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AN EXPLORATION OF GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF A TRAINING PROGRAM'S EFFORT TO INTEGRATE THEORY AND METHOD

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Social Welfare in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Social Welfare, The City University of New York

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Abstract

AN EXPLORATION OF GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF A TRAINING PROGRAM'S EFFORT TO INTEGRATE THEORY AND METHOD

by

Eric Zachary

Adviser: Professor Michael Fabricant

The breakdown of community in poor and working-class urban neighborhoods is well documented. While most of the efforts to rebuild those communities stress the important role of indigenous leadership, there is little clarity and depth about the kind of leadership that is best suited to this effort and the methodology for developing it.

The purpose of this study is to explore how grassroots leadership training can effectively unite philosophy and method in an effort to develop leaders who can help to rebuild their communities. An exploratory case study approach was utilized in which one grassroots leadership training program was examined in great depth. The study employs a triangulated research methodology consisting of a content analysis of the program's documents, primary and secondary analysis of quantitative outcome data, and qualitative interviews with participants in the training program.

The case that was studied, the Parent Leadership Project based in New York City, provided comprehensive leadership training to parent leaders involved in school improvement efforts. The study found that the Parent Leadership Project was highly successful in generating statistically significant and meaningful changes in the participants' level of activity and confidence as grassroots leaders. These positive changes were found to be sustained one and two years beyond the leaders' participation in the training.

Given its exploratory nature, the study sought to generate broad themes and categories concerning the approach to training that the Parent Leadership Project utilized that might have applicability to practitioners. The study found that "beginning with the end in mind" is critical in the construction of a successful grassroots leadership training program. Specifically, it was found that the development of critically conscious group-centered leaders was the "end in mind" that best fit the contemporary grassroots neighborhood context. By starting with a clear and comprehensive philosophy of grassroots leadership, the practitioner can address specific leadership skills as components of this larger vision, not as separate and unrelated subjects. This holistic approach reflects the intended outcome of the training-- to create grassroots leaders who have the

confidence and skills to question, think critically, and chart direction for their community.

Leadership training is most powerful when its methodology reflects and reinforces its philosophy. This study found that a training methodology that seeks to develop and reflect the critically conscious group-centered approach to leadership has at its core the creation of a learning environment in which the richest source of learning lies within the group. This methodology includes the following elements: a focus on the personal dimensions of leadership to enable the participants to deepen their leadership self-awareness and "own" their learning; rituals of engagement that establish an atmosphere of comfortable participation; strategies that facilitate participant ownership of the training; a clear training structure that is also flexible; a culture of participation in which participants feel safe to take risks and that demonstrates respect for the participants by using their experiences as the starting point for learning and by communicating high expectations; and the trainer as a model of the skilled, yet humble, leader.

This study raises questions about the culture of community organizing groups in relation to issues of vision, process, and the role of the grassroots leader in shaping their direction. It also suggests that the practitioner who

seeks to create progressive social change faces the challenge of aligning his/her leadership training intervention with an alternative macro-level social vision in order to avoid reproducing the dominant social values in the training.

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As I come to the end of my dissertation "journey," I am struck by another of life's complexities. On the one hand, the thinking, researching, and writing of this study have constituted an intensely personal odyssey. The memory of many weekends spent at my computer alone in my study will stay with me for quite some time. On the other hand, I am keenly aware of, and feel a profound debt to, the people and forces that have influenced me and equipped me to engage in this process.

First and foremost are my parents, Rose and Allan. It is to them that I dedicate this project. They taught and urged me to think critically, provided me with a degree of love and stability too often denied to children, and through their actions as grassroots neighborhood leaders taught me about responsibility to the community. My love and respect for them knows no bounds.

My wife and soul-mate, Susannah, has been wonderful in providing me with the space to grapple with this study in the only way I know how-- with passion and intensity that can border on the maniacal. More importantly, she continues to teach me about generosity and tolerance. My stepson, Damien, has taught me much about "hanging in there," a quality that has been essential in completing this project. My close friends - Laine, Ray, Lisa, Jon, Skipper, David,

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with their time. This study, obviously, owes much to their insights and sensibilities.

Finally, this project ultimately draws its inspiration from my experience growing up in a public housing project in Coney Island in Brooklyn. That experience produced in me a life-long commitment to put my skills at the service of poor and working-class and lower middle-class people struggling to provide a better life for their children and communities and to build a more just society. That struggle continues!

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I. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

THE BREAKDOWN OF COMMUNITY IN URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS

One of the fundamental tenets of social work theory is that human behavior is the result of biological, psychological, and social factors. The richness of this theory lies not only in the range of factors that it takes into consideration, but in the understanding that it is in the interaction among these factors that the uniqueness of each person comes alive. The challenge for the social worker, while acknowledging and grappling with this complexity, is to assist people in gaining greater control over and coping more effectively with these forces.

A community or neighborhood is an equally complex organism. The life of a neighborhood results from the interaction between external and internal factors. The world has become so interdependent that changes in the global economy can ripple down and impact on a local neighborhood:

> The world is in dramatic flux. Global concerns force themselves on people's everyday lives at the same time that local events, with unprecedented speed and frequency, become global matters. Political upheaval, environmental degradation, cultural images, international summits, and multinational corporate decisions travel worldwide, as fast as the speed of electronic information systems, and directly and indirectly affect the lives of people next door as well as those thousands of miles away. (Fisher and Kling, 1993, p.xi)

If these kinds of macro-level factors often determine the issues that a local community will have to confront, it is the level of resources, organization and cooperation between the people and institutions that make up the community that will help to determine the outcome of that confrontation. It is within the interplay between the larger social and economic forces and the community's capacity to act that the complexity of community life is captured.

A powerful example of this, and one that forms the immediate historical context for the issue explored in this study, is the dramatic racial and economic changes that many urban neighborhoods have experienced over the last 30 years and the attendant breakdown in community life. The roots of this transformation lie in several interrelated shifts in the country's political economy. After World War II, the federal government initiated massive highway construction and mortgage programs which facilitated the growth of suburbs and the migration of young and upwardly mobile families, most of whom were white, from their inner city neighborhoods to these new communities: "The widespread and rapid construction of developments such as Levittown were spurred by the availability of low-cost FHA mortgages as well as by the growing number of federally-financed super

highways running from the cities to the suburbs" (NYC Planning Commission, p.8).

At the same time that these suburban communities were developing, there was a massive migration to urban areas of primarily poor and unskilled/semi-skilled African-Americans from the South in search of jobs (Puerto Ricans from Puerto Rico also migrated in large numbers, but to a smaller number of cities, particularly New York). As Fisher writes in Let the People Decide: Neighborhood Organizing in America, "as late as 1910, 90 percent of African-Americans lived in the South and 75 percent lived in rural areas...by the mid-1960's 75 percent of the black population in the United States lived in cities and more than 50 percent lived outside the South...In the course of a generation...a black rural peasantry was transformed into an unskilled urban proletariat" (Fisher, 1994, pp.101-102).

This change in population interacted with an equally dramatic change in the labor market -- the loss of hundreds of thousands of well-paying and stable manufacturing jobs in cities. In New York City, for example, the number of manufacturing jobs was reduced by half between 1950 and 1975 (Goering, 1978, p.71). This severe mismatch between the job skills of the new population and the demands of the labor market led to high levels of unemployment, dependence on

government assistance, and social disorganization in these neighborhoods. Fisher (1994) sums up this complex process succinctly:

> ...at the very moment that masses of unskilled, uneducated, poor black farmers were moving to cities up North, businesses and white property owners -- the basis of the urban tax structure -- were leaving the city for the suburban hinterland. At the very moment that more funds were needed for public services to train recent black migrants and at the very moment that masses of unskilled laborers arrived looking for work, much of which required higher skills than ever before, the sources of jobs and the tax base to support public services were leaving the city. Worsening poverty, declining urban educational programs, deteriorating housing, increasing crime and drug use, booming welfare rolls, and spiraling infant mortality and disease rates combined to create an urban crisis... (p.103)

These real changes in living conditions intersected with the racial fears of many white people. This point of intersection, where the extent of the objective changes was often exaggerated, is central to understanding the **process** of change: "...for many people uncertainty and fear take on a life of their own -- which then becomes one of the social factors relevant for understanding neighborhood transition" (Goering, 1978, p.74). The rapid turnover in population, particularly given its racial and class dimensions -- a typical example is the Coney Island section of New York City which saw its African-American and Latino population increase from 13% to 78% of the total population between 1960 and 1980 (Zachary, 1983, p.1) -- contributed to the

real breakdown in the sense of community in many urban neighborhoods. A resident of Coney Island during this period of change remembers it this way:

> During that whole urban renewal time people were just like filtering in and filtering out...Most of the people that I know of who have just recently moved to Coney Island, say in the last 7-8 years, have come from Brownsville or Bushwick where there was urban renewal going on at that time also, and they were just filtered into Coney Island with the promise that they would be going back to bigger and better things in their respective communities, which never happened...People that was out of the norm before urban renewal started to come and it, just, like, generated this kind of fear where people just started leaving left and right (Kahan, 1982, p.2)

While many neighborhoods tried to organize to control these changes, the residents of these communities, both the newcomers and the established ones, experienced them as being largely beyond their personal and collective control. Organized neighborhood efforts were more able to slow down the process of decline than to fundamentally change it (Fisher, 1994, p.137). This tumultuous process led to feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness, and rage among many residents and fueled the decision of some to move (Zachary, 1983). Many of our inner city communities-- their physical, social, and psychological lives-- were left devastated as "...the destruction of inner city America went largely unchecked from the 1950's through the early 1980's" (Walsh, 1996, p.6).

The 1980's saw a continued decline in the number of well-paying manufacturing jobs, a redistribution of wealth and income in the direction of the already affluent, and severe cutbacks in human services for poor people. Specifically, while the weekly per worker income, adjusted for inflation, declined by 15% between 1972 and 1987 (Fabricant and Burghardt, 1992, p.6), the top one percent of the population increased their income share from nine to eleven percent between 1980 and 1988 (p.8) and federal spending on cities decreased by more than 60 percent between 1981 and 1992 (Fisher, 1994 p.171). On top of this raw economic pain, and in part caused by it, homelessness and the deadly crack epidemic exploded in poor inner city neighborhoods. Increases in crime and the deepening of fear among residents within the same neighborhood served to intensify the breaking down of community.

In the mid-1990's, low-income and working-class communities are under even greater attack from the policies of the Gingrich-led Congress. Social welfare assumptions and programs of the last 60 years --guarantees of government financial and medical assistance for anyone below a certain income -- are being dismantled. Other public services in these communities continue to suffer reductions. For example, the public schools in New York City have

experienced almost $2 billion in cutbacks in the last six years (Educational Priorities Panel, 1995). As one social commentator put it, "the Gingrich Congress attempts the most blatant shakedown of the poor to fatten the rich that America has yet seen, destroying the safety net while proposing tax cuts for the wealthy, stripping away at a frightening pace the ties that bind citizen to citizen and state to state" (Staples, 11/19/95, p.7).

THE POTENTIAL OF THE GRASSROOTS NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION

How can a neighborhood cope with these kinds of changes? How can a neighborhood strengthen its internal capacity to chart its own direction and rebuild a sense of community? While there are many points of intervention -- from the efforts of a local church to renovate or build affordable housing to the provision of counseling services to assist individuals in coping with stress -- a vehicle that is "...one of the most potentially effective, though frequently overlooked..." is the grassroots voluntary organization (Theilen and Poole, 1986, p.20). This kind of organization has an important place in the social history of this country. As De Toqueville wrote in Democracy in America,

> Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition are forever forming associations. There are not only commercial and industrial associations in which all take part, but others of a thousand different types -- religious, moral...Thus the most democratic country in the world now is that in which men have in our time carried to the highest perfection the art of pursuing in common the objects of common desires and have applied this new technique to the greatest number of purposes...Nothing, in my view, deserves more attention than the intellectual and moral associations in America. (as quoted in Putnam, 1994, p.1)

While that attitude may have taken a "...back seat in the twentieth century as centralized state responsibility for citizen welfare expanded" (Fisher, 1994, p.176), the modern day equivalents -- volunteer block associations, tenant groups, neighborhood federations, parent associations, and church groups, to name a few -- carry on this tradition. In fact, since the 1980's, one can speculate that "retreating government coupled with the ongoing effects of poverty and social disease have continued to fuel the move toward local-level self-help" (Vandenberg, 1993, p.1). These groups constitute the most grassroots unit of organized community life in that they are closest to the "people." They provide residents who are concerned about community problems with the opportunity to act as a **group**, rather than as isolated individuals. By coming together in an organized manner and pooling their talents and resources, these groups are in a position to impact on

the future of their neighborhoods. This is particularly important in low-income and working-class communities where economic and institutional resources are the most scarce, social problems are the most urgent, and residents often feel the most alienated from the power structures that govern their communities.

Grassroots neighborhood groups (GRNG) have several defining characteristics, including being: geographically-based, volunteer-driven, locally initiated, human-scaled or "people-sized," and problem-solving in orientation (Florin and Wandersman, 1990). They initiate a range of activities that fall into at least three categories:

(1) self-help strategies to address local problems, including block clean-up efforts and after-school tutoring programs;

(2) advocacy campaigns for improved and/or additional services, such as efforts to have new schools built to relieve overcrowding or a campaign to save a threatened firehouse; and

(3) community-building activities, like block parties and trips to cultural/recreational institutions.

There is much overlap between these categories. For example, a group's effort to transform a vacant lot into a community garden may bring it into confrontation with a city agency. And the garden itself can serve as an "oasis" providing a sense of calm and connection within the inner city. An organization's work on concrete local issues

provides an arena for small victories with tangible results: "By bringing about small changes...they may buffer or resist some of the negative effects of larger external forces..." and help residents feel hopeful that some degree of control is possible in a complex society (Florin, 1989, p.4).

The important benefits that grassroots neighborhood groups bring to their communities have been documented by social scientists. In a review of several studies, a group of community psychologists concluded that GRNG's are "...positively associated with improved physical conditions, decreased deterioration, and increased social services on the community level, suggesting that participation in community organizations influences both community and organizational empowerment...and increased personal and political efficacy" (Prestby, et al., 1990, p.118).

One study that is illustrative, conducted by the Citizens Committee for New York City, examines the role of block associations in community development and crime prevention. This study, entitled "The Block Booster Study," was undertaken in the mid-1980's and surveyed more than 1,000 residents on 47 blocks from three economically and culturally diverse neighborhoods in New York City. Information was gathered through questionnaires, interviews, telephone surveys, observations, and archival records. By

comparing blocks with block associations with those without such groups, the study found that the existence of a block association contributed to increased physical investments in terms of home improvements, substantially reduced fear of crime among residents (though not necessarily an actual reduction in reported crimes), increased the sense of commitment among residents to each other and to the block, and was associated with less physical disorder and vandalism (Chavis, et al., 1987).

Robert Putnam, in a recent essay that garnered much attention among intellectuals entitled "Bowling Alone: Democracy in America at the End of the Twentieth Century," also cites recent empirical social science research to conclude that grassroots networks of community organization can positively impact on a range of social problems affecting inner city neighborhoods. He uses the term **social capital** to refer to "features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and social trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (p.6).

Grassroots volunteer neighborhood groups have vast potential:

> At their best, volunteer neighborhood organizations transform isolated individuals into public citizens. They provide a human-scale sense of place, purpose, and process which is rare and precious in today's mass society. Grassroots volunteer activity, weaving together private and public concerns, is a significant

> form of civic action which generates both tangible and intangible common goods. (Florin, 1989, p.3)

THE VULNERABILITY OF THE GRASSROOTS NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION: THE NEED FOR LEADERSHIP TRAINING

By their very nature, however, grassroots neighborhood groups are also quite vulnerable and fragile entities (Prestby, et al., 1990; Florin and Wandersman, 1990). To start with, they are totally reliant on volunteers who are free to withdraw at any time. The leaders and members have full lives -- jobs, families to raise, hobbies, etc. -- which limit the amount of time and energy they have to devote to the organization. In addition, the groups usually do not have an official meeting place or office of their own to conduct business and from which to derive a sense of organizational identity and stability. Finally, their financial resources are quite limited, particularly in poor and working-class communities, as they are primarily dependent on membership dues and small fundraising events. In the Block Booster Project, for example, the 32 blocks with block associations that were studied in 1984 had decreased to 20 by 1986 (Chavis, et al., 1987).

A final factor that is related to the GRNG's fragility is the issue of leadership. The role of leadership in any organization is critical to its viability (Bennis and Nanus,

1985). However, in a GRNG this role cannot be overestimated. The power of such a group derives fundamentally from the size and commitment of its membership, not from financial or technological resources. This is the case particularly in "...poor and working-class groups (which) depend on numbers and lack other resources" (Gittell, 1980, p.35). And because GRNG's are composed entirely of volunteer members, with the leaders having no coercive power over them or potential members, **how** a leader of a grassroots neighborhood group treats neighborhood residents and carries out his/her leadership role is a critical factor in determining the level and quality of participation of neighborhood residents-- a factor which is central to the organization's strength and longevity. Put simply, in a GRNG, there is a particularly critical relationship "...between the quality of participation...and the quality of grassroots leadership" (Grimshaw, 1982, p.2).

While the leaders of large corporations and non-profit organizations often have a range of structured opportunities to strengthen their leadership skills and their intellectual understanding of leadership and organizational development -- through academic programs in universities, internal corporate training programs, and private leadership development programs -- the opportunities for the leaders of

grassroots neighborhood groups are few. While this is certainly connected to the disparity in resources at the disposal of these groups, it also may be connected to a popular misconception about leadership at the neighborhood level.

One of the myths surrounding GRNG's is that because they are small and possess few resources, it is therefore easy to lead them and does not require training. In reality, the leader of such a group requires a broad range of skills and knowledge. In a study of neighborhood leadership, in-depth interviews were conducted with a group of neighborhood leaders to identify what they perceived as their major responsibilities. They cited the following as central to the leadership role: motivating people, encouraging their active participation, ensuring that they have input into the organization, building a sense of community, running meetings, being knowledgeable about the issues facing the neighborhood, developing a vision, communicating, developing new leaders, and acting as a liaison with other groups (Vandenberg, 1993, p.89). These skills and responsibilities are not that different from those that the leaders of much larger institutions exercise (Anderson, 1992; Bennis, 1989; Covey, 1989; Kouzes and Posner, 1988). The difference lies in the size and

complexity of the organization. Leaders, whether they operate within a large corporation or a GRNG, are not simply born knowing how to fulfill this complex set of responsibilities.

As grassroots neighborhood groups struggle to protect and advance their communities, how can the community-based practitioner assist and support them? In other words, "as they (GRNG) nurture and sustain their communities, they themselves must be nurtured and sustained" (Florin, 1989, p.18). Given the critical connection between leadership and participation in a grassroots neighborhood organization, one of the important forms of intervention is a leadership training program that equips neighborhood leaders with the skills, knowledge, and values to meet the needs of their organization and community. Leadership training that assists indigenous leaders in developing strategies for organizing residents to win improvements in their neighborhood and generating social capital -- the development of deeper connections and cooperation between residents -- can make an important contribution to the rebuilding of neighborhoods.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

There are a number of empirical studies, most of which used a pre- and post-test research design with some also using qualitative interviews, that demonstrate that leadership training can lead to an increase in the level of activity and confidence of neighborhood leaders (Bolton, 1991; Briscoe, Hoffman, and Bailey, 1975; Cusack, 1991; Cusack and Thompson; 1992; McKinney; 1980; Rohs, Langone, and Curry, 1992; Seekins, Mathews, and Fawcett, 1984; Williams, 1981). Beyond this conclusion, what do these studies and the broader literature on leadership development reveal that can be utilized by practitioners working in the field of grassroots leadership development?

