

ENHANCING LEADERSHIP EDUCATION: INSIGHTS FROM A SEMINAR EVALUATION

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Definitions are central to both the practice and the power of leadership. This deceptively simple supposition was the basis for an elective doctoral leadership seminar at Illinois State University designed and taught by Lyman in Fall 2005, and replicated by Gardner in Spring 2007. We (Lyman & Gardner) featured the same texts and stimulated students' reframing of leadership by using critical and dialogic approaches to defining the concept. Conversations between us about how the seminar design contributed to similar learning outcomes in both sessions led to this co-authored paper. In order to probe how individuals define and understand leadership, we used Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) principles to construct a reflective evaluation of the learning outcomes of the two sessions of the seminar. The article that follows presents the results of the subsequent SOTL analysis and explores how-teaching emerging leadership theories might affect leadership practices.

The seminar curriculum was constructed with representative definitions from leadership theories but was also grounded in transformative adult learning theory so students could engage in bridging theory and practice. Designing a seminar around emerging leadership theories makes sense because "past understandings of leadership from a paradigm of power and dominance are not equal to the challenges of today and have in fact contributed to the challenges of today" (Lyman, Ashby, & Tripses, 2005, p. 143). Leadership remains a highly contested concept (Chapman, Sackney, & Astin, 1999; Furman, 2002; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Willower & Forsyth, 1999). Rather than advancing a particular definition of leadership, the ultimate goal of the seminar was to contribute to

developing authentic leaders whose practices are connected with and reflect their beliefs. Begley (2004) calls authentic leadership “a metaphor for professionally effective, ethically sound, and consciously reflective practices in educational administration” (pp. 4-5). The article begins with the conceptual frameworks that grounded our assumptions and analysis. Next we provide details of the seminar design and evaluation process, and finally we present and interpret student responses to highlight insights that connect the teaching of leadership theory and practice.

Conceptual Frameworks

Definitions are important because our understanding of complex concepts influences our actions (Beck, 1999; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Rost, 1991; Senge, 1990). Lambert (2003) articulates that relationship stating, “How we define leadership frames how people will participate in it” (p. 4). The course was constructed around foundational scholarship that promotes the power of metaphoric language to shape thought and thereby action. Transformative learning theory and elements of the scholarship of teaching and learning were also used.

Scholarship Related to the Power of Definitions

Writings by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Beck (1999), Rost (1991), and Senge (1990) support the assumption underlying the seminar, that changes in one’s definition of leadership could change one’s leadership practices. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) wrote about the power of metaphor to shape people’s lives, explaining that “metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought and action” (p. 3). They argued, however, that our “concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities” (p. 3). They also posited that our language is an important source of evidence for what that conceptual system is like, and concluded that

“we act according to the way we conceive of things” (p. 5). In other words, definitions matter to our behaviors. Explicit or implicit metaphors in our definitions of leadership are influenced by and influence our leadership practices.

One example of the power of metaphors is found in Beck’s (1999) analysis of the images or metaphors of educational community, which was grounded in Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) work on the power of metaphors, and Morgan’s (1986) images of organization. Working from a large database culled from the literature she concluded that there were at least six metaphoric dimensions of community: ontological, psychological, structural, behavioral, political, and ethical. Beck argued that these multiple layers of meaning added to the richness of the concept, even as they have potentially contributed to confusion about it and cautioned against oversimplification. Beck concluded that knowing about how metaphors shape our thinking and reasoning contributes to “imaginative envisionment of possibilities for acting” (Johnson, 1993, p. 202, as cited in Beck, 1999).

Rost (1991), who conducted an extensive analysis of the definitions of leadership in the literature from 1900 through the 1980s, found that the predominant patterns of thought about leadership reflected images of management. He asserted that as an interdisciplinary field, leadership studies “has a culture of definitional permissiveness and relativity” (p. 6). He continued, “There are almost no arguments about definitions in the literature on leadership. There are almost no critiques of other scholars’ definitions, and what little there is, appears in the literature of the 1980s” (p. 6). Essentially, he argued that from 1900 to 1979 all definitions were definitions of management rather than leadership. He found the same to be true of the leadership definitions of the 1980s, based on a review of 312 books, chapters, and articles. In his view the leadership scholars and practitioners in the twentieth century “understand leadership based on the values and cultural norms of the industrial paradigm” (p. xiv). Not content with critique, Rost asserted that the post-industrial paradigm was calling forth a new definition of leadership more appropriate for the 21st century. Rost concluded his book with suggestions to scholars, consultants and trainers, and

practitioners for improving the study and practice of leadership in the twenty-first century by first “transforming our understanding of leadership” (p. xv).

Finally, Senge’s (1990) work about the importance of understanding ones mental models further underscores the relationship between definition and action. Elaborating on reasons for inaction, Senge argued that “new insights fail to get put into practice because they conflict with deeply held internal images of how the world works, images that limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting” (p. 174) – e.g. older ideas of management rather than newer ideas of leadership. He writes, after referencing the work of cognitive scientists, “Our ‘mental models’ determine not only how we make sense of the world, but how we take action” (p. 175), suggesting again the link between concept (definition) and practice. He explained that the power of mental models is that they affect what we see, which then affects what we do. If we *see* management because our definitions are based on management images then we *do* management in leadership positions. Senge believes mental models both impede and create learning by dictating perceptions and behavior, contending that the 21st century demands new mental models of leadership. He writes, “Just as ‘linear thinking’ dominates most mental models used for critical decisions today, the learning organizations of the future will make key decisions based on shared understandings of interrelationships and patterns of change” (p. 204).

