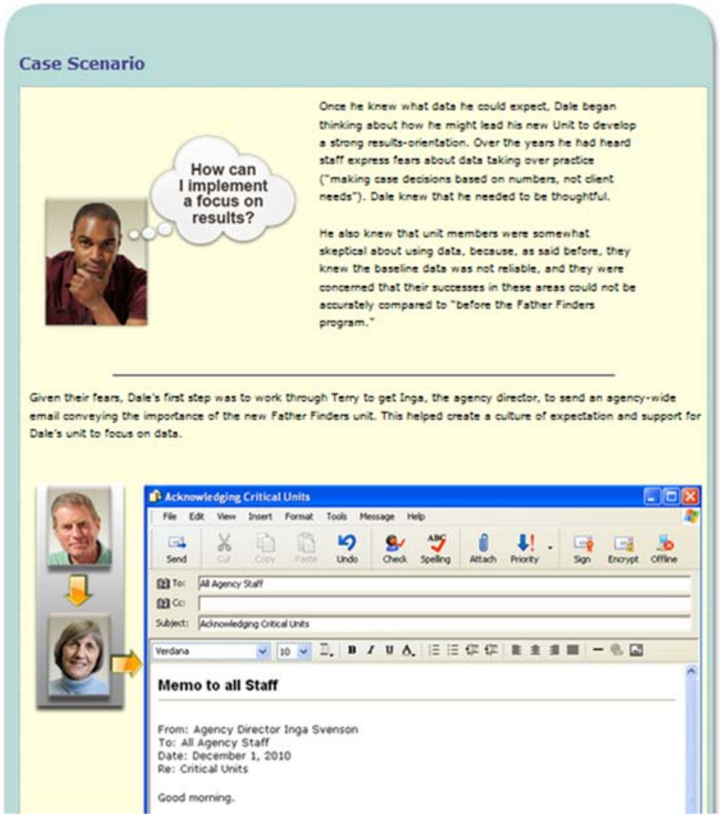
Layered instructional content. To allow the learner to focus attention on the main points and choose to explore additional information at his or her own discretion and timeline, the design included layered content. This is accomplished by providing visual cues that learners can hover over to see additional content, such as citations, glossary definitions, links to resources, or further explanation, without interrupting the flow of the primary content.

Learning self-assessment and reflection. One form of self-assessment included throughout the modules is 'knowledge checks' in which the supervisor interacts with the material in order to assess their own knowledge and learning. These embedded interactions are primarily in the form of activities, such as drag and drop matching, term identification, true/false and multiple choice questions, and short essay responses to scenarios.

Reflection activities are an important component in the core curriculum. An integral part of each module is the development of the supervisor's personal learning plan and learning portfolio. The supervisor is asked to develop a change initiative in the *Foundations of Leadership* module. Throughout the following modules, supervisors use multiple assessments to refine the change initiative and to identify strategies and concrete steps to implement the change.

Case study approach. Drawing on stories from the field, the curriculum presents authentic and relevant case studies with which the supervisors interact, applying their experience and knowledge of newly learned concepts. For all activities, the online modules provide immediate feedback. The feedback is provided, not in the standard correct/incorrect form, but in a form that reflects the complex and ambiguous nature of the work in which these supervisors are engaged. For example, feedback includes the pros and cons of each type of action a supervisor may choose in response to the situation presented in the case scenario, as seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Example of Case Scenario



LAS Learning Networks (LASLNs). One of objectives is to challenge supervisors to try new ways of leading, practicing, and thinking about the profession. While asynchronous approaches are the most convenient and cost effective for reaching a national audience, the LAS offers blended approaches to address the social aspects of learning without incurring excessive cost. This is accomplished by following each asynchronous module with a 90-minute synchronous session, joining colleagues through webinar technology on a national, state, or regional level. Each session is led by experienced trainers with child welfare supervisor experience and is highly interactive, using virtual breakout rooms and active group discussion. Discussions at the LASLNs revolve around key points in the online modules and how the information presented in the module aligns with current approaches in their own practice. Implications for change initiatives are examined as supervisors explore possible solutions to obstacles or barriers they might face in the implementation of their change.

Implementation

Consistent with the program announcement, the original LAS was designed as a national self-directed learning model, allowing supervisors to complete the curriculum at their own pace and from anywhere with an internet connection. The real-time LASLNs facilitate learning transfer through peer and instructor interaction focused on application of training content to the learner's change initiative. The LASLNs were scheduled at regular intervals with a goal of allowing each supervisor to participate in the LASLN within three weeks of completing a module.

In the summer of 2009, the LAS team began recruiting supervisors with the goal of launching the first core modules in the fall of 2009. The response was encouraging with over 500 supervisors responding to the initial invitation. Supervisors who expressed interest were put on a mailing list and able to access a short online orientation that demonstrated the learning technology and ease of use. As each of the six core modules launched, supervisors on the mailing list received email notifications and an invitation to enroll. Simultaneously, recruitment activities continued to the larger population with links on a variety of professional websites and the distribution of promotional material both online and at numerous conferences.

As individual supervisors began to enroll nationally, the training director in Indiana expressed interest in implementing the LAS for groups of supervisors using a coordinated state approach. The LAS team agreed to explore this option with her and as a result, 68 supervisors representing 18 counties in Indiana enrolled as a cohort in the fall of 2009. In this design, the Indiana staff development staff handled recruitment, supervisor selection and the development of a training schedule. Rather than enrolling in the national LASLNs, Indiana supervisors attended the local online LASLNs facilitated by Indiana trainers with the assistance of a NCWWI facilitator.

Early evaluation results from both the national and the Indiana state specific models showed that all participants were learning key competencies, as measured by pre- and post-assessments. However, the participation levels were dramatically different. Of the 403 supervisors who registered nationally only 301 enrolled in the *Introductory Module*, 131 completed the module and 11 participated in the LASLN. These numbers continued to drop off throughout the six modules in the core curriculum. Despite all efforts to reach out to participants, to provide sessions at convenient times and to provide multiple scheduling options, fewer than 10 people attended each of the national online LASLNs; sometimes no-one showed up.

The experience in Indiana was very different. Fifty-four of the 68 supervisors who registered in 2009 entered the modules, completed the assignments, and participated in the online LASLNs. Completion rate was over 90%.

Given this information, the LAS team began reaching out to other states to encourage state-coordinated participation. The team developed informational materials to support state implementation, including an implementation resource package, a memorandum of agreement, and an implementation checklist. They also offered regular technical assistance through teleconferences with state planning teams. By 2011, Colorado, Tennessee, and South Carolina were offering a state-directed approach and Indiana was implementing their second cohort.

By the end of 2011, total LAS enrollment was 1,394. Of the 551 self-directed participants who entered the national training, only 29 completed (5%) compared to a completion rate of 87% for the 246 state-directed participants. As a result, the LAS team decided in January 2012 to terminate the national self-directed LASLNs, while keeping the online core curriculum accessible for anyone who wished to experience the training. In addition to a new focus on state-coordinated implementations, the team also decided to test a new national cohort model for supervisors working outside of participating states. The cohort model would replicate some elements of the state-directed approach by supporting a group of supervisors to go through the training together, on a common schedule, and participating in the LASLNs open only to their cohort. The LAS team used social media and regular personal communication with participants to promote support and engagement. The hope was that building a peer community would increase completion rates.

After an intensive recruitment effort, three national cohorts were implemented with disappointing results. Of the 97 participants who began, only 12 (15%) completed the entire core curriculum. The results of a national tribal cohort were even more disappointing and the cohort was terminated in April 2013 because of the lack of participation.

In 2011-2013 the group of states offering the LAS in a state-coordinated approach expanded to ten (Alabama, Colorado, Indiana, Illinois, Hawaii, Albany County [NY], Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Vermont), with Indiana and South Carolina graduating their third cohorts in 2013. All states were required to offer the 21 hours of online learning in the sequence of the core curriculum. However, the supports, requirements, and incentives for participation varied in each state. For example, some states expanded the LASLNs to 19 hours to meet their state requirements of 40 hours of mandatory supervisory training per year. Many delivered their LASLNs in face-to-face sessions, and some included LASLN guest speakers such as representatives from the agency’s human resource office and/or quality assurance team. Some states added an individual coaching component. Others linked with university social work faculty to review and rate assignments and give feedback to participants. Indiana worked with their human resource department so that successful completion of the LAS became a preferred criterion for promotion to the position of local Office Director. Participation and completion in all states continued to be high.

Learning Results

The Butler Institute at the University of Denver conducted the LAS evaluation, using a mixed-methods longitudinal design to measure learning, transfer of knowledge to the workplace, and facilitators and barriers to transfer of learning. A full description of the evaluation methods and results are described in Leake, deGuzman, Rienks and Landsman in the current issue.

Of particular interest is the similarity of learning results for both the self-directed/national and state-cohort participants. Across all modules, supervisors reported statistically significant competency gains from pre- to post-training that remained significant at six months post-training. Where the two groups diverge slightly is in their level of satisfaction with the training. Overall, all supervisors who participated in the LAS were satisfied with the clarity of the training goals and objectives, the relevance of leadership competencies to their job, and the organization of training content. Self-directed respondents, however, reported higher overall satisfaction compared to state cohort respondents, (sample sizes were quite different: state cohort n=105; self-directed national n=32). Further analyses were conducted with interview and survey data to look at the profiles of this small and unique group of national completers. Results revealed that compared to state cohort supervisors, national respondents held significantly more positive views about the relevance of the LAS content and their personal capability to transfer their learning to the job; they were motivated to learn, and had higher expectations that the LAS would improve their job performance.

Discussion/Lessons Learned

Based on evaluation findings, supervisors who put in the time and effort are rewarded with improved leadership skills and the ability to use the NCWWI leadership framework effectively to manage their teams and projects and to implement systems changes. Without organizational supports, however, the retention of learners in online learning is disappointing.

High attrition among self-directed online learners is not unique to the LAS; similar results are reported in other self-directed online learning programs. For example, Park and Choi (2009) present a number of findings showing a higher percentage of students in online courses drop out compared to those in face-to-face courses. Data from massive open online courses (MOOCs) show that only about 5% of the students who signed up earned a credential signifying official completion of the course (Koller, Ng, Do, & Chen, 2013). Heller (2013) in an article on online learning in higher education notes that the dropout rates in online courses are typically more than 90%. Park (2007) suggests three categories of factors to explain drop out and persistence: learner characteristics, internal factors, and external factors.

In terms of learner characteristics, there were no significant differences in the LAS between the self-directed group and the state cohorts in education and years of professional experience. As noted, however, there was an interesting finding regarding the high level of motivation and positive expectations among the small percentage of self-directed participants who were able to complete. This would indicate that even when external supports are not in place, the most highly motivated participants could still succeed.

Results also demonstrated the importance of paying careful attention to the internal design factors of the overall blended-learning approach, and to including learning events within the curriculum to promote engagement and relevance. Most participants, self-directed and those who were part of a state cohort, were satisfied with the training, and felt it was relevant to their job. Most supervisors learned from the training and were able to apply their learning on the job, to develop a learning plan and to implement a change initiative.

The most significant findings, however, reinforce the importance of external supports. Many of the self-directed supervisors enrolled in the LAS on their own because they were excited about the opportunity to improve their leadership skills through a training that was affordable and accessible. Many entered the program highly motivated and ready to take their skills to the next level. Some of these participants had the permission of their supervisor or manager to go through the LAS, however, most did not have protected time to take the training. This means supervisors participated on their own time or squeezed training into already busy work schedules. Because other people in the agency were not familiar with the content and approach, they did not get performance feedback as they practiced new skills. In addition, there were no direct external incentives (or sanctions) for completing the course or using the skills. As a result, activities associated with the training had less priority than direct job-related tasks that affect performance reviews. Without these critical workplace supports, the vast majority of supervisors who were going through the LAS on their own eventually dropped out of the program.

The supervisors who were most successful in completing the LAS and developed strong leadership skills were part of a state cohort and therefore experienced the external supports identified by Park (2007). They were provided with enough information so that they felt prepared and began the training with appropriate expectations about the LAS and their role as a participant. Successful participants were expected to complete the modules sequentially according to a specified timeframe and attend either face-to-face or teleconference LASLNs to discuss their learning and application of skills with their peers. These supervisors were given time on the job to complete the modules, and adequate technology to do so. Many managers of these supervisors were familiar with the leadership framework and provided constructive feedback and support to supervisors in developing competencies. Managers also supported supervisors in the selection and implementation of a systems change initiative. Upon completion of the training, supervisors were acknowledged and rewarded for their participation in the program.

Free training, certificates of completion, contact hours, and CEUs proved insufficient incentives for child welfare supervisors to mitigate the lack of support in the external environment to complete a self-directed program. However, results also show that through careful attention to adult learning theories, implementation of best practices in blended learning, and engagement of organizational supports, online learning can be an effective method of developing human services leaders.

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SUPPORTING HER RISE TO POWER: DEVELOPING MULTICULTURAL WOMAN-AFFIRMING LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

Leadership development for women, both White and of color, is a critical issue for human services. Since most of the non-profit workforce is female, as more women move into leadership it is important for women to work together, learning from, and mentoring one another. Yet divisions along race and culture lines can make this a painful and difficult journey for many professional women (Glassman, 2012). This paper highlights four key points of leadership development that attend to women's experiences as leaders and responds to the unique relationship among women of color and White women.

Introduction

Supporting the advancement of women, both White and of color, into leadership roles is a critical issue for human services. Racial disproportionality and disparities in outcomes for clients of color are concerns in many areas, and women and children are overrepresented among the poor. It is important to develop leaders who best represent the full range of people served, and support policies and practices that promote equity. Men, mostly White, currently hold between 55% - 79% of leadership positions in non-profit agencies, even though they only make up about one quarter of the workforce (Lapovskey, 2009). There is indication of change: Women hold almost half the managerial positions for smaller non-profit organizations. Since most of the non-profit workforce is female, as more women move into leadership it is important for women to work together, learning from, and mentoring one another. Yet divisions along race and culture lines can make this a painful and difficult journey (Glassman, 2012).

Attending to women's experiences in leadership, and responding to the unique relationships among women of color and White women, are important considerations in developing a model for leadership development. In reviewing the literature on diversity, multiculturalism, and feminist approaches to organization development and management, the authors have identified four central points to inform this process. We have termed this "multicultural," to acknowledge the need to respond to a range of cultural differences, including ethnic differences and cultures that emerge from the experience of oppression and marginalization, such as gay culture or Black culture. We have added the term “woman-affirming” to highlight the unique position of women in social culture and in the organization.

Much of the available research used to conceptualize these points emphasizes the experiences of women typically described as African American/Black. The authors recognize limitations in this categorization, since Black women are not a homogeneous group and may see themselves as having little in common socially or professionally. Further, the body of literature does not adequately capture the experiences of those who are not Black. Women who identify as Native American, Latina, Asian, or other, including those from other parts of the world, have different cultural identifications and different social and professional experiences in the U.S.