This study was undertaken to explore what the critical elements are of an effective leadership training program for grassroots neighborhood leaders. The literature review, presented in the next chapter, focuses on three specific areas:

(a) **what** kind of leadership needs to be developed at the neighborhood level? what is the content or conceptualization of leadership that is used in leadership training programs? what is the intended outcome of grassroots leadership training?;

(b) **how** do the programs deliver the training; what is the training methodology used to transmit the approach to leadership; what is the process?; and

(c) what is the **fit** between the type of leadership that needs to be developed and the training process or method for doing so? what is the relationship between the "what" and the "how" of grassroots leadership training? To what extent do the outcome and the process reflect and reinforce one another and form a dynamic whole?

These questions form the core of this study. It is in their answers that the richness, complexity, and challenge of grassroots leadership training are to be found. An exploratory case study approach, which is explicated in Chapter III, was used to investigate these questions. Chapter IV presents an overview of the philosophy and training methodology of the Parent Leadership Project, the program that is the subject of this case study. Quantitative data concerning the outcomes of the Project are discussed in Chapter V. Qualitative data about the Project, which was gathered through interviews with parent leaders, are discussed in Chapter VI. The final chapter presents a summary of the study, the implications for practitioners, and recommendations for further research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership is a subject of study by a wide range of academic and practice disciplines. There are several types of literature that are germane to the specific questions and social context of this study. The following "schools" of literature are reviewed:

(1) Community Organizing

Leadership development is central to the practice of community organizing. As Burghardt has written in The Other Side of Organizing, "if an organizer takes pride in anything, if there are any cherished bedrock values within the community organizing literature, they would center around the training of new leaders" (1982, p.81). The logical starting point for a review of grassroots leadership development is in this literature;

(2) Studies of Leadership Development and Training

Social scientists have studied the issue of leadership development at the neighborhood level, including training programs for community leaders. Beyond proving their efficacy, what do these studies reveal concerning how these programs work? How do these programs conceptualize leadership and teach it?;

(3) Leadership Training Manuals

Another source of information is the written materials of organizations that provide leadership training to neighborhood leaders. What do the training manuals reveal concerning the type of leadership they are intending to promote and the methodology by which to do it?; and

(4) Corporate Management

Many who work in, and write about, the field of community organizing are of the opinion that developments that emerge out of the corporate sector are irrelevant to their work because "corporations are worlds away from grassroots organizations" (Shaver, 1995, p.7). There is no doubt that the two contexts are quite different. The contextual differences include divergence in their missions and values, size, resources, and approaches to accountability. However, because of powerful threats to its economic hegemony over the last 20 years, the corporate sector has been forced to re-think its traditional leadership paradigm based on a hierarchical, scientific approach to management (Bennis and Nanus, 1985). The progressive wing of the corporate sector now talks about empowerment, self-managed work teams, and total quality management. In an ironic twist, the corporate sector may have something to offer to the field of

neighborhood leadership and organizing about the nature of contemporary leadership and self-determination.

LITERATURE FROM COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

What does the Community Organizing literature put forth as a conceptual framework for developing effective grassroots neighborhood leaders? In "...most, if not all, community organizing models, there's an emphasis on producing indigenous leaders who will operate through democratic decision-making structures" (Staples, 1984, p.17). However, within this broad context, there is wide variation in the literature with regard to the amount of attention and depth of analysis given to this issue.

At one end of the spectrum, Saul Alinsky, who might be called the "father" of community organizing, gives relatively little attention to the kind of grassroots leaders that community organizers should work toward developing. In Rules for Radicals, he emphasizes the role of the organizer in mobilizing a community to fight for power over its destiny. Alinsky is well known for his "ideal elements of an organizer" (1971, p.72). These include: curiosity, irreverence, imagination, humor, vision, level of organization, ability to act in the midst of complexity, confidence, and a free and open mind.

In Reveille for Radicals, he discusses the importance of the organizer carefully and strategically identifying potential grassroots leaders. He also acknowledges that community residents "...have to make their own decisions...No organizer can tell a community what to do" (1971, p.91). But he doesn't address the questions that flow out of this commitment: What is the role for the indigenous leader? Should this leader have the same qualities as the organizer? What kind of leadership is effective in mobilizing residents and sustaining the organization over time? His only reference is revealing:

> This is the basic difference between the leader and the organizer. The leader goes on to build power to fulfill his desires, to hold and wield power for purposes both social and personal. He wants power himself. The organizer finds his goal in creation of power for others to use. (p.80)

Does this mean that the organizer is always selfless and does not need to struggle with his/her own attraction to power? And that the grassroots leader cannot develop the larger perspective of the organizer? Is the role of the organizer to assist the leader in developing this perspective? Alinsky is silent on these dilemmas of community organizing and leadership.

Lee Staples, in Roots to Power: A Manual for Grassroots Organizing, spends more time than Alinsky on the issue of grassroots leadership development. He starts off by

acknowledging that the job of a grassroots leader is not easy in that it requires a wide range of skills and attitudes. This means that "nobody can do it all...All leaders need to work together, sharing responsibility, work, and credit, functioning as a team in pursuit of a common victory" (1984, p.126). Committees offer emerging leaders the opportunity to take on new levels of responsibility and serve as an important step in a "leadership ladder." He also discusses the critical responsibility and challenge facing leaders in balancing task and process.

He is clear on the need for democratic leadership and draws the connection between the kind of leadership and the involvement of rank-and-file members:

> Certainly there is no place for the undemocratic person who refuses to let others play a meaningful part in actions and activities. Those who don't respect others and seek to grab all power and credit only hurt the organization in the long run, regardless of their individual talents. ..And while they may be brilliant and charismatic, they won't help create the collective leadership and broad-based participation so necessary for organizational growth. Other characteristics that will undermine these goals are racism, sexism, prejudice. ..Thus organizations with the broadest base of participation usually develop the best leaders and, in turn, those leaders help increase membership involvement. Existing leaders and organizers have the responsibility for expanding the leadership core and motivating, teaching, and supporting the new people who emerge. (p.129)

While Staples does address the critical role that grassroots leaders play in community organizing efforts, he

also acknowledges that in his book "...the amount of space allocated here for this discussion is by no means commensurate with the importance of leadership development" (p.17). Why is this so? Staples' view of **how** leaders develop sheds light on this admitted contradiction:

> The general philosophy expressed here is that leaders learn through direct experience. This involves a three-part process of planning strategies and specific tactics (featuring lots of meetings, role playing, and other advance preparation), executing the plans, and assessing the results during and after the issue campaigns. (p.17)

Given this philosophical bias, perhaps it is not surprising that there is virtually no discussion in his book concerning the content and methodology of leadership training. This void makes sense **only if** there is an absence of a commitment to: (1) an over-arching framework or conceptualization of leadership that "fits" the needs and circumstances facing grassroots leaders; (2) a clear sense of how specific leadership skills can be carried out in a way that reflects that framework; (3) a belief that grassroots leaders are capable of understanding and grappling with the framework and developing into thoughtful and skilled leaders who can chart their organizational destiny; and (4) a belief that it is healthy and useful for rank-and-file members to be empowered to question the direction and leadership of their own organization. This is

not to say that Staples is wrong about the importance of direct experience in the process of leadership development. However, is it the **only** important strategy?

Rubin and Rubin, in Community Organizing and Development, also discuss the need for democratic and shared leadership. They focus on the **dilemmas** of grassroots leadership. They write that "only a thin line separates a leader who guides community members to achieving their goals from one who dominates them through personality, experience, or ability to dramatize an issue...An organization needs a leader to give it guidance, but the members need to participate and set the direction of the group" (1992, p.237). They suggest the need to avoid two dangers in leadership development: the dominance of the charismatic and/or authoritarian leader and the paralyzing fear of leadership. The "stuff" of leadership, in their view, lies in the grappling with, and resolution of, these dilemmas.

While Staples devotes no attention to formal training, Rubin and Rubin do acknowledge the role that it can play in the development of indigenous leaders and the consequent strengthening of the organization. They write that

> at training sessions, members of the organization learn specific skills that enhance their sense of competence. People learn how to run meetings, raise funds, prepare press releases, arrange rallies...As members develop these skills and use them to promote collective purposes, the group becomes more successful, and the

> individual's commitment to the ideals of community development is increased. (1992, pp.234-235)

They identify four major responsibilities of trainers:

(1) Skill building through practice, role playing and demonstration;

(2) Integrating philosophy with skills so that people understand how a specific skill grows out of a broader philosophy. In the context of leadership training, this means explaining how the particular approach to running a meeting, for example, is a reflection of a broader approach to leadership;

(3) Being realistic about what the trainees can expect of themselves in terms of using the skills and information from the workshops in their work as neighborhood leaders because "otherwise people will become discouraged as soon as the enthusiasm generated by the training session wears off" (p.236); and

(4) Building enthusiasm and loyalty to the training program by focusing on the trainee's perceived needs and making sure that things don't get boring.

While this is an excellent beginning in terms of identifying several of the trainer's major roles, Rubin and Rubin spend little time operationalizing these concepts. The nuts and bolts of designing and delivering an effective skill building workshop -- how these four elements fit together -- are only superficially addressed. Moreover, there is no discussion about the importance of, nor how to make, connections between the content of the leadership training and the training methodology.

Si Kahn, a well-known community organizer/writer for the last 30 years, starts off in the same direction as the

previous theorists. He defines a leader as "...someone who helps show us the direction we want to go and who helps us go in those directions" (1991, p.21). He lists the qualities that he believes a leader should have, including liking people, listening, friendliness, and helping people believe in themselves. He also identifies important leadership skills, including running meetings, outreach, strategic planning, research and fundraising.

However, he then advances the development of a framework for grassroots leadership development by locating and anchoring it in the needs and everyday realities of indigenous community leaders. People are not "blank slates" with regard to their beliefs, conscious and unconscious, about leadership. What attitudes do community residents bring with them to this issue of leadership development? Kahn writes that people's ideas about leadership emanate from the popular culture -- newspapers, television, films, etc. -- and thus tend to reflect the attitudes and behavior prevalent in government and the corporate sector. He suggests that these practices -- for example, of "pushing others around" or accumulating power for oneself --are not appropriate and don't "fit" in grassroots voluntary organizations. Kahn is eloquent in capturing the **context** of grassroots leadership development:

> It would be nice if all powerless people as they began to achieve power through the organization were able to handle it without any problems. But it's natural to expect that certain problems are going to come with new power. When someone who has never had any recognition in her life is suddenly being chased after by television and newspaper reporters, and asked her opinion on every issue under the sun, it sometimes goes to her head. When someone who has never played any such role finds himself on the board of directors of an organization with a staff of 100 people, he may start to think that he as a person is powerful. But the power of grassroots leaders must be power through their organizations, not personal power. (1991, p.42)

Unfortunately, Kahn does not take this discussion to the next level. He does not explore how -- methodologically -- community-based practitioners can challenge the indigenous leaders to re-think this traditional model of leadership without alienating them and without **reproducing** that form of leadership. He also briefly discusses two other issues that are central to leadership: the importance of a leader monitoring and assessing his/her performance and how to cope with the pressures that are endemic in community organizing and leadership.

More than any of the other writers surveyed in the Community Organizing literature, Kahn recognizes the importance of **training** grassroots leaders. In his book, Organizing: A Manual for Grassroots Leaders, he devotes an entire chapter to this issue, much more than any of the other writers. He identifies many of the critical issues

involved in developing a training program and writes thoughtfully about them. He first identifies four general content areas:

(1) Organizing skills, including how to select an issue around which to organize, the development of strategy and tactics, how to use the media, and how to conduct research on the issue;

(2) Leadership roles, including recruiting and motivating members, chairing meetings, developing other leaders, and coordinating leadership duties;

(3) Political education, including information about the specific issue the group is organizing around, how the issue is related to larger political and economic issues, and the history of organizing in the community; and

(4) Personal development, meaning the development of the kind of self-confidence that allows people to grow and take risks as leaders. Kahn recognizes that leadership is a highly personal process when he writes that leaders "need to begin to root the work they do in their own personalities, so that it's real and has the force of coming from who each one is as a person" (1991, p.180).

This powerful insight -- the joining of the personal and political dimensions of practice -- is, unfortunately, not elaborated upon nor is it explained how a training program might accomplish this complex task.

Kahn then discusses how to put a program together. He makes several key points:

(1) A training program should be "...well thought out and carefully planned. Organizations should do training not just in response to a crisis but as a regular part of their work" (p.179). In other words, training should be a part of the organization's "culture";

(2) While an organization should develop an overall

strategic plan for its training program, the people who will be participating should have as much input as possible. The best training is based, in part, on people's perceived needs;

(3) Training should not be an abstract exercise. It works best when it is tied to concrete issues and organizing campaigns; and

(4) Ideally, the trainers should come from within the organization because they know the organization and community and so that they have an opportunity to grow as leaders. Kahn also recognizes, however, that "knowing something well, or being able to do it well, doesn't necessarily mean that you can train people in doing it" (p.188). People need to be trained as trainers. Hiring a training director or a consultant to train some staff in how to train can be an appropriate resolution of this issue.

With regard to the major issue of the methodology that should be used in a grassroots leadership training program, Kahn is more vague. In the spirit of openness, rather than lay out a training methodology, Kahn writes that "one of the exciting things about training is that there are so many different ways to do it" (p.184). While there is literal truth in that statement, the same can be said for organizing. And isn't his writing an effort to set out a particular **methodology** for organizing, albeit not a dogmatic one? While he mentions some recognized training techniques -- role plays and small group discussions, to name two -- he does not attempt to weave them together into a coherent and meaningful whole (he does provide a useful sample training outline. However, he does not explain it in depth). Nor

does he discuss how, if at all, his approach to training is connected to a philosophy of adult education. In fairness to Kahn, his book is about organizing, not training. One would not expect each subject to receive the same depth of analysis.

Kahn also touches on the critical relationship between the goal and the process of leadership development. He writes that an organization "should avoid training in a way that goes against the other principles..." upon which it is based (1991, p.194). The example he uses involves an organization that stresses internal democratic cooperation but contradicts itself by stressing the use of outside experts in its training program. One is left disappointed when he stops there. There is no effort to address this issue in a comprehensive manner by drawing connections between the critical components of a philosophy of grassroots leadership and the training strategies to model and reinforce it.

Kahn's final contribution to the discussion of grassroots leadership training is in making the connection between training and grassroots democratic control over the organization. He states that it is not enough to train the staff to become more effective organizers:

> An organization that provides training for its staff but not for its leaders is making a statement about who

> it thinks is most important. It's saying clearly who it really feels should lead and direct an organization. Good training in an organization should reinforce our belief in grassroots leadership, that people are their own best decision-makers. (1991, p.195)

Steve Burghardt, in The Other Side of Organizing: Resolving the Personal Dilemmas and Political Demands of Daily Practice, develops a fuller conception of grassroots leadership development. He begins by locating the issue of leadership in the larger context of social reproduction. He uses the definition offered by Andre Gorz in Strategy for Labor: social reproduction means that "capitalism, as a complex social formation,...is in the constant process of renewing the conditions of its existence through all aspects of life. The concept of social reproduction explains that not only do workers have to be fed, sheltered, and kept healthy...but also their 'own' ideas and attitudes must be reproduced as well" (Burghardt, 1982, p.239). For Burghardt, the critical question in the development of a framework for grassroots leadership development is: will the model help to socially reproduce "...a set of leaders consistent with common conservative notions of hierarchy, deference..." or create "...political alternatives quite different from traditional models" (p.83).

He suggests that there have been three alternative strategies for the development of indigenous leaders. The

first is what he refers to as "changing the situational problem to the exclusion of leadership development" (p.85). This is where the organizer works **for** the people to change or rectify a specific and concrete problem. This approach fosters people's dependency on the organizer. The second approach, which is probably the most commonly used in community organizing, works to develop leaders who are "grounded in organizational consciousness" (p.85). In part because of the incessant demands for action and the limited resources that are endemic to organizing, there is often an emphasis on "getting the job done." This leads to quickly establishing someone as a leader, often having little to do with that person's skills, attitudes, or even desire and understanding of such a role; it is almost as if any leader will do. The urgency obscures examining **how** the job is done and the relationships of authority that are produced. This approach treats grassroots leaders as "...tactics to be maneuvered into positions of organizational responsibility" (p.88). By objectifying and manipulating people, without honest and thoughtful dialogue between organizer and leader, this approach serves to prepare the grassroots leader to use the same techniques on others in the future.

Burghardt posits the development of critical consciousness as the third alternative, the one that stands

the dominant model of leadership on its head. The goal is the development of leaders who are capable of "naming the word," a phrase used by Paulo Freire. This means facilitating the development of leaders who are capable of, and confident in, acting as **subjects** of history and not simply objects. Subjects do the following. They:

* ask questions about the larger social world in which they live and not only their immediate context;

* challenge orthodoxy rather than accept what the "line" is;

* grapple with the complexity of social reality by not settling for easy or one-dimensional answers;

* struggle to share their full humanity with others rather than having to always be strong; and

* accept vulnerability in their leaders rather than placing them on a pedestal and needing them to be perfect.

For the organizer, this means, for example, that "if you truly respect them (leaders) you will risk demanding success and will be willing to openly, honestly criticize failure" (p.106). The ultimate goal of this model of leadership development is for "...people to come to realize that they don't need 'leaders' at all!" (p.108).

Burghardt's seminal contribution lies in going beyond the descriptions of democratic grassroots leadership and lists of leadership qualities offered by the other writers and developing a rich conceptual framework for leadership. However, he doesn't put enough "meat" on it. While the

outcome of leadership development is clear, the functions and day-to-day work of leaders is neglected (in other writings, Burghardt addresses some of these issues. What is missing is the synthesizing of the two within one work). In addition, his focus is on developing an **organizing methodology** through which critically conscious grassroots leaders might emerge. He does not address what the elements might be of a training program to facilitate the development of such leaders.

Two theorists writing from a feminist perspective make a contribution toward developing a clear conception and definition of the responsibilities and functions of a grassroots leader. Kokopeli and Lakey, in Leadership for Change: Toward a Feminist Model, start off with a critique of patriarchal forms of leadership, including authoritarianism and paternalism. Both styles "...maintain the power of the group firmly in their leader's grasp" (p.6). In response to this traditional approach to leadership, some activists within the feminist and left movements of the 1960's and 1970's attempted to form groups without leaders (Rubin and Rubin also identified this as a danger for groups to avoid). With wonderful clarity, the authors write that "we didn't see the very crucial difference between leaders and leadership: between the role

and the function...because groups, organizations, and societies do need leadership, but they do not need leaders! They need the functions to be filled, but not by one (or a few) leader(s)" (p.7).

They prefer the term, **shared leadership**, to democratic leadership because it connotes that many people can and must perform acts of leadership. They offer the best brief definition of leadership surveyed in this section of the literature review. They quote Johnson and Johnson, in Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills,: "Leadership is defined as the performance of acts that help the group reach its goals, maintain itself in good working order, and adapt to changes in the environment, and these acts are group functions" (p.15). More clearly than the previous writers, they separate leadership functions into two major categories: group achievement (task) and group maintenance (process or morale). They then identify concrete and specific actions within each category. Their framework **demystifies** leadership and offers a simply understood yet intellectually and politically powerful alternative conception of leadership to the one dominant in a capitalist, patriarchal society. The authors provide a brief discussion on how organizations can develop structures that encourage this type of leadership. They do not,

however, touch on the issue of how to train or develop this type of leader.