Transformative Adult Learning Theory

Transformative adult learning theory further supported the seminar’s definitional approach to teaching leadership. Specifically, the decision to use primary texts, along with critical reflection and discourse, corresponded to the basic tenets of transformative learning theory. Transformative learning theory builds on an adult education literature that assumes adults learn best when their experiences and preferences are honored and integrated into teaching and learning practices (Knowles, 1984). Adult learning, like reflective learning, is grounded in “self-conscious awareness of how they (adults) come to know what they know;

an awareness of the reasoning, assumptions, evidence, and justifications that underlie their beliefs that something is true" (Brown, 2006, p. 3). Transformative theory takes this a step further by bringing self-consciously critical reflection and discourse into the classroom. Experience remains primary in this view of adult learning, such that new information or points of view are merely resources in the learning process which is fundamentally "a social process, and discourse (that) becomes central to making meaning" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 10).

The use of primary rather than secondary sources is an example of a transformative teaching practice because interpretation does not come from authority but rather draws on the experiences and variations in perspective available in the graduate classroom. The goal is to raise the possibility of changing the learner's habits of mind and point of view in some meaningful way by creating the conditions that help them reframe their experiences using the new resources. Primary sources are mined for their tacit assumptions, competing interpretations, qualities of argument and evidence, and alternative perspectives. Both written sources and the social discourse in the classroom make it possible for the learning adults to engage their own habits of mind and points of view in critically reflective ways. Mezirow (1997) takes critical reflection and discourse on "one's taken-for-granted frame of reference" as "an indispensable dimension of learning for adapting to change" (p. 9). The critical habits of mind that include reflection and reframing meanings through social discourse create the possibility that experience in the graduate classroom can have the same transformative power that is commonly attributed to professional experience.

Brown's (2006) discussion of transformative andragogy suggests that the instructional processes of leadership courses must feature attention to beliefs, create experiences, and give opportunities for reflection. She writes, "Transformative learning is a process of experiential learning, critical self-reflection, and rational discourse that can be stimulated by people, events, or changes in context which challenge the learner's basic assumptions of the world. Transformative learning leads to a new way of seeing" (p. 2).

Individual reflection and rational discourse with colleagues must be key components of courses aiming for transformative learning, for changing beliefs about what leadership is and is not. From our perspectives (Lyman & Gardner), the seminar sessions became for the cohort members “extended and repeated conversations that evolve[d] over time into a culture of careful listening and cautious openness to new perspectives” (Brown, 2006, p. 3). Confronted with the challenges of their positions of leadership, this openness to new perspectives coupled with their new definitions led them to see and enact new possibilities in their leadership practices.

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

The process of investigating graduate student learning resulting from critically engaging core definitions of leadership is an example of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (Boyer, 1990; Shulman, 2004). The scholarship of teaching and learning begins with the premise that “just as students must be actively engaged in formulating their own learning questions and thinking critically about them, so teachers must be actively engaged in formulating questions about learning and the impact of their teaching on it” (Cross & Steadman, 1996, p. 2). Research that attempts to answer critical questions about teaching and learning becomes scholarship in two ways: first when faculty reflect systematically on teaching and learning; and second, when they make their findings public (Cambridge, 2001). First, as a reflective set of practices, the scholarship of teaching and learning is situated within a broader tradition of autonomous adult learning by which a knowledge base for teaching and learning develops and is refined (Brookfield, 1991; Schon, 1983). Second, by making the results of teaching and learning scholarship public, exemplary approaches and practices are disseminated and improved through peer critique. The dissemination of results situates this scholarship within a familiar faculty role as researcher. Reflective learning by faculty stands within the tradition of adult education that applies to both teacher and student in graduate level professional education.

Whereas the students testified in their final papers to the learning they experienced in the seminar, the process of writing this article contributed to our learning as teachers. From a SOTL perspective the article completes the reciprocal reflective learning cycle set in motion by student and teacher interaction. Next we present the seminar design, including participants, texts, teaching and learning practices. We conclude the section with a preliminary look at students' observations about effects of changes in their leadership definitions.

The Seminar Design

Whereas more typical leadership courses may rely on secondary sources and focus on the historical evolution of leadership theory, this seminar used primary source readings and focused on theoretical perspectives that have emerged in the past 30 years. The goals of the seminar as stated on the syllabus were:

Through dialogue with each other, seminar participants will review the mental models surrounding the traditional conceptions of leadership and will explore emerging ideas about leadership that have the potential to reculture schools. This seminar is designed to give participants the opportunity to develop further their own understandings of leadership through reflection and in-depth reading of groundbreaking books about leadership. Attention will be given to practical applications of the ideas explored, controversial topics, and issues associated with research on leadership.

The opportunity for in-depth reading and discussion of primary sources, processes of critical reflection required by the writing assignments, exploring the paradigm of constructive postmodernism, and focusing on developing and articulating one's own definition of leadership were key processes of the seminar.