Other absences in the literature that informs leadership development are discussions of race and gender in the context of sexual orientation and identity, physical ability, or other factors that make people unique and influence their experiences in professional leadership roles. Truly inclusive leadership development takes all of these factors into account. Since the discussion of multicultural woman-affirming leadership development presented here depends upon a review of extant literature, the authors acknowledge these limitations but generalize to begin to formulate a conceptual model to support the advancement of all members of the organization. We do not assume that all women are the same but propose that, in the dynamics of racism, sexism, and other oppressions, there are commonalities that are useful for understanding steps to promote women of color and White women into leadership positions.

Women as Leaders in Organizations

Over the past several decades, women have made important progress in the workplace, and White women are often noted as significant beneficiaries of Affirmative Action (Goodwin, 2013). Women now hold 50.6 % of all management and professional positions (Catalyst, 2007), but only about 15% of top executive positions, and less than 2% of Fortune 500 CEOs, are women. Attitudes are changing, however, and Americans are increasingly open to seeing women as leaders (Lapovskey, 2009). According to a Gallup poll (Gallup, 2011), many Americans would still prefer to work for a man (32%) rather than a woman (22%), but for the first time in the poll’s 60-year history the plurality of Americans do not have a preference.

Despite changing attitudes, research continues to show that women are less likely to be promoted than men (Blau & DeVaro, 2007). Race and ethnicity are important factors, as women of color are clearly under-represented at senior levels. African American women make up 5.8% of the labor pool but hold less than 1% of corporate officer positions. Latinas make up 5.2% of the labor pool but only 0.3% of management, and Asian women, who hold 1.9% of jobs, make up 0.4% of corporate officers (Catalyst, 2006).

The representation of women in leadership in the non-profit sector is somewhat better than in corporate organizations overall, but disproportionality is still a concern. Women make up 75% of the non-profit workforce, but only 45% of top executives are women (Lapovskey, 2009). In organizations with budgets over $25 million, the number of women in top leadership positions drops to 21%. Additionally, whereas women generally earn 82% of what men earn (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013), women in top leadership positions in non-profits earn about 65% of their male counterparts (Lapovskey, 2009).

Approximately 82% of the non-profit workforce is White (Lapovskey, 2009). Since White people make up approximately 74% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010), they are over-represented among non-profit personnel. In the non-profit sector, African Americans make up 10% of workers, followed by Latino/as at 5%, and all other groups at 1% or less (Lapovskey, 2009). People of color only make up 14% of Board members, about half of their representation in the population. There are no statistics on how many non-profit leaders are women of color, an absence that is noteworthy.

Sexism and Stereotypes

Women in the workforce face many common concerns. Since White men dominate organizational leadership, women are still considered outsiders to this realm, and women of color even more so. Women leaders are judged by higher standards and receive lower rewards for their efforts than male leaders (Catalyst, 2007). Women are often perceived as either too soft or too tough, and when they are perceived as capable, colleagues often dislike them. These findings are supported by Fiske (2012), who found that women leaders often are faced with opposing prejudices, being perceived as warm but incompetent, or competent but cold.

Prejudices such as these are rarely expressed overtly. Rather, they are communicated subtly in the form of micro-messages. Micro-messages, both positive and negative, are often unconscious verbal or non-verbal cues people send to one another as an indication of their thoughts, feelings, or beliefs about the other (Young, 2003). As negative micro-messages accumulate, they build toward micro-inequities, the subtle workings of organizational culture that favors one group over another (Rowe, 2008), or micro-aggressions, the painful experience of continual negativity received by the out-group individual (Constantine & Sue, 2007). For women, over time, the stereotypes and negative micro-messages can adversely affect the individual's performance and interrupt her ability to build an effective professional network with those who have power to support her rise to leadership (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Some women may move away from leadership roles to avoid the stress, while others who pursue leadership roles may find their standing within the organization jeopardized, leading to high stress and strained relationships.

Issues Faced by Women of Color

The "glass ceiling" has long been a symbol of the barriers encountered by women who reach toward upper management positions and can see through to the next level of power but are stopped short of achieving it. When a woman succeeds, she is hailed as breaking or shattering the glass ceiling, acknowledging the rigid but fragile nature of glass that can be cut through or smashed. The term "concrete ceiling," however, has been used (Catalyst, 2004; Durr & Harvey Wingfield, 2011) to illustrate the opaque and formidable barriers encountered by women of color.

Women of color experience the stereotyping and micro-inequities that all women face in leadership positions; they also face racism and racial micro-aggressions from White supervisors (Constantine & Sue, 2007) and colleagues. Women of color must negotiate stereotypes and subtle, and sometimes overt, bias based on both race and gender (Combs, 2003). Black professional women have reported that work-related stress due to race was the most taxing form of stress (Bacchus, 2008), where the repeated micro-aggressions can erode their sense of confidence and competency (Dudley, 1988). Women of color must expend a great deal of emotional energy to transform themselves to be accepted and welcomed in the workplace (Durr & Harvey Wingfield, 2011)—energy that might otherwise be devoted to developing as leaders.

Since women of color are under-represented in organizational leadership, they are unlikely to find strong networks of other women of color within their own organization, and perhaps not within their immediate professional network. Sources of social support, such as family and friends who share their cultural background, may not be women in positions of leadership. Thus, women of color in leadership can be very alone—the only woman of color in the executive suite and the only executive in their social group.

Lack of access to networks of influential colleagues has been noted as a barrier for women of color (Catalyst, 2006). Without strong racial and gender affinity networks, women of color can be forced into out-group status in terms of forming the types of informal social networks that are important to career success (Combs, 2003). Findings across studies make it clear that social networking with other professionals is important for success, and women of color in leadership positions experience barriers in accessing these networks. To develop leaders, it is crucial to support professional networking for women of color and facilitate access to those in power for all women.

Race and 'Sisterhood' Among Women

It would be logical to think that women of color and White women could find common ground and develop strong networks for their mutual benefit, particularly in non-profit management where there are significant numbers of women in leadership positions. In fact, research has shown that women who make it to leadership positions do tend to help other women, but primarily within their own racial or cultural group (Kurtulus & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2012). Unfortunately, a persistent divide inhibits the formation and reduces the viability of multi-racial groups of women; salary structure highlights this divide. While women of all races make less money than men, African American women make an average of 83% of what White women make and Latinas make about 73% of what White women earn (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013).

Research has found that White women are more likely than men to have antiracist attitudes, as demonstrated through expressions of cultural sensitivity, seeking education on multiculturalism, and articulating an understanding of the negative consequences of racism (Spanierman, Beard, & Todd, 2012). In spite of this, women of color still report experiencing unintended injuries from White women and may choose to self-segregate to find emotional safety and comfort (Flores, 2011). Ortega (2006) explored the concept of "loving, knowing ignorance" to describe a common experience within multiracial groups of women. White women, intending to express concern and empathy, may come across as all-knowing regarding the experiences of women of color, in a sense appropriating their oppression without actually including women of color as equal partners or learning from them. Women of color, therefore, may not perceive White women as allies or potential mentors, resulting in missed opportunities for professional networking and partnerships for advancement. An effective model for developing all women in an organization as leaders needs to create systems that support honest communication among members with awareness of history and cultural differences, and responsiveness to negative micro-messages and subtle expressions of privilege.

Organizational Context for Leadership Development

Leadership development typically takes place in the context of organizations, thus attention to the development of organizational culture to support multicultural inclusion is crucial. Multicultural organizational development focuses directly on issues of social identity and oppression (Ramos & Chesler, 2010), working to change the culture and practices of an organization that favors white people, particularly White men, and marginalizes others. Hyde (2003) identified that organizations with multicultural climates are those that value inclusivity, build on strengths, and challenge oppression. To ensure the leadership potential of women and people of color is nurtured, it is important for the organization to formulate critical intersectional analyses of race, gender, and other aspects of identity and culture as members work together to transform the organization's culture.

It is crucial to have the head of the organization committed to inclusion (Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence [SPAN]), 2007), along with other executive leaders who are highly visible in the change process (Cocchiara, Connerley, & Bell, 2010). Unlike other organization effectiveness initiatives, however, multicultural woman-affirming leadership development often calls upon expertise and practice wisdom that the current leaders may not have. Consultation is often necessary at points, as is training. Leaders can also develop relationships with members of the groups they are hoping to advance. Ongoing reciprocal communication among organization leaders and people who can provide insight and insider knowledge about micro-aggressions, institutional bias, and unconscious privilege can be invaluable (Blitz & Kohl, 2012).

Four Points for Multicultural Woman-Affirming Leadership Development

The four examples given in this section are drawn from the authors' practice, teaching, and consulting experiences, and are composite characteristics and situations used to better illustrate the various aspects of each point.

1. Develop a strategic plan with measurable goals and systems for follow up

It is important to have a clear vision of what the organization will look like when the process of diversity, inclusion, and affirmation is well integrated into organizational culture (Brazzel, 2007). This vision should be articulated to align with the organization's mission, connecting it to the rationale that has been put forth by the organization's leaders. To move from vision to action, practices geared toward multicultural and woman-affirming norms must be an integral part of the organization's strategic plan (Forbes, 2008). Goals should include measures that verify achievement, point out areas of continuing need, establish accountability (Cocchiara, Connerley, & Bell, 2010), and include assessment, monitoring, and evaluation (Hyde, 2003).

Goals to recruit, retain, and promote women and staff of color can be achieved by focusing on the individual virtues required by various positions in the organization (van Dijk, van Engen, & Paauwe, 2012). In this manner, the values, experiences, cognitive orientation, and knowledge of staff members are evaluated in the context of what is needed for their position, rather than adhering to performance measures that may have unintended bias. Policies and practices that engage with women and communities of color are central to the effectiveness of the plan (SPAN, 2007). While developing women as leaders is a goal, the target of change is often organizational culture as expressed in both management and client services. Meaningful feedback from clients can ensure that programming is designed with all potential constituents in mind, and becomes one aspect of accountability in measuring progress.

Example: Multicultural woman-affirming leadership strategic plan in action

A large human services agency in a metropolitan area developed a 10-year strategic plan that included goals and benchmarks in all major areas of the organization. Diversification was infused within each area, and leadership development for women and people of color was highlighted as a separate goal. The easiest part of the plan was counting and measuring. Using an approximate calculation of the percentage of people of color in the community and among their client base, they developed targets for racial/ethnic proportionality. Since women made up about three quarters of their workforce, one goal was to have 75% of the management and other leadership positions held by women. Timelines were assigned to each measure, and division managers were accountable to the board of directors.

The more complex aspects of the plan involved creating internships for undergraduate and graduate students to attract people of color, developing task forces responsible for educating the organization, and creating dialogue among staff that supported organizational culture change. Special attention was paid to the relationship among White women and women of color, through in-service trainings and other professional development opportunities that supported dialogue on gender and race.

One concern expressed by women staffers was that they were sometimes judged as ineffective when, from their perspective, their work was culturally responsive to their consumer group but perhaps less efficient than management's expectations. Therefore, central to all efforts was the development of reciprocal dialogue with constituent groups, typically clients, or former clients of the agency who provided feedback on their experiences with the organization. By developing networks within marginalized communities, the voices of the people served were heard by people at all levels of the organization, not just frontline workers. The communication process helped bridge gaps between agency practices and consumer needs and styles. As a result, staff members most closely connected to consumers were more likely to be recognized for their success, which in turn promoted their professional growth.

2. Create comprehensive processes that engage organization members at all levels

Successful implementation of a strategic plan for organizational inclusiveness recognizes that all employees have a role in executing the plan (Forbes, 2008), and have a stake in its success. Blitz and Kohl (2012) discuss the use of racial affinity group meetings to support organizational goals toward antiracism, where White staff and staff of color meet both separately and together to better understand their role in the organizational status quo and in creating change. Similar affinity group discussions can be conducted to explore intersections of race and gender or other issues pertinent to the organization.

Training to help staff members and leaders develop strong communication skills and skills that enhance cultural responsiveness are important (Hyde, 2003). Various forms of training should be embedded systematically throughout the organization, to help people transfer diversity training knowledge directly to their jobs (Cocchiara, Connerley, & Bell, 2010). Participation in training should be mandatory, since voluntary participation may not reach those who are most likely to benefit (Kulik, Pepper, Roberson, & Parker, 2007). Three components of training geared toward equity are vital: (a) a genuine understanding of the role oppression plays in people's lives; (b) a sincere appreciation of socio-political privilege and how communities and individuals are impacted; and (c) pragmatic action steps that can address organization policies, practices, or norms that inhibit inclusiveness (Johnson, Antle, & Barbee, 2009). Dynamics of oppression and privilege permeate culture, often in ways that are difficult to recognize and even harder to understand. Therefore, systems-focused interventions are needed to create both dialogue and action where women and people of color are given opportunities to demonstrate leadership and provided mentoring to inform their skill development.

Example: Using task forces and affinity groups to promote inclusive leadership

A social service organization in an urban community had a good deal of diversity among staff and clients, but struggled with tensions among groups. Various affinity groups were established, initiated by the CEO. Men of color, women of color, White allies, and LGBTQ groups met regularly with the goal of clarifying areas where the organization functioned in ways that inhibited inclusion. All staff members, regardless of title or seniority level, were invited to participate in an affinity group and supervisors were advised to support the participation of their staff. Not all staff members were interested in participating, but those who did join a group brought back information from the discussions to their program meetings. Discussions in program meetings were taken back to the affinity groups, creating a multi-layered dialogue. In this way, each staff member knew that they had a role in influencing the culture of their program and the agency overall. Representatives from each of the affinity groups met with the organization's leadership team regularly, functioned as a task force responsible for educating the organization, and made recommendations to the executive leaders to support culture change.

The groups also provided multiple opportunities for members to develop leadership skills within the safety of a group of colleagues with whom they acknowledged affinity. For women and people of color, the groups provided important opportunities to develop their professional networks, breaking down isolation. The groups also became safe spaces for some of the women to begin to challenge themselves on sensitive areas around internalized oppression, such as colorism within communities of color, ethnic bias, or internalized sexism. Frank discussions about how they had unconsciously adopted negative images of themselves and other members of their group helped them to move beyond competition and suspicion and develop stronger supportive networks. The ability to discuss these concerns with other women at various stages of dealing with these issues themselves was a significant aspect of leadership development.

Aspects of internalized and unconscious privilege were central to affinity group discussions. The White ally group periodically met jointly with the people of color groups, and the LGBTQ group included straight allies. Discussions about male privilege, White privilege, and heterosexual privilege became integral to the overall dialogue and helped move the culture toward inclusiveness. Deeper understanding of the role of privilege in organizational culture, and the ability to talk about it openly, provided multiple opportunities to confront unintentional bias, promote equity, and remove barriers to recognizing leadership potential.

Finally, the activities of the affinity groups and task forces offered many opportunities for emerging leaders to be seen and their skills observed by upper management. Staff members not known to the executive group found opportunities to take leadership in various projects that were valued by the organization. The resulting praise and promotions served as encouragement to others in their affinity groups, further motivating them to invest in their professional growth.

3. Support race-aware and woman-affirming mentoring

Women of color face many barriers that inhibit their participation in social and professional networks that contribute to career advancement (Combs, 2003). Additionally, White professionals and professionals of color often follow different timetables in their career development. White people tend to focus on career achievement early on, whereas people of color may not begin to find high levels of success until they are mid-career (Thomas, 2001). Women of all races may have different trajectories and timelines as they negotiate motherhood and other family responsibilities. Each of these factors can contribute to complications in career advancement, and professional mentoring can be a particularly helpful tool in developing leadership capacity.