This section of the literature review reveals both the strengths and the limitations of the community organizing literature's contribution regarding the issue of grassroots leadership development. All of the writers provide important insights. What is missing, however, is a cohesive and comprehensive treatment that integrates these different insights into a holistic framework that is accessible to grassroots leaders and practitioners.

STUDIES OF GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMS

The studies that have been conducted of leadership training programs for grassroots leaders have focused primarily on the extent to which the interventions have affected the attitudes and activities of the participants. The authors write more about the research methodology that was used to evaluate the programs and the positive outcomes that were generated than on the philosophy of leadership and training methodology that were used. This, of course, does not necessarily mean that these programs lacked a clear approach to leadership development and training. It means, at a minimum, that the social scientists reporting on these programs chose not to focus on questions of process.

Nevertheless, these findings on grassroots leadership training programs are central to this investigation and therefore should be reviewed.

A. APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP

There is variation among the studies in terms of how much space and explication is given to the type of leadership that the training programs sought to promote. Out of the ten articles reviewed in this section, four identify an overarching vision or approach to leadership used in the programs (Cusack and Thompson, 1992; Grimshaw, 1982; Vandenberg, et al., year unknown; Williams, 1981). Of these, two utilized "democratic and shared leadership" as a conceptual framework (Cusack and Thompson, 1992; Grimshaw, 1982). They argue that this approach to leadership is appropriate at the grassroots level because "people participate voluntarily in groups to have their needs met and, therefore, the role of the leader must be to address the needs of members of the group. If we include the needs of each individual to be recognized, to have fun, and to experience a measure of power and control, then it becomes particularly important to share the responsibilities for leadership among the membership" (Cusack and Thompson, 1992, p.347). Using this as its approach, the Community Leadership Training Center of Western Michigan identified

"...four sets of skills, which taken together, enable a group to successfully direct its action toward achieving specific results" (Grimshaw, 1982, p.5): communication, meeting management, problem-solving, and planning and evaluation. The goal of the training program is to assist the participants in learning how to perform these skills in ways that promote shared leadership and participation.

Another effort at defining effective community leadership that shares some elements with the approach just outlined was a study undertaken to determine how to strengthen the linkages between research and practice in Community Leadership Development (CLD) programs in the Cooperative Extension Service. The resulting theoretical framework for community leadership was based on a review of leadership theories and an empirical study of CLD programs during the 1980's. In this model, the authors attempt to synthesize different strands of past research on leadership that focused on traits, behavior, and situations "...to forge a link between leader-centered and follower-centered approaches to leadership" (Vandenberg, et al., p.139). Leadership is conceptualized as involving the interrelationship among three dimensions: perception, property, and process. Perception refers to the beliefs that each follower has regarding the qualities and behavior

associated with effective leadership. It is incumbent upon the leader to be familiar with what the rank-and-file values in a leader and to then work toward developing those qualities. Property, in this framework, refers to the skills, behavior, and knowledge that are "objectively" associated with effective leadership, including self-confidence, flexibility, facilitating goal attainment, establishing external linkages, and understanding human behavior. The final dimension -- process -- involves the use of non-coercive influence between leaders and followers to facilitate the achievement of the group's goals.

Another program also used a framework centered around the relationship between leaders and followers. In this program, leadership is viewed as a "... relationship one develops with a potential followership and, further, that to be effective, a leader must tailor his or her behavior to fit the specific leadership situation" (Williams, 1981, p.66).

One study falls somewhere between the four outlined above that identified a particular approach to leadership and the others that did not. In this one, a school of social work trained "...urban indigenous religious leadership as community change advocates and change agents...The thrust of the curriculum is toward the

development of knowledge and skills which can be transferred into community development activities, combined with a basic awareness of the forces operating adversely on the community" (McKinney, 1980, p.200). The program is quite comprehensive, consisting of four phases: Phase I focuses on deepening the participants' understanding of the hierarchy of human needs and the nature of the social problems in their community; Phase II involves field visits to human service agencies; Phase III focuses on the role of government; and Phase IV covers community organizing principles and techniques. While the article does not identify a well-developed model of leadership used in the training program, it is clear that the **purpose** of leadership in this urban context is to fight for social change that will benefit poor and working-class people.

In three of the articles, "...no operational definition of leadership was used" (Cusack, 1991, p.439). They do, however, identify the training categories or topics that were covered in the training workshops. In one program, four broad components were addressed: goal attainment, communication skills, group process skills, and citizen participation skills (Bolton, 1991). Another program covered much of the same material but divided it into three categories: overview of leadership styles, group process

skills, and the community development process (Rohs, et al., 1992).

The final two articles report on training programs that utilize a behavioral approach to leadership training (Briscoe, et al., 1975; Seekins, et al., 1984). While there is no vision or philosophy of leadership that is explicitly identified in the articles, there is a clear bias. Leadership is viewed as a discrete set of behaviors, taught and learned through behavioral techniques; leadership does not need a philosophy that underlies and connects the behaviors. Each of these articles focused on programs that provided training in one particular skill area, i.e. chairing a meeting.

B. TRAINING METHODOLOGY

It is useful to view training as involving two essential phases -- **design** and **delivery**. How were the training programs designed that were reported on in these studies? Several of the articles make no mention of who and how the training curriculum was designed (Rohs, et al., 1992; Williams, 1981). Of those that do report on the issue, there is wide variation. Two programs were designed with a high level of input from actual and potential participants (Cusack, 1991; Cusack and Thompson, 1992). In one of these, a planning committee made up of 12 senior

citizen leaders and several staffpersons "...came together for five 3-hour working sessions to identify the issues in leadership and the topics that ought to be covered in each of the 10 workshops" (Cusack and Thompson, 1992, p.349). At the other end of the spectrum, the training curriculum used in a program sponsored by a university-based Cooperative Extension Service was designed solely by the faculty after an initial literature review on leadership development. The faculty were also "...involved in the selection of design parameters, number of lessons, and weeks for delivery" (Bolton, 1991, p.121).

There is also a fairly wide spectrum regarding the intensity and length of the programs. At one end, the program offered by the school of social work was composed of four phases of 14 weeks each, with classes meeting twice a week for a total of six hours (McKinney, 1980). The shortest programs were the behavioral-based ones, with the training in one consisting of several highly structured 30-minute sessions (Briscoe, et al., 1975). In between, there was one program that offered twelve six-hour sessions (Rohs, et al., 1992), one that was structured around 20 two and one-half hour workshops (Cusack, 1991), and several that offered 15-20 hours of training (Bolton, 1991; Cusack and Thompson, 1992; Grimshaw, 1982). One program offered

variations of a leadership training program, combining differing amounts of classroom training and travel to other sites over a period ranging from one to three years (Williams, 1981).

In terms of the delivery of the training, the literature either ignores it entirely or provides brief and superficial descriptions. For example, one article simply mentioned that each module "...contained objectives, lecture notes, handouts, visuals, group participation guides, and a detailed lesson plan..." (Bolton, 1991, p.121). There is no rationale concerning **why** these tools were used and **how** they were used. Another example of this lack of depth in the description of training methodology occurs when one author writes that "the teaching philosophy and methods utilized in the project are based on the principle of andragogy, the art and science of helping adults learn" (McKinney, 1980, p.203). Other than a few general statements -- such as the "participants' experiences provide a basis for classroom work" and there is a "...small group discussion...following each class lecture" -- he does not discuss how the principles embodied in andragogy were applied in this program.

A moderate exception to this pattern of superficial description is the article by Grimshaw in which he discusses

the Community Leadership Training Center of Western Michigan. In the same way that he articulated one of the more comprehensive approaches to leadership in this literature, his description of training methodology is also more developed than the others. While advocating for "experiential learning," he identifies three parts or sections in the workshops: a brief lecturette that describes a skill, followed by a "structured experience" in which the participants practice the skill, and concluding with a period in which they "process" the experience. While it might seem a minor point, he is the only one who mentions the use of newsprint (or flip charts) -- a part of the technology of training -- as a tool for capturing and preserving the "group memory."

An important issue that goes to the "heart" of training that is touched upon in one of the articles is the role of the facilitator. Cusack (1991) asks a most significant question: "which is most important: the knowledge of the workshop leader, the importance of the topic, or the facilitation skill?" (p.447). While she does not explore this complex issue in great depth, she does conclude that the "...skill of the facilitator and the rapport developed with the group may be the most important factor in the effectiveness of individual workshops" (p.447).

This is one of the very few cases in this literature in which a **dilemma** of training is acknowledged and addressed. The methodology that a trainer/program utilizes is based on assumptions and beliefs, explicit and implicit, about how adults learn and how a trainer can best facilitate that learning. The following questions, which help to elicit our assumptions about training and the dilemmas that arise, are not addressed adequately, if at all, in this literature:

(1) To what extent should the training curriculum be based on what the trainer thinks the participants need to know on the subject or on the learners' perceptions of their needs and interests?

(2) To what extent should the learners' experiences and ideas or the trainer's knowledge of a subject be the base upon which a training workshop is built?

(3) To what extent should training sessions be structured around pre-determined learning objectives or flow out of the emerging needs of the group?

(4) How should one balance the need to build a sense of community among the participants, particularly in voluntary programs that extend for 10 to 20 weeks, with the need to cover a wide range of leadership issues?

(5) How do you balance task and process **within** each of the workshops?

(6) To what extent is it important for the trainer to facilitate the participants' ownership of the training program as a strategy for building their investment?

These are some of the dilemmas of grassroots leadership training. There are no uniform answers to these questions that can be mechanically applied to all leadership training

programs. The strategies depend on a wide variety of situational variables, including the intensity and duration of the training and the overall goal of the program.

Every practice method has dilemmas. They are neither good nor bad. They are the "stuff" of the method. It is out of the struggle to integrate or synthesize them that our most important and innovative work emerges. It is unfortunate for the practitioners in the field of grassroots leadership training that this literature pays such little attention to the dilemmas of training.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING MANUALS FOR GRASSROOTS LEADERS

There is a wealth of training opportunities for corporate managers interested in, or obligated to, improve their leadership performance. Two authors who have surveyed the corporate sector have written that "every large company, and most medium-sized firms, have some sort of internal training department. Most also send their employees to external programs for further development" (Kouzes and Posner, 1988, p.288). The same authors estimate that 30% of the training focuses on leadership development. It would be naive to think that the social sector that works to empower neighborhood leaders would be able to provide as wide a range of training programs. However, there are

organizations that do offer structured leadership training programs to indigenous community leaders. What is their approach to leadership training? To what degree, and in what ways, do they attempt to integrate their methodology and their philosophy of leadership?

There are dozens, if not hundreds, of groups around the country that provide some kind of leadership training. Some are organizations whose primary mission is community organizing and who provide training to advance their work. Others have as their main purpose the provision of training and technical assistance to those groups doing "front-line" organizing. Several organizations that are representative of these two types will be surveyed in this section of the literature review. It should be noted that several other organizations were contacted that did have written materials explicating their philosophy and methodology. They chose not to make the materials available for this study.

(1) ACORN

ACORN (Association for Community Organization and Reform Now), was established in 1970 to organize for power for low- and moderate-income people. With a dues-paying membership of 100,00 families in 29 states, it is one of the largest groups in the country dedicated to this purpose (ACORN Fact Sheet). It's Institute for Social Justice is

the organization's training arm.

While ACORN believes that the most essential source of development for leaders lies in their direct experience -- "leaders become leaders by doing things they've never done before or had the opportunity to do or could imagine themselves doing" (12/22/95 telephone interview with Elena Hanggi, Director of the Institute for Social Justice) -- they are also committed to providing more formal training opportunities for their grassroots leaders. On an annual basis, the Institute provides one or two week-long "Leadership Schools" for 25-30 leaders from across the country. The School covers such areas as: history and principles of ACORN; overview of leadership; electoral politics; how to build a campaign; skills, like chairing a meeting; finances and budget; and an exploration of an issue that ACORN is mobilizing around across the country. The Institute also offers a weekend-long Leadership School for Spanish-speaking leaders. In addition, it provides one day of training per year to every ACORN chapter on an issue(s) that is relevant to that chapter.

In articulating its approach to leadership, ACORN critiques the dominant approach that its members have been socialized to practice, which views the leader as being special or unique -- something that the rest of the people

could never be. It defines leadership in a manner that makes it accessible to the rank-and-file. Its vision of grassroots leadership is one in which the usual distance between leaders and members is radically reduced. ACORN has a clear and focused approach to leadership. The two critical concepts are that leadership should be:

> **functional** -- leadership is viewed as "something you do, rather than a position or title you hold...Leadership is responding to the current needs of the group in such a way that the group is helped to go on with whatever task it has and to have its own needs met at the same time. A person is a leader when they offer help or services to the group in a way that the group can receive" (Institute for Social Justice, 1980, p.1); and
>
> **shared** -- because leadership is based on what you do and not your title, it is distributed among many people. In this approach, "the designated leader has a special function but is still responsible as a member" (Institute , p.2).

In keeping with the rest of the literature surveyed in this review, the training methodology that ACORN utilizes seems to be less clear and developed than its conceptualization of leadership (without seeing the training in action, one is forced to rely on written documents and phone interviews that may not reflect the richness of a group's practice. Greater certainty regarding all of the groups surveyed in this section would require extensive observation). The organization has very little in writing that explains its training methodology. In fact, a four-page January, 1995 memo from Hanggi setting out some basic

guidelines for designing a workshop is the only written document that seems to focus specifically on methodology. While the agenda for the Leadership School training is clear, coherent, and well organized, one is not able to infer much beyond that from reading it.

Hanggi herself acknowledges that ACORN relies on its approach to training being "orally passed on" (12/22/95 interview with Hanggi). The ACORN training approach involves a "wide variety of styles, " including some lectures, small group discussions, and role plays. An emphasis is placed on creating a relaxed atmosphere -- for example, there are "no wrong questions" -- and connecting the training to the experiences and needs of the ACORN leaders. When asked if the training methodology mirrors ACORN's commitment to functional and shared leadership, she answered in the affirmative. However, she offered two examples that were limited in scope. One example, which involved the opening exercise when the participants stand in a circle and share their name, where they live, and one thing they hope to get from the Leadership School, was meant to reflect ACORN's commitment to building a community of equals. The other example involved the process by which small groups picked spokespeople to report back to the large group. As the Leadership School progresses during the

course of the week, the groups go from picking a person on the basis of convenience to that of skill. This was offered to illustrate the organization's functional approach to leadership.

(2) Grassroots Leadership

Grassroots Leadership was established in 1980 in North Carolina to provide training and technical assistance to groups in the South struggling for social change in their local communities. It has a strong commitment to the development of "...relationships forged outside the constraints of age, class, gender, and race barriers" (City Limits, 1993, p.62). It has a staff of eight trainers.

In a telephone interview (conducted on 12/20/95) with its director, Si Kahn, the author reviewed in an earlier section, it was clear that the organization did not possess, and/or was not comfortable in releasing, written materials that explicated its approach to leadership and training methodology. However, he was quite willing to share their approach verbally. He started out by explaining that their approach to leadership was "both a concept and a critique of existing leadership." An alternative conception of leadership must include a critique of the dominant model, which he defined as being individualistic, entrepreneurial, competitive, and acultural.

Grassroots Leadership believes that a new concept of leadership starts with how indigenous leadership is **actually** practiced in poor and working-class communities and must be "culturally rooted" in those communities. This means sustaining what is positive from that culture and struggling with the elements that should be discarded. This approach builds community on the basis of equity, cooperation, and interdependence. It is "open, but tough," in the sense that it is not afraid of confrontation. But this kind of leadership is able to differentiate between strategies for confronting one's enemy and those for resolving conflicts within one's own ranks. In an interesting twist, Kahn resisted putting a label on this conception of leadership. Labels get easily misinterpreted because words like "democracy" or "shared" connote different things to people. It is also easier for people to **claim** that they practice a certain model of leadership when it can be summed up in a word or phrase.

There are several general guidelines that are central to their work. The training programs of Grassroots Leadership are not offered to individuals. Their work takes place in an organizational context; people are not "abstracted from an organization." Grassroots Leadership believes that training should facilitate a sense of mutual

obligation between the trainees beyond their participation in the workshops in an effort to avoid the development of self-centeredness and a false sense of community during the training sessions. Their work is also based on building long-term relationships with organizations. A three-year commitment is the minimum. This stems from a belief that authentic leadership development and organizational growth do not occur with short-term intervention. Another significant characteristic of their training, and one that distinguishes Grassroots Leadership from other organizations, is that, in Kahn's estimation, "half of the training is culturally based." They use art to help people learn, grow, and take new risks. Through artistic expression -- music, writing, drawing -- people "create a shared reality."

Kahn said that their training methodology has been influenced by Paulo Freire and adult education theory. There is "little direct teaching" because "people learn through experience." They use the "standard things," like icebreakers and role plays. He was much more interested in discussing the broader meaning of the training than the nuts and bolts of the methodology perhaps because of the group's strong belief that the "conceptualization of training is important, not just the delivery."

There were several areas in which the conception of leadership and the training methodology seemed to reinforce each other. First, the training program is developed in close consultation with each organization in the belief that people have a unique perspective of their needs and so that the organization is invested in making the program work. Second, in an effort to address the inherent power imbalance that exists when Grassroots Leadership is providing training to an organization -- the implicit assumption is that the community organization is deficient in some area and has to learn from the expertise of Grassroots Leadership -- the organizations are often clustered in groups of eight. This facilitates their "learning from their peers." Finally, the trainers also struggle to model their approach to leadership. This means, for example, not avoiding conflict but struggling with it.

Grassroots Leadership is engaged in interesting and important work. It is frustrating that their work is not better documented so that other practitioners might learn from it.

(3) Midwest Academy

The Midwest Academy was established in 1973 in Chicago to provide assistance to the many people and groups organizing for social, economic, and political justice. It

helped to develop Citizen Action, " a national organization of 2.5 million members in 29 states... the common thread connecting all of the Academy's work is the value placed on developing individuals so that they can work together toward a more just society" (Bobo, et al., 1992, p.ix). In a book/manual that is over 250 pages, entitled Organizing for Social Change: A Manual for Activists in the 1990's, the Academy lays out its conceptualization of leadership and its approach to training (in a phone conversation with the organization in which I asked for materials on these two subjects, I was directed to this publication).

The authors define a leader as someone who has followers, who has a base of people who respect his/her views. As was the case with several writers from the Community Organizing section of this literature review, they list the qualities -- commitment, honesty, positive outlook, confidence, trust in people, and mistrust of accountable institutions -- and the skills -- listening, diplomacy, recruitment, personal organization, and goal setting -- that they believe leaders most need. As Staples did in Roots to Power, they emphasize the need to provide opportunities through which grassroots leaders can develop, i.e. committees. They also discuss the need for both "task and maintenance leadership" and that no person can fulfill all

leadership roles well. The need is to "institute the rotation of roles and develop systems for training people for new roles" (p.91).

The authors do not provide an underlying conceptualization of leadership. Their valid points are not woven together into a coherent and comprehensive approach to leadership. Even more glaring is the lack of attention paid to the context of grassroots leadership development. There is no discussion of how the model of leadership that grassroots leaders have been socialized to emulate can inhibit their ability to carry out the skills and attitudes, mentioned above, that the authors identify as being central to effective leadership. They write, for example, that "the importance of the principle that leaders have followers can't be stressed too much" (p.87). However, they ignore the critical questions that follow: what is the **basis** upon which leaders develop relationships with followers? Is it on the basis of doing personal favors, threats, force of personality? Is it on the basis of the Freirian concept of "dialogue" and "naming the word" together? Or a combination? It is in the struggle to grapple with these complex issues that the dilemmas of grassroots leadership development emerge.