Seminar Participants

The seminar was held Fall 2005 at an off campus location for students in an Illinois State University P-12 doctoral cohort, with Lyman as the instructor. The 12 participants included three elementary principals, five secondary administrators, and four central office administrators. The four women and eight men were from a variety of school districts in terms of size and type, including both large and small districts in suburban, urban, and rural areas as well as small towns. The seminar met 11 times from September 1 to December 1.

During Spring 2007, Gardner taught the seminar on campus using the same syllabus with eight students coming mainly from the higher education doctoral program. The eight participants included one high school assistant principal with many years experience in special education, one high school dean with a counseling background, one department chair from a small liberal arts college, two student affairs professionals, and three international higher education scholars seeking their doctorates in the U.S. at Illinois State University. The six women and two men met for six extended Saturday sessions from February to May 2007.

The Texts

Emerging leadership perspectives presented in the six required textbooks were: servant leadership (Greenleaf, 2003); leadership as adaptive work (Heifetz, 1994); constructivist leadership (Lambert, Walker, Zimmerman, Cooper, Lambert, M. D., Gardner, & Szabo, 2002); relational leadership (Drath, 2001); a post-industrial leadership paradigm (Rost, 1991); and leadership in a quantum age (Wheatley, 1999). Each offers a different approach to defining leadership.

Greenleaf's (2003) essay *The Servant as Leader*, published as part of a collection of his essays in 1977, features a story about how "leadership was bestowed upon a person who was by nature a servant" (p. 21). Greenleaf's parable and new paradigm of the servant leader has had enormous direct and indirect influence. Although he articulated no actual

definition of leadership, Greenleaf implicitly offered a redefinition of leadership as service and stewardship. He comes close to a definition in these words: "The very essence of leadership, *going out ahead to show the way* [emphasis added], derives from more than usual openness to inspiration" (p. 28).

Heifetz (1994) acknowledges that "the way we talk about leadership betrays confusion" (p. 13). His position is, "Rather than define leadership either as a position of authority in a social structure or as a personal set of characteristics, we may find it a great deal more useful to define leadership as an activity" (p. 20). In particular, he articulates the concept of adaptive work as the essence of leadership: "Adaptive work consists of the learning required to address conflicts in the values people hold, or to diminish the gap between the values people stand for and the reality they face. Adaptive work requires a change in values, beliefs, or behaviors" (p. 22). He frames leadership as a process of education: "Leadership is a special sort of educating in which the teacher raises the problems, questions, options, interpretations, and perspectives, often without answers, gauging all the while when to push through and when to hold steady" (pp. 244-245).

Lambert et al. (2002) focus on leadership in schools, charging that many preparation programs are still based on outdated ideas about leadership. Lambert addresses the transformative power of leadership, writing, "Leadership as critical social and intellectual transformation is achieved through reciprocal, purposeful learning in community" (p. xviii). She defines constructivist leadership as "the reciprocal processes that enable participants in an educational community to construct meanings that lead toward a common purpose of schooling" (p. 36). This is a redefining that situates leadership in "the processes among us rather than in the skills or disposition of a leader" (p. 42), with equity "deeply embedded in these patterns" of relationships (p. 44). Conversation is the central process in building patterns of relationships.

Drath (2001) directly addresses what he calls the confusion surrounding our understanding of leadership. He writes, "At the heart of our current confusion about

leadership is the persistence of a taken-for-granted idea about leadership. . . . I propose that this persistent central idea is that leadership is something leaders possess as an individual attribute and, therefore, leadership is given by, created by, leaders. This is the idea of leadership that is causing our confusion" (p. xiv). Rather than a definition of leadership he advances three principles of leadership – principles "deeper than a definition, and . . . deeper than a leadership style" (p. 11). Drath believes that all leadership is a process of shared meaning-making.

Rost (1991), previously discussed, concludes that leadership and management have essentially been equated with each other. He writes that "leadership as good management is the twentieth century [industrial] paradigm of leadership" (p. 94). It features "those great men and women with certain preferred traits who influence followers to do what the leaders wish in order to achieve group/organizational goals that reflect excellence defined as some kind of higher-order effectiveness" (p. 95). Rost shares his own definition: "*Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes.* Every word in that definition was carefully selected to convey very specific meanings that contain certain assumptions and values which are necessary to a transformed, postindustrial model of leadership" (p. 102). He issues the following challenge: "Leadership scholars in the future are going to have to think new thoughts about leadership, using post industrial assumptions about human beings, organizations, societies, and the planet Earth" (p. 183).