Individuals often benefit from a team of mentors that form a base for a professional network (Higgins & Kram, 2001). A team of mentors comprised of individuals who have different areas of expertise and different relationships with the protégé can help the emerging leader develop multiple aspects of her. A diverse team is optimal: people of color need mentors who are aware of the challenges race can present, and who can help them navigate complexities of race, gender, and other issues in their professional development (Thomas, 2001).

Example: A virtual personal board of directors

A Latina social worker accepted a new job as a program director after several years' experience as a practitioner and then supervisor at a different agency. She saw this move as an important step toward a larger goal of someday having a position where she could influence child welfare policy. She was the first college graduate in her family, and her husband, while supportive of her career ambitions, did not work in an administrative or executive role and found his wife's work somewhat alien. Few of her friends had major career ambitions, and she found herself navigating new professional territory without much guidance. The executive to whom she reported on her new job suggested that she develop a professional mentor network, comprised of people who would guide her in her career. The executive helped her get started in this process by connecting her to two women she knew, one Latina and one African American, who could offer advice on getting started.

Within two years, the emerging leader had created a “virtual personal board of directors” (Pender Greene, 2014) consisting of ten people whom she trusted and valued for various reasons. The board was virtual because some of her mentors lived in different areas of the state and their contact was primarily by phone or email. All of the members of her virtual board were people who had achieved success in their careers, were in a position to offer support and advice, and helped her make connections to others. The mentor group was racially diverse, included both men and women, and all were people with whom she could talk about race, culture, and gender. Knowing that leaders supported her within her organization, valued her professional development, and encouraged external networking, helped solidify her positive associations with the agency, and contributed to job satisfaction.

4. Prepare for pushback, negative reactions, and tensions among organization members

Mandatory diversity training and comprehensive organizational change efforts may result in backlash from some members of the organization who are resistant to change or who have objections to the goals of inclusivity (Kaplan, 2006). Dismantling intuitional structures to rid them of imbedded bias requires sharing power and decision-making responsibilities and presupposes that the core culture must fundamentally change (Pender Greene, 2007). The process of change will no doubt be welcomed by many, but it also causes disruptions. Those who have achieved success or found a comfortable place in the organization may feel confused, insulted, or threatened by the idea that the norms they have taken for granted and built their success upon are now being questioned. Resistance can also manifest as tension among White women and women of color, who may not understand how their group will be prioritized as other groups get attention.

Maintaining the focus on institutional oppression as the target for remedial action provides a way to avoid competition between groups (Eveline, Bacchi, & Binns, 2009). Professional consultation from outside sources can help guide the process, provide strategic advice as problems arise, and help keep the focus on the big picture of the organizational development process. Multicultural organizational consultation (MOC) (Sue, 2008) provides a good model as it possesses a strong social justice component directed toward removing barriers to equal access and opportunity in organizations. Operating in harmony with multicultural leadership development, MOC often challenges the power and privilege of organizational policies and practices that oppress marginalized groups and perpetuate disparities. For multicultural woman-affirming leadership initiatives, it is important to maintain the intersectional focus in both development and consultation. Knowledgeable consultation can help an organization prepare for backlash, minimize negative consequences, and use difficulties in the process and as opportunities for learning.

Example: Responding to pushback and organizational disruption

The director of a residential treatment facility for youth, a White woman, announced her plans for retirement and informed the staff that the agency would begin looking for a replacement, considering both internal and external candidates. The staff consisted of many non-degree direct care workers, most of whom were women of color. The clinical staff, six licensed social workers and an art therapist, consisted of two White men, four White women, and one African American woman. Approximately 65% of the youth who resided at the facility were youth of color, and almost all came from financially poor communities. The team had been openly talking about race, gender, and class for quite a while, examining how privilege and oppression affected the lives of their clients and how it played out within the staff group. These conversations were not easy, and tensions among staff arose at various times, but all agreed that furthering the dialogue and their learning was crucial for high quality services to clients.

One of the White men from the clinical staff applied for the director position. The top external candidate was a black woman. When he learned that she had been asked back for a second interview, he confided to other clinical staff that he did not think he had a chance because "obviously" the current director would choose a black woman over a White man, regardless of qualifications or experience. Other staff rallied to his defense and approached the director. They put forth the benefits of promoting an internal candidate as a way of maintaining balance during what was sure to be a difficult transition. Further, they asserted that if their colleague were promoted his job would be open and could be filled by a person of color, perhaps someone Spanish speaking since this was a need. One of the direct care staff, a black woman, muttered in a half joking manner, "I don't know if I want to work for no black lady; I know how they can be," a statement that was met with amused chuckles by some, eye rolling by others, and some uncomfortable shifting by the White staff.

The director sought consultation with a trusted mentor. After a long conversation, the mentor advised that sharing her thoughts and feelings with the team would help continue their honest dialogue. She went back to the team and started the conversation. "We have always agreed that excellence in service requires that we really understand race and gender, and what that means in terms of power and what it means to our kids. I see the faces of the mothers the first time they drop their child off here. I see them scared, exhausted, looking at my middle class White face hoping they can find someone they can trust to heal their child. I know what a leap that is for some of them, and it weighs heavy on my heart. I imagine what it would mean if they could see a face that looks like theirs sitting in this director's chair, and that weighs heavy in my decision. Let me hear your thoughts."

Commitment for the Long Haul

The workplace is a form of community, and multicultural woman-affirming leadership development is a form of community organizing. The investment in developing leadership through integrating multicultural and woman-affirming practices into all areas of programming, organizational culture, and at all levels of staffing requires maintaining a long-term, holistic approach. Outreach and networking with communities of color and professional women's groups are important to recruit a diverse pool of applicants, and developing a reputation as a place where women and people of color want to work is crucial. Retention, promotion, and job satisfaction improve as the organization shifts toward equity and inclusiveness (Mckay, Avery, Tonidandel, Morris, Hernandez, & Hebl, 2007). As diverse groups gain success within the organization, the reputation of the agency can spread, attracting others and reducing the stress of professional isolation on new and existing members (Pender Greene, 2007). All members of the organization's community will be impacted; staff, clients and each member can contribute uniquely. The benefits are seen as women and people of color become centers of knowledge about clients, services, and organization development—leaders for the future of the organization.

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BRIDGING THE GAP: A LEARNING ACTIVITY ON EFFECTIVE MULTISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

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Abstract

This work highlights a learning activity that demonstrates the principles of collaboration and the impact it has within the field of human services from a multidisciplinary framework. This learning activity will give participants the opportunity to gain valuable insight on functional and applicable methods of successful collaboration across disciplines. Participants will be involved in activities and discussion focused on the elements of effective collaboration and ways to use collaborative efforts to impact service delivery.

Conceptual Framework/Evidence

Leaders possess the ability to motivate and influence the behavior of others. An effective leader recognizes the importance of utilizing the collective skills and abilities of all members of the organization in order to carry out the mission of the organization. A successful leader understands the shared value that the "team" brings to the development of the overall organization. Transformative leaders engage in collaborative enterprises on a daily basis and the evidence of their work often is seen in the success of the organizations. According to Northhouse (2013), transformative leadership is "the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower" (p. 186). The nature of human service organizations rests on the ability of everyone working together to ensure quality and effective service delivery for clients and consumers. Quality and effective services are challenging to achieve if collaboration is not at the center of the organizational philosophy.

Now that we know collaboration is key to effective leadership, why does it continue to be underutilized in many human service organizations today? The concept of collaboration is often discussed and reviewed in many human service environments, as it is often the nucleus of an effective human service organization. In recognizing the usefulness of collaboration in the field of human services, one may question the lack of its consistent and effective use by human service leaders within the field. The nature of human service agencies encompasses the need for multidisciplinary teams to exchange resources, ideas, and time in order to provide meaningful and effective services to clients.

Understanding the nature of human service as a distinct field of professional practice would make one believe that collaborative efforts between human service leaders and service providers would be inherent to the agency, however this is not often the case. In many human service agencies, collaboration is spoken of but when implementation is discussed issues like pride, ownership and individualistic motives begin to surface. This ultimately leaves the ideal of collaboration far from the goal at hand, which is working for the common good in an effort to provide quality services to the population being served. Many grants go unfunded because service providers are unable to see "eye to eye" and work together. Resources for vulnerable populations, like women, children, and the elderly are often thwarted due to the lack of collaboration between agencies.

Research from many human service fields, including social work and psychology, indicates that effective collaboration efforts are key to building partnerships and providing coordinated, comprehensive service delivery systems. The School Social Work Association of America (2008) indicates, "An essential belief of School Social Workers is the necessity of collaboration in addressing the systematic and individual needs of all students, particularly struggling students."

The National Association of School Psychologists (2006) also recognizes the importance of collaboration, in that the organization is "committed to the development of partnerships between schools and other community agencies to build coordinated comprehensive systems to meet the educational and mental health needs of children and their families" (p. 34).

Although school social work and school psychology are two distinct fields of practice, they serve children, families, and communities that become clients for many human service agencies locally and nationally. In essence, collaboration is the missing link in effective service delivery not only for school systems but also for the larger community. Human service leaders must begin to recognize the inherent value that collaboration brings to services provided to clients and to the overall organizational culture and climate. The learning activity presented here attempts to shed light on the issue of collaboration by providing a useful group-training model for human service providers.

Collegial Circle Workshop on "Bridging the Gap: Effective Multidisciplinary Collaborations"

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to

- Understand the elements of effective collaboration.
- Discuss the effects of collaboration on a variety of Human Service areas.
- Highlight successes and challenges involved in collaboration across disciplines.

- Help practitioners build skills to engage in effective collaboration.
- Develop a plan to begin or improve collaborative efforts.

Activity Goals:
- Provide participants with an understanding of collaboration principles.
- Provide participants with a knowledge base to implement effective cross discipline collaboration.

Group Size: The group should be a minimum of 10 and maximum of 20.

Required Materials: Computer, projector, screen, paper, pens, and a whistle. This workshop would be conducted utilizing a power point presentation.

Physical Setting: A room that can comfortably seat at least 20 participants. The chairs should be set in a circle to provide an intimate and inviting environment for group work and team building.

Procedures and Timing: The length of the workshop is 1 hour and 30 minutes, which allows time for sufficient engagement and interaction.

Notes for the Facilitator:
The facilitator should have an understanding of group process prior to facilitating the workshop. In understanding group process, the facilitator should be able to recognize group differences and be aware of group dynamics (i.e., some participants may not want to engage in discussion, others may want to dominate the discussion). It is important to prepare to address both types of participants. Participants who choose not to engage in the group discussion can benefit from listening to other group members and reviewing the information presented in the power point presentation.

The facilitator should respect the participant's choice and not solicit engagement from the participant, if it is not voluntarily offered. Participants who dominate the discussion should be encouraged to allow other group members to participate. This can be facilitated by addressing the dominating participant and acknowledging their participation and by providing room for other participants to share who may have not shared previously.

The facilitator should also allow the participants to establish group rules prior to engaging in the activities. This allows participants to create a safe environment that is conducive for learning. The facilitator should be mindful that the group establishes the group rules and the facilitator merely facilitates the process.

The facilitator should also be prepared to provide leads for all activities and appropriate discussion starters to control for lack of group participation. An example of a lead: “In my organization, I will begin to share my ideas with others.”

Supportive Materials: Team building exercises, icebreakers, and other activities that foster non-threatening engagement and interaction.

Bumper Collision Activity:

- When the whistle blows “bump” into people.
- The number of whistle blows is the number of people involved in your collision
- Introduce yourselves with your (1) name, (2) occupation, and (3) most important aspect of collaboration.
- One whistle blow means start moving again; each time you should bump into new people.

Underlying Principles of Collaboration:

- Everyone is focused on a common goal.
- All participants are valued.
- Individual perspectives are embraced.
- There is a sense of purpose and urgency.
- Trust and shared responsibility are key.
- It is critical when you are working with team members not to allow disciplines, titles, and positions to overshadow the team’s ultimate goal. The goal, no matter what the setting, should be to serve your students, families, and or client/consumer population better.

The Elements of Effective Collaboration:

- Interpersonal Skills: 1) Respect for diverse opinions, welcome different perspectives, and 2) look for and embrace similarities and differences
- Monitoring of group functioning: Built-in processing, feedback, and evaluation opportunities and follow up throughout the project
- Individual accountability: Agendas, minutes, to-do lists, rotate roles

Why is Cross-Discipline Collaboration Important?

- Effective services to clients
- Diverse program planning
- Client outreach
- Professional development
- Community engagement
- Grant funding opportunities and sustainability

Example of a Study Circle Agenda:

- Introductions
- Client caseloads (problem)
- Brainstorming possible reasons for the problem
- Why are the client caseloads so high?
- What are our current approaches to reducing the number of client caseloads?

Brainstorming Possible Solutions:

- Policy changes
- Practice changes
- Program changes

Future Steps:

- Prioritize issues, conduct department focus groups, facilitate staff/client study circles, and summarize results.
- Research evidence-based programs and share resources if possible.

Challenges of Collaboration:

- Developing trust
- Gaining administrative support
- Finding time for common planning
- Resolving differences of opinion

Summary

The original workshop presentation, conducted at the National Youth At-Risk Conference (2010) in Savannah, Georgia, entitled "Bridging the Gap: A Look at Effective Collaborations Between Social Workers and Psychologists," proved to be very useful to workshop participants. This workshop presentation was presented by the author (school social worker) and Jessica Traylor (school psychologist). The comments from participants were: excellent, very well done, very organized and practical, will use suggestions made, social workers and psychologists working together-great idea, and need more sessions particularly for social workers and psychologists. In rating the usefulness of the presentation's content, the scores were as follows: excellent and very good. In rating the speaker's effectiveness as a presenter, the scores were as follows: excellent and very good. Overall, the participant feedback was positive.

Both presenters have also experienced many positive changes in their school district while field-testing the collaborative mode. There has been an increase in the number of youth participating in group-counseling. Before this collaborative effort, group-counseling sessions were held at two of the four schools, impacting fifteen students each year. Groups are now conducted at all four schools and the alternative school, affecting approximately seventy-four students. Traditionally school social workers and school psychologists were not involved with planning and conducting parent workshops or professional development courses. During the 2008-2009 school year, six parent workshops were held on such topics as self-esteem, positive discipline, child development, and bullying. Professional development was designed and implemented on "Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices." A teacher commented "Once we opened up and began dialoguing the class was interesting and relevant, not just another mandatory training." These workshops and courses received average ratings of 19 out of 20 on feedback surveys.

The evidence illustrates the positive impact that collaboration has on organizational effectiveness. Engaging in collaborative efforts allows for greater success and more effective services and programs. Anyone interested in producing effective results and engaging in organizational growth and development should begin to utilize the collaborative model.

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AN EXAMPLE OF LEADERSHIP TRANSFER OF LEARNING THROUGH THE NCWWI TOOLKIT: LEARNING AND LIVING LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

Training leadership can be challenging, even tricky, as it is such an ambiguous concept. To address this, the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) developed a Leadership Model and Competency Framework to provide guidance to agencies on preparing leaders at all levels. In addition to classroom and on-line training, the NCWWI created *Learning & Living Leadership: A Tool Kit* in 2013, to provide a series of activities to cultivate the leadership competencies from the model to accomplish transfer of learning. The concept of transfer of learning is explained along with an example of activities from the toolkit.