In addressing the issue of training methodology, they

do a good job of explaining some of the basic guidelines in training -- from the importance of how the room is set up and the role of audiovisuals to the importance of the trainer remembering names and tuning in to the group. They are clear that "leading a good workshop takes time for preparation, as well as skill in leading it" (p.126). The basic components of a workshop, in their view, are: presentation, exercise, role play, discussion, and evaluation/wrap-up. While they recognize that "the form of a workshop and how material is presented are as important as the actual content" (p.127), they don't elaborate on this critical point. Why is the process as important as the content? Is it simply a question of not boring people? Or does the way in which the training is conducted reveal a powerful statement about leadership and community, which go to the heart of community organizing? It is disappointing that such an important issue is left unexplored. As was the case with their effort to provide a conceptualization of leadership, and the efforts of the other groups discussed in this section to offer frameworks for leadership training, they do not discuss how the points that they make about training fit together in a way that can be used as a model of leadership to build community.

RECENT LITERATURE FROM THE FIELD OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

If the subject of this study is grassroots, community-based leadership development, and the professional commitment of the author is to developing indigenous leaders in low-income and working-class communities, why survey the recent literature from the corporate sector of the society? Why try to learn from the social sector whose behavior helps to perpetuate the economic inequality that the GRNG's struggle against?

Burghardt correctly noted in 1982 that most of the well-developed work on leadership that existed at that time emanated from the corporate sector and that "...this style of leadership will often be in conflict with social work's stated objectives of self-determinism...the few training models that do exist are focused on conditions inhospitable to most of our constituents' concerns" (pp.82-83). In the face of powerful and complex changes in the global economy, however, the progressive wing of the corporate sector has been re-thinking their traditional leadership paradigm. Bennis and Nanus, in Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge, put it well:

> A chronic crisis of governance -- that is, the pervasive incapacity of organizations to cope with the expectations of their constituents -- is now an overwhelming factor worldwide. If there ever was a

> moment in history when a comprehensive strategic view of leadership was needed, not just by a few leaders in high office but by large numbers of leaders in every job, from the factory floor to the executive suite, from McDonald's fast food franchise to a law firm, this is certainly it. (1985, p.2)

Thus, in an ironic twist, the corporate sector may have insight to offer to the field of community organizing about the kind of leadership that is needed as we approach the 21st century.

The literature from this field is explicit in its "...belief that leadership is the pivotal force behind successful organizations..." (Bennis and Nanus, 1985, pp.2-3). Each of the books reviewed in this section are based on rigorous reviews of the literature on leadership and several also incorporate interviews with people in leadership positions in a variety of organizational settings. In contrast to the writers from the field of community organizing who each contribute a "piece" of the leadership puzzle and thus were reviewed separately, each of the authors discussed in this section offer comprehensive and coherent conceptualizations of leadership that embody significantly similar themes (because these books focus exclusively on the approach to leadership and do not address training, the issue of methodology will not be addressed in this section of the literature review). These themes include:

(1). Importance of Self: All of the models stress the importance of leaders knowing themselves -- their strengths and limitations, their motivations, and their patterns of behavior (it should be noted that Burghardt makes a similar point for the organizer with his concept of tactical self-awareness). Kouzes and Posner, in The Leadership Challenge: How to Get Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations, sum this up well when they write that "leadership is an art, a performing art. And in the art of leadership, the artist's instrument is the self. Ultimately, leadership development is a process of self-development. The quest for leadership is first an inner quest to discover who you are" (1988, p.298). Covey characterizes his "Seven Habits" as an inside-outside approach in that "private victories precede public victories..." (1989, p.43). The danger of not being highly self-aware is that "a trait that begins as little more than a personal hang-up can become tragic through repetition...so effective leaders learn to compensate for their imperfections before they become perilous" (Bennis and Nanus, 1985, p.60).

(2). "The Vision Thing": One of the most important functions of a leader is to facilitate and "inspire a shared vision" (Kouzes and Posner, 1988, p.9). Leadership is characterized by the ability to create a strong vision for

the organization's future. This ability creates a clear and powerful **focus** for, and serves to instill confidence in, the organization. This is simply summed up in Covey's Habit #2: "Begin with the end in mind." It is in this context that a distinction is made in the literature between leadership and management. The former involves creating the vision while management refers to the set of skills involved in implementing and maintaining it. Terry Anderson, in Transforming Leadership: New Skills for an Extraordinary Future, calls for the development of "leading managers":

> Without both working together in a balanced manner, each would suffer and be less effective. Without leadership as the foundation of management, management cannot function effectively because it is undermined by a lack of humanity, clarity, focus, adaptability, and creativity. Without management, leadership might never follow through enough to get the results needed for long-term success. (1992, p.53)

(3). Proactivity: Effective leaders don't wait for opportunities to present themselves, for problems to evolve into crises, and don't simply respond to the agendas of other people. They **act** on their vision by "challenging the process" (Kouzes and Posner, 1988, p.80). They are willing to take risks and make mistakes. In fact, there is the clear sense in the literature that leaders **must** make mistakes -- that mistakes are meaningful because they often offer the most powerful opportunities for growth and learning.

(4). Empowering Others: Leaders know that they can't be a one-person show. They are consistently looking for ways to delegate and collaborate with others. Blanchard, Zigarmi and Zigarmi (1985) make an important contribution by pointing out the need for leaders to adjust their leadership style to the level of experience and confidence of each employee or member. In this area, Covey lists Habits #3-6, including the ability to achieve "win-win" agreements with people, listening to truly understand others, and synergizing people's talents and resources. He refers to these as "public victories." In sum, "it is important that a transforming leader avoid even the appearance of being 'above' other people in value. The transforming leader...views self as a servant and catalyst to bring forward those potentials rather than a 'capitalist' manipulating others to achieve personal ends" (Anderson, 1992, p.18).

(5). "Walk the Talk": Effective leaders are walking reflections of their values and what they expect from others, including the value of imperfectibility. Of course, it is a high level of self-awareness that enables leaders to, in the words of Kouzes and Posner, "model the way." In a business setting, the guiding principle is "...to always treat your employees exactly as you want them to treat your

best customer" (Covey, 1989, p.58).

(6). Leadership as a Process: Leadership is about life-long learning. Leaders "...are constantly educated by their experiences. They read, they seek training, they take classes, they listen to others, they learn through both their ears and eyes" (Covey, 1990, p.39). Leaders never stop **developing**.

It is worthwhile to identify the key elements of each of the models:

A.Covey	B.Kouzes/Posner	C.Bennis/Nanus
1.Be Proactive	1.Challenge the the Process	1.Attention thru Vision
2.Begin with the End in Mind	2.Inspire a Shared Vision	2.Meaning thru Communication
3.Put First Things First	3.Enable Others to Act	3.Trust thru Positioning
4.Win/Win	4.Model the Way	4.Development of Self
5.Seek First to Understand	5.Encourage the Heart (Celebrate)	
6.Synergy		
7.Sharpen the Saw (Renewal of Self)		

While there are powerful commonalties between these frameworks, there are also differences. For example, Covey emphasizes the need for leaders to take the time to "sharpen their saw," or renew themselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually. By taking the time to focus on self-development, they will be more productive in their leadership role (Si Kahn also makes this point about the need for balance in the life of a leader, though with considerably less depth). Kouzes and Posner emphasize the need for leaders to "encourage the heart" by celebrating and praising others for their contributions and effort. This builds commitment and a sense of purpose.

Terry Anderson, in Transforming Leadership: New Skills for an Extraordinary Future, weaves many of these essential themes around a useful definition of leadership. He writes that, given the wide range and rapidity of change that the world is experiencing, organizations need **transforming leadership**. This approach to leadership focuses on the **relationship** between leader and employee/member. He provides two definitions from other writers that bear quoting at length. The first is from J. Burns in Leadership:

> The transforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower. The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual

> stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents of change...Moral leadership emerges and always returns to the fundamental wants and needs, aspirations, and values of the followers...the kind of leadership that can produce social change that will satisfy followers' authentic needs. (p.60)

The second one, offered by R.M. Kanter in The Change Masters, addresses the other side of leadership, that of ensuring that the vision moves toward reality:

> While encouraging participation, innovators still maintain leadership. Leadership consists in part of keeping everyone's mind on the shared vision, being explicit about 'fixed' areas not up for discussion and the constraints on decisions, watching for uneven participation or group pressure, and keeping time bounded and managed. Then, as events move toward accomplishments, leaders can provide rewards and feedback, tangible signs that the participation mattered. (p.61)

It is in the synthesis of these two definitions that we find a meaningful definition of leadership (note that this definition is not that different from the one offered by Kokopeli and Lakey in Leadership for Change). What does this literature from the corporate sector have to offer to the community-based practitioner engaged in grassroots leadership training? Is this model too much of a burden to place on a grassroots neighborhood leader, who is involved as a leader on a voluntary basis, who is not involved as part of his/her employment, who does not view his/her involvement as part of their career aspirations, and who has limited time? Are the contexts so different that it has no

meaning?

IMPLICATIONS OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership is one of those elusive and complex concepts that has spawned many attempts at description and definition. In fact, by the estimate of two such individuals, "decades of academic analysis have given us more than 350 definitions of leadership. Literally, thousands of empirical investigations of leaders have been conducted in the last seventy-five years..." (Bennis and Nanus, 1985, p.4).

Do we find this level of attention in the literature about neighborhood-based leadership? The literature embodies a fundamental contradiction or gap. As Burghardt has written,

> ...leadership development is to community organization what social functioning is to case and group work. Yet, ironically, never has so cherished a hallmark of practice been so completely ignored in the literature itself. It is as if leadership development is so universally agreed upon as a given objective of practice that it never dawned on anyone to study it as it actually takes place. (1982, p.81)

Has this changed since 1982 when Burghardt made this claim? Two recent reviews of this literature, unfortunately, came to a similar conclusion. Vandenberg (1993), in a doctoral dissertation investigating

neighborhood leaders' perceptions about leadership, makes the important distinction between research on neighborhood organizations and research on neighborhood leadership:

> In contrast to the fairly extensive literature on neighborhood organizations, the literature on neighborhood organization leadership is scarce. Few studies focus exclusively on neighborhood leadership, and in some studies it is only briefly mentioned or not directly alluded to at all. This is remarkable given the importance ascribed to the role of leadership in neighborhood organizations. (p.44)

Finally, an even more recent study concluded that "little has been written about the conditions that foster the development of strong leaders in the context of grassroots citizens organizations" (Shaver, 1995, p.8).

Nevertheless, the literature discussed in this review all make valuable contributions to our understanding of leadership at the grassroots community level. Each one of them has provided unique insight and a piece of the leadership puzzle. Staples and Rubin and Rubin offer valuable insight into the dilemmas of leadership and the critical connection between leadership and participation. Burghardt provides the larger social context in which leadership development must be anchored and a **vision** of critical consciousness as the ultimate destination of leadership development. Kokopeli and Lakey and ACORN offer grounded and clear definitions of shared leadership. Finally, Kahn and Grassroots Leadership capture the local

context of grassroots leadership development. He/they explore the nuances that operate in a community-based setting and grapple with many of the key issues involved in developing a training program for grassroots leaders.

What is missing in the literature, however, is a full-bodied comprehensive framework that conceptualizes and then operationalizes the kind of leadership that **fits** the needs and circumstances of grassroots leaders in their organizations and communities and that will enable them to be effective in mobilizing residents, winning battles, **and** building/rebuilding a sense of community among people. In other words, while there is universal agreement on the importance of developing grassroots leaders, there is inadequate attention paid to the **kind** of leadership to promote that will generate "social capital" and rebuild the civic culture of our neighborhoods. If this is the case, then it makes sense that the literature spends even less time exploring an effective **training methodology** through which to develop neighborhood leaders. Why spend the time developing and then articulating a training process if there is no clear leadership outcome or destination toward which to train?

TOWARD A CONCEPTUALIZATION OF GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP

What might the outline be of such a conception of leadership? A framework for the development of grassroots leaders must start with, and be conceptualized around, the needs and everyday realities of grassroots leaders. The reality that much of the literature (Kahn is a partial exception) does not adequately convey is that grassroots leaders can be their "own worst enemy." They have often internalized the dominant approach to leadership in our society which views leadership as convincing and/or "telling" other people what is best for the group and as a status symbol deserving of special privileges. In the harsher version of this approach, "the leader controls through threats as well as ability to perform leadership functions" (Kokopeli and Lakey, p.3). The subtler version is based more on manipulation in which "leadership appears to be the art of getting others to want to do something that you are convinced should be done" (Kouzes and Posner, 1988, p.1). In both versions, power resides fundamentally in the leader.

The grassroots neighborhood leader who practices this traditional approach might behave in the following ways:

* tells residents they "must" attend an important meeting;

* refers to the members as "my" members;

* is reluctant to delegate work because he/she believes that most people are not reliable and/or that his/her way of doing something is the best if not the only way;

* seeks to persuade someone before trying to understand them;

* is reluctant to share information with people who don't attend a meeting; and

* complains about and blames residents who don't get involved

While this traditional approach **may** work to varying degrees of effectiveness in a military or employment setting where coercive power exists, it won't be effective over the long-run in a **voluntary** organization: "Voluntary associations are first and foremost what their title suggests -- associations of volunteers...Therefore, the life experiences, skills, and political resources of an association's members are its most important resource" (Theilen and Poole, 1986, p.22). If a leader(s) attempts to control the group through threats, manipulation, or force of personality, and members don't feel respected and heard, if they don't feel that the GRNG is "their" organization, they will simply leave or become disruptive. And then, quite often, what occurs is that the leaders will complain about how the other residents don't really care about the neighborhood, blame and resent them, and feel sorry for themselves. The rank-and-file members will, of course, pick

up on these feelings and stay away even more -- a formula for organizational stagnation and dissolution. A neighborhood leader from Michigan sums this up well:

> ...working with people who are volunteers, it can be really tricky...Because, when you're a volunteer you can un-volunteer. So if somebody doesn't like something or they get angry at something or disgusted with something that's happening, they can just leave and you don't know why. So you've got to be able to **read** people, and have a feeling that something is not right with so and so, and I don't want to lose her. What can I do to find out what's happening. (Vandenberg, 1993, p.91)

It is this dynamic that explains, in part, why the GRNG is fragile and difficult to maintain and why training and technical assistance that focuses on this dynamic can help to sustain it (Chavis, et al., 1987). The literature simply does not capture this fundamental contradiction that goes to the heart of neighborhood organizations and leadership: grassroots leaders have been socialized in a leadership style that does not **fit** their context!

If this traditional approach doesn't fit in the neighborhood setting, what kind of leadership does? What kind of approach will be most effective in helping a leader to maintain and increase the participation and commitment of the existing and potential membership of a grassroots neighborhood organization? To the extent that the literature that has been reviewed in this study does explore this issue, it identifies the shared or **group-centered**

approach to leadership as offering the best opportunity for encouraging the participation of the rank-in-file, who in the GRNG are the ultimate source of power. In this approach, leadership is viewed more as a set of skills and functions that enable the group to operate well than as personal privileges. Consequently, more of the power is located in the group than in the leader. This allows for mutual accountability between the leaders and the members. The exercise of leadership is structured fundamentally around using one's skills, knowledge, and values to help the group decide what it wants to do, help the group carry it out, and keep it cohesive (Kahn, 1991; Kokopeli and Lakey; Vandenberg, 1993). The challenge for this kind of leader is to balance "task leadership and maintenance leadership" (Bobo, et al., 1991, p.88) not simply for its own sake, but to strengthen the members' investment in, and ownership of, the organization. The purpose of the group-centered leader comes back to that: to motivate people to get involved and to then facilitate their participation in, and ownership of, the organization (Vandenberg, 1993).

The goal of training toward this conception of leadership is summed up best by ACORN: "leaders become members and members become leaders" (Institute for Social Justice, 1980, p.2). In other words, as members develop

into leaders, they must never forget that they are still members, accountable to members, and have a responsibility to assist other members in becoming leaders.

The grassroots leader who struggles to practice this kind of leadership might:

* stay away from words like "must" and prefer terms like "we'd like you to attend" or "we need you" to help us;

* refer to the residents as "we" and "our";

* delegate work knowing there might be mistakes along the way;

* "seek to understand before being understood" (Covey);

* reach out and share information with people who don't attend meetings; and

* problem solve, more than complain, when attendance falls below expectations

With this as a basic definition, the skills and functions that are central to leadership are not viewed as separate and discrete from one another. Rather, they are interdependent parts of a holistic philosophy of leadership, with each skill being carried out in a way that struggles to reflect the group-centered philosophy. As Rubin and Rubin write, many skills "...are not meaningful unless placed in the broader philosophy out of which they grow...You have to know not only what to do in the circumstances but also why you are supposed to do it" (1992, p.236). Two examples are:

(1) Meeting Management: the challenge for a group-

centered neighborhood leader is to run a meeting in such a way that the members "own" it by enabling them to make most decisions about the content as well as the process of the meeting and so that a sense of community is built/strengthened -- without allowing the meeting to become chaotic and unproductive; and

(2) Delegating: how can leaders delegate as much work as possible to as many people as possible so that people feel a stake in the organization? How can leaders delegate work in such a way that they provide guidance and support but not interference --so that the individual member feels respected -- and the work gets done promptly and well so that the group's needs are met?

What relevance, if any, does the corporate management literature have to this group-centered approach to neighborhood leadership? While it is certainly true that "...the nature of leadership in grassroots organizations is fundamentally different" from that in corporations (Shaver, 1995, p.8), and it is understandable that people who are committed to organizing for power for poor and working people have an automatic reflex against developments emanating from the corporate sector, they should not and cannot blind themselves to ideas that can assist them in their organizing. The dearth of comprehensive literature on grassroots leadership development makes it imperative that a search is made for contributions from other contexts and fields that can be **adapted** to the community-based context.

The corporate literature on leadership is relevant, but only when viewed within the world of neighborhood leadership

rather than separate from it. Specifically, it is on top of the **contextual foundation** of grassroots leadership development outlined above --

* that the dominant approach to leadership that has been internalized by many grassroots leaders does not work in the neighborhood context,

* that the participation, commitment, and investment of the members, existing and potential, is the key source of power in a GRNG, and

* that, therefore, a strategic focus of the grassroots leader needs to be on developing the skills and attitudes to facilitate the investment and ownership of the "rank-and-file" in the GRNG

and on top of the **conceptual foundation** of grassroots leadership development --

* that a group-centered approach to leadership "fits" the neighborhood context, and

* that the development of critically conscious subjects of history is the ultimate destination of grassroots leadership training (Freire,1982)

that the contributions from the field of corporate management should be assessed. There are at least two significant areas that merit consideration.

The first contribution that the literature on corporate management offers is the <u>importance of self</u>. This literature is quite clear that the quality of leadership starts with self -- the ability to know oneself and understand how one's leadership impacts on others. This insight is virtually missing from the community

leadership/organizing literature. Moreover, neighborhood leaders' approach to generating more participation can be part of the problem. Many of them approach the issue from what might be called an **emotional** perspective. They work hard as neighborhood leaders, giving of themselves and their time. They often resent other residents for not getting involved. They think to themselves, "I'm busy, but I still make the time to be involved, why don't other people. They're probably lazy and don't care." Their behavior reflects those feelings. Too often, the leaders don't step back and assess how their leadership might be affecting people's participation. They do not make the **strategic** connection between how they act toward and engage residents -- from how they talk to people and run meetings to how their group selects issues to work on and how much it accomplishes -- and the extent and quality of the residents' participation.

It is easier -- particularly without training -- to complain about other's behavior than to seriously assess and grapple with one's own. A framework for developing grassroots leaders must include an emphasis on what Burghardt refers to as **tactical self-awareness** -- the ability and willingness of a leader to assess their level of skill and comfort in performing different leadership tasks

in different situations (Burghardt uses this term for organizers. He is less explicit regarding grassroots leaders). It is this quality that then enables leaders to **share** responsibilities on a strategic basis, rather than on the basis of titles.