Wheatley (1999) writes, "As we let go of the machine model of organizations . . . we begin to see ourselves in much richer dimensions, to appreciate our wholeness, and hopefully, to design organizations [schools] that honor and make use of the great gift of who we humans are" (p. 14). In the original edition (1992) of her groundbreaking book, Wheatley provided a different way of thinking about organizations as living systems, a view that is clearly postmodern even if she does not use that term. Her writing focused on the implications of the new science for organizational practices and leadership. Quantum

physics, she argued, leads to the understanding that we live in a world of relationships, that “even organizational power is purely relational” (1999, p. 39). She offers insights about leadership processes that derive from the new sciences, stating that principles from science can contribute to a ‘new’ science of leadership. Contending that leadership has been defined in the past in terms of its control functions, the closest she comes to a definition of leadership is this passage:

These ideas speak with simple clarity to issues of effective leadership. They recall us to the power of simple governing principles: guiding visions, sincere values, organizational beliefs – the few self-referential ideas individuals can use to shape their own behavior. The leader’s task is first to embody these principles, and then to help the organization become the standard it has declared for itself. This work of leaders cannot be reversed, or either step ignored. (1999, p. 130)

Seminar Teaching and Learning Practices

During the first meeting of the seminar, participants were given time to write their definitions of leadership. With definitions in hand, they divided into three groups, shared the definitions they had written, and attempted to achieve consensus on a definition of leadership. Group results differed considerably. The first class concluded with an introductory lecture titled *Comparing Traditional and Emerging Conceptions of Leadership*. Both historical perspectives and categorical perspectives for defining leadership were presented, as well as examples of traditional and non-traditional definitions.

For subsequent reading assignments either one or two nights were allocated for discussion of each text. Participants wrote 3-5 page reflection papers in advance of these discussions. The reflection paper assignment required participants to center their papers on practical implications for educational leaders using two or three major ideas from the book under discussion. Varied seminar activities were built around the practical implications generated by the participants in these reflection papers. For example, after a video about

Greenleaf (2003) provided a context for his ideas, participants wrote reactions to assigned passages from the readings, then compared responses in small groups, followed by a general discussion of Greenleaf's concept of servant leadership.

Problems in the participants' schools and districts were categorized according to Heifetz's (1994) adaptive versus technical challenges distinction, followed by group problem solving. Lambert et al.'s (2002) constructivist leadership ideas were explored using an adapted World Café format (Brown, 2005). Drath's (1991) three leadership principles were used to categorize the group consensus definitions from the first night and the participants' own evolving definitions. Then the principles were used to analyze two case studies. Rost's (1991) work provided a historical context and overview of the evolution of leadership definitions. His distinction between management and leadership provoked much discussion as did his comprehensive explication of his own definition of leadership. Finally, Wheatley's (1999) groundbreaking insights about organizations and leadership arrived at by analogy moved the conversation directly into the meaning of leadership in a postmodern or quantum age.

Student Observations of Effects of Changes in Leadership Definitions

The final Synthesis Paper required students to address what was learned about leadership from the seminar. Students were asked to compare and contrast the ideas about leadership with which they began and ended the class, and present an in-depth analysis of how and why their ideas did or did not change. They were asked to conclude the papers with their unanswered questions about leadership, and make recommendations for how the course could be strengthened. In the Synthesis Paper assignment students were not asked about whether changes in definition had affected their leadership practices. Nevertheless, comments from five of the participants noted effects of their changes in definition on their leadership practices, i.e., that their new definitions were beginning to have an effect on their leadership practices.

The specific effects on leadership practices noted were: "I will certainly be more open to promoting shared leadership" (Amanda); "Personally I have tried Drath's three principles and have found that allowing leaders to emerge within the different levels of solving an adaptive problem is actually less stressful than trying to solve it by myself as a leader" (Cindy) ; "I have gained many interesting and useful ideas . . . and apply much of what was discussed in my current position" (Larry); "The author often catches himself doing something that was influenced by one of the authors read in the class" (John); "I began to reflect on how I could be a servant to my staff and set a goal to put this in practice at least once a day" (Madeline). These unexpected comments about changes in practice interested Lyman in finding out whether there would be any long-term effects on leadership practices as a result of the seminar. That curiosity was the genesis of the Follow-Up Survey for 2005 seminar participants and the comprehensive evaluation, including results from the 2007 seminar, reported in the remainder of this article.

The Follow-Up Survey, sent and returned as an email attachment, was completed five months after the seminar ended in December 2005, with participants receiving an email invitation in May 2006 to participate. The survey contained three open-ended questions and was designed to gather participants' perceptions about whether the leadership definitions with which they ended the seminar, as well as other experiences, had affected their leadership practices in the intervening five months. The Follow-Up Survey is included at the end of the article.

The next section of the article will present a detailed evaluation of the 2005 leadership seminar, an analysis of how leadership definitions of the 12 participants in the 2005 seminar changed, and their perceptions of how those changes affected their leadership practices.

Evaluation of the 2005 Leadership Seminar

In presenting the data gathered to evaluate outcomes of the 2005 seminar we caution readers to consider the report as an outcome of a scholarship of teaching process, as an evolving evaluation designed specifically to gain insights about student learning that could be used to improve course design and teaching practices. Data presented are from the Final Synthesis papers of the 12 participants, and the Follow-Up Survey responses received from 11 of the participants. Not the result of a formal research process, the evaluation is organized around three questions important to teachers focused not only on learning of students but also on their own learning about powerful teaching. Three questions guided the exploration of student learning in the seminar:

1. What were the themes in the definitions of leadership with which participants began the seminar?
2. How did the participants' definitions of leadership change during the seminar?
3. How did the seminar experience affect participants' leadership practices?

Data from the Synthesis Papers provide answers into the first two questions, whereas data from the Follow-Up Surveys present participants' perceptions with respect to the third question. Themes in these two data sets were identified using constant comparative and content analysis procedures (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 2001).