Introduction

Staff development professionals face challenges when it comes to developing the rather vague concept of leadership, both due to a lack of common understanding about the concept and a dearth of evidenced-based programs to prepare and train future leaders. Unlike training for such topics as interviewing, documentation, or assessment, where there is a right or wrong way, the concept of leadership is more ambiguous, making it more difficult to capture in a model and a professional development program. Yet, effective leadership possesses the power to address today's realities and tomorrow's challenges.

To address the lack of leadership models and leadership programs specific to child welfare, the NCWWI created the NCWWI Leadership Model and Competency Framework (hereafter called the "NCWWI Leadership Model") and used it as the foundation for the NCWWI Leadership Academy, a blended learning experience employing both classroom training and online learning modules. Extensive evaluation shows the efficacy of the approach (Leake, Reed, Ebersten, Rienks, & de Guzman, 2014). The NCWWI Leadership Model recommends a framework to inform leadership development at multiple agency levels through the lens of four domains, further articulated in 30 competencies, and on the foundation of five leadership pillars. To promote leadership development beyond the classroom or online learning environment, the NCWWI developed a toolkit based on this model. This document*, Learning & Living*

Leadership: A Tool Kit, offers a series of activities to cultivate the leadership competencies from the model to accomplish transfer of learning. An example of activities from the toolkit is provided later in this article, but first some background on adult learning and transfer of learning.

Adult Learning

An effective leadership development program attends to adult learning principles to achieve transfer of learning. Professionals can teach leadership skills in the classroom, but the classroom rarely, if ever, provides sufficient opportunity for people to become leaders. Instead, adults must experience and live the leadership competencies to become increasingly proficient in them.

Principles of adult learning have been well articulated and researched (Knowles, 1980; Tiberius & Tipping, 1990; Caffarella, & Merriam, 1999). Adults need to know how learning will benefit them before they will be motivated to learn. They also need to take responsibility for their own learning and participate in assessing, planning, implementing, and evaluating that learning.

Adults accumulate a vast array of experiences that they can draw upon to understand and apply to new concepts. Further, adults need to make connections from their previous experiences to new content in order to learn and grow (Gleeson, 1992). Adult learning also happens in multiple settings: formal, such as at schools and universities; informal, through everyday experiences; and non-formal, within opportunities outside the formal system such as on-the-job training (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974).

A greater understanding of adult learning offers significant implications for adult education (Knowles, 1980). Adult learners' experiences especially inform experiential techniques, such as case studies, simulations, practice exercises, and action projects. Learning opportunities also should promote the practical application of new knowledge and information relevant to the adult's experience. Research shows that experience leads to a person's ability to create, retain, and transfer new knowledge (Argote, McEvily, & Reagans, 2003).

Transfer of Learning

Transfer of learning is generally defined as the application of skills and knowledge acquired during classroom training to performance on the job (Cromwell & Kolb, 2004). Effective transfer of learning encompasses activities occurring on a timeline starting before training and happening well after training concludes (Curry, McCarragher, & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2005).

Many see formal classroom training as the most efficient way to prepare child welfare staff for their jobs. However, classroom training alone is not sufficient. Several studies cite an estimate by Baldwin and Ford (1988) that only 10 to 20 percent of what is taught in training actually transfers to the job.

Yet adults must apply their new knowledge and skills for transfer to occur (Broad & Newstrom, 1992). Thus, post-classroom activities ensure that learners sufficiently retain and realize classroom training and its goals. Transfer of knowledge occurs gradually over time as learners practice, reinforce, and strengthen new behaviors in the job setting.

Learning & Living Leadership: A Tool Kit

The NCWWI toolkit, *Learning & Living Leadership*, supports the transfer of learning of competencies central to the NCWWI Leadership Model. Research on adult learning needs and transfer of learning activities makes clear the importance of this toolkit to encourage the application of the NCWWI Leadership Model to the real world of child welfare leadership and practice. Users of the toolkit will develop new learning using the principles of adult learning, as well as transfer learning from the classroom to the field through real-world experiences of learning and living leadership. While specific to the NCWWI model, activities may apply to any leadership development program because they often promote similar competencies such as vision, strategic thinking, and conflict management.

The toolkit suggests three activities to grow leadership for each of 30 competencies and it includes worksheets and potential resources. It also contains detailed guidance on how to implement the toolkit at the agency level. Toolkit users are encouraged to create a personalized leadership plan to develop the competencies most important and relevant to them.

The full kit presents transfer activities to develop each competency within the NCWWI Leadership Model and can be accessed from the NCWWI website at: https://www.ncwwi.org/files/Leadership ToolkitFinal_September2013.pdf**.** (See Appendix for a sample of the *Learning & Living Leadership: A Tool Kit* transfer activities for one competency, *Planning and Organizing* within the *Leading for Results* domain of the NCWWI Leadership Model.)

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Appendix

Activities Related to Competency 3.g., Planning and Organizing

Implementation Science Applied

Professional Development Plan

Cleanup Day

3-g. Competency: Planning and Organizing

Planning and Organizing: *Organizes work, sets priorities, and determines resources requirements; determines necessary sequence of activities needed to achieve goals; handles multiple demands and competing priorities; sets high performance expectations for team members; sets clear performance expectations and objectives; holds others accountable for achieving results; successfully finds resources, training, tools, etc. to support staff needs.*

Activity 1
Relevant for:

- **Executive**
- **Middle Manager**
- **Supervisor**

Implementation Science Applied

In order to improve a new initiative's sustainability, it is important to understand how a new initiative, program, policy, or practice is implemented. Using the concepts of implementation science, assess your agency's progress with implementation science and your current implementation stage.

Complete **Worksheet 3g.A1** to assess using the components of implementation science.

To apply implementation science to a current initiative, program, policy, or practice to more appropriately plan and organize for maximum results.

Activity 2
Relevant for:

- **Middle Manager**
- **Supervisor**

Professional Development Plan

Construct a professional development plan for an individual employee, unit, or program. Carefully consider organizational goals as well as individual needs. Assess practice strengths as well as challenge areas to construct a plan most relevant to the individual, unit, or program. Structure the plan to designate goals and activities over a 12-month period.

Respond to the reflection questions in **Worksheet 3g.A2**, and then use the plan template to construct your plan based upon an analysis of the individual, unit, or program area's professional development needs. As appropriate, involve others in the discussion of professional development needs.

This worksheet can also be used to construct a personal development plan.

GOAL

To develop a professional development plan that sets clear performance expectations and objectives in alignment with the agency's goals.

APPROVAL OR SUPPORT NEEDED ?

Activity 3
Relevant for:

- **Middle Manager**
- **Supervisor**
- **Caseworker**

Cleanup Day

Organize a cleanup day for your office, division, or team. Tackle long-neglected cleaning projects such as cleaning out office supplies or the foster care resource closet. Engage staff in the organization and implementation of the event.

GOAL

To provide an opportunity to fully plan, organize, and execute a specific event relevant to the agency.

APPROVAL OR SUPPORT NEEDED ?

Worksheet 3g.A1
Competency: Planning and Organizing—
Implementation Science Applied

Implementation Science Applied

Driver	What are we doing well in terms of this driver?	What do we need to pay more attention to in terms of this driver?	Other thoughts or comments
Competency Drivers			
Recruitment & Selection			
Training			
Coaching			
Staff Performance Assessment			
Organizational Drivers			
Systems Intervention			
Facilitative Administration			
Stakeholder Engagement			
Data Driven Decision Making			
Cultural Responsiveness			

Leadership Drivers			
Technical			
Adaptive			
What is your current implementation stage? Exploration; Design & Installation; Initial Implementation; Full Implementation; Innovation; Sustainability			

Adapted from *Implementation research: A synthesis of the literature* by D. L. Fixsen, S. F. Naoom, K. A. Blase, R. M. Friedman, & F. Wallace, (2005). Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, The Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, Department of Child & Family Studies.

Worksheet 3g.A2
Competency: Planning and Organizing—Professional Development Plan

The plan may be completed for an individual, unit, or program. The intent of this worksheet is to help you think through the process in order to develop the most meaningful plan based on performance, goals, strengths, interests, and agency requirements.

Reflection Questions

- What are the individual or unit's areas of strength?
- What would the individual (or unit) like to know more about or develop more skills in?
- What are the new approaches to practice? What is the skill level of the individual (or unit) related to these practices?
- What areas of practice could be improved?
- After reviewing data reports for the individual's or unit's caseload, do any patterns indicate an area for potential development?
- What are the individual's (or unit's) goals for the next year?
- Do the individual or unit members possess the knowledge and skills to achieve these goals?
- What performance issues (if any) could professional development opportunities address?
- How many training hours is the individual (or unit) required to take in the next year?
- What formal trainings or other learning opportunities have been identified to fulfill the individual (or unit's) training needs? Who is responsible for exploring other resources?
- What informal learning opportunities could address the individual's (or unit's) professional development needs?
- What is the individual's (or unit's) plan for the next 12 months? (Complete the Professional Development Plan on the next page.)
- With whom will you share the plan?

Professional Development Plan

Name:

Date:

Goals:

1.
2.
3.

Month	Learning Opportunity	Goal Addresses
January		
February		
March		
April		
May		
June		
July		
August		
September		
October		
November		
December		

A TOOL FOR EVALUATING A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE: FROM SATISFACTION TO OUTCOMES

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Abstract

Many reports of leadership development programs have been published, but much remains to be learned about how to assess program effectiveness. This evaluation shows promise by going beyond evaluations that are common in such programs, by including correlational analyses among variables. A correlation matrix was used to assess variation on two variables, Change in Self-Efficacy and Change in the Work Environment, with references to demographic variables and the impact of the program from the point of view of participants. Participants reported increases in self-efficacy, which were associated with the program and its perceived impact.

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Despite a growing number of published reports on leadership development programs, much remains to be learned about determining their effectiveness through rigorous evaluation. The purpose of this paper is to add to this knowledge base by describing a comprehensive, multi-year evaluation of a leadership development program for human services managers, focusing on the data collection instruments used for participants and their supervisors.

A few of the studies of leadership development evaluation will be mentioned here. A meta-analysis of leadership development evaluations by Collins and Holton (2004) assessed designs including posttest only with control group, pretest-posttest with control group, correlational analyses, and single group pretest-posttest. Possible outcomes studied included knowledge, expertise (e.g., behavioral or performance change), and system change (e.g., subordinates' job satisfaction or commitment to the organization, group effectiveness, reduced costs, or improved quality or quantity). Grove, Kibel, and Haas (2007) used an open-systems model using primarily qualitative methods to assess impacts at the individual, organizational, community, or societal levels in fields including public health and community development. Martineau and Patterson (2010) described methods for evaluating individual, group, team, and organizational outcomes, and emphasized the importance of organizational context and incorporating "evaluative thinking" into the program design.

Despite this growing literature, comprehensive evaluation of leadership development programs is not common, partly due to the staff time and funding commitments required; and to date, there is not much research which fully assesses the results of such programs, particularly regarding outcomes and impacts on the organization (Russon & Reinelt, 2004; Day, 2001).

The Leadership Development Program Evaluation

A leadership development program for managers of eight county human service agency managers recently completed its tenth year, including comprehensive evaluations each year. This program is described by Coloma, Gibson, Jones, Packard, Rahiser, and Tucker-Tatlow (this issue). This paper will describe the instruments used to evaluate it, including examples of program outcomes, and implications for research and practice. Additional background on the program and other details on evaluation results are available in Coloma, Gibson, and Packard, (2012).

Instrumentation and Key Findings

The conceptual background for the instrumentation has two sources. First, a "theory of change" (Russon & Reinelt, 2004) reflects the point of origin of the program (the need for executive talent to address organizational goals and strategies in the future), selection of participants, program elements, and expected results. The second conceptual source is Kirkpatrick's (1996) four-level evaluation schema (participant satisfaction, enhanced skills and knowledge, changes in on-the-job behavior, and changes in organizational outcomes).

As noted by Solansky (2010) and others, evaluation data based only on self-reports may be subject to bias. To address this limitation, in an enhancement not common in leadership development evaluations, two instruments were used for the evaluation: one for program participants and one for their supervisors. Participant reports of performance changes were assessed for corroboration by their supervisors, who were asked for their observations regarding changes in their supervisees' performance.

The instrument for program participants includes questions to address each level and one for their supervisors assesses changes in participant behaviors and outcomes. Copies of the instruments, which are administered on line, are available from the senior author. Broadly speaking, the survey has two intended uses: to gather feedback on program activities for program improvement, and to gather data on the effects of the program to assess its impact in the workplace.

The two instruments are administered several times over an 18-month period: pretest; posttest immediately after the training; and three, six, and twelve month follow-ups after the training. Self-assessments of skills and knowledge are completed at each of the five data collection points. Demographic data include county of employment, program area (e.g., child welfare, welfare to work, and administration), years of management experience, span of control, gender, age, ethnicity, and education. Surveys for supervisors are administered at the three follow-up periods.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered for this evaluation. Quantitative changes were tested with the paired *t*-test. Qualitative data were gathered by asking participants and their supervisors to provide up to two examples for each of the areas of possible program impact (e.g., improved quality or quantity of work, performance as a leader or manager). Evaluation elements presented here use Kirkpatrick's (1996) four-level schema.

Level 1: Satisfaction. Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas, and Cannon-Bowers (1991) found that participant satisfaction in terms of expectations being met was correlated with participant outcomes including organizational commitment. Here, participants rate satisfaction with the components of the program (the trainers and presenters, the curriculum, the 360-degree debrief and individual coaching sessions, and the individual development plans); and satisfaction with the program as a whole, upon program completion, using a 5-point Likert scale, where 5 is the highest rating. An open-ended question asks participants to list aspects of the training that were most helpful.

Level 2: Knowledge and skill acquisition. Evaluation at this level focuses on the changes in the knowledge, skill, or values of the participant because of the training. Participants rate their competency regarding each program topic (e.g., leadership, strategic planning, organizational change, fiscal essentials, and critical thinking) before and after each module using a 5-point Likert scale. The pre- and post-differences reflect acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

Level 3: Transfer of learning (TOL). Evaluation at this level focuses on the transferability of the knowledge, skills, and values to the workplace and attempts to provide information on what affect the training had on the participants' ability to apply the new knowledge and skills. In spite of recent growing interest in TOL, Curry, McCarragher, and Dellman-Jenkins (2005) summarized studies indicating that only 10-13% of training learning transferred to the workplace. In their own study of transfer of learning in child welfare casework, however, they found that three months after training, participant reports of transferring their learning were significantly correlated with 11 factors, including supervisor, management, and co-worker support, training relevance, an application plan, participant motivation, and pre-training preparation. All of these except co-worker support are elements of the program being studied here.

Blume, Ford, Baldwin, and Huang (2010) found "moderately strong relationships" between TOL and another variable studied here: self-efficacy, although this decreased over time. They also found that post-training self-efficacy and post-training knowledge both had "small to moderate" effects on transfer (p. 1082).