The second area has to do with the importance of vision in leadership. This is another area that is not well explored in the community-based literature. It seems almost as if it is either not important for grassroots leaders to have a vision -- something that is more appropriate for organizers and executive directors -- or there is an unspoken belief that they are not capable of having a broad vision for their neighborhood and society. Without a vision, people are more likely to **react** to other's agendas and thus be dependent on them. Developing a vision is a crucial part of becoming a **proactive** and critical thinking grassroots leader who is capable of collaborating with, but not being controlled by, others. Critically conscious leaders, to borrow Burghardt's term, must have a vision.

A framework for grassroots leadership development should set high expectations for those leaders. Grassroots leaders **can** develop the ability to be introspective about their leadership, strengthen their visionary side, and learn how to effectively delegate and collaborate with others.

How can grassroots leaders know if they are practicing "democratic" leadership if they do not have a vision of it and do not have the self-awareness to assess themselves in relation to it? These expectations are missing from the community organizing/leadership literature.

On the other hand, these expectations have to be realistic. Grassroots leaders are **volunteer** members of their organizations. Being a neighborhood leader is not a career commitment as it is for corporate managers. To the contrary, neighborhood leaders have neither the time nor the energy to dedicate themselves to the issue of leadership in the way that people do who function in that role as part of their employment. The challenge is to adapt these high expectations to the constraints of the neighborhood context.

It is the low expectations of neighborhood leaders that leads to an over-emphasis on "learning from experience" as the dominant process for leadership development. This does not produce **subjects** of history -- critically conscious neighborhood leaders. Paulo Freire, in The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, sums up this goal of leadership development when he writes that

> man's ontological vocation...is to be a Subject who acts upon and transforms his world, and in so doing moves toward ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively. This world to which he relates is not a static and closed order, a given reality which man must accept and to which he

> must adjust; rather, it is a problem to be worked and solved. It is the material to be used by man to create history...each man wins back his right to say his own word, to name the world. (1982, pp.12-13)

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

With this as the outline of a conceptualization of grassroots leadership development, it is important to acknowledge its inherent limitations. The purpose of theory is to **guide**, **not prescribe**, the work of the community-based practitioner and grassroots leader. Leadership is not a science. It is closer to an art form. An analogy to jazz is instructive (Depree, 1989, 1992). The popular conception of the jazz musician is that he/she merely "plays" what comes to his/her mind. The notion is that the music is spontaneous without having a lot of thought and training behind it. It is almost as if the musician is "born, not made."

The reality is that the great jazz innovators -- Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Max Roach, Wynton Marsalis, to name a few -- are quite well versed in musical theory, familiar with different types of music, and spend an inordinate amount of time practicing. Their incredible compositions and improvisations take place within a structure and set of parameters that they have spent years learning, creating, and changing. Their art is created

through the interplay of their knowledge of music and their intuitive and creative impulses. The music that each creates is unique and is their own "sound." Their understanding of certain musical guidelines and principles serves as the foundation upon which their music is created.

What is the connection to leadership? As Rubin and Rubin point out, there are dilemmas and tensions that are central to leadership. Leaders can neither afford to mechanically apply theory to the variety of situations they face nor can they simply rely on instinct and impulse to resolve the dilemmas. To cite one example, one of the important skills that a grassroots leader needs, and that exerts a powerful influence on how members relate to the organization, is that of meeting management. There are general principles and skills that are involved in facilitating a meeting from a group-centered leadership perspective. These might include: facilitating a process by which the participants develop a set of "ground rules" to hold themselves accountable for their behavior; allowing the participants to approve/modify the agenda; the use of an icebreaker; and allowing the group to make decisions during the meeting concerning the agenda.

A leader of a grassroots neighborhood organization needs to be familiar with those principles and have the

opportunity to practice the skills. Nevertheless, the dilemma that a leader faces in knowing when and how to intervene to ask a participant to finish a point or relate it more clearly to the topic being discussed -- without causing that individual and the other participants to feel stifled -- cannot be resolved by predetermined and uniform prescriptions. The options/techniques/strategies that a leader uses will be **based** on the principles. But the fullest expression of one's leadership involves using one's knowledge, skills, and values, to "improvise" to fit the needs and dynamics of a particular situation and/or person. The challenge for leaders is to use theory and ideas as a guide in developing their own leadership "sound."

III. THE RESEARCH STUDY

The challenge for the field of neighborhood leadership/organizing is to develop a comprehensive framework for grassroots leadership development that synthesizes the various contributions from its ranks, adapts some of the insights from the progressive management literature to the grassroots community context, and integrates the two into a powerful whole. The task is to integrate the knowledge of context and the commitment to social justice from the former with the breadth of vision from the latter.

GOAL OF THE STUDY

The challenge for the field, however, does not end there. One of the defining principles of the social work profession is that how a service is delivered -- the process or method -- can be as important, and deserves as much attention and thought, as the desired outcome. Social work theory and practice go one step further by viewing process and outcome as interacting parts of a holistic intervention. In fact, it is the degree to which they **fit** that facilitates the most powerful intervention. To what extent is there consonance between them? To what extent do they reinforce and reflect each other? The profession is distinguished by

its conscious and intentional struggle with this dynamic.

For the individual progressive community-based practitioner, the task is to "walk the talk," to struggle toward "...convergence between what is said and done. And it is not easy to work on diminishing the distance between discourse and action. It is much easier to talk than to do...It is impossible for a social worker to continue to be progressive when he or she only talks progressive but acts conservative or reactionary" (Freire, 1990, p.6). Kahn also recognizes this when he writes that "the kind of world we build is determined in many ways by how we build it. We have to begin working in ways that reflect how we want to work" (1991, p.44).

In fashioning a leadership training program for grassroots leaders, the practitioner must, in Covey's words, "begin with the end in mind." This means starting with a vision and conceptualization of leadership and working backwards from there to develop the methodology through which to share that vision. It is not enough for community-based practitioners to talk about group-centered leadership, they must also struggle to use themselves "...as models of leadership. If...we are presenting a style of leadership that implicitly we wish others to emulate, it would seem that we need clarity on what we are about, too" (Burghardt,

1982, p.83). Of course, the practitioner must also recognize that their development, as much as that of the grassroots leader, is a process that unfolds over time.

Too often, however, as documented in the literature review, neither the philosophy of leadership nor the training methodology receive adequate attention, with the latter receiving less attention than the former. Beyond that, there has been virtually no effort to systematically draw the connections between the outcome and the methodology of the training and unite them in a holistic intervention. That is the purpose of this study: If, as has been argued above, the group-centered approach to leadership fits in the grassroots neighborhood context, what are the elements of a training methodology to transmit that approach? If, as has also been argued above, grassroots leaders have been socialized to act as leaders in ways that don't fit their context, how does the community-based trainer challenge them to re-think their leadership paradigm without **reproducing** it and alienating them? How does the practitioner **model** an approach to leadership that is better suited to their context? How does a trainer transmit the philosophy and skills of a group-centered approach to leadership?

RESEARCH DESIGN

Given the wide gap in the literature concerning the elements of a training methodology that **intentionally** sets out to reflect and produce a group-centered approach to leadership, this study is an exploratory one. An exploratory study is appropriate in those areas "...where little work has been done, few definitive hypotheses exist, and little is known about the nature of the phenomenon..." (Patton, 1990, p.131). The goal of exploratory research is to articulate questions and refine concepts that will lead the way to further investigation. The goal is to discover, not to verify. The goal of this study is to begin a process of exploration concerning the dimensions of a training methodology the goal of which is to develop group-centered, critically conscious neighborhood leaders.

The literature review that was undertaken as part of this study also revealed that there are few grassroots leadership training programs that consciously set out to develop group-centered leaders through the use of a methodology that mirrors that approach and that record their work in written form and make it available for research. As a result, there are few natural settings in which to investigate this issue. For this reason, the case study approach was selected as the specific strategy for exploring

this issue. It is "...useful where one needs to understand some special people, particular problem, or unique situation in great depth, and where one can identify cases rich in information -- rich in the sense that a great deal can be learned from a few exemplars of the phenomenon in question...Regardless of the unit of analysis, a qualitative case study seeks to describe that unit in depth and detail, in context, and holistically" (Patton, 1990, p.54). The case study approach provides the researcher with the opportunity to illuminate the nuances, tensions, contradictions, dilemmas and dynamics of a phenomenon -- the "stuff" of a practice method. It "fits" the exploratory nature of this study in that there is no assumption that the findings will be generalizable to other programs.

This study is structured around an intensive investigation of one such program, The City University of New York Parent Leadership Project (PLP). The PLP was established in 1988 to provide leadership training to parents in New York City public schools to strengthen their ability to participate in and lead efforts to improve their children's schools. The PLP was chosen as the case study because it possessed the following characteristics:

(a) a substantial track record of training grassroots leaders. The Project has provided comprehensive training --

an average of 40 hours -- to approximately 1,400 parents. It has a body of practice through which it has refined its approach, and more specifically, it has a history of struggling with the essential question of this study-- **how** does a training program reflect in its methodology the commitment to developing group-centered leaders. It is precisely "how" and "why" questions that lend themselves to the case study approach (Yin, 1989, pp.16-19);

(b) a well-developed and documented training curriculum and methodology. As has been shown in the Literature Review, there are seemingly few studies of grassroots leadership training programs that have devoted substantial attention to both content and method, and few programs that have taken the time to record their approach. The Parent Leadership Project has a 250-page Trainer's Manual that contains lesson plans and handouts for 11 curriculum modules and a section on training methodology. The breadth of the PLP's practice and its documentation met an important criteria for the selection of a case study, namely the "opportunity to learn" (Stake, 1994, p.243). The findings from this study were captured in the interplay between the participants' perceptions of the program and its conscious articulation by the staff;

(c) a high degree of accessibility to the researcher.

Yin, in Case Study Research: Design and Methods, suggests that the single case can be selected on the basis of its *revelatory* potential, in the sense that the researcher has "...an opportunity to observe and analyze a phenomenon previously inaccessible to scientific investigation" (1989, p.48). While no claim is being made that grassroots leadership training methodology has been totally inaccessible to researchers, it is an issue to which they have devoted minimal attention. Additionally, as was pointed out in the previous chapter, several grassroots training entities that have recorded their approach refused to make their materials available for this study. The fact that the researcher in this study was the past director of the PLP provides unique access to its thinking, history, documentation, and actors. This unique perspective, while having dangers discussed later in this chapter, has tremendous potential to yield significant insights; and

(d) preliminary indications that the PLP generated successful outcomes. Quantitative data gathered from pre/post-questionnaires on an annual basis indicate that the PLP was successful in producing positive changes in the confidence and activity of the parent leaders. The focus of this study is the relationship between the inputs and outcomes of grassroots leadership training.

RESEARCH METHOD

The literature lacks a rich and multi-dimensional study of grassroots leadership training. This study takes one step in filling that void by utilizing a triangulated research methodology to develop a holistic understanding of the PLP: "Triangulation is a powerful solution to the problem of relying too much on any single data source or method, thereby undermining the validity and credibility of findings because of the weaknesses of any single method. Using triangulation is recognition that the researcher needs to be open to more than one way of looking at things" (Patton, 1990, p.193). Several types of methodological inquiry were conducted for this study:

(a) content analysis of written documents of the PLP;

(b) secondary analysis of existing quantitative data from the pre/post evaluation used by the PLP;

(c) construction and analysis of a study assessing the impact of the PLP on parents after they completed the training; and

(d) qualitative interviews with parents concerning their experience with the PLP.

It was in the interaction between these different sources of data that the complexity of the PLP was captured.

A. Content Analysis of Program Documents

The PLP was chosen as the program for investigation, in part, because it possessed extensive written documentation which would provide insight into what it hoped to achieve through its intervention. Program documents are important to the researcher because of what he/she

> ...can learn directly by reading them; but they also provide stimulus for generating questions that can only be pursued through direct observation and interviewing. Thus, program records and documents serve a dual purpose: (1) they are a basic source of information about program decisions and background, or activities and processes, and (2) they can give the evaluator ideas about important questions to pursue through more direct observations and interviewing. (Patton, 1990, p.233)

Each methodological component interacted with and affected the development of the others. By providing a clear sense of the PLP's objectives, the documents analysis served to shape the questions that were included in the qualitative interviews. The specific purpose of the document analysis was to understand how the PLP grappled with the critical issues that this study seeks to illuminate:

(a) what outcomes did the PLP hope to achieve?
(b) what was the philosophy of leadership that the PLP utilized;
(c) what were the elements of its training methodology; and
(d) how did the PLP draw connections between its

philosophy and methodology?

The documents that were analyzed include:

* PLP Trainer's Manual
* All PLP proposals to funding sources
* All PLP final reports to funders
* Internal PLP support materials distributed to trainers

The findings from the documents analysis are presented in Chapter IV.

B. Secondary Analysis of PLP Pre/Post Questionnaire Outcome Data

The quantitative component of this study examined how successful the PLP was in achieving the objectives identified in the analysis of its program documents. It had two parts. The first was a secondary analysis of existing PLP data regarding changes in participants' confidence and activity during the training (Grinnell, p.290). The data, which was generated from a pre/post questionnaire, covered more than 400 parents over five years. The second part, described in the next section, assessed the impact of the PLP on the parents beyond the point of their completion of the training.

The PLP's curriculum, methodology, and evaluation design all evolved over time. As the PLP worked toward clarifying its learning outcomes, it similarly struggled with how to measure those outcomes. It is useful to place

the PLP's evaluation strategy in the larger context of program evaluation.

In Program Evaluation in the Human Services, Smith provides a useful and simple framework for selecting a research design for evaluating a human service program. He identifies three basic options. At one end of the spectrum is the *ex post facto* study in which people who receive a particular service or participate in a particular program are surveyed at the conclusion through a questionnaire or interview. The limitations of this approach are clear. Since there is no collection of data before the program, there is "...no real data on change" (Smith, 1990, p.72).

At the other end of the spectrum exists the *experimental* design. This is generally considered the most rigorous of designs for "...establishing cause-and-effect relationships between the program and the program goals. Experimental design involves randomly allocating people to different forms of intervention or program, into two contrast groups...Many experimental studies also contain a control group, which is studied but not treated. This is done so that treatment can be contrasted with no treatment to determine the program's effects" (Smith, 1990, p.73-74). While being the most conclusive and "scientific" of the three design choices, it poses ethical and logistical

problems for the practitioner (Smith, 1990; Epstein and Tripodi, 1977). Simply put, is it ethical for a human service program to differentiate what services clients receive on the basis of random distribution rather than professional judgment? Additionally, how realistic is it for programs that often struggle with limited resources to set up and monitor control groups?

The research design that sits in the middle of Smith's spectrum is the *pre-post* study. By asking the same questions before and after the intervention, Smith writes that the pre-post study "is an improvement on the ex post facto survey because you can monitor changes in the client's situation" (pp.72-73). However, because there is no effort to control for factors other than the intervention, the findings from a pre-post study are less certain than those from an experimental study regarding "...the ultimate effectiveness of programs...and causality" (Smith, 1990, p.75-76). In a pre-post study, causal connections between program input and program outcome can be inferred, but not proved with absolute certainty.

In its first two years, the PLP administered a post-test questionnaire to participants (this questionnaire and subsequent ones were developed and monitored by an evaluation consultant in collaboration with PLP staff). In

its third year (the 1990-91 school year), the Project established the pre-post study as the basic evaluation design. The PLP recognized that

> ...a critical dimension of any program evaluation is to have a basis for comparing the impact of the intervention (in this instance the training). The only comparative design available to this study was a pre- and post-test for respondents on a number of attitudinal and behavioral criteria. In effect, respondents were tested on these criteria prior to and after their participation to assess the influence of the training." (Parent Leadership Project, 1991a, pp.23-24)

While the basic structure of this evaluation design remained constant, the questions did not become fixed and final until the 1992-93 school year -- the same year that the Trainer's Manual was completed (see Appendix for the Parent Questionnaire). The questions posed to the parents were in two categories:

Attitudes and Beliefs

* How confident are you in speaking at a school meeting?

* How interested are you in working with other parents or school staff to address problems in the school?

* How confident are you in taking on a leadership role in an activity or project to improve the school?

* How confident are you in running a meeting?

* How confident are you when meeting with a teacher?

* How confident are you when meeting with a principal?

* How strongly do you believe that other parents can be

recruited to attend parent association meetings and work on important school issues?

* How likely are you to remain a part of a group as opposed to dropping out when faced with conflict between members?

* How likely are you to listen to and think about the ideas of other group members?

* How effective are you in persuading others to your point of view?

* How likely is it that your contributions will make a difference in the school?

Activities

* How often do you attend parent association meetings?

* How often do you attend school board and other district meetings?

* How often do you speak at school meetings?

* How often do you work with other parents, teachers and the principal on activities to improve the school?

* How often do you reach out to other programs or resources that help parents?

* How often do you reach out to friends and neighbors to try to get them to participate in parent association meetings and activities?

* How often do you discuss issues of concern with the principal?

* How often do you discuss issues of concern with the superintendent or other district staff?

In this study, data from the pre- and post-tests over five cycles or years of training were analyzed to assess the success of the PLP. Because the evaluation design first

became consistent in 1990-91, the presentation and analysis of the data in Chapter V begins with the data from that year and ends with the data collected from the 1994-95 training cycle, the last year in which information was formally collected and analyzed.

C. Quantitative Study to Assess the Post-Participation Impact of the PLP

Organizations, like individuals, go through stages of development. The needs and possibilities of an organization at one stage are different from those at earlier and later stages. The area of research and evaluation is no exception. The data collected from the pre/post questionnaires did not shed light on whether the impact of the PLP was sustained beyond the point of the parent leaders' completion of the training. During its early years, the PLP collected anecdotal evidence which suggested that many of the participants continued their involvement in their children's schools beyond the point of participation in the PLP workshops. Specifically, there were examples of parents who were elected to their Community School Boards and to positions on district-wide committees and parents who

went back to school and/or located employment (Parent Leadership Project, 1993b).

The systematic collection of quantitative data on the post-participation impact of the PLP had to wait, however, until the assessment instrument used ***during*** the training had proven to be a reliable and valid indicator of program objectives. Any effort to collect post-participation data prior to this point would have been premature and resulted in less valid results. By 1994, after six years of training and two years after the Trainer's Manual was developed, the pre/post evaluation questionnaire had produced consistent findings and become a fixed instrument. Consequently, research was initiated as part of this overall study of the PLP to assess the impact of the Project on parents beyond their participation in the training.

(1) Design of the Post-Participation Study

The purpose of this component of the overall study of the Parent Leadership Project was to assess the leadership activities of PLP parents at a point in time after their participation in the training concluded (to be referred to herein as the "post-participation" study). While the results did not establish with certainty a causal relationship between the training program and the parents' behavior -- because there was no control group -- the study

did shed light on whether the effects of the training were sustained beyond the point of the parent leaders' engagement with the PLP.

The design of this undertaking was patterned after the evaluation design used during the training. A questionnaire, based on the pre/post-questionnaire distributed to participants at the beginning and end of each PLP training cycle, served as the evaluation instrument. The format, language, sequence, and content of the questionnaire was quite similar, and in many instances identical, to the instrument developed earlier (see Appendix for Follow-Up Parent Survey Form). This helped to ensure its reliability and validity because the pre/post-questionnaire had produced reasonably consistent findings over several years with the same universe of respondents.

The first section of the questionnaire, as was the case with the pre/post-questionnaire, covered demographic background issues, including gender, race/ethnicity, and education. This information provided a basis for comparing the backgrounds of parents who participated in the training and those who completed the post-participation instrument. Differences and similarities between the samples were discerned and the potential implications are discussed in Chapter V.