Evolving Leadership Definitions

Generally, participants' first day definitions of leadership, as reported in the Synthesis Papers, were typical of traditional leadership definitions. These definitions included getting others to do the leaders' wishes, focused on achieving goals, and featured linear processes. However, the final Synthesis Papers also contained their end-of-seminar leadership definitions, which were qualitatively different. All 12 seminar participants reported changes in their original understandings or definitions of leadership as a result of

studying the work of selected leadership scholars from the last 30 years. In other words, their definitions of leadership changed during the seminar. It is possible that some of the changes reported could be attributed to a student’s need to meet the expectations of change reflected in the course design. See Table 1 for a list of participants, their positions, and their descriptions of how their definitions changed. All names are pseudonyms.

Table 1: *2005 Seminar Participants, Positions, and Descriptions of Leadership Definition Change*

Participants	Positions	Leadership Definition Change Descriptions
Amanda	Elementary Principal	"Perspective has changed, made some additions"
Stephanie	Elementary Principal	"Views heightened to new levels of understanding"
Dave	Elementary Principal	"Certain elements added and others reinforced"
Sam	Middle School Principal	"Profoundly changed my view"
Chad	Freshman Center Principal	"Significant paradigm shift"
Cindy	High School Department Chair	"Greatly modified"
Eric	High School Division Chair	"Gained a different view"
Tom	High School Assistant Principal	"Still changing"
Larry	Central Office Asst. Supt for Business	"Refined and reshaped"
John	Central Office Superintendent	"Influenced by the authors"
Madeline	Central Office Superintendent	"Quite a paradigm shift"
Matthew	Central Office Superintendent	"A sea change in my ideas"

Major Themes in Original Leadership Definitions

Two major themes emerged through analysis of the original leadership definitions from the first class that participants restated in the Synthesis Papers. These themes were: (1) having personal influence (11 of 12, or 91.6%); and (2) achieving goals (8 of 12, or 66.6%). Table 2 details how responses were distributed among the participants.

Table 2: *Distribution of Themes in 2005 Seminar Participants' Original Leadership Definitions*

Participants*	Positions	Themes	
		Personal Influence**	Achieving Goals***
Amanda	Elementary Principal	X	X
Stephanie	Elementary Principal		
Dave	Elementary Principal	X	X
Sam	Middle School Principal	X	
Chad	Freshman Center Principal	X	X
Cindy	High School Department Chair	X	X
Eric	High School Division Chair	X	
Tom	High School Assistant Principal	X	X
Larry	Central Office Asst. Supt for Business	X	X
John	Central Office Superintendent	X	X
Madeline	Central Office Superintendent	X	X
Matthew	Central Office Superintendent	X	

* N = 12
 ** N = 11
 *** N = 8

Representative phrases. Comments illustrating the theme of having personal influence included: traits that “gain influence over others” (Sam); ability “to facilitate or manipulate a group” (Cindy); “being able to get others to follow you” (John); and “initiate a change in another person” (Matthew). Phrases that illustrate the theme of achieving goals included: move group “toward one common goal” (Cindy); “attainment of the goals of the organization” (Larry); “to see the vision completed” (John); and “to achieve goals within a specific timeline” (Madeline).

Major Themes in End-of-Seminar Leadership Definitions

Analysis of their end-of-seminar definitions-revealed quite different major themes: (1) a focus on the moral imperatives of leadership (11 of 12, or 91.6%); and (2) building reciprocal relationships (11 of 12, or 91.6%). Table 3 provides more detail about participant responses.

Table 3: *Distribution of Major Themes in 2005 Seminar Participants' End-of-Seminar Leadership Definitions*

Participants*	Positions	Moral Imperatives**	Major Themes Building Reciprocal Relationships***
Amanda	Elementary Principal	X	X
Stephanie	Elementary Principal	X	X
Dave	Elementary Principal	X	X
Sam	Middle School Principal	X	X
Chad	Freshman Center Principal		X
Cindy	High School Department Chair	X	X
Eric	High School Division Chair	X	X
Tom	High School Assistant Principal	X	
Larry	Central Office Asst. Supt for Business	X	X
John	Central Office Superintendent	X	X
Madeline	Central Office Superintendent	X	X
Matthew	Central Office Superintendent	X	X

* N = 12

** N = 11

***N = 11

Representative phrases. Comments that illustrated the theme of focusing on the moral imperatives include: "Leadership is a social concept that transpires when there is a collective desire for continuous improvement leading to purposeful action" (Stephanie); ". . . emphasizing shared meaning and purpose" (Dave); "Today I strongly support a moral imperative to leadership" (Sam); "Members who are part of dynamic organizations would agree that components, which may be more spiritual in nature, are present in these organizations" (Eric); and "These relationships enable team members to design creative and ethical solutions" (Madeline). Phrases that spoke to the theme of building reciprocal relationships include: "developing collaborative relationships toward that purpose [of an organization]" (Dave); "One might even say that leadership is relationships" (Sam); "Leadership is a reciprocal relationship of influence between leaders and followers creating common synergy toward shared outcomes" (Chad); "Leadership is the relationship between individuals who influence each other to . . ." (Larry); and "Building relationships is the single most important task of any leader" (Madeline).