Beginning at the three-month follow up survey, participants complete the *Opportunity to Apply Learning Scale.* This scale contains ten items where participants were asked yes or no questions about specific opportunities to apply learning. The alpha coefficient was .626. Higher scores on this scale mean the respondent perceives more ability to apply learning. Participants are also asked about the usefulness of each training subject using a 4-point Likert scale from "very useful" to "not at all useful." They are also asked an open-ended question regarding what aspects of the training were most helpful.

In the eighth year of the program, the Application Potential of Professional Learning Inventory (APPLI-33) was used to assess the transfer of learning. This instrument has been found to predict significantly the transfer of learning of trainees (Curry, Lawler, Donnenwirth, & Bergeron, 2011). Participants respond to 33 questions such as "I am motivated to put this training series into practice" and "I have a plan to implement this training series" on a 5-point scale. The authors reported a validity correlation between the APPLI 33 and the transfer criterion for one sample of .57, and a correlation with the full scale of that instrument of .98, and a Chronbach's alpha of .95. In the current study, the composite score was 4.77.

Participants are also asked open-ended questions about how the training may make them better prepared for promotion, their career goals and expected challenges, how the program might contribute to their career, and how they plan to apply what they have learned on the job.

Participants complete a scale called *Agency Culture*. This scale consists of 4 items (e.g., "I had the opportunity to try out what I learned in the program in my agency" and "My supervisor encouraged me to apply what I learned from the program to my work") where the respondent rated their supervisor, co-workers, and organizational climate supportiveness in implementing their learning. Participants respond on a Likert scale with the results from the four items being summed. Higher scores mean the agency supports the transfer of learning. The alpha coefficient (.793) suggests that the scale demonstrated good reliability.

Level 4: Outcomes. Evaluation at this level addresses how the training has affected the performance in the participant's position (measured here in two ways: participant feelings of self-efficacy, changes in performance at work rated by participants and their supervisor, and perceived changes in the work environment), and changes in perceptions of the work environment.

Self-efficacy, defined as "beliefs in one's abilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet situational demands" (Hannah, Avolio, Luthans, & Harms, 2008, p. 671), has been found to be associated with effective performance in organizations (Holden, 1992; Multon, Brown, & and Lent, 1991; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998; Prussia, Anderson, & Manz, 1998; Anderson, Krajewski, Goffin, & Jackson, 2008; Paglis & Green, 2002), and is therefore used here as an outcome measure. This is measured using the 10-item *Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale* (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008). These authors asserted, "High validity and reliability of the scale has been demonstrated in many studies across various research contexts and ethnically diverse populations" (p. 158). This scale asks participants to rate themselves on a 5-point Likert scale, where 5 is the highest rating, and 1 is the lowest score, on ten different competencies, including items such as "I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough" and "I can usually handle whatever comes my way." Items were summed to provide a score. Increases in scores over time were taken as evidence of the effectiveness of the training in increasing the ability of workers to perform their job better. This scale had good reliability (alpha = .786).

Changes in job performance since program completion are measured by self-reports and supervisor assessments at the three, six, and twelve month follow-ups in terms of increased responsibilities, improved quality or quantity of work, improved performance as a leader, and better performance as a manager. *Impact: Participant View* is a count of "yes" responses by the participant on each of these items (i.e., there were changes in their performance), which are then summed. For each of these areas, participants also rated the extent to which the changes in their work performance were the result of the program, on a 4-point scale, from "to a great extent" to "not at all." This variable is labeled *Effects of Program* in Table 1. In an enhancement not common in leadership development evaluations, participant reports of performance changes were assessed for corroboration by their supervisors, who were asked for their observations regarding changes in these same areas for their supervisees' performance. This approach addresses the criticism of self-reports that they may be providing data about perceptions and not actual behavior. Beyond face validity and content validity, the correlation of measures on this scale with self-efficacy scores, as described below, can be seen as criterion validity because, as noted above, self-efficacy has been found to be related to individuals' performance in organizations.

Table 1. Correlation Matrix

	Changes in self-efficacy	Changes in work environment	Less than BA	BA	Graduate work	Gender	Black	Staff 1-100	Other position	Effects at 3 months	Effects at 12 months
Changes in work environment	.020										
Less than BA	-.176 ++	.070									
BA	.217*	.000	-.229**								
Graduate work	.181++	.011	-.110+	-.166*							
Gender	.155 +	-.082	.006	.048	.193**						
Black	-.104	-.224**	-.082	.028	.044	.186*					
Staff 1-100	-.037	-.258**	-.091	.046	-.001	-.068	-.012				
Other position	.169++	.075	-.043	.080	-.043	-.022	.193**	-.151*			
Effects of the program at 3 months	.422**	-.136	-.052	.000	.085	-.032	.022	-.006	.179++		
Effects of the program at 12 months	.351**	.050	.020	.043	.081	-.048	.086	-.046	-.046	.146	
Impact: Participant View at 3 months	.338**	-.216*	-.145	.134	.234*	.170+	.148	.086	-.032	.349**	-.086
Impact: Participant View at 12 months	.216*	.050	-.167	.002	-.080	.054	-.100	.023	-.036	.167	.325*

*P<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, ++p<.10, +p<.15

The *Work Environment Scale*, with six items (e.g., “In my organization, there is a climate that supports and recognizes the importance of learning” and “In my organization, management is open to changing the way things are done”), is given at all five data collection points by the participant and her or his supervisor. It measures the extent to which the environment is seen as becoming supportive of participant career development. This scale is an attempt to identify macro level change, assuming that after successive waves of participants return to their agency they, with continued support from agency executive leadership and supervisors, would help transform the work environment. Higher scale scores mean a more positive work environment. The reliability as measured by the alpha was .879.

Examples of Outcome Assessments

To show how some of the evaluation data are used, a correlation matrix (see Table 1) shows how some demographic and outcomes variables are associated. Two variables, *Changes in self-efficacy* and *Changes in the work environment*, represent the difference between the pre-test and three and twelve month follow-up scores. One hypothesis suggested that the program would lead to increases in participants’ self-efficacy, which, as noted above, has been associated in other studies with improved performance. A second hypothesis suggested that the program would lead to work environments that are seen by participants as supporting their ongoing development and a third hypothesis suggested that the program would lead to improved performance by participants.

Educational level and how much “impact” a worker thinks she or he has in the work place are significantly associated with self-efficaciousness. Workers with either a BA ($r=.217$, $p<.05$) or some graduate work ($r=.181$, $p<.10$) reported more self-efficacy gains over the training. Having a graduate degree is only approaching significance; that may be related to the relatively low number of participants with an advanced degree (about 15% of the participants). Participants without a BA reported feeling less efficacy ($r=-.176$, $p<.10$), but this is only trending toward significance.

All of the impact variables are positively and significantly associated with self-efficacy. The direction of this relationship cannot be determined because data are correlational. It may be that increased efficacy led to more impact, or that individuals who reported more positive changes in their career were more efficacious before training. Also associated with feeling less efficacious was the job classification labeled “other position” ($r=-.169$, $p<.10$), but only at a level which approached significance. This group was made up of policy analysts, trainers, and others. It may be that this group felt the training was less relevant to their needs, and they therefore perceived less learning.

Changes in the work environment were predicted by being African American and number of staff for whom the person was responsible. African Americans perceived the environment as being less responsive to their career development ($r=-.224$, $p<.05$) which probably has something to do with historic racism African Americans have encountered in the workplace. However, it should be noted that no associations with race/ethnicity were noted with any of the *Impact* variables. Therefore, it appears that African Americans are experiencing the same positive changes in their work as the other participants.

It is particularly notable that changes in self-efficacy were associated with the other dependent variable: the extent to which participants saw changes in the four aspects of work performance (increased responsibilities, increased quality or quantity of work, improved performance as a leader, and improved performance as a manager), and the extent to which the participants saw the program as a factor in these changes. This was true at both the three and twelve month follow-ups. This finding supports earlier research (e.g., Hannah, et al., 2008, and others cited above) with further detail that participants noted the extent to which they believed these changes were due to the program.

Before reviewing some of the potential uses of this instrument, several limitations, including threats to validity such as history, will be noted. First, because this survey is done with a different cohort each year, findings that include all years reflect slightly different experiences of respondents. For example, over the years, there have been occasional minor changes in module content in response to evaluation findings and to ensure that content remained relevant. On the other hand, module subjects and their trainers have remained quite constant over the years. One exception is that directors of the participating agencies, who present each year on some topics, such as leadership, organizational change, and political savvy, vary, largely based on their schedule availability.

Conditions in the agencies have likely changed over the years; and other historical factors could affect evaluation scores. Therefore, it would not be possible to say definitively that any changes reflected were due to any exact extent to the program. Partly for this reason, a multiple methods evaluation process is used. Triangulating several evaluation methods does help to strengthen the overall conclusions.

One goal of the program was to change over time the work environment of the agencies in which participants worked. The directors of these agencies, through their leadership, have been working to create this change, and they expect that participants of this program and their supervisors would also be able to create changes in their work environments. The measure here, changes in the work environment, relies upon measures of participants' perceptions, and of course reflects only the views of these participants at certain points in time. Organization-wide changes in this variable could only be fully measured with surveys of much larger numbers of employees. Therefore, results here represent limited perspectives on changes in the work environment. The directors expect that over time, as more of their managers complete this program, these changes will be greater.

As is common in many studies, this instrument relies upon self-report data, and therefore responses might not always reflect reality. This limitation is partially addressed by using supervisor's responses to corroborate workers' reports.

Because of the nature of a leadership development program such as this, control or comparison groups cannot be used, limiting the ability to establish cause and effect. The use of a comparison group that had not undergone the training might help to determine precisely the effect of training, but this is not possible because the program was designed to select high performers with potential for participation.

Implications for Practice and Research

The use of this evaluation instrument offers several implications for practice: the development, implementation, and evaluation of leadership development initiatives. First, these positive findings suggest that the program content and the evaluation methods used here are relevant for applications elsewhere. Program elements used here, which have also been shown in other studies to have impacts, include off-site training, 360-degree feedback, individual development plans, coaching, and networking.

Second, this highlights the importance of addressing the dynamics of the transfer of learning to the workplace to enhance unit or program performance, offering guidelines for practicing managers and leaders. The essential factor of ongoing involvement of the agency directors has included their hands-on role in initial planning, their involvement as trainers, their annual review of evaluation findings, and their continuing support through selecting promising staff for participation each year. Particularly valuable was their practice wisdom conveyed through the sessions on political savvy and working with elected officials.

Measurement of managerial performance, including the performance of programs within managers' areas of responsibility, are still not at an advanced stage, but this study's inclusion of supervisor ratings of participants was seen as a valuable step forward in evaluating program impact.

Data on participant views of self-efficacy and their organizations' transfer of learning climates, given their importance in potentially improving participant and organizational outcomes, represent opportunities for further study.

The greatest advances in the evaluation of such programs would be the development of methods to gather more powerful follow up outcome data, ideally using other relevant unit or program performance measures; and using more effective methods of connecting such improvements to program activities. Measures of pre-post performance of the programs overseen by participants would be powerful data, but the methodological and logistical challenges with this are substantial. Nevertheless, future research should be able to refine and strengthen the follow-up measurement processes here, providing greater validity to evaluations of programs in the future.

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A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE FOR EIGHT COUNTY HUMAN SERVICE AGENCIES: RESULTS AFTER NINE YEARS

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Abstract

Leadership development programs and their evaluations have received increasing attention in recent years; but evaluation methods are often limited to qualitative reports, satisfaction data from participants, and anecdotal data about program impacts. A leadership development initiative in eight county human service agencies recently completed its tenth year. Its evaluation used evaluation methods that are not yet common in leadership development programs, including data from participants' supervisors. This evaluation found positive results at four levels: satisfaction with program activities; improvement in knowledge and skills regarding topics covered in the program; opportunities to transfer knowledge to the work setting; and increased self-efficacy, responsibilities, quantity or quality of work, promotability, and performance as a leader and manager.

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Introduction

With the upcoming retirements of baby boom leaders of human service and nonprofit organizations, the need for development of new highly skilled leaders has become acute. To address this need, a consortium of eight county human service directors commissioned the creation of a leadership development program for their managers in order to strengthen their talent pools for promotions into the executive ranks. This program recently completed its tenth year, and has helped develop 220 leaders. An ongoing evaluation of the program at four levels has demonstrated positive outcomes.

The purpose of this paper is to describe this leadership development program, summarizing the components of the program and presenting some findings from its ongoing evaluation. New knowledge will be presented in both areas: leadership development program design and activities, and evaluation methods for such programs. Further detail is available in Packard, Tucker-Tatlow, Waechter, Rahiser, and Dudley (2005); and Coloma, Gibson, and Packard (2012).

Leadership development and leadership development evaluation have received increasing attention in recent years. The research reported here contributes to this growing literature by demonstrating the use of evaluation methods not yet common in leadership development programs and which offer promise for advancing knowledge in this area.

Leadership Development

Leadership development programs, "structured, off-the-job events that bring individuals together for shared learning and development experiences" (McCauley, 2008, p. 24) are probably the most common explicitly designed development method. These programs are often considered to be only a minor part of leadership development (Aude, Keller-Glaze, Riley, & Fallsen, 2007), with on-the-job experiences, challenges, setbacks, and learning from others seen as more important. Nevertheless, leadership development programs are an important factor in many large organizations. One survey of workforce learning professionals found that the average amount spent on each employee participating in an executive development program was $12,370 (American Society for Training and Development, 2008). The program described here is a traditional off-site training program, but also has elements that address the work environment, to enhance opportunities for the transfer of new learning.

Formal leadership development programs (e.g., Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004; Van Velsor, McCauley, & Ruderman, 2010) are available through specialized training organizations, in-house programs for a particular organization, and consortia in which similar organizations pool resources. In the human services field, the setting for the program evaluated here, a large-scale executive development program for county managers has operated in the San Francisco Bay area since 1994 (Austin, Weisner, Schrandt, Glezos-Bell, & Murtaza, 2006). A similar program provides leadership development training for managers of nonprofit organizations (Austin, Regan, Samples, Schwartz, & Carnochan, 2011).

The most common conceptualization of leadership development focuses on skills and abilities, often described as competencies, although a focus on transforming a leader's worldviews, and developing network relationships and sense of identity, are seen as important.

After an extensive review of the literature, Leskiw and Singh (2007, p. 444), concluded that “Six key factors were found to be vital for effective leadership development: a thorough needs assessment, the selection of a suitable audience, the design of an appropriate infrastructure to support the initiative, the design and implementation of an entire learning system, an evaluation system, and corresponding actions to reward success and improve on deficiencies.” In a similar vein, McCauley (2008) listed success factors including alignment of leadership development objectives with business strategies; top-level executive support; shared responsibility between line managers and human resources staff; manager accountability for the development of subordinates; competency models; multiple development methods; and evaluation. All of these except involvement of human resources staff were included in the program described here.

The Program

The program presented here was developed to train middle managers in eight county human service agencies to create a talent pool for promotion and to enhance organizational performance. Annual budgets of these agencies range from $50 million to over $3 billion. The directors of these agencies have been meeting quarterly since 2001 as a consortium in which members discuss and develop strategies for issues facing public human services by engaging in strategy discussions, research, policy development, and succession planning. In 2003, the directors noted that in the coming years, many of their executive managers would retire, creating a pressing need for succession planning and the development of middle managers who could move into executive leadership positions when these senior executives retired.