The section of the questionnaire measuring the breadth of the respondents' leadership role had much in common with the pre/post-questionnaire. It included questions from the latter measuring the frequency of leadership activity. These are:

* speaking at school meetings
* speaking at district meetings
* reaching out to other parents
* discussing issues of concern with the principal
* discussing issues of concern with the superintendent
* remaining part of a group when faced with conflict between members
* thinking about the effect on others before speaking
* listening to other group members before responding to them
* encouraging the group to plan before taking action

However, there were also differences between these questionnaires. The post-participation questionnaire included questions that were not part of the pre/post-questionnaire. Questions were asked which required the parent leaders to assess their effectiveness (not frequency) since the training in specific skill areas. These skills were covered in great depth in the Trainer's Manual and were central to the PLP's understanding of the responsibilities of a parent leader. These questions were included so that a picture would emerge not only of the level of activity of the PLP "graduates," but their "style" of leadership as

well: to what degree, and in what ways, had the parent leaders begun to internalize and act upon the group-centered approach to leadership that provided the philosophical coherence of the PLP training workshops? These questions asked the parent leaders to assess their effectiveness in the following skill areas:

* welcoming new parents
* recruiting other parents
* developing new leaders
* using community resources
* running a meeting
* public speaking
* planning a project
* being part of a team
* delegating work
* communicating with one's children

(a third section of the questionnaire containing several open-ended questions about parents' employment and school prospects and their assessment of the PLP was not germane to this study).

(2) Sampling in the Post-Participation Study

If the intent of this study was to survey parents at some point after they had completed the training, what was the appropriate point? This study was initiated after the PLP had undertaken six cycles of training. The choice was made to survey those parents who "graduated" from the PLP one and two years prior to the study. Those parents who participated in the PLP more than two years prior to this study likely would have had greater difficulty tracing

behavioral change during that period. On the other hand, if it was restricted to those parents who had participated one year prior to the study, the sample would have been quite small and less reliable. To a significant degree, the tradeoffs between memory and sample size dictated sampling strategy.

The pool of parents to whom this questionnaire was mailed numbered 200. To encourage them to complete it, several steps were taken. These included:

* a cover letter from the coordinator was included containing "...a brief description of purpose, how the information will be used, what provisions have been made for assuring anonymity...Sometimes the endorsement of agencies or individuals who are important to respondents will facilitate a high response rate" (Epstein and Tripodi, 1977, p.11);

* the letter and questionnaire were translated into Spanish for those parents for whom it is their primary language;

* the questionnaire was copied on blue paper to make it a bit more attractive to the eye;

* a stamped self-addressed addressed envelope was included to make it simpler for the parents to mail it back (Grinnell, 1993, p.281);

* follow-up postcards were sent to the 200 parents two weeks after the initial mailing as a gentle reminder to complete and return the questionnaire (Grinnell, 1993, p.282); and

* no attempt was made to track the questionnaires because the PLP's experience with the pre/post-questionnaire indicated that anonymity is essential for a significant proportion of the parents.

The findings from the post-participation study are presented in Chapter V.

D. Qualitative Interviews with Parents

The documents' analysis revealed what the PLP sought to achieve. The outcome data demonstrated the degree to which the PLP succeeded. The final component of the study -- qualitative interviewing -- sought to shed light on how the PLP was experienced by the participants. In so doing, it is hoped that the data generated by the combination of these methodological processes will produce insight into the relationship between the "what" and the "how" of successful grassroots leadership training. As Mintzberg has written, "we uncover all kinds of relationships in our 'hard' data, but it is only through the use of this 'soft' data that we are able to 'explain' them, and explanation is, of course, the purpose of research" (1983, p.113).

This part of the study was an attempt to enter the "world" of the PLP parents. Patton puts it well:

> The purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else's mind. The purpose of open-ended interviewing is not to put things in someone else's mind (for example, the interviewer's preconceived categories for organizing the world) but to access the perspective of the person being interviewed. We interview people to find out from them those things that we cannot directly observe...We cannot observe feelings, thoughts and intentions...We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings

> they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. (1990, p.278)

(1) Design of the Qualitative Study

Patton identifies three basic approaches to collecting qualitative data through interviewing (1990, p.280). These are:

(a) the informal conversational interview, which relies on a spontaneous flow of questions as part of a natural interaction;

(b) the general interview guide approach, which entails identifying a common set of issues to be explored with each respondent but does not require the same order of questions for each interview and their prior wording; and

(c) the standardized open-ended interview, which consists of asking all respondents the same basic questions and in the same order.

This study utilized elements of the general interview guide approach and the standardized open-ended interview. An interview guide consisting of clearly worded questions sequenced in a logical order was used to guide, without prescribing, the interviews (see Appendix for Interview Guide). It was based on a pilot study undertaken in the summer of 1995 with five parent leaders who completed the PLP training (this data is included in the analysis). Areas of inquiry included:

How did the PLP affect the parents' approach to, and

understanding of, leadership? How did it affect their behavior?

How did the parent leaders characterize the PLP approach to leadership?

How did the parent leaders experience the PLP, most specifically its method of training?

What did they perceive as the critical factors that contributed to their higher levels of leadership activity and confidence?

To what degree did they perceive a consonance between the philosophy and the methodology of the PLP? If so, in what areas of the program? If not, where were the contradictions?

The specific questions included in the Interview Guide were a product of several sources, including the researcher's direct experience with the PLP, the content analysis of its documents demonstrating what the PLP hoped to achieve and its methodology for doing so, the results of the quantitative studies indicating areas in which the PLP had been successful, and the general literature review discussed earlier in this study that identified general sensitizing concepts. The guide was formulated to follow a logical sequence of questioning, beginning with questions concerning the parents' expectations of the PLP and how they were impacted by the training followed by questions about their experience in the training.

Given that "the basic thrust of qualitative interviewing is to minimize the imposition of pre-determined

responses when gathering data..." every effort was made to construct questions that were truly open-ended (Patton, 1990, 295). Most questions were initiated with "what" or "how," and did not use language that was suggestive of the "right" answer. Additionally, the questions were formulated in order to be clear and accessible to the interviewees.

(2) Sampling for the Qualitative Interviews

The purpose of qualitative inquiry is to explore an issue deeply, not necessarily widely. It generally focuses on relatively small samples that are selected purposefully. Since the purpose of this component of the study was not to explore the outcome of the Parent Leadership Project but its process, a sampling strategy was utilized that selected "...information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research..." (Patton, 1990, p.169).

More specifically, a combination of two sampling strategies was utilized in this study. An **intensity sampling** strategy was used in which individuals were selected to be interviewed on the basis of having been intensely, but not necessarily extremely or unusually, involved in the PLP. The trainers and their school district collaborators served as "key informants" identifying parents

who were articulate, thoughtful, and had been "immersed" in the PLP experience. A **stratified purposeful sampling** strategy was also used in which parents were selected so that each of the five training groups was represented in the interview "pool." This was done in order to capture the racial/cultural/geographic diversity of the PLP "universe." This selection strategy ensured that the data identified the methodological elements that were common to all of the groups; the data transcended the personalities of the individual trainers.

(3) Data Collection

Forty parent leaders were interviewed (this includes the five from the pilot study) in May and June, 1996 after the training concluded. Since approximately 100 parents participated in the 1995-96 cycle of PLP training, this number was large enough to generate a rich spectrum of data and small enough to be manageable for the study. A combination of individual interviews and focus group interviews were conducted. The nine individual interviews allowed for a deep exploration of each person's experience with the PLP. These interviews included much give-and-take, with the researcher following up on particular questions in order to better explore the nuances of the individual's perspective. It allowed for intensity of exploration.

On the other hand, the eight group interviews enabled the researcher to efficiently gather more data by reaching greater numbers of people. There was one group interview with six parents, four groups of four, one involving three parents, and three interviews with two parents in each. The group interviews were useful because the topics were "...reasonably public and are not matters of any particular embarrassment. It has the advantage of allowing people more time to reflect and to recall experiences; also, something that one person mentions can spur memories and opinions in others" (Lofland and Lofland, 1995, p.21). The group interviews generated synergistic insights that would otherwise have lay dormant if only one-on-one interviews were conducted (Patton, 1990, p. 17). The interviews, both individual and group, lasted for approximately one to one and one-half hours.

What can be done during the course of the interviews in a qualitative study to ensure a high level of validity and reliability? As reported above, the wording, sequence, and language of the interview questions is quite significant. Additionally, the role of key informants in selecting the interviewees can minimize the potential intrusion of the researcher's subjective bias (Lofland and Lofland, 1995, p.61). In qualitative research, however, the ultimate

factor in determining the reliability and validity of the study is the research instrument -- the **researcher**. This places a serious burden of responsibility on the researcher to be thoughtful in developing the interview guide and extraordinarily focused and self-aware during the interview. If the goal of the qualitative interview method is to enter another's world, then the respondents must be allowed to speak in their own terms without being led, consciously or unconsciously by the researcher, in pre-determined directions. The researcher must also be aware of his/her level of fatigue, concentration, anxiety, and mood so that the research instrument -- him/herself -- controls their intrusion into the interview process.

Since the interview is a profoundly human encounter, the researcher (I) wants to establish a rapport with the interviewee, "...but that rapport must be established in such a way that it does not undermine my neutrality concerning what the person tells me" (Patton, 1990, pp.316-317). The challenge is to exhibit empathic neutrality, the balance between being attuned and sensitive to the respondents and neutral to the findings that are revealed throughout the process of the investigation.

How did this study address this critical issue? To make the interviews as "naturalistic" as possible and allay

uncomfortable or anxious feelings on the parts of the parents, they took place in the school in which the training was delivered. If that was not possible, the interviewee's school or a location in the school district with which the parent leader was familiar and comfortable was used.

In general, the researcher's stance was one of respect and courtesy. The researcher began each interview with an explanation of its purpose and his role in it(see Appendix for Introduction in the Interview Guide). The following points were emphasized:

* everything was confidential: "For the known researcher...the guarantee of confidentiality...of the people being researched is often viewed as both an essential technique for 'getting in,' and once entree has been accomplished, as a sacred trust..." (Lofland and Lofland, 1995, p.44);

* the researcher was there in the role of student/researcher, and not as the director of the PLP. The parents were urged to express the full range of their experience and feelings - positive elements as well as things that did not work so well - about the PLP;

* there were no "right" or "wrong" answers because the goal of the researcher should "...be neither moral judgment nor immediate reform, but understanding" (Lofland and Lofland, 1995, p.44); and

* the parents' participation was greatly appreciated.

Additionally, parents' permission to use a tape recorder was explained and requested. The use of the tape recorder, which was granted by all of the interviewees, ensured accuracy in the collection of the data and allowed

the "...interviewer to be more attentive to the interviewee...The interactive nature of in-depth interviewing can be seriously affected by the attempt to take verbatim notes during the interview" (Patton, 1990, p.348). On the other hand, the interviewer did periodically take notes to record what was thought in the moment to be particularly meaningful phrases and impressions. These notes were later analyzed in relation to the full transcription of the interview.

While an interview guide was used, the interviewer was flexible in the actual delivery and order of the questions in recognition that the interviewees encompassed a range of formal education, age, ethnicity, and speaking styles. This was done in order to elicit the richest responses from each of the interviewees.

These issues are particularly relevant in this study. As the director of the program that was the subject of the inquiry, the researcher had intimate knowledge of the history and principles of the PLP. This had a positive side in that it provided the researcher with what Lofland and Lofland refer to as "access to understanding" (1995, p.23). By being so familiar with the PLP, the researcher had a unique perspective on the questions to ask the respondents. This allowed for the skillful use of follow-up *probes* based

on "...knowing what to look for in the interview..." (Patton, 1990, p.327).

The danger with such familiarity was the potential for subjectivity and bias which requires the researcher "...at least initially, to seek mechanisms for distancing" (Lofland and Lofland, 1995, p.23). This researcher used his in-depth understanding of the program to establish rapport with the interviewees and ask meaningful questions that reached to the core of their experience with the PLP. However, through the use of the techniques described above, the researcher was also vigilant not to impose programmatic categories on the parents and allowed them to identify those elements that made the PLP meaningful to them.

4. Data Analysis

After each of the interviews, the interviewer's notes and reactions were written up to preserve initial impressions and add depth to the analysis. Each interview was then transcribed. Patton summarizes the challenge for the researcher in analyzing data when he writes that it "...is to make sense of massive amounts of data, reduce the volume of information, identify significant patterns, and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal" (1990, pp.371-372).

Each interview was read and analyzed separately several

times. "Strips of data" from each interview were listed and then coded by suggested theme. This was also done several times to ensure thoroughness. After this process was completed for all of the interviews, a search was begun to identify common thematic elements between the interviews. This was done by "lumping" similar "strips of data" and themes together and "winnowing out less productive and useful codes...Categories within the selected codes are elaborated. Other codes are collapsed and yet others are dropped. Some codes begin to assume the status of overarching ideas or propositions that will occupy a prominent or central place in the analysis" (Lofland and Lofland, 1995, pp.192-193).

While the reading and coding process were characterized by rigorous attention to the data, the analysis of the data relied on the creativity of the researcher as much as on "...concrete and even routine activities" (Lofland and Lofland, 1995, p.181). This is because qualitative research is fundamentally an inductive method of inquiry. One works out from the data to concepts and theory. The researcher can neither be too quick to draw conclusions from the data nor too insecure to allow the data to lead him/her in unexpected directions. For the researcher,

> ...formulating potential major propositions from your data is an emergently inductive activity. You get from

> data, topics, and questions, on the one side, to answers or propositions, on the other, through intensive immersion in the data, allowing your data to interact with your intuition and sensibilities as these latter are informed by your knowledge of topics and questions. To do inductive analysis...you begin with an open-ended and open-minded desire to know a social situation or setting; the data and yourself as an agent of induction guide you in the task of emergently forming one or more propositions...(Lofland and Lofland, 1995, pp.184-185)

For this study, the core of the process lied in the dialectical interaction between the data and the researcher's "intuition and sensibilities." Analysis **emerged** -- through stops, starts, twist, turns, and changes -- over time. The researcher struggled to be focused and centered in order to first accept and work with the anxiety that developed in this effort. The underlying task for the researcher was to stay close to the data, allow the respondents to speak in their own words, and take their story(ies) and make it accessible and meaningful so that other practitioners will be able to learn from it and use it. The findings are discussed in Chapter VI.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Just as there is no perfect intervention, there is no perfect research design. Each design has strengths and tradeoffs. This is necessitated by "limited resources,

limited time, and limits on the human ability to grasp the complex nature of social reality" (Patton, 1990, p.162).

What were the major tradeoffs/limitations of this research design? There were three:

(1) This study focused on **one** program. The primary limitation of the case study approach is the narrowness of its "universe." It cannot take into consideration the nuances of different program settings. There was no attempt to compare the PLP intervention with that of other programs in order to more clearly identify what seemed to work across programs. As a result, the findings were less generalizable;

(2) It entailed no observation, which along with interviewing and analysis of documents, are the primary methods of inquiry in qualitative research. There was no structured observation of PLP workshops nor was there any observation of the PLP parents in the course of their work in the schools to assess the degree to which they were utilizing the group-centered approach. However, given the exploratory nature of the study, these important issues await further investigation. The possible questions and directions of that investigation are discussed in the final chapter of this study; and

(3) While the researcher's close association with the

program that was studied was a strength as outlined above, it was also a limitation. No matter how strong an effort the researcher made not to structure and direct the interviews in pre-conceived directions, he could not bring the freshness of perspective that an individual not previously associated with the program might have brought to the study.

IV. THE CASE STUDY: OVERVIEW OF THE PARENT LEADERSHIP PROJECT

The goal of this study is to identify and explore what the critical elements are of a training methodology that fits the needs and context of a grassroots leadership training program. To accomplish this goal, the study is structured around the intensive case study investigation of the Parent Leadership Project. Through an analysis of PLP documents, this chapter will describe the history, philosophy, and methodology of the Parent Leadership Project.

BACKGROUND OF THE PARENT LEADERSHIP PROJECT

"We have a disaster with our public schools...and everybody knows it" (Collins, 1995, p.19). While it was written in 1995, this statement -- particularly the first part declaring the problem -- could just as easily have been written in 1988 when the Parent Leadership Project was established.

The contours of the crisis in our public schools, particularly in large inner city school systems, are clear. In 1991, for example, almost 50% of all NYC public school students were reading below grade level. In 1996, this figure had increased to more than 55% (NYC Public Schools, 1996, p.1). In low- and moderate-income neighborhoods where

the overwhelming majority of the students are African-American and Latino, the statistics are even more dramatic. A 1984 study of the 18 high schools in Chicago with the largest percentage of low-income students provides powerful testimony:

> We found that 6700 students entered these schools as ninth graders, that about 3,300 of them dropped out, and about 600 transferred. So about 2800 remained as seniors. Of those seniors, only 300 could read at or above the national average on a standardized achievement test. Thus we had the situation where 6,700 students were coming into the system at one end, and only 300 were coming out at the other end...where they might have a chance to go to the four-year colleges on the lowest rung of our higher education system. (Moore, 1991, p.12)

On top of this educational crisis, or right in the midst of it, urban public school systems have suffered substantial cutbacks in their budgets. In New York City, for example, between 1990 and 1996, the public schools suffered over $2.7 billion in budget cuts. This reduction in funding occurred at precisely the same time that a significant influx of immigrant students -- the student population increased by 114,739 or 12% -- placed additional demands on the system (EPP Monitor, 1997, p.20).

The result is that many students leave school inadequately prepared to play a productive role in our society. Even those government agencies responsible for overseeing public education recognize the seriousness of this crisis. The New York State Education Department, in

its 1991 policy statement entitled A New Compact for Learning, sums up the results of this crisis:

> Many of those who do graduate from high school lack the skill and knowledge to function effectively in a sophisticated society. Even many of our 'best' students...know less math and science and history and foreign language than their agemates in other industrialized nations. And for these reasons, young people fail to develop their capacities, the quality of civic life is impaired, jobs go unfilled, businesses move, industries fail to develop, and our standard of living is poised for decline. (p.1)

What makes this low level of educational achievement a significant social problem is that it interfaces with the shift in the labor market over the last generation in which many of the well-paying and stable jobs available to non-college graduates require "new skills" that were not needed in the past. As a recent study puts it, "during the past 20 years, the skills required to succeed in the economy have changed radically, but the skills taught in most schools have changed very little. As a result of the ever-growing mismatch between the skills of most graduates and the skills required by high-wage employers, a U.S. high school diploma is no longer a ticket to the U.S. middle class" (Murnane and Levy, 1996, p.3). Business leaders see this first hand. For example, "...in 1988, 44% of the job applicants at the Newark, NJ office of Prudential couldn't read at the ninth grade level...and in 1987, Bell South Corporation estimated

that fewer than 10% of their job applicants met minimum requirements" (Reavis and Griffith, 1992, p.80).

This mismatch between the economy and our public schools has led to an increased focus among politicians on the problems of public education. At the national level, President Clinton declared in his 1997 State of the Union address that "my number one priority as President for the next four years is to ensure that Americans have the best education in the world" (Hoff, 1997, p.1). At the local level, the state of the public schools was a major issue in the 1997 NYC mayoral election. While Mayor Giuliani increased the budget for the schools in the year before the election after three years of reductions, his opponents pointed to the continuing low reading and math scores as a reflection of his poor leadership.