Minor theme. A minor theme was a stated or implied movement from leadership using linear processes to a different worldview resulting in leaders using organic and more fluid processes (6 of 12, or 50%). Representative comments from those six participants include: "I have moved from a linear model of leadership to a non-linear one. Both top-down and bottom-up leave me unsatisfied" (Sam); "I have begun to think in terms of leadership from a global perspective with a values-driven system" (Matthew); "I have revised my definition of leadership as I have broadened my worldview" (Larry); "In each element [of my definition] a multidirectional characteristic has emerged" (Dave); "I believe in such a state, fluidity of thought and dialogue between the members drives discovery of new options. Mainframes of individuals tap into a group consciousness, where neither a leader nor a follower exists for long periods" (Eric); and "Leadership is fluid and not necessarily centered in a single person" (Madeline).

Perceptions of Continuing Effects of the Seminar

Although all 12 participants expressed willingness to respond, only 11 completed the Follow-Up Survey. Nine of the 11 who completed the Follow-Up Survey, in responding to the question "Would you define leadership today in the same words you used in your final paper," affirmed their end-of-seminar definitions for a variety of reasons, including that holding the definition in practice had reinforced its "truth" for them. For example, Chad said that his definition would possibly change in the future, but he currently still professed it. He explained that he had thought long and hard before formulating his definition, and was now engaged as a principal in walking the talk. He wrote, "I have trust in my creation and like a child that must go off into the world to find itself, I too armed with my leadership theory must go forward." Dave, also a principal, stated, "If anything, I believe even more strongly in this definition. Shifting both semantically and in practice from 'collaborative' to 'shared' has had some wonderful initial results for me as a principal." Cindy, the high school department chairperson, wrote "My definition of leadership has not changed, but given me more of a personal motivation to lead others towards a common goal." Not everyone was so definitely positive. For example, Tom, the assistant high school principal who was always a voice of realism in class, wrote, "I am still clinging to my words from December. My world is so hectic: I have not really thought much about leadership in recent weeks." Matthew answered "yes" and "no" to whether his definition had changed since the end of the seminar.

Amanda was the only participant to offer a revised leadership definition in the Follow-Up Survey. Her end-of-seminar definition was "Leadership is a process promoting vision and creating consensus and goals for that vision through sustained trust in the facilitation of a path of change that realizes those visions and goals with equitable collaboration." In her response, she added the words "*and awareness of stakeholders as we build community*" following the phrase *equitable collaboration* at the end of the definition. She wrote that this addition was a direct result of the policy analysis class taken by the

cohort the semester following the leadership seminar. "The language or linguistics of leadership should include this awareness of stakeholders. The idea of building community regardless of race, ethnicity, ability, etc. has affected my definition of leadership." This addition highlights her developing understanding of the importance of relationships and reflects attention to a moral imperative.

Major Themes in Continuing Effects on Leadership Practices

Ten of the 11 who responded to the Follow-Up Survey perceived continuing effects on their leadership practices. Survey respondents were asked how their end-of-seminar definition of leadership had influenced their leadership practices in the past five months, including explanations and examples. Analysis revealed three themes: effects on handling of complex tasks (9 of 11, or 81.8%); effects on leadership style (6 of 11, or 54.5%); and effects on cognitive processes (5 of 11, or 45.5%). Taken as a group the responses represent experiences of 10 of the 11 participants who completed the Follow-Up Survey. One person reported no effects on his leadership practices (Tom). Table 4 provides details on individual responses.

Table 4: *Distribution of Major Themes in 2005 Seminar Participants' Responses to Perceived Effects of End-of-Seminar Definitions on Leadership Practices*

Participants*	Positions	Complex Tasks**	Major Themes Leadership Style***	Cognitive Processes****
Amanda	Elementary Principal	X		
Stephanie	Elementary Principal	X	X	X
Dave	Elementary Principal	X	X	
Chad	Freshman Center Principal	X		X
Cindy	High School Department Chair	X		
Eric	High School Division Chair	X		
Tom	High School Assistant Principal			
Larry	Central Office Asst. Supt for Business	X	X	
John	Central Office Superintendent	X	X	X
Madeline	Central Office Superintendent	X	X	X
Matthew	Central Office Superintendent		X	X

* N = 11

** N = 9

***N = 6

****N = 5

Handling of complex tasks. Representative examples of the effects of the course and their leadership definitions on the handling of complex tasks included: provided mindset for process of opening a new school (Amanda); gave framework for handling co-leader role of boundary committee that became contentious and heated along racial lines (Chad); modified hiring process by adding new questions, including asking about concept of servant leader (Dave and Eric); requested and had approved by the state an alternate schedule to make more frequent staff meetings possible and initiated monthly course instructional team meetings, required appointed team leaders, gave teams two tasks, and left them free to work with largely positive results (Eric); used World Café technique with district facilities committee to generate a 10 year facility improvement plan (Larry); moved staff closer to a professional learning community (Stephanie); problem solving with input from others (Cindy and Madeline); and resolving a situation involving bullying at a district school (John).

Leadership style. When describing the effects of the seminar and their leadership definitions on their current leadership style, participants noted formal and informal differences: approached building leadership teams and leading a district strategic action planning team differently (Dave); relied on concepts of questioning, leading the conversation, and reciprocal learning to move staff closer to professional learning community, with them taking more active roles and letting their voices be heard (Stephanie); appointed a school improvement process group and turned them loose to work (John); conducted employee group interviews by asking questions and them mostly listening rather than talking, and turning problems over to those involved to solve (Madeline); changed decision making in department to involve more people and allow for free flow of information (Larry); and have a more relaxed leadership style (Matthew).