To respond, staff of the consortium, including a faculty consultant from the school of social work overseeing the project, completed a best practices review of leadership development programs and lists of specific competencies commonly seen as important in human services leadership. In addition to generic management competency models, social work competencies (Wimpfheimer, 2004; Menefee, 2000) were considered. These findings were presented to the directors, who, in collaboration with staff, developed a set of competencies relevant to their agencies which would guide development of the program. Staff also conducted four focus groups with 45 managers of these agencies. Then, with additional consultation from other leadership development experts, staff designed a program which was approved by the directors for implementation.

In a review of 55 leadership development programs, Russon and Reinelt (2004) noted that the use of a “theory of change” could be helpful in evaluating a leadership development program. In this case, explicit attention was paid to the development and use of a theory of change for the program, not only to aid in its evaluation but also to show the importance of it as one aspect of a strategic human resources management process intended to improve individual manager performance and ultimately organizational performance. This model also supports the expectation that individual-level changes for participants would eventually lead to organization-level changes in the learning environment and program outcomes. The leadership development program was intended to be augmented by on-the-job development activities such as stretch assignments and mentoring (currently only informal in this model).

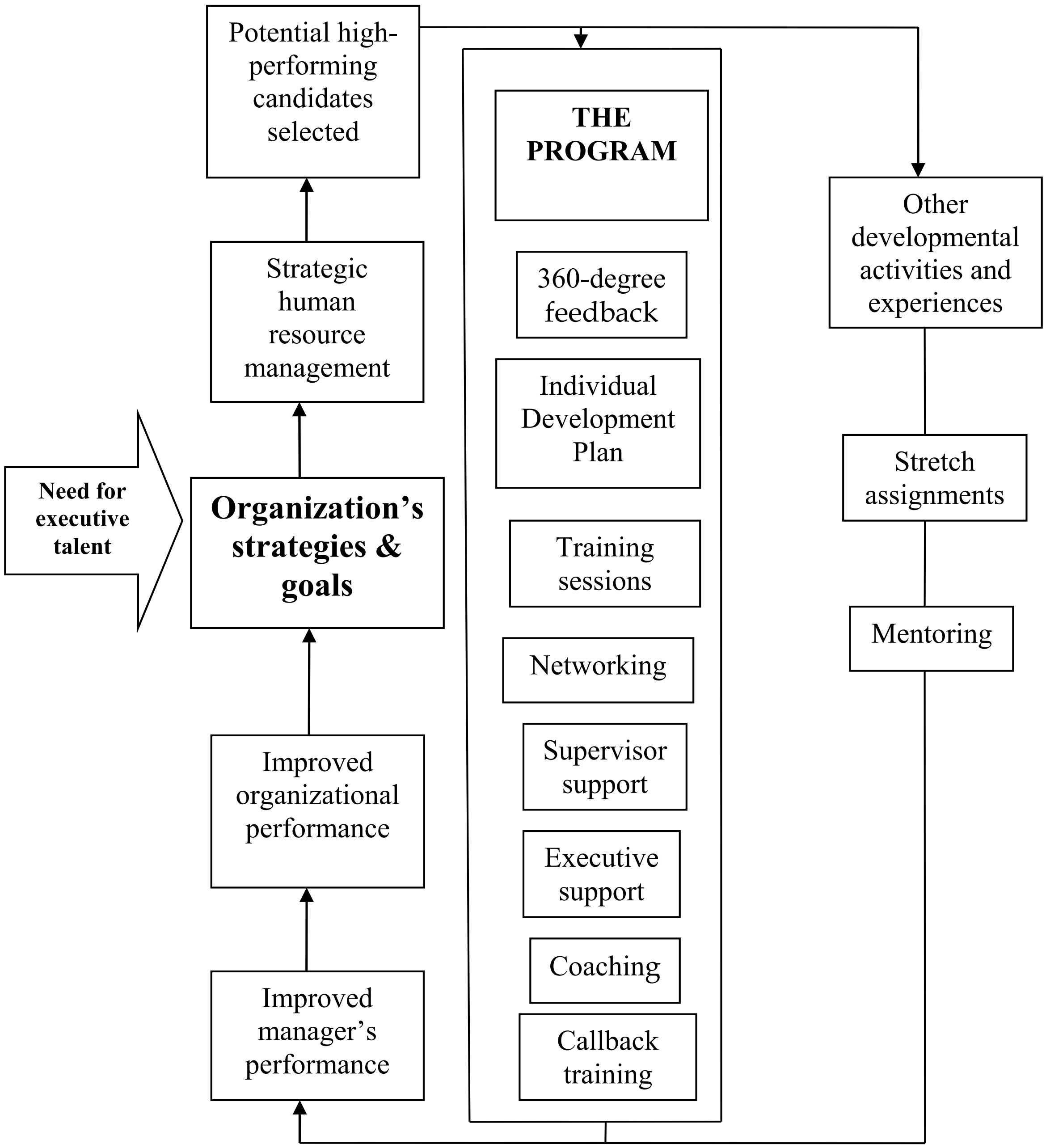
Figure 1 represents the theory of change that informed the implementation and evaluation of this program. It shows the point of origin—the need for executive talent to address organizational goals and strategies—and how the program, in the middle column, is seen as contributing to improved manager and organizational performance.

Common elements of leadership development are formal development programs, multisource (360-degree) feedback, executive coaching, action learning, and mentoring (McCauley, 2008). All of these except mentoring have been included in the program described here. Core elements in this program include 360-degree feedback, individual development plans, workshop sessions conducted by both professional trainers and the directors of the participating agencies, individual journaling, coaching, a book club, ongoing support by agency directors, action learning projects, and intensive opportunities for dialogue and networking. Also included are annual follow-up sessions to review progress on action plans and "call back" trainings offered to program alumni to meet for a day of additional training based on emerging needs. The first class, with 24 participants, began in 2005. The program recently completed its tenth year.

This program currently includes 12 half days of training in five blocks of two- to three-days each, delivered over a period of five months. After participants are selected by their directors, they attend an orientation session three months prior to beginning the training. This includes a review of the curriculum and a discussion regarding participant and agency director expectations.

Prior to the training sessions, each of the participants completes a 360-degree feedback process and an individual development plan. The 360-degree feedback process is done on line using an instrument for executive managers, (Envisia Learning, n.d.), with the training program coordinator conducting individual debriefing sessions to review results. The instrument chosen covered nearly all of the key competencies identified by the directors. As detailed above, competencies were developed from a competency-job analysis of executive and managerial positions, with some items drawn from two already validated multi-rater feedback tools.

Figure 1. Leadership Theory of Change



To enhance the transfer of learning to the workplace and build a climate of organizational learning, participants' supervisors are involved before, during, and after the program. Some counties also have taken suggestions from their participants regarding developing a mentoring program and a book club.

Training sessions currently include the following topics:

- Leadership
- Essential critical thinking skills and processes for executives
- Coaching for results
- Organizational change
- Strategic management
- Presentation skills
- Fiscal essentials
- Managing accountability/knowledge management
- Media relations/interview skills
- Multi-generations in the work place
- Political savvy (including a mock session of a meeting of elected officials: the county board of supervisors)
- Executive critical thinking/writing
- Ethics and your career

Professional trainers, agency directors, and faculty consultants conduct training sessions. Over the years, some agency directors have varied the sessions they trained, including leadership, organizational change, and political savvy, based on their schedule availability, and some retirements.

At the end of each training day, participants are given time for individual journaling to reflect upon and accent learnings. During the five months of training, the program coordinator holds individual coaching sessions, mostly by telephone, with participants to review progress on their individual action plans.

"Call Back" trainings held for program graduates have been used to add further development content in subjects such as fiscal essentials, multi-generations in the workplace, and coaching.

Evaluation of the Program

Consistent with current attention to evidence-based practice, a thorough evaluation plan was developed to assess the effects of this program. Selected findings are presented here. Study methods and other findings are presented in Packard and Jones (this issue).

Over the first seven annual iterations of the program, 192 participants completed the program, for an average of 27 participants per annual program. In Year 1, directors nominated participants at or near top levels of management for the program; in subsequent years, they nominated a larger proportion of managers from lower levels. Nevertheless, the average years of management experience of each cohort has remained stable, clustering around 10 years. Participants represent a diverse group in terms of gender (59% female); race or ethnicity (47% White, 23% Hispanic, 20% African American, and 9% Asian Pacific Islander); education level; and program area (e.g., Child Welfare, 34%; Welfare to Work, 17%; Medicaid, 14%; Administrative, 13%; Other, 22%). There have not been notable trends in variations regarding the demographic characteristics of participants over the years. Evaluation findings will be presented here using D. Kirkpatrick and J. Kirkpatrick's (1996) four levels.

Level 1: Satisfaction/Opinion/Reaction. Data collected at this level help to evaluate the training experience and training methods, and help to determine what should be changed about the program. Participants rated satisfaction with the components of the program upon program completion using a 5-point Likert scale. Scores for Years 1-8 were over 4 regarding the trainers/presenters, the curriculum, and the 360-degree assessment and individual debrief and coaching sessions, except for some scores below 4 in years one, two, and four.

Participants were asked to rate the extent to which the training was a good use of their time. For years one through eight, 97% of respondents indicated that the program was "very useful" or "useful." They were also asked an open-ended question regarding what aspects of the training were most helpful. In Year 8, the most frequent response was *Coaching for Results (n=7),* followed by *Media Relations, Networking, Strategic Planning, and Board of Supervisors' Relations*.

Level 2: Knowledge and skill acquisition. For Year 8 participants, each topic had a statistically significant increase from pre- to post-training. The subject with the largest gain in perceived competence was *Strategic Planning and Management*. The subject with the second-largest gain was *Fiscal Essentials*. The subject with the highest self-rating of skill at the posttest was *Strategic Planning and Management*.

Level 3: Transfer of Learning. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they had been able to apply each topic in the curriculum and the usefulness of each topic. In Year 7, the 12-month follow-up showed that at least 50% of graduates reported opportunities to apply learning from 12 of 14 session subjects. Two topics participants found they were less able to apply, were those for which mid-management may not offer many opportunities: speaking at Board of Supervisors (elected officials) meetings and media relations.

Participants also were asked about the usefulness of each training subject. All mean scores were between "Useful" and "Very useful," with 8 of the 15 closer to "Very useful."

For Years 1-8, 78% of respondents said this training would make them better prepared for promotion. Respondents also described some ways in which the training may make them better prepared for promotion, including increased skills (11 responses), gaining experience of a higher position (5), broadened perspectives (3), and four general comments. A number of respondents also gave examples of how the training program would contribute to their career growth, and how they could apply what they learned.

Level 4: Outcomes. On a self-efficacy scale, respondents reported significant gains from the pretest measure to the posttest, suggesting that they felt better able to carry out each competency after training. These gains were sustained at each follow-up.

A count of the changes in participants' performance (e.g., increased responsibilities, improved performance as a leader), showed an increase in responsibilities as reported by both participant and supervisor, but this change only approached statistical significance. Regarding the degree to which the training program was seen as a factor in the reported job changes, scores suggested that workers thought the training contributed at least moderately to the positive changes they experienced on the job. For each of these changes, the mean participant rating of the extent to which the program was a factor was between "to a moderate extent" and "to a great extent." Participants saw change in two areas: receiving more responsibility after the training (58% reporting this at 12 months), and improved quality or quantity of work (68% reporting). Notably, supervisors reported more changes than did workers, seeing changes in all four areas.

Summary and Conclusions

This evaluation found positive results of a leadership development for county managers at four levels: satisfaction with program activities; improvements in knowledge and skills regarding topics covered in the program; opportunities to transfer knowledge to the work setting; and increased self-efficacy, responsibilities, quantity or quality of work, promotability, and performance as a leader and manager. They thought the training contributed at least moderately to the positive changes they experienced on the job. Supervisors reported more positive changes in performance than their subordinates did.

One additional evaluation method is worth mentioning: stakeholder satisfaction. While not an official measure, it is notable that in every year since this program was initiated, the directors have nominated more potential participants than can be accommodated. They continue to support the program with funds, trainee release time for sessions, and, significantly, their personal time as trainers and participants in orientation sessions and follow-up meetings.

Because evaluation of such programs is not at an advanced stage, this study adds to the knowledge base regarding effective leadership development processes and evaluation methods, and suggests opportunities and challenges for improving such programs and their evaluations. These findings suggest that the training and development methods used here are relevant for applications elsewhere. The use of agency directors as trainers is not commonly reported in the literature (an exception is the program described by Austin, et al., 2006), and role-playing of meetings with elected officials has not been found in the literature.

Ongoing support and follow up, through coaching by the project coordinator, annual review meetings including directors and participants, "call back" sessions for additional training of program graduates, and involvement of participant supervisors to assess application of learning and provide support were seen as key success factors that should be considered in the design of any leadership development program.

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DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION FINDINGS FROM AN ONLINE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM FOR CHILD WELFARE SUPERVISORS

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Abstract

Improvements in technology have provided opportunities for child welfare professional development that extend far beyond traditional classroom learning. Increasingly, training programs are using distance and blended learning approaches to reach a wider audience and to teach complex job-related skills in new and innovative ways. This study evaluates a distance learning program designed to build leadership skills for supervisors in public, private, and tribal child welfare agencies. This study used a multi-method design that included pre-post and follow-up self-report measures of learning and transfer of learning, as well as participant semi-structured interviews to learn about barriers and facilitators of transfer of learning. Results indicated that training participants increased their leadership competency from baseline to post-training, with gains persisting a year after beginning the training. Implications for utilizing a distance learning approach with child welfare supervisors are addressed.

Background

Many organizations rely on formal training programs to build the skills of practitioners and improve performance. Formal classroom training has long been seen as the most efficient way to prepare human service workers for their jobs and to improve person-job fit; however, the resources devoted to such professional development efforts are substantial. Since the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Children's Bureau began monitoring state child welfare services through the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) in 2000, data indicate that many child welfare agencies struggle to achieve federally identified outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being for children and families (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2010). Agencies increasingly count on formal training as the primary mechanism for improving the skills of the workforce which in turn, is believed to improve agency performance and outcomes for children and families (Curry, McCarragher, & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2005; Milner & Hornsby, 2004). In fact, it is a federal requirement for states to operate a staff development and training program for new and ongoing staff. It is no wonder, then, that organizations are continually searching for more effective and cost-efficient mechanisms for the professional development of their workforce.

In particular, the demand for effective child welfare supervisor training has increased as the importance of the supervisor role in agency outcomes has been recognized (Brittain & Potter, 2009). Numerous studies show that supervisors play a key role in child welfare organizations by preparing and supporting frontline practitioners to work effectively with children and families and acting as purveyors of the agency's policies and practice models (Fisher, 2009; Frey, LeBeau, Kindler, Behan, Morales, & Freundlich, 2012). Among supervisors' most critical responsibilities are administrative tasks, support for practitioners and education (Westbrook, Ellis, & Ellett, 2006), and the promotion of positive organizational cultures that support achievement and family-centered practice (Glisson & Green, 2006). All of these tasks require supervisors' utilization of leadership skills, however, leadership training for human services professionals, especially supervisors, is lacking in the field (Preston, 2005). Supervisors are in need of professional development to learn leadership skills that allow them to manage organizational change and solve complex problems (Bernotavicz, McDaniel, Brittain, & Dickinson, 2013).