A crisis provides opportunity for change. In addition to outlining the dimensions of the educational crisis and calling attention to it, educators have also been developing strategies for addressing it. "In 1983, Americans were warned in A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education) that a rising tide of mediocrity in their education system threatened the nation's security. Since then, the call to arms has centered on an arsenal of new tools to 'restructure' schools" (Newmann and Wehlage, 1995, p.1). The last ten to fifteen years has seen a "new

wave" of school reform efforts in the United States. Some of these reform efforts have focused on new approaches to teaching and learning, including the whole language approach to reading, active learning strategies, cooperative and multi-grade classes, alternative forms of student assessment, and the integration of a multicultural perspective into all subject areas. Many of these ideas are being implemented in newly established or restructured schools that are small in size and theme-based. In New York City, since 1990, over 100 of these new alternative schools have been established serving a student population of nearly 50,000 (New York Networks for School Renewal, 1997, p.1). Other efforts have focused on democratizing governance through school-based management and planning councils. Additionally, several national school reform networks have emerged in the last ten years, including the Comer Project, based on the work of James Comer of Yale, and the Coalition of Essential Schools, based at Brown University.

As part of this reform effort, the role of parents and families in the schools has received increased attention. A great body of research emerged during this period demonstrating that parents' concerns, values, and involvement influence children's behavior and level of achievement in school. In an analysis of studies concerning the involvement of parents and families in public schools,

Anne Henderson of the National Committee for Citizens in Education concluded that "when parents are involved, children do better in school, and they go to better schools...Programs designed with strong parent involvement produce students who perform better than otherwise identical programs that do not involve parents as thoroughly, or that do no involve them at all" (Henderson, 1989, p.1).

The dissemination of these findings during the 1980's and 90's coincided with the nation's rightward political tilt. Conservative education advocates have used these findings to promote the dominant values of the period, including the emphasis on the role of the family in all spheres of social and economic life and the insistence on local control over institutions. Newt Gingrich, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, reflected these values when he argued against President Clinton's proposal for national tests: "The President is focused on the wrong end. He's focused on Washington bureaucracy, Washington regulations, Washington red tape...We believe he ought to be focusing on local parents, local students and local teachers" (Mitchell, 1997, p.1).

The left has also been able to use this focus on parents in its efforts to reform the schools. As the authors of New Directions in Parent Involvement put it, "social movements of the 1960's produced a tradition of

advocacy on behalf of low-income and disadvantaged students...This advocacy work has begun to link up with the progressive education tradition...to produce an increasingly influential reform literature and a growing number of innovative public schools...Parent involvement in collaborative decision-making is a critical principle of that reform literature" (Fruchter, Galletta, and White, 1992, p.8). Thus, from across the political spectrum, parent involvement has been touted as an essential component of improving schools.

It is out of this general context -- the increasing recognition of the crisis in our public schools and an accompanying wave of school reform strategies and the more specific movement for greater parent involvement -- that the Parent Leadership Project emerged in 1988.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE PARENT LEADERSHIP PROJECT

As with most intervention efforts to address social problems, the Parent Leadership Project did not follow a linear path of development. Rather, it evolved in a more circuitous fashion in response to what it learned through its practice and the demands of the external environment.

The crack epidemic, or as the Citizens Crime Commission of NYC put it, the "crack explosion", was at its height in 1987 (Citizens Crime Commission, 1988, p.1)). In response

to this crisis, and in anticipation that New York City would be receiving new money from the federal government in the area of substance abuse prevention and education, The City University of New York established the Office of Substance Abuse Prevention Programs. In the words of the Council of Presidents, in their "CUNY Policy Statement on Substance Abuse" adopted on March 2, 1987, the Office was established to support "...the development and conduct of educational and support programs directed toward the use and abuse of drugs...and cooperation with and support of existing state and city agencies and community based substance abuse prevention programs." The Office was located at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in part because the college already housed an Institute for Drug and Alcohol Studies.

In response to the latter part of the aforementioned mission, the Parent Leadership Project (PLP) was established in 1988 through a two-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education (under the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act). The thinking behind the original proposal was that "...many parents are concerned about drug abuse but are confused about what to do about it" (John Jay College, 1988, p.3). More specifically, school personnel in New York City had often expressed (in conversations with the staff of the Office) their concern about the lack of parental participation and leadership in school-based prevention

programs. The goal of the proposal was to strengthen parents' leadership skills and their understanding of substance abuse prevention, through training, so that they were more able to involve other parents in prevention activities. Between 1988 and 1990, more than 175 parents in eight school districts in New York City participated in training programs that averaged 20 hours (Parent Leadership Project, 1990, p.1).

By the end of the grant period in 1990, there was a growing realization within the PLP that substance abuse prevention could not be neatly separated from issues of school quality. To help keep children away from drugs, schools had to engage them with hands-on learning activities using subject matter that was connected to the children's lives. Too many children were being "turned off" with outdated pedagogical methods and subject matter. Moreover, it was clear that once parent leaders became empowered around the issue of drugs, a natural next step was to turn their attention to the school, both in terms of the quality of education and their role in shaping it.

Simultaneously, several new potential private funding sources requested that the PLP focus its leadership training on preparing parents to participate in and lead efforts to improve their children's schools. As a result of these internal and external demands, the PLP broadened its mission

so that, in its own words, "depending on our funding source and the needs of a particular group of parents, the Project explores the role of parent leaders in improving the functioning of the schools or preventing substance abuse" (Parent Leadership Project, 1992b, p.1). That mission remained constant (the PLP continues to operate, though at a much reduced level compared to the period analyzed in this study).

The Project was based on four fundamental premises:

(1) Parent involvement must be a major element of a comprehensive strategy to improve the schools. Citing the work of James Comer and others, the PLP believes that critical to the success of a school is "...the degree to which the school demonstrates respect, knowledge, and sensitivity to the needs and culture(s) of the surrounding community" (Parent Leadership Project, 1993b, p.5);

(2) There are "significant numbers of parents in every school district in New York City who want to participate in their children's schools, but for a variety of reasons, do not" (Parent Leadership Project, 1991b, p.2). Obstacles cited by the PLP include: an unwelcoming school atmosphere; social problems that may overwhelm some parents; negative experiences parents had when they were children in school; lack of information, confidence and skills on how to get involved; and parent associations that may be poorly organized and unwelcoming to new parents;

(3) Parent leaders are the key "player" in increasing parent involvement because they are intimately familiar with parents' problems and concerns and because teachers and principals, by the very nature of their roles, are focused first and foremost on running the school and the needs of students; and

(4) The job of being a parent leader is not an easy one. "For example, while some parents may be elected as officers of parent associations, they may not have the skills to run a meeting, plan a project, or negotiate with a principal. In addition, many women of color have historically been discouraged from challenging

authority...The skills and knowledge that these parent leaders need to be effective in increasing the involvement of families in the educational process are too critical and too complex to be exclusively learned through 'on-the-job' experience" (Parent Leadership Project, 1993b, p.2). It is this essential need that the PLP set out to meet.

The PLP also developed a training structure that remained fairly constant. The key elements include:

(1) Comprehensiveness: The PLP believes that the development of grassroots leaders is not a quick process that lends itself to short-term intervention. In the belief that leadership encompasses a wide range of skills and knowledge, the Parent Leadership Project provides an average of 40 hours of training to groups of parents;

(2) Intensity: The PLP believes that consistency in relationship is critical to the leadership development process. The Project works with a group of 15-30 parents in weekly two-hour workshops over an average of 20 weeks. It is felt that "the number and consistency of the sessions allow the parents to develop a sense of cohesiveness and trust necessary to take the risks involved in developing new skills and taking on new challenges" (Parent Leadership Project, 1993b, p.3);

(3) Collaboration: The PLP is designed as an "inside-outside" collaboration with each participating district. The district personnel are responsible for recruiting the parents and providing space for the workshops. The training program is developed in close partnership with the district's parent involvement program to ensure that the unique needs of the districts are met. This is done also to "ensure that the participating district personnel have a high level of investment in making the program succeed" (Parent Leadership Project, 1993b, p.3); and

(4) Action: In order to ground the training in the concrete day-to-day realities of being a parent leader, an action component is built into the training program. The parents use the skills and knowledge from the workshops to plan and implement projects that involve other parents in school improvement activities.

In 1992, after four years of work, the Project took a major step in further defining its core curriculum and methodological structure. Until then, in its own words, it "chose not to impose a detailed curriculum and training methodology because we felt that it would be premature. We needed to learn from our experience with parents about the critical elements of a parent leadership training program...After training approximately 400 parents, we made the strategic decision that we were ready to develop a cohesive curriculum and methodological structure for the Project" (Parent Leadership Project, 1993a, p.4). This decision led to the development of the Parent Leadership Project Trainer's Manual. The Manual, 250 pages in length, contains lesson plans and handouts for 11 modules on leadership development and school improvement issues and a section on training methodology. It is the PLP's curriculum and methodology that have critical relevance to this study.

THE PLP'S APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP

The underlying philosophy or approach to leadership of the PLP is conceptualized around, and flows out of, four interrelated "building blocks":

(1) The power of a grassroots group is dependent fundamentally on the number of **people** who participate and the level and quality of their involvement;

(2) If people are the source of power, then a strategic focus of the organization must always be on **participation and commitment.** "Involving, engaging, and sustaining a large and strongly identified group of participants is important to achieving organizational goals" (Mondross and Wilson, 1993, pp.69-70);

(3) If participation is the key variable, then what **kind of organization** will promote and encourage participation is a critical question with which leaders must grapple. This translates into "...analyzing the factors that influence whether or not parents get involved and then developing strategies that encourage their participation in the Parent Association and the school" (Parent Leadership Project, 1992b, p.3); and

(4) If building an organization in which people want to participate and increasingly feel an investment is the fundamental strategy for building power, then the final question is: what **kind of leadership** is best suited to building this kind of grassroots parent organization in low- and moderate-income communities?

With these "building blocks" as the conceptual foundation, the PLP's approach to leadership sharply challenges the traditional one in which leaders expect people to follow them by dint of their position or more subtly attempt to manipulate and/or convince them to want to do something that the leaders believe should be done. While the PLP recognizes that there is no one leadership approach that is appropriate in all situations, it does believe that a group-centered approach is the best "fit" at the grassroots level. The PLP explains its approach this way:

> Our approach to leadership is what is often referred to as the group-centered or democratic approach. We emphasize that the leader's primary role is to use their skills and knowledge to help the group of parents decide what they want to do and carry it out...It means for instance, that leaders need to start where parents

> are, not where leaders want them to be. We help parent leaders develop strategies to reach out to parents where they live, shop, and congregate in order to identify and act upon their concerns and interests. It isn't enough only to wait for parents to come to the leaders. The leaders must also go to the parents. This kind of leadership builds parent investment and ownership of the Parent Association. (Parent Leadership Project, 1992b, p.3)

For the PLP, this definition cannot be abstracted from the context in which grassroots parent leaders operate. The PLP curriculum "grounds" the group-centered approach in what it views as the complex everyday reality of these leaders. The PLP believes that, while parent leaders often voice the desire to learn how to get more people involved, their approach can be part of the problem. In the Trainer's Manual, it is written:

> The #1 issue that parent leaders want help for, feel frustrated about and that underlies their other concerns is the issue of: how to get more parents involved? Many of them approach the issue from what might be called an emotional perspective. They often resent other parents for not getting involved; they view them as lazy and not caring. And, of course, their behavior reflects those feelings." (p.2)

The PLP training curriculum challenges parent leaders to re-think these assumptions by focusing on the two things that they have the most control over to increase parent participation -- their behavior as leaders and the resulting functioning of their Parent Association. One of the goals of the training is for the "...participants to move beyond this (emotional) reaction and to strengthen their ability to

approach this issue from a strategic perspective" (Parent Leadership Project, 1992b, p.3).

Most parent leaders, in the PLP's view, do not make the connection between their behavior and member participation. It is as if their behavior has no influence on whether or not, and how, people get involved in their organization. The PLP centers on this dynamic by having the participants in the training always draw the connection between the two. For example, in the workshop on communication, participants are asked to reflect on their own experiences with "good" and "bad" communicators and to draw out the impact that the different communicators have had on their own level of participation. Through role plays and structured self-assessment exercises, participants are then able to reflect on how their own communication impacts on other people. This same approach -- "by helping people to re-evaluate their prior experiences with leaders, the critical link between the behavior of a leader and parent participation should be made" -- is used in other modules in this section of the curriculum, including: approaches to leadership, conflict resolution, cultural diversity, public speaking, and delegating and feedback (Parent Leadership Project, 1992b, p.39).

This emphasis on leaders reflecting on how their leadership style affects other parents is connected to

another element of the PLP approach to leadership -- the need for leaders to develop new leaders and share responsibility. Leaders trying to do everything themselves "...doesn't build a sense of parent ownership. Leaders need to develop the ability to assess how skilled and comfortable they are in performing different leadership tasks. With this assessment, leadership can become a shared responsibility based more on skills and less on titles" (Parent Leadership Project, 1992b, p.3). The training assists parents in examining how comfortable they are in sharing work and power with others and then focuses on techniques, including how to delegate work and give and receive feedback, that strengthen their ability in this area.

In the PLP's approach to leadership development, leaders generally do not function separate from organizations. In the same way that the PLP assists parent leaders in evaluating their own leadership and how it impacts on the involvement of others, the leaders are also trained in how to facilitate a similar process with regard to their Parent Association. The PLP defines it in the following way:

> A strategic approach to parent involvement involves examining how the functioning of a Parent Association -- from how effective the meetings and newsletters are to its ability to plan good projects and build a sense of community among parents -- impacts on parents' willingness to get involved. The training helps the

> participants to assess the 'health' of their associations, identify the factors that put their associations 'at risk' of poor parent participation, and diagnose what needs to be improved. We call this conceptual framework, **Organizational Risk Factors and Diagnosis**. (Parent Leadership Project, 1992b, p.3)

The section of the curriculum on organizational diagnosis explores ten risk factors. These are: vision and goals, organizational structure, outreach and communication, meetings, opportunities for member responsibility and growth, planning, use of research and external resources, sense of community, meeting member needs, and relationship with power players. The training is geared to helping the participants: (a) recognize these as critical factors that impact on member participation and (b) develop the ability to carry out these organizational functions in a way that gets things done and simultaneously builds "...member ownership and a sense of community by providing opportunities for growth, input and responsibility" (Parent Leadership Project, 1992b, p.47). For example, in the module on running effective meetings, the participants first reflect on their own experiences with meetings in order to identify the elements of an effective meeting and the behaviors that are associated with "bad" meetings. Based on their reflections, the group then focuses on what goes into preparing for a meeting and the skills needed to facilitate it. Dual emphasis is placed on accomplishing the items on

the agenda and encouraging member participation in the meeting through icebreakers, small group discussions, and opportunities for feedback and reflection. Throughout the module, the connection is drawn between how meetings are run and the level and quality of participation.

Finally, the Parent Leadership Project believes that an essential component of the leadership development process is the deepening of a leader's understanding of the issue(s) around which their group is working. Thus, a section of the curriculum is focused on school improvement. The goal of the PLP is that

> participating parents will begin to act, and view other parents, as change agents capable of 'going beyond the bake sale,' to 'proactively' impact on improving their schools...That means parents becoming involved in all aspects of schools as partners with teachers and administrators -- from curriculum to governance to fundraising. (Parent Leadership Project, 1992b, p.7)

For parents to be involved in this manner in the schools, they need information about effective educational practice and school operations. Curriculum modules in this section include: parent rights, a comprehensive framework for parent involvement, effective schools, and the structure of the New York City school system.

THE PLP'S TRAINING METHODOLOGY

The Parent Leadership Project has been guided by the notion that **how** it delivers the training is as important as the content of the training. The PLP trainer faces the same basic challenge as the one facing a grassroots parent leader: what approach will facilitate the participation and commitment of volunteer members? In the same way that the leaders of a Parent Association have no "power" over members, the trainer has none over the participants in the workshops. If the PLP suggests to grassroots parent leaders that the group-centered approach to leadership works best in facilitating the participation and commitment of their members, why should it not also apply to the PLP trainers who face similar conditions?

In the view of the PLP, this presents an ideal and powerful opportunity for the trainer to mirror the group-centered approach to leadership that the PLP promotes. Using this approach is not only best suited to keeping a PLP training group of volunteer parent leaders together over twenty weeks, it also serves to deepen the participants' understanding of the group-centered approach because they will be experiencing and seeing it in the workshops. For these reasons, the PLP consciously struggles with the challenge of developing and using a training methodology that reflects and models their approach to leadership.

There are several concepts about how adults learn that inform the PLP's training approach. They are heavily influenced by the andragogical method of adult education developed by Malcolm Knowles and the work of the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire. These include:

* An adult "accumulates an expanding reservoir of experience that cause him to become an increasingly rich resource for learning, and at the same time provides him with a broadening base to which to relate new learnings" (Knowles, 1972, p.35). In other words, parents are not simply "empty vessels" into which the PLP should pour new information. Their experience should be an integral part of the training process;

* If parents' experience is one of the critical sources of learning, then they can learn as much from one another as from the trainer. Training is then designed around interactive learning exercises that encourage parents to share and take risks in their development as leaders;

* Adults generally have a need to be seen and treated as independent and self-directing. Adults want and need to have input into their learning; and

* There is no one way that all people learn. They learn through a variety of means, including hearing, reading, seeing and doing. This means that the trainer must consider different ways of transmitting the content.

The PLP posits this approach to training against what it considers the traditional approach to teaching in which the instructor defines "...both the content and the process of learning...This includes what topics will be covered and how they will be taught. It is the teacher's input that is considered important. The students are, at most, passive participants" (Parent Leadership Project, 1992b, p.11). Interestingly, this traditional approach to teaching is not

that different from what has been identified in this study as the traditional approach to leadership. Given the PLP's commitment to developing a training program in which there is consonance and integration between content and methodology, this is not surprising.

How does the Parent Leadership Project operationalize its approach to training? It begins by laying a methodological foundation in the first few sessions -- what it calls methodological "building blocks" -- and then following a consistent training format in the workshops themselves. It seeks to build "parent investment in and ownership of the training as early as possible in the training process" (Parent Leadership Project, 1992b, p.12). In the first workshop, after explaining the purpose and parameters of the training program, the PLP trainer initiates a "dialogue" with the parents about their needs and problems as parent leaders. This discussion results in a list of topics that serves as the foundation for the 20-week curriculum. The trainer's role is to weave them together with his/her own ideas (if not already done so during the dialogue) and those outlined in the PLP Trainer's Manual into a coherent training outline. From the beginning, the PLP struggles **to start from the parents' needs** -- in the same way that a group-centered parent leader starts with the needs that parents articulate. It should be noted that the

PLP operates this way despite having trained hundreds of parents and having developed a comprehensive training manual.

In that first or second workshop, the trainer continues to build the methodological foundation by facilitating a process whereby the parents come up with a list of what the PLP calls "ground rules" or "common considerations." In the Trainer's Manual, the PLP explains this process and its significance. The process allows the parents to

> ...define the behaviors and rules of conduct that they will all observe during the course of the training series in order to create a safe and productive training environment and program. This allows the group to take the first step toward taking responsibility for itself. This is in keeping with the group-centered form of leadership that is central to our approach. (Parent Leadership Project, 1992b, p.17)

In facilitating this process, the trainer is modeling the group-centered parent leader's responsibility to share power and responsibility with the group.

The trainer concludes the building of the methodological foundation by writing up what the PLP calls a "learning agreement." This document includes a goal statement about the overall purpose of the training program, the training outline, and the ground rules. After review and possible modification by the participating parents, it is signed by all of the parties involved in the PLP -- the parents, the PLP trainer, and the school district staff. The

PLP believes that this agreement helps to "...make parent participants feel more invested in the training process and creates a certain amount of accountability between the trainer and the learner" (Parent Leadership Project, 1992b, p.19).