Cognitive processes. Explanations of how leadership definitions affected cognitive processes were: used as litmus test for framing communications and helped me decipher problems associated with issues (Chad); made me more willing and able as first-year

superintendent “to step up and claim the leadership role that is rightfully mine” (John); gave me “confidence in my leadership precepts and frame of reference” and I became “comfortable with my self-defined leadership reality” (Matthew); learning and applying the concepts of questioning, leading the conversation and reciprocal learning (Stephanie); and merging the attributes of a manager with the concepts and practices of the servant leader (Madeline)

Other Influences on Leadership Practices

Learning does not happen in a vacuum, but is extended by the world of practice. The learning outcomes of leadership courses can either be supported or negated by other experiences. To explore that reality, the third Follow-up Survey question asked respondents how other experiences had affected their leadership practices in the five months since the end of the seminar. Responses to the question suggested a variety of influences, including that other learning resulted from both positive and negative experiences.

Reflecting on positive and negative experiences. Tom, a high school assistant principal, wrote about negative experiences: “Most of the other experiences affecting my leadership practices quash any attempts I make to offer leadership. . . . When I attempt to get my arms around a problem, I look to the building principal for support beyond his initial approval. When I am left twisting in the wind, my initiative usually dies.” With the first difficult year of her elementary principalship behind her, Stephanie wrote, “Courage is something I have come to value. It takes courage to be a change agent and confront difficult situations. It’s easier to ignore problems hoping they will go away. On the contrary they usually get worse. A courageous leader deals with confrontation, embracing the increased learning that usually results.” When one of Stephanie’s staff members “expressed feeling that he was unappreciated,” she wrote, “I realized the importance of staff recognition. I try hard to recognize staff often and sincerely for their efforts.” As Madeline, a superintendent, observed, “Time changes all of us and hopefully, we learn and grow from

those experiences. There are many successes in this business and many failures, as well. We need to learn how to fail forward and reflect on our practice.”

Involvement in complex processes. Four participants (Stephanie, Amanda, Chad, and Eric) specifically mentioned learning from being involved in complex processes involving large groups of people. For Stephanie participating in the dialogue of strategic planning increased her personal moral commitment to greater involvement of the Hispanic community in her district. Amanda, also an elementary principal, worked with a Citizen’s Advisory Committee to facilitate new school boundaries. The process was collaborative. She said, “My role was quiet and evolving, yet I had an influence on the decisions that were made. It was servant leadership. I really could see how one can serve and lead with influence at the same time.” Chad’s learned from participating in contract negotiations, his first experience with the process. The 175 members of the union who showed up at a school board meeting addressed the board on their frustration with the process and angered many members of the administration. Principal of a freshman center, Chad wrote, “I put myself in the place of being a follower at that moment and observed where I was being led. The answer was nowhere. It then became clear to me that it was not about the administration and union, but simply between union leadership and union members. By critiquing the leadership style, I could clearly see what was transpiring. There was no sense upsetting myself over it.” Eric, a high school division chairperson, participated in hiring four administrators and in all of the committees looked for leaders who expressed constructivist themes. He said, “In many respects I was looking for a *servant leader*,” something he would not have been aware of before the seminar.

Influence of role models. Two participants (Cindy and Dave) reported that the changes in their leadership practices were supported by experiences with leaders who were excellent role models. A role model for Cindy, a high school department chairperson, was a superintendent described as having a “way with words.” A role model for Dave, an elementary principal, was a facilitator for the district strategic planning process who had “a

wonderful style in moving a team forward without being directive. His use of questions and some gentle nudging have been a great model to follow in developing shared purpose with a small or large group."

Positive results. One participant reported how positive results from using his new approach reinforced his commitment to using it. Larry, assistant superintendent for business, implemented more involvement in decision making in an office "where decisions continue to be made without input and are implemented through coercion. Followers accept their role only because they are fearful of losing their jobs." Whereas he continued to witness poor leadership practices in his district, he wrote, "I found that the changes I made in my approach to leadership (requiring more involvement from others) provided positive results, thus reinforcing my newly held understanding of what leadership is. Success breeds success!"

Effects of subsequent courses. Two superintendent participants remarked on effects of courses from the semester following the seminar on their leadership practices. Speaking of the challenges involved in transitioning from management to servant leadership, Madeline wrote, "The qualitative research course (EAF 415) gave me an opportunity to interview, observe, and document some of the changes in my organization. Many systems are much better, but there is a tremendous need for improvement in the way we relate with our employees, the community, and the students." Documenting the changes was positive and allowed her to realize that the organization was "transitioning in a positive manner." Matthew elaborated about the effect on his leadership practices of the study of Freire and oppressors-oppressed dichotomies in a policy class (EAF 521). This has led him "to think about the continuum of place along a vertical and/or horizontal scale of leaders/followers, male/female. Gay-lesbian/straight, rich/poor, black/white, Hispanic/white, etc." He said, "For sure, my leadership understanding has been enlightened and broadened."