Rapid improvements in the quality and availability of technology have led to a burgeoning field in distance learning. Distance learning greatly expands the access and reach of training programs to geographically dispersed participants. Some studies indicate that distance learning formats are equally effective, or even superior to traditional classroom training (Harker & Koutsantoni, 2005). As access to technology increases, so do the number of trainings that are being adapted to a distance learning format through video-conferencing, webinars, or online modularized trainings (Eddy & Tannenbaum, 2003). Distance learning may be synchronous (i.e., all learners are "present" at the same time), or asynchronous, where learners access the course materials on their own schedules (Lever-Duffy, McDonald, & Mizell, 2007). The distance learning format may also include both synchronous and asynchronous components. Although some distance learning programs may cause participants to feel isolated, leading to disengagement (Stonebraker & Hazeltine, 2004), blended learning approaches that are a mix of online and face-to-face training create a shared social context within the technological environment that can enhance learning and satisfaction for learners (Johnson, Hornik, & Salas, 2008; Lyons, Reysen, & Pierce, 2012).

The National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) developed the Leadership Academy for Supervisors (LAS) in 2009, as an online professional development program to build the leadership skills of child welfare supervisors across the country. The program was created to address public, private, and tribal child welfare system needs for a competency-based training that would help experienced supervisors improve management and leadership skills. The LAS curriculum was based on the NCWWI Leadership Competency Framework (NCWWI, 2010), which describes a conceptual model for leadership and identifies the leadership competencies—key skills that child welfare staff at every level of the organization need to lead effectively. The

LAS included three major components: six self-paced online modules organized by the Leadership Competency Model, stand-alone training modules on specific topics of related interest, and facilitated peer networking sessions. The peer networking sessions brought participants together virtually through a facilitated webinar meeting after the completion of each module. Through the course of the training, supervisors were asked to identify or develop a “change initiative” for their agency. The change initiatives were projects that the participants were encouraged to develop and implement as a way to practice using the competencies addressed in the LAS. (For a full description of the program, see French, Ebersten, Bernotavicz, & Leake, in this issue.)

The LAS offered two ways for supervisors to participate: as part of national cohort of self-directed participants, or as part of a state cohort. Supervisors who participated in the self-directed national cohort could register for the LAS on their own and join facilitated peer networking sessions after each module so they could discuss the content and application with other self-directed supervisors. Alternatively, supervisors could attend the LAS as part of a group from their state or county agency. In the state cohort approach, requirements, incentives, and available supports for participation varied by each state. In several states, the peer networking sessions were conducted face-to-face, rather than through a webinar. Since 2009, ten states have convened cohorts of supervisors to participate in the LAS. The number of supervisors completing the entire LAS through the state cohort model was much higher than the number of supervisors completing the LAS in self-directed cohorts, which had a high rate of attrition.

The current study used a multi-method approach to examine outcomes from the first five years of the LAS, including supervisors’ ability to learn key leadership competencies through an online training and their application and continued development of those leadership skills on the job. This is part of a larger developmental evaluation study that focused on the creation and initial implementation of the LAS, including the evolution of the academy from an online-only program to more of a blended learning format (see French et al., in this issue).

Evaluation Questions

1. Did the LAS participants learn the leadership competencies that were addressed in the training modules?
2. Did the LAS participants transfer their knowledge and skills to the workplace?
3. What factors acted as facilitators or barriers to the transfer of learning?
4. How did participating as part of a state cohort versus self-directed impact supervisors’ experience?

Method

Evaluation Design

To study the LAS, the NCWWI used a developmental evaluation approach and a mixed-methods design. Developmental evaluation is an approach that supports the growth and implementation of new or changing initiatives in complex environments by providing evaluative feedback throughout the development process (Patton, 2011). The first five years of the LAS involved the development of a Leadership Competency Model that served as the foundation of the competency-based online training, which included synchronous and asynchronous components. This type of program delivery required an evaluation approach that yielded just-in-time information about how the academy was working during rollout, as well as flexibility to adjust the outcome study to a training design that was continually changing during the first few years of implementation. The evaluation measured learning of key leadership competencies and transfer of that learning to the job. Evaluators also looked more deeply at the distance learning platform, including how participants were recruited and prepared for the program, how they progressed through the modules and experienced the training, and how elements of their work environments acted as facilitators or barriers to their learning.

Procedure

Process evaluation. The process evaluation monitored how participants progressed through the modules and experienced the training, as well as their reactions to training. We examined how the LAS program adapted and changed in the early stages of development, guided by continuous evaluation feedback to the project team through written reports and monthly meetings to review data. In the second year of the project, due to high attrition levels under the self-directed approach, where individual supervisors across the country registered and participated independently, the LAS changed to include a state-coordinated approach, where supervisors trained as part of a cohort with supports and accountability from the state (see French et al., in this issue). To learn more about the experiences of supervisors in the state-coordinated approach compared to the self-directed approach, interviews were conducted with training directors and 33 randomly selected supervisors from the first five states that participated in the cohort approach. All 25 participants who graduated from the self-directed national cohort were asked to participate in an interview; 16 agreed to be interviewed. Forty-nine interviews were conducted by telephone, each from approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour in length. As an incentive, interview participants received a $20 gift card to their choice of vendor.

Outcome evaluation. The evaluation of the LAS consisted of pre- and post-assessments for each training module and follow-up assessments at three-, six-, and twelve-months after supervisors began the training. Links to the pre- and post-questionnaires were accessed by participants through the LAS training module, with reminders included at the beginning and end of each module's curriculum. Participants received links to the follow-up questionnaires via email invitation and were sent up to three reminder emails beginning three months after they started the first module. In order to accommodate the self-paced nature of the LAS training curriculum, the follow-up questionnaires included skip logic so that blocks of questions (such as modules' competencies) would only display if the respondents indicated they had completed specific modules. All questionnaires were administered online through Qualtrics Research Suite survey software, and participation was voluntary.

In fall of 2011, we made two revisions to our procedures in order to improve participation in the outcome evaluation. First, we began issuing survey incentives to respondents who were randomly selected each quarter in a drawing; four $50 Amazon.com gift cards were issued for those who completed both the pre-training and 6-month follow-up surveys and two $100 gift cards were offered to respondents of the 12-month follow-up survey. Second, we revised our pretest assessment procedure. Prior to this, a pretest assessment was attached to each core curriculum module—*Foundations of Leadership, Leading in Context, Leading People, Leading for Results,* and *Leading Change*—and respondents were assessed only on competencies that were specific to that module (i.e., before beginning each module, participants were asked to complete a pretest that gauged participants' competencies related only to that module's content, and once the module was complete, they were asked to complete a posttest). In order to reduce survey burden, increase pretest responses, and gain a clearer picture of participants' competencies before attending any training, we combined the competencies from all modules into a single pretest assessment, which was administered before the first module, *Foundations of Leadership*. The evaluation protocol was approved by the evaluators' university institutional review board (IRB).

Participants

As of 2013, approximately 1,000 child welfare supervisors had registered and participated in at least one core curriculum module of the LAS. Of these participants, 851 individuals participated in the program evaluation by completing at least one of the survey instruments. The sample is predominantly female (87%) and of various ethnic backgrounds: 2% American Indian/Alaska Native, 23% Black or African American, 3% Hispanic or Latino, 69% White/non-Hispanic, and 3% other. Most participants had a Bachelor's degree (41%) or MSW (27%), with 1% reporting a high school diploma, 8% a BSW, 19% a Master's degree, and 4% other. On average, participants had been supervisors for five years but had been in the child welfare field an average of 15 years. A large majority (90%) worked in public agencies.

Measures

Measures included in survey instruments are described below. Survey items were structured on a 5-point agreement scale from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

Demographics. The registration form for the LAS included items about respondents' gender, education, current position, their reason for participating in the LAS, and years of experience in child welfare.

Training satisfaction. The training satisfaction measure was modified from the scale developed by Wehrmann, Shin, and Poertner (2002) and administered after each module. It includes 12 items that ask about relevance of content, confidence in applying the content, and delivery of the training, such as, "I was able to navigate through the training module with little difficulty" and "I can see how I will be able to apply the skills I learned in training to my work setting." Across modules, Cronbach's alpha reliability estimates (1951) ranged from .93 to .95.

Competencies. The training competencies were developed collaboratively by evaluators and the training curriculum developers. The measure is a self-assessment of supervisors' knowledge of the learning objectives across all five of the core curriculum modules. The original measure consisted of 80 items but was revised in the fall of 2011. A review by evaluators and curriculum developers resulted in items being removed if they were no longer reflective of the training content and items being added, resulting in a measure with 69 items, distributed across the core curriculum modules. At follow-up (three-, six-, and twelve-months after start of the *Foundations of Leadership* module), a subset of 46 items was administered and changed slightly so that the verbiage reflected the evolution from knowledge and understanding to performance of competencies and skill mastery through application (see Table 1). For each time-point and across modules, reliability estimate ranges were .89 to .95 at pretest, .91 to .98 at posttest, .83 to .92 at 3 months, .87 to .95 at 6 months, and .91 to .95 at 12 months.

Transfer of learning. The Learning Transfer Systems Inventory (Holton, Bates, & Ruona, W.E.A., 2000) was adapted with the authors' permission for use with child welfare supervisors. The adapted version contained 48 items covering 15 constructs that group into three domains: *Motivation to Transfer* (α = .86), *Personal Ability* (α = .87), and *Work Environment* (α = .83). The measure provides a comprehensive view of the factors that influence transfer of learning from the training setting to the workplace, including personal capacity, learner readiness, and peer support.

Table 1. Example Competency Statements

Module	Pre-Post Statement	Follow-up Statement
Foundations of Leadership	I can provide examples of how supervisors as leaders must adopt a systems perspective for their work.	I have adopted a systems perspective (getting on the balcony) in my work as a supervisor.
Leading in Context	I can describe the continuum of skills in the partnering process (communication, coordination, collaboration, negotiation, and advocacy).	I am using the continuum of skills in the partnering process (communication, coordination, collaboration, negotiating, and advocacy).
Leading People	I can identify strategies to mitigate the stress of secondary trauma in my staff.	I am applying strategies to mitigate the stress of secondary trauma in my staff.
Leading for Results	I can apply the RESULTS Framework to agency reports (gathered in pre-work).	I have used the RESULTS framework to analyze agency reports.
Leading Change	I know how to develop resilience and renewal in the midst of change.	I am implementing my plan to develop resilience and renewal in the midst of change.

Change initiative implementation. If respondents indicated that they were developing a change initiative in the follow-up survey, their implementation progress was measured using three items developed for the study, "I am confident that I can implement my change initiative," "I have begun to implement my change initiative as planned," and "My change initiative has had a positive effect on my agency." Reliability estimates for the scale were .86 at three months, .85 at six months, and .91 at twelve months.

Semi-structured interviews. The telephone interviews with the LAS participants and state coordinators were conducted through a semi-structured process that used an interview guide but allowed for more spontaneous discussion of issues that emerged through the conversation. The interviewer took extensive notes during each conversation (largely verbatim) to enhance the authenticity of the participant's voice in the analysis and reporting of findings.

Results

Respondents

Across all quantitative survey instruments, 851 of the LAS participants completed a pre- or posttest, *or* follow-up questionnaire. Data reported in this paper were collected between the fall of 2009 and August 2013. The number of responses collected vary by survey time-point (pre- and posttests, or three-, six-, and twelve-month follow-ups) and by training module (see Table 2). Overall, 560 individuals completed one or more pretest surveys, 453 completed one or more posttest surveys, and 347 completed one or more follow-up surveys. Of the 851 respondents, 51% were part of a state cohort and 49% were national self-directed participants.

Question 1: Learning Outcomes

To test for differences over time in pre-post competency levels, we used SPSS 20.0 to conduct factorial repeated measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for each module. Sample sizes ranged from 82 cases (*Leading People*) to 160 cases (*Foundations of Leadership*). Results indicated statistically significant competency gains from pretest to posttest across modules as indicated in Table 3.

Question 2: Transfer of Learning

To test whether respondents applied their learning to their job and continued to develop their skills through application (the competencies tapped knowledge in the pre-post assessment and skill utilization in the follow-up assessments), we conducted repeated measures ANOVA, including pre-, post-, and six-month follow-up.

Table 2. Questionnaires Received

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Pretest</th><th>Posttest</th><th>3 months</th><th>6 months</th><th>12 months</th></tr>
<tr><td>Foundations of Leadership</td><td>517</td><td>328</td><td rowspan="5">248[a]</td><td rowspan="5">203[a]</td><td rowspan="5">146[a]</td></tr>
<tr><td>Leading in Context</td><td>376</td><td>250</td></tr>
<tr><td>Leading People</td><td>333</td><td>159</td></tr>
<tr><td>Leading for Results</td><td>355</td><td>196</td></tr>
<tr><td>Leading Change</td><td>334</td><td>190</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unique Responses</td><td>560</td><td>453</td><td colspan="3">347 across all follow-ups</td></tr>
</table>

[a]Follow-up surveys included measures across multiple training modules, dependent on individuals' progress through the training

To get the cleanest test of change over time, these analyses utilized a subsample of respondents who: (1) received the revised competency pretest (completing the pretest in a single survey at the beginning of the training versus a subset of competencies administered at the beginning of each module), and (2) completed a pretest *and* posttest of any given module as well as a 6 month follow-up. The resulting sample size ranged from 24 to 33, depending on the module. Results indicated statistically significant changes in competency levels over time across all modules (see Table 4). Follow-up contrasts indicated that across all modules, respondents' six-month competencies were significantly higher than pretest levels. Due to small sample size, we were unable to test change from pretest to twelve months.

A second indicator of transfer of learning was the degree to which participants were able to implement the systems change initiatives that they identified and developed over the course of the program. Across all 347 follow-up respondents, 78% of supervisors indicated they were implementing a change initiative. A repeated measures ANOVA testing change over time (3 months, 6 months, and 12 months) in respondents' implementation of their change initiatives approached significance, $F(2, 106) = 2.80$, $p = .07$, $\eta^2 = .05$. However, a follow-up contrast indicated that change initiative implementation was significantly higher at 12 months when compared to 3 months, $F(1, 53) = 4.22$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2 = .07$.

Question 3: Barriers and Facilitators to Transfer of Learning

Using progress on change implementation as an indicator of transfer of learning, we tested whether supervisors' progress three months and six months after beginning the program, was predicted by supervisors' motivation to transfer their learning, their perceptions of their own ability, and their work environment. At 3 months, supervisors' leadership competency level and work environment were significant predictors of implementation progress (see Table 5). At 6 months, concurrent competency level was highly predictive, while work environment was a trend-level predictor.

Table 3. Pretest to Posttest Training Competency Gains across the LAS Modules

Module	***n***	**Pretest** ***M (SD)***	**Posttest** ***M (SD)***	***F***	**Effect Size (η^2)**
Foundations of Leadership	160	3.21 (0.53)	3.81 (0.38)	187.91**	.54
Leading in Context	131	3.15 (0.64)	3.91 (0.38)	108.71**	.46
Leading People	82	3.53 (0.54)	3.96 (0.38)	42.78**	.35
Leading for Results	99	3.38 (0.57)	3.87 (0.56)	39.48**	.29
Leading Change	89	3.32 (0.57)	3.96 (0.40)	82.54**	.49

$^{**}p < .01$

Table 4. Competency Score Changes from Pretest to 6 Months across All LAS Modules

Module	n	Pretest M (SD)	Posttest M (SD)	6 months M (SD)	F	Effect Size (η^2)
Foundations of Leadership	33	3.17 (0.53)	3.85 (0.34)	3.82 (0.43)	30.56**	.49
Leading in Context	31	3.13 (0.69)	3.91 (0.36)	3.77 (0.48)	24.31**	.45
Leading People	25	3.51 (0.65)	3.93 (0.39)	3.81 (0.51)	8.86**	.27
Leading for Results	25	3.43 (0.60)	3.89 (0.47)	3.70 (0.67)	6.33**	.21
Leading Change	24	3.39 (0.66)	3.96 (0.40)	3.74 (0.60)	7.71**	.25

**$p < .01$

Table 5. Summary of Simple Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Change Initiative Implementation 3 and 6 months into Training

	3 Months (N =141)			6 Months (N =130)		
Variable	B	$SE\ B$	β	B	$SE\ B$	β
Motivation to Transfer	-0.04	0.19	-.02	-0.06	0.15	-.03
Individual Ability	-0.02	0.15	-.01	0.02	0.13	.02
Work Environment	0.41	0.15	.25**	0.23	0.13	.15†
Concurrent Competency	0.83	0.25	.24**	0.98	0.12	.61**
R^2	.29			.46		
F	14.13**			26.73**		

†$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

Question 4: State Cohort Versus Self-Directed

Analyses were conducted to determine whether supervisors who participated as part of a state cohort differed from self-directed/national cohort supervisors on pre-post competencies, transfer of learning, or training satisfaction.

Results from factorial repeated measures ANOVAs conducted for each module to test for differences in pre-post competency levels between respondents who were in state-coordinated cohorts and those who were self-directed participants, revealed that cohort participation was not a significant factor: *Foundations of Leadership*, $F(1, 158) = 1.00$, $p = .32$; *Leading in Context*,

F(1, 129) = 0.001, p = .97; *Leading People*, F(1, 80) = 0.51, p = .48; *Leading for Results*, F(1, 97) = 0.77, p = .38; *and Leading Change*, F(1, 87) = 0.13, p = .72.

Due to small sample size, analyses of transfer of learning that included the six-month follow-up could not be conducted using participation type as a factor. We conducted a repeated measures ANOVA testing change over time (three-, six-, and twelve months) in our second indicator of transfer of learning (implementation of change initiative), and found that state cohort participants did not differ from their self-directed peers in the degree to which they had implemented their change initiative, $F(1, 52) = 3.07$, $p = .09$. However, it should be noted that the sample of national self-directed participants was quite small, with only 14 respondents across all three time-points.

Training satisfaction. Overall, supervisors' ratings of their satisfaction with the training sessions indicated moderate satisfaction. Mean (and standard deviation) scores across modules ranged from $M(314) = 4.04$ (SD = 0.50) for the *Foundations of Leadership* module to M(196) = 3.88 (SD = 0.52) for the *Leading for Results* module. A series of independent samples *t* tests revealed that national self-directed participants reported significantly higher training satisfaction than did state cohort participants for four of the five training modules: *Foundations of Leadership*, $t(312) = 5.29$; *Leading in Context*, $t(244) = 2.84$; *Leading for Results*, $t(194) = 3.65$; and *Leading Change*, $t(187) = 3.29$; all $p < .01$.

Qualitative Results: Supervisors' Experiences with the LAS

Data from interview transcripts were analyzed using a typical qualitative data analytic approach. Two separate evaluators conducted textual analysis of all transcripts, identifying key words and phrases that emerged across multiple interviews. When there were differences in coding, the two coders discussed the specific item until they reached consensus. In order to maintain respondents' confidentiality, potentially identifying information has been excluded in the presentation of findings.

Self-directed national cohort participants. Interviews with the 16 supervisors who successfully completed the LAS revealed a highly motivated group of supervisors who wanted to improve their supervision and were seeking professional development opportunities that were not available through their agencies. They were drawn to the LAS because it was free, easy to access, and gave them the opportunity to interact with other supervisors in the national cohort. On average, self-directed participants completed the LAS in about 9.25 months, with a range of 6 weeks to 2 years. Most supervisors completed the training at night at home, or on weekends, rather than during office hours. Participants all agreed that the LAS increased their leadership skills, particularly around improving personal leadership styles, promoting internal and external collaboration, adopting a systems-perspective, and managing data. In this sample, 7 of the 16 supervisors had successfully implemented their change initiative. Barriers to implementation included agency turnover and some supervisors having to provide casework coverage; time management or conflicting work demands; and resistance from staff, management, or community partners. Those who were able to implement their change initiative reported high levels of support from their manager and other agency staff.

For most managers the LAS met their expectations, and for three participants, exceeded their expectations. In general, participants found the training provided varied content information and resources, beyond supervision issues. As one supervisor noted, “there were a lot of ‘wow’ moments for me.” Another participant became “an advocate for the training” and went on to address the time commitment for the LAS as “time you can’t afford to not give.” In general, supervisors valued the experience of the LAS and expressed more overall satisfaction and motivation to use their learning compared to supervisors in the state-directed cohorts. Supervisors also provided critical feedback about technology challenges and suggestions for module improvements.

State-directed cohort participants. Thirty-three supervisors across five state cohorts participated in qualitative interviews. Supervisors in state cohorts were much more likely to complete the LAS program, and more likely to implement a change initiative. In many of the cohorts, attendance was mandatory and monitored by the agency, with sanctions for noncompletion, and rewards such as continuing education credits or acknowledgements in their personnel files, for completion. Some of the supervisors in the early state cohorts expressed frustration and resentment that the LAS program was mandatory. This feedback led to changes in the model so that states used the LAS as a reward and incentive for supervisors who showed excellence and promise as a leader. When supervisors were invited to participate as part of a select group, and expectations about the training were clearly communicated, supervisors responded much more favorably. State cohort supervisors, in contrast to the self-directed supervisors, reported using a combination of office and home (or after-hours in the office) time to complete the LAS. A key theme that emerged from these interviews was the importance of peer support, which was a distinct advantage for the state cohort participants. Many respondents described the face-to-face Leadership Academy for Supervisors network sessions as opportunities to strengthen peer support within their state. One supervisor was proud of the fact that, “We built a support system with each other that we hadn’t had before.”

Themes across cohorts. Almost without exception, all participants (both self-directed and state cohort) noted the extensive time commitment required by the LAS as the key challenge in completing the program. This was true across states and regardless of the length of time from start to completion. In other words, no matter how much time respondents were given to complete the entire program or to complete modules within the program, the time commitment was noted as the greatest challenge. However, supervisors also reported successful strategies for managing their time for the LAS and utilizing peer support, including covering workloads for one another, and scheduling time in the office to complete modules as a group.

The importance of supervisor support was another key theme, with a range of responses noted. For some national self-directed participants, their supervisors were not even aware that they were participating in the training. For state cohort participants, the supervisors' managers had knowledge of their participation, at a minimum, and had signed off to approve their participation and to stay informed of their progress. In some cases, this was minimal. As one interviewee noted, "When he/she was asked to ask us about it, he/she did." Another supervisor described supervision sessions in which the LAS was discussed: "We talked about superficial things – whether I was meeting the deadlines, how far along I was in it – but not about the content." A supervisor in the self-directed cohort wished there had been some acknowledgment of the work put into completing the training for a year. For others, their supervisor demonstrated a much greater interest in their progress and discussed this consistently in supervision meetings. One person noted, "My supervisor and I talked a lot about it, where I was with it, how it was going. At monthly management meetings we talked about what we learned." Another level of support was demonstrated when supervisors received tangible help. As one person stated, "My supervisor was great –he/she took on some of my duties in order to help me complete it." Another noted, "I knew my supervisor would help if I needed it. I don't think I ever asked for it, but I knew it was there." For one national self-directed participant, even though the supervisor was not aware of their participation in the LAS, the supervisor was "always in my corner. He/She is really supportive about anything that improves the agency."

In discussing the leadership training with supervisors, many noted ways in which the experience had increased their own self-awareness and empowered them to make changes in their supervisory methods and styles. In some instances, the focus was on raising awareness of their own need for growth: "The self-reflection pieces were really good, really important—helped me to focus on areas in which I need to develop." Another supervisor noted, "It allowed me to explore my own strengths and weaknesses, and increase my awareness about these—how easy it is to get bogged down in negativity and how that impacts our workers."

The most frequently noted concept was that of perspective. The metaphor of getting on the balcony seemed to be a particularly poignant one, mentioned as one of most memorable aspects of the curriculum.

> It made me become more aware of how I did things as a supervisor… the balcony… the looking down—perspective. I was just talking to one of my workers (before you called) about perspective. She was talking about poor choices that a child was making, and I tried to help her to understand her perspective on the child's behavior. (Program participant)

The final key theme that emerged from the data was a construct that we have labeled "outcome focus." This category captures a variety of ways in which supervisors expressed how they used the LAS to create a stronger focus on client outcomes in their units and in their agencies. One key area in which the outcome focus was demonstrated was strengthening the supervision approach to expedite permanency for children:

> I've learned to recognize what I want from my staff—accountability about what is happening when we're moving kids towards permanency. Instead of asking, "What treatment are we doing?" or, "What group home are they in?" I'm asking them, "What is the permanency plan and how are we going to get there?" (Program participant)

Discussion

This study is an evaluation of the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute's Leadership Academy for Supervisors. The LAS evaluation used a developmental competency measure that assessed knowledge and understanding at the beginning of the training program and at post assessments and then shifted to usage of skills for the follow-up assessments. The learning theory behind this approach is that skills taught in training may be partially acquired during training and must be practiced on the job for the learning to continue. As the positive behavior is reinforced, skill acquisition is enhanced, and the learning continues to transfer to the job, thus improving job performance (Broad & Newstrom, 1992). Results revealed that supervisors who participated in the LAS and progressed sequentially through all of the modules, demonstrated competency gains in leadership from pre to post assessment that persisted at the six month follow-up. These findings suggest that the LAS participants were applying the knowledge and skills they learned in the online modules to their jobs and continued to develop their skills through practice.

We also found that the majority of the LAS supervisors were able to successfully develop and implement a change initiative over the course of a year and that leadership competency gains predicted implementation of these change initiatives. Through these multiple measures of transfer of learning, as well as qualitative data containing rich detailed stories about supervisors' leadership development and their efforts to apply their learning as they implemented changes in their agencies, we began to get a deeper and more nuanced look at skill development. Finally, the finding that supervisors' leadership competency level and work environment were the strongest predictors of change initiative implementation progress three- and six-months after supervisors started the training indicates that learning and practicing key competencies within a supportive work environment is critical to transfer of learning.

A training program that is well designed and delivered with fidelity is an essential component to building a child welfare workforce that can effectively meet the needs of children and families. In child welfare, supervisors are considered critical for the success of their organizations and there is a great need for training that builds leadership skills of supervisors to manage effectively both up and down the organization. Distance learning has much promise as a mechanism for delivering training to supervisors across the country, with cost benefits realized through economies of scale. However, distance learning has its challenges, in that it can be isolating in its lack of social interaction. In distance learning programs where there are high demands on the learner and low accountability, attrition rates are high. This pattern played out in the early iteration of the LAS program. Despite high numbers of learners who began the LAS in the self-directed group, only a handful were motivated enough to make it through the intensive program on their own without the explicit support and expectation of their agencies. Interviews and survey results showed that the self-directed supervisors who did complete the LAS were more highly motivated to learn and transfer their learning than were other supervisors in the study. Adjustment of the approach to provide both social support and accountability to participants resulted in a much higher completion rate for participants. Interview participants emphasized the need for support from both supervisors and peers in using the leadership concepts on the job, as well as a work environment that encouraged supervisors take on more leadership roles and responsibilities.

Evaluating distance and blended learning programs presents unique challenges compared to evaluation of traditional classroom training. The LAS training was composed of multiple, sequenced, online modules, and it was important to track how participants progressed through the training: how long it took them to get through each module, whether they were more likely to complete a module in one sitting or with starts and stops, whether they did the module activities, and how much time elapsed between modules. This formative information was critical to program developers so they could adjust the module content and delivery during the pilot phase. It also helped to clarify expectations for participants and for managers so they could allocate appropriate resources to allow staff to attend training. There were also technical challenges related to tracking when participants completed a module, so that evaluation surveys could be appropriately timed. With hundreds of participants moving through the modules at different rates, the evaluators had to work closely with the training providers and programmers to gather the survey data. The greatest challenges were missing data and motivating participants to complete the surveys without the face-to-face interactions and relationships. Some of the successful strategies that the evaluators implemented to increase the response rate included reducing the number of overall surveys, clearly embedding the links to the survey into the modules, and enlisting state training partners to encourage participation of their supervisors.

Limitations

The first few years of the LAS focused on developmental and process evaluation and the outcome findings presented in this study are still exploratory. One limitation of the study was having inconsistent respondents across questionnaires. The training was meant to attract various types of participants, from supervisors who were interested in one or two modules to those who were interested in learning the entire core curriculum in the recommended sequential order (see French, et al. in this issue). The pre-post and follow-up questionnaires were originally designed to be linked to each module as stand-alone trainings rather than as parts of a progressive training program. For process evaluation, it was useful to know whether participants were learning each module's competencies without reference to other modules. However, that design does not allow for rigorous testing of the outcomes of participants who completed the full LAS.

Another limitation of the outcome evaluation was the lack of a true posttest or follow-up assessment that was equivalent across individuals. Although adjustments were made to try to capture a true pretest measure before participants began the core curriculum modules, varied rates of progress through the modules created the biggest challenge: capturing a true posttest measure of all competencies upon completion of all the LAS modules.

Reliance on self-report to assess competency and transfer of learning was a measurement limitation of the study. Although the competency measures demonstrated high reliability across time points, self-report is, by its nature, an indicator of a participant's perceived competency and transfer of learning. However, the use of self-report measures for those constructs appears to be valid as the qualitative data also suggested that supervisors were transferring their learning from the training to the job. Through the mixed methods design of this study, we were able to support the self-reported quantitative findings of transfer of learning through qualitative reports.

Recommendations for Evaluating Online Learning

Few published studies evaluate the effectiveness of distance or blended learning social work education, let alone training for child welfare professionals. Some studies have focused on comparing distance and blended learning formats to traditional classroom training (York, 2008); however, some researchers argue that distance learning programs differ from traditional training only in design and delivery method, and that these programs need to be evaluated on the basis of fundamental learning theories and training research (Ayala, 2009). To this end, it is important that evaluation of distance learning programs be theory-driven, and encompass strong measurement of factors that have been demonstrated to lead to learning, learning transfer, job performance, and client outcomes. These critical factors include characteristics of the training program itself (content validity, delivery of training, trainer effectiveness), the individual learner (motivation, readiness, expectation, self-efficacy), and the work environment (support, agency climate, agency capacity). Finally, it is critical that evaluators of training programs continue to develop strategies to tie learning to individual job performance, agency service delivery to children and families, and child and family outcomes.

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