Summary. The definitions of leadership developed in the 2005 leadership seminar interacted with on-the-job realities of the world of practice and subsequent courses to affect leadership practices in the five months following the seminar. Effects from the world of practice were expressed through reflecting on both successes and failures, participating in complex processes such as strategic planning, observing positive role models, and experiencing hoped-for-results from a new leadership approach. The content and activities of the two courses the following semester also were cited as other experiences affecting leadership practices. In conclusion, John, a superintendent, highlighted the continuing influence of the leadership seminar in these words: "The course also opened my mind to the field of leadership studies. I have found myself picking up and reading materials that I would have previously skimmed over or skipped entirely. Just this morning a book on servant leadership caught my eye. The education process did not end with the leadership seminar. It was a beginning, as I'm sure it was intended."

Connecting Leadership Theory and Practice

Whether leadership practice can be enhanced through graduate courses is a question that lingers. This article presents no final answer, but documents rather a definitional approach using emerging leadership theories perceived by students to be successful in enhancing their leadership practices. Conversations between the co-authors about how to connect leadership theory and practice led Gardner, who had previously taught the seminar, to see if similar results [i.e. changes in definitions and perceived effects on leadership practices] could be obtained through replicating Lyman's course. In fact, the Spring 2007 leadership seminar used, with similar results, the same texts and the same critical and dialogic approaches to defining leadership that were developed in the 2005 seminar. The Follow-Up Survey used to evaluate the ongoing impact of the course on personal views of leadership and leadership practices was not administered to this spring 2007 group, but their final Synthesis Papers revealed themes similar to those in the 2005 papers, confirming

that the seminar design led students to a deepened and more contemporary understanding of leadership. For example, one student, Jessie, wrote,

I remember our first class on leadership where our definitions reflected the traditional ideas of dominance, influence, a linear view... My own definition which I have always used in my social studies classes is that leadership is the process of one influencing a group to achieve common goals. Thinking about it now, I am actually embarrassed to have used that definition, because my paradigm has totally shifted. I now see leadership as collaborative, democratic, circular instead of linear, inclusive, relational and serving others.

Changing mental models and images of leadership can enhance leadership practice. Lyman, Ashby and Tripses (2005) note that "Some of the scholarship associated with postmodern leadership focuses on redefining the essence or meaning of leadership, given the world's pluralism and new scientific understandings of the nature of reality; other scholarship focuses on implications for practice" (p. 146). In this article we focused on both. In the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, Cambron-McCabe (2006) wrote, "Our understandings of traditional leadership are rooted in organizational theory that is focused on rationality, effectiveness, and efficiency of bureaucratic institutions, defining the education of leaders, for the most part, in terms of specific skills and performances that can be quantified" (p. 1). She referred to widespread calls for a different kind of school leader – "one whose actions embody justice, respect, ethical values, care, spirituality, and equity" (2006, p. 1). We certainly concur. The results of this seminar confirm that the content selected for study in leadership courses needs to move out of the industrial paradigm and display the postmodern complexity and diversity characteristic of the 21st century. If we have as a field been disappointed in efforts to link leadership theory with practice, perhaps the fault is twofold: the content selected for study and the processes of that study.

The leadership seminar reported on in this article used content based on emerging leadership theories from the last 30 years. The processes of the seminar were developed to assist students in bridging the theory practice gap. Student responses in class discussions and various evaluation processes documented that the content and processes of the 2005 and 2007 leadership seminars were successful in leading students to a new way of seeing leadership, and perceived effects on their leadership practices. Whether or not the reported definition changes actually affected their leadership practices, or whether definition changes have an effect on leadership practice, remain open questions worthy of future research.

We argue that it is also important to conduct research on student perceptions of how existing courses can better meet their. We understand the value of student critique in enhancing leadership education. The Synthesis Paper assignment for both Fall 2005 and Spring 2007 seminars asked students to include a critique of the course and provide suggestions to improve it. One Spring 2007 student saw the possibilities that come from critical reflection and discourse and how this fundamentally changed the teacher-student relationship in terms of power. This is a clearly postmodern perspective. When asked to critique the course in the text of her final paper, she wrote,

I also thought it might be neat, though "chaotic" to allow each student to choose a leadership book of their choice to read for the class and write a reflection paper... How cool would it be for each of us to choose one that interests us and be able to apply it back to our other readings and course lectures? ...What a great way to engage us in our own learning. We would be leaders in the class and sharing in the decision making of the course thus supporting the various leadership models presented in the course.

We anticipate that compiling all of the student suggestions, as well as our other ongoing experimentation with evaluation strategies to improve the leadership seminar, will be the subject of a future co-authored paper.

We have written this paper as an invitation to other faculty who work with the scholarship of teaching and learning to join the dialogue about how to enhance leadership practice. Our work offers one approach to enhancing leadership education. A recurring criticism of current programs is that they are not preparing educational leaders for the challenges facing them. This evaluation of our approach suggests that a leadership seminar with multiple opportunities for critical reflection and dialogue, and based on emerging leadership theories, rather than what has been the conventional managerial wisdom of the field, may be successful in preparing administrators to confront the challenges of educational leadership in a postmodern world. Leaders who will transform the world of 21st century education must be critically reflective and engaged in an ongoing way with their own learning so that their understandings and leadership practices continue to evolve and change with the challenges.

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