The PLP builds its training "house" on top of this methodological foundation. The Project uses the approach to training that is referred to in the literature as **structured interaction** (Margolis and Bell, 1986). In this approach, the PLP trainer's responsibility is to provide a clear structure for each session. Within the structure, however, the emphasis is on interaction between the participants and with the trainer. Each workshop has several essential elements:

* An **icebreaker** at the beginning of each workshop "...helps parents get to know each other, develop a sense of community, and/or mentally move themselves into the training environment or particular training module" (Parent Leadership Project, 1992b, p.30). This places the focus on the group, not the trainer, right from the beginning of the workshop, as is consistent with the group-centered approach to leadership. As the training cycle proceeds, the PLP trainer recruits participants to lead the icebreakers. Parents are also encouraged to use icebreakers in their own Parent Association meetings to build a parent community;

* **Written objectives and agenda** are used to provide a clear focus for each session. After the icebreaker, the trainer reviews the objective(s) and agenda with the parents for their approval. This provides the participants with the opportunity to have input into what is covered in the session (which can change week-to-week). Again, this models the group-centered leader's responsibility to ensure that the member's needs are being addressed;

* **Interactive learning exercises** provide parents with structured opportunities to discuss, re-think, and challenge their assumptions, ideas, and experiences. These exercises -

- brainstorming, role plays, small group discussions -- validate the importance of the parents' experiences and lives. They also provide all trainees at one time or another with opportunities to participate. Again, this is consistent with the PLP's approach to leadership, with its emphasis on member participation. These exercises are also fun-- which is essential to maintaining a group made up of volunteers over 20 weeks;

* **Brief lecturettes** are used by the PLP trainer. However, they are almost always used **after** parents have had the opportunity to reflect on their own experience and thinking on the subject. Lecturettes are used to build upon the participants' ideas and experiences and to weave those ideas into a framework or structure that facilitates their learning;

* **Flip charts** are used in every session to validate the participants' thoughts by "preserving the group memory" and also in recognition of the varied ways through which people learn; and

* Typed **handouts** are distributed for every topic to reinforce the information/ideas from the session, again, in recognition that people learn in different ways.

What is the trainer's role in the workshops? Fundamentally, the PLP believes that it is quite similar to that of the group-centered parent leader of a Parent Association. The trainer's "...role is to provide a structure through which parents' experience can be brought out, explored, and analyzed. The trainer should act as a process guide, information giver, and joint decision-maker with adult participants and not the repository of all wisdom" (Parent Leadership Project, 1992b, p.10). This role requires significant skill in the area of workshop facilitation, strong knowledge of the content areas covered in the training in order to provide conceptual frameworks

that are accessible to parents and enable them to locate and synthesize their ideas, and a deep commitment to and belief in the capacity of people to chart their own destiny.

The PLP believes that none of these tools by themselves is a magic wand. It is in their combination that a profound respect for the parents is manifested and the group-centered approach to leadership is brought to life for the parents to see. In effect, the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts -- synergy -- over the 20-week life of the group.

V. QUANTITATIVE OUTCOMES: EVALUATION DATA ON THE PARENT LEADERSHIP PROJECT

Every study embodies choices. The choices made in this study flow out of the finding, documented in the Literature Review, that there is a dearth of written material on the subject of methodology within grassroots leadership training programs. Based on that determination, the choice was made to undertake an *exploratory* study, the purpose of which "...is to build a foundation of general ideas and tentative theories which can be explored later with more precise and hence more complex research designs and their corresponding data-gathering techniques" (Grinnell, 1993, p.119). The case study approach was selected as the specific strategy for exploring the subject in great detail and depth.

As shown in the previous chapter, the Parent Leadership Project was chosen as the case study because it has a substantial body of practice with, and documentation concerning, the issue that is being investigated. Yin writes in Case Study Research: Design and Methods that, in addition to the revelatory basis for choosing one case as the basis for a study, another rationale "...for a single case is where the case represents an extreme or unique case" (1989, p.47). As this chapter will demonstrate, the success of the PLP in terms of its impact on the participants is striking and extreme. Because the focus of this study is on

a program input -- the "how" and "why" of the PLP's training methodology -- that is linked with a successful programmatic outcome, the findings will have particular resonance and meaning to practitioners who are seeking to facilitate the development of grassroots leaders. It is this element of the PLP -- its highly positive outcomes -- that will be explored in the following discussion.

DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND OF PARTICIPANTS

Over 400 parent leaders participated in the Parent Leadership Project between the 1990-91 and 1994-95 school years. Characteristics of gender, race/ethnicity, and education were surveyed (all data comes from the PLP Final Reports).

As Table 5.1 shows, the participants in the Parent Leadership Project were overwhelmingly female. Except for one year in which the percentage of female participants was 86%, females constituted at least 90% of the trainees during the study period. Overall, women made up 94% of the participants.

Table 5.1

Year of PLP by Gender of Participant

Year	Female	Male
1990-91 (N=55)*	50 (91%)	5 (9%)
1991-92 (N=42)	36 (86%)	6 (14%)
1992-93 (N=63)	59 (93%)	4 (7%)
1993-94 (N=152)	146 (96%)	6 (4%)
1994-95 (N=130)	125 (96%)	5 (4%)
Total (N=442)	416 (94%)	26 (6%)

* the small differences between Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 in the total numbers for each year are due to participants not answering every question

In terms of racial composition, the parent leaders who participated in the PLP were primarily Black or Latino, with White and Asian parents constituting a minority (see Table 5.2). In two out of the first three years, White parents made up 25% of the participants. As the PLP grew and expanded into additional school districts, the percentage of Black and Latino parents increased. More specifically, by the fifth year Black parents constituted an absolute majority of the participants. Over the course of the five years, Black and Latino participants made up over 80% of the parents who took part in the PLP training programs.

Table 5.2

Year of PLP by Race of Participant

Year	Black	Latino	White	Other
1990-91 (N=53)	6 (16%)	29 (52%)	14 (25%)	4 (8%)
1991-92 (N=42)	13 (31%)	26 (62%)	2 (5%)	1 (2%)
1992-93 (N=68)	15 (22%)	36 (53%)	17 (25%)	0
1993-94 (N=152)	67 (44%)	62 (41%)	17 (11%)	6 (4%)
1994-95 (N=131)	69 (53%)	46 (35%)	13 (10%)	3 (2%)
Total (N=446)	170 (38%)	199 (45%)	63 (14%)	14 (3%)

Table 5.3

Year of PLP by Educational Level of Participant

Year	Non-College Grad.	College Graduate
1990-91 (N=55)	37 (67%)	18 (33%)
1991-92 (N=42)	37 (88%)	5 (12%)
1992-93 (N=68)	52 (76%)	16 (24%)
1993-94 (N=152)	114 (75%)	38 (25%)
1994-95 (N=130)	116 (89%)	14 (11%)
Total (N=447)	356 (80%)	91 (20%)

Finally, in addition to being overwhelmingly female and Black or Latino, the PLP participants were also non-college

graduates. The percentage of PLP trainees who had graduated college, as seen in Table 5.3, never rose above 33% in any year. Overall, 80% had not completed college.

CHANGES IN PARTICIPANT ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR

At the end of each PLP training cycle, the answers from the pre- and post-tests were tabulated to determine what, if any, change in the participants' attitudes and behavior occurred during the course of the training. In all of the evaluation studies of the PLP, the pre/post questionnaire used "...the three point ordinal scale that offered subjects basic or broad choices..." and the discussion of the findings focused "...for the purpose of clarity on percentage shifts in behavior(s) and attitudes(s) within the most positive category or point on the ordinal scale" (Parent Leadership Project, 1992a, p.24).

The chi-square test was performed to determine if the change was a statistically significant one. Tests of statistical significance, including the chi square test, enable researchers and practitioners to move beyond their subjective interpretation of the relationship between two variables and use probability theory to determine the significance of that relationship. As Weinbach and Grinnell make clear in Statistics for Social Workers, while the chi square test does not prove "...that one variable may cause

the variation in the other," it does "demonstrate that chance is an inadequate explanation of the pattern or apparent relationship" (1991, p.110). Data is presented by year and in summary form. The following discussion will also examine the *meaning* of the findings.

Year-By-Year Summary of Statistically Significant Findings

(a) 1990-1991: The questionnaire used by the PLP in the 1990-91 evaluation included eight questions concerning the participants' attitudes about themselves as leaders and ten questions regarding their activity or behavior (all questions are listed in Tables 5.4 and 5.5). All but one of the 18 questions registered change in the positive direction. As Tables 5.4 and 5.5 show, for five of the attitudinal and three of the activity questions the change between the pre- and post-test was statistically significant. It is certainly worth noting that for these eight questions, the respondents averaged a 23% shift and the amount of change was never lower than 19% (see Table 5.6).

(b) 1991-1992: This year's evaluation had the same number of questions registering statistically significant changes as the 1990-91 one, though there were two fewer total questions. In contrast with the previous year, six of these changes were in the activity category and only two in

the area of attitudes. The percentage shift between the pre- and post-test for seven of these eight questions was above 20%; the average for all eight, as shown in Table 5.6, was 25%. The remaining eight questions all registered positive change, though not at a statistically significant level.

(c) 1992-1993: The results of the evaluation for the 1992-93 PLP training cycle were in the same general range as the two previous years. Of the 19 questions, all but one demonstrated change in a positive direction. Out of the 11 questions concerning attitudes, six registered change that was statistically significant. For the eight questions concerning leadership activity, the participants recorded changes that were statistically significant in three areas. As shown in Table 5.6, for the nine questions that registered significant change, the average percentage shift between the pre- and post-test was 17%.

(d) 1993-1994 and 1994-1995: During the 1993-94 and 1994-95 training cycles, the change in the participants' attitudes and activity as leaders was even greater. For the 1993-94 group, statistically significant change was recorded for 17 out of 19 questions; the average amount of change for these questions was 17% (see Table 5.6). As striking, 11 of those 17 were extremely significant at the $P<.001$ level. For the final year, 1994-95, all but one of the 19 questions showed statistically significant change; the average

percentage shift for these questions between the pre- and post-test was 16% (see Table 5.6). Of these 18, 10 were extremely significant.

Table 5.4
Parent Leadership Project

Summary by Year of Statistically Significant Changes on Attitudinal Questions from Chi Square Test

Questions	1990-1991	1991-1992	1992-1993	1993-1994	1994-1995
confidence in speaking at a meeting	P<.01 +24%	P<.05 -21%	P<.01 +13%	P<.001 +32%	P<.001 +17%
confidence in running a meeting	P<.05 +20%	NO* -17%	P<.01 +24%	P<.001 +30%	P<.001 +20%
interest in working with others in school	NO* +3%	NO (no data)	NO +1%	NO (no data)	P<.001 +12%
confidence in taking on a leadership role in the school	P<.01 -29%	NO +18%	P<.01 -14%	P<.001 27%	P<.001 -22%
confidence when meeting with a teacher	NI**	NO +9%	P<.01 +18%	P<.001 +26%	P<.001 +23%
confidence when meeting with a principal	NO -8%	NO +9%	P<.05 +11%	P<.001 +27%	P<.001 +25%
believe that parents can be recruited to attend PA meetings	P<.02 -23%	NO -11%	P<.05 -15%	P<.001 +23%	P<.001 +15%
feel that your ideas are respected by others in school	NO -12%	P<.05 -25%	NI	NI	NI
believe that principal and teachers really listen to parents	P<.05 +19%	NI	NI	NI	NI
likely to remain part of a group when faced with conflict	NI	NI	NO +19%	NO (no data)	P<.01 +14%
likely to listen and think about ideas of other members	NI	NI	NO +3%	P<.05 +11%	P<.001 +18%
effectiveness in persuading others to your point of view	NI	NI	NO +10%	P<.001 +22%	P<.001 +14%
likely your contributions will make a difference in the school	NI	NI	NO +4%	P<.01 +18%	P<.001 +14%

* NO= Not Statistically Significant
** NI= Not Included in that Year's Questionnaire

Table 5.5
Parent Leadership Project

Summary by Year of Statistically Significant Changes on Activity Questions from Chi Square Test

Questions How often you:	1990-1991	1991-1992	1992-1993	1993-1994	1994-1995
attend PA meetings	NO* +4%	P<.05 +23%	NO +8%	P<.05 +13%	P<.01 +16%
attend school board and district meetings	NO -2%	P<.01 +30%	P<.05 +18%	P<.05 +11%	P<.01 +17%
volunteer to do work in the PA	NO +10%	P<.05 +15%	NI**	NI	NI
speak at school meetings	NO +10%	P<.01 +31%	NO -4%	P<.05 +12%	P<.05 +9%
take on a leadership role in school meetings	NO +7%	NO +12%	NI	NI	NI
work with others on school problems	NO +5%	NO +22%	NO +5%	P<.001 +21%	P<.05 +10%
vote in PA elections	NO +12%	NI	NI	NI	NI
vote in community school board elections	P<.05 +19%	NI	NI	NI	NI
reach out to other programs and resources	P<.02 +24%	P<.01 +26%	P<.01 +23%	P<.001 +20%	P<.05 +11%
reach out to friends to participate in PA meetings	P<.01 +25%	P<.01 +27%	P<.05 +14%	P<.001 +18%	P<.05 +11%
discuss issues of concern with principal	NI	NI	NO +5%	P<.001 +23%	P<.05 +11%
discuss issues of concern with superintendent	NI	NI	NO +4%	P<.05 +10%	NO (no data)

* NO= Not Statistically Significant
**NI= Not Included in that Year's Questionnaire
***Data in the PLP Final Reports for Question #30 on the PLP Questionnaire (p.244) was insufficient to be included in this analysis.

Table 5.6
Parent Leadership Project

Summary by Year of the Total Number of Statistically Significant Findings and Their Average Percentage Change

Year	Overall Number of Questions	Questions Registering Change of Statistical Significance	Questions Registering Change of Extreme Statistical Significance	Average Percentage Change
1990-91	18	8	0	23%
1991-92	16	8	0	25%
1992-93	19	9	0	17%
1993-94	19	17	11	17%
1994-95	19	18	10	16%
Total	91	60	21	18%*

* an average of all 60 questions

What is the *Meaning* of these Findings?

As shown in Table 5.6, over the five years surveyed in this study, statistically significant change was recorded for two-thirds of the leadership attitude and activity questions. This is a striking finding. What, however, is its meaning? The literature on statistical significance points out that a significant finding based on a statistical test is not automatically a *meaningful* one (Weinbach and Grinnell, 1991; Smith, 1990). A closer look at the data will shed light on its meaning.

For the 91 questions surveyed over the five years, 89 showed positive change. Moreover, 74 out of the 91 -- or

81% of the questions -- recorded change between the pre- and post-test of at least 10%. Of particular note, for the last two years surveyed, 1993-94 and 1994-95, 37 out of the 38 questions -- 97% of the questions -- registered change between the pre- and post-test that was at least 10%. Clearly, the breadth of change among the PLP participants is meaningful.

How deep is the change? For the sixty (out of 91) questions that registered change at a statistically significant level, the amount of change between the pre- and post-test averaged 18% (Table 5.6). Another way of assessing the depth of the changes is by examining the 12 questions that appeared in each of the five questionnaires (see Table 5.7). Of these, three recorded statistically significant change in each of the five years. Given the PLP's goal of developing group-centered leaders, it could be argued that these three are among the most critical of leadership attitudes and behavior. They are:

* reaching out to programs and resources to help parents (average of 21% change over the five years)
* reaching out to friends and neighbors to participate in parent association activities (average of 19% change over the five years)
* confidence in speaking at a meeting (average of 21% change over the five years)

Table 5.7
Parent Leadership Project

Summary by Year of Statistically Significant Changes and Their Average Percentage Change for Twelve Core Questions

Question	# of Years that Change was Significant	Average Change over the Five Years
confidence in speaking at a meeting	five	21%
confidence in running a meeting	four	22%
interest in working with others in school	one	5%
confidence in taking on a leadership role	four	22%
confidence when meeting with a principal	three	16%
believe that parents can be recruited to attend PA meetings	four	17%
how often attend PA meetings	three	13%
how often attend school board and district meetings	four	15%
how often speak at school meetings	three	12%
how often work with others on school problems	two	13%
how often reach out to other programs and resources	five	21%
how often reach out to friends to participate in PA meetings	five	19%
Total		16%*

* this figure is an average of all of the changes over the five years, including those that were not significant

Four other questions recorded statistically significant change in four of the years. These included:

* confidence in running a meeting (average of 22% over all five years)
* confidence in taking on a leadership role (average of 22% over all five years)
* believe that parents can be recruited (average of 17% over all five years)
* attend school board and other district meetings (average of 15% over all five years)

Three of the questions documented change at a statistically significant level in three of the five years. These were:

* confidence when meeting with a principal (average of 16% over all five years)
* attendance at parent association meetings (average of 13% over all five years)
* speak at school meetings (average of 12% over all five years)

One question -- how often the parent leaders work with others on problems in the school -- registered statistically significant change twice over the five-year period. Nevertheless, the average amount of change over the five years was 13%, still a substantial change. Finally, the question measuring the leaders' interest in working with others in the school registered a statistically significant change for only one year. This is explained, at least in part, by the quite high percentages of participants who recorded a very strong interest in such collaboration on the

pre-tests (82% in 1990-91, 80% in 1992-93, and 70% in 1994-95. Data is not available for the other two years).

These twelve questions form the core of the PLP evaluation. Overall, the percentage of PLP participants who answered these questions at the most positive end of the ordinal scale increased by an average of 16% between the time they took the pre-test and the point at which they completed the post-test (see Table 5.7).

When a change between a pre- and post-test is found to be statistically significant, it means that the change is not due to chance. To be able to then say that there is a meaningful relationship between the change and the intervention, that change must be broad and deep. The preceding discussion demonstrated that:

* for two-thirds of the questions, there was a statistically significant change between the pre- and post-test;

* for the sixty questions that registered a statistically significant change, the average amount of change between the pre- and post-test was 18%;

* for 81% of the total questions, there was a change of at least 10% between the pre- and post-test; and

* for the 12 core questions that were included in each of the five questionnaires, the change between the beginning and the conclusion of the training averaged 16%.

All of this provides powerful testimony to both the significance and the meaning of these findings.

WHAT IS THE POST-PARTICIPATION IMPACT OF THE PLP?

The preceding discussion presented strong evidence that the PLP had a significant and meaningful impact on the parents during their participation in the training. It does not shed light on whether or not that impact was sustained beyond their participation in the training. To inquire into the impact of the PLP on parents beyond the point of their "graduation," a Post-Participation questionnaire was mailed to approximately 200 parents who had participated in the PLP. The following discussion reports on the findings from that study.

A. Background

Forty-six completed questionnaires were received. 91% of the respondents were female, compared with 94% of those who completed the pre-post-questionnaire during the five-year period covered in this study (see Table 5.8).

Table 5.8
Parent Leadership Project

Comparison of Post-Participation Group and Post-Test Groups Over Five-Year Study Period by Gender of Participants

Group	Female	Male
Post-Participation Group (N=46)	91% (N=42)	9% (N=4)
Post-Test Groups Over Five-Year Study Period (N=442)	94% (N=416)	6% (N=26)

The great majority of the respondents -- 78% -- were Black or Latino, with Whites making up 13% of the group and Asians 4.3% (4.3% identified themselves as "other"). As Table 5.9 shows, these figures are quite close to those of the five-year pre/post-test study group. In the latter, Black and Latino parents comprised 83% of the group and Whites were 14% of the total.

The final background variable that was measured was that of education. Of the forty-six respondents, 78% had not completed college. Again, this is almost identical to the percentage of participants surveyed over the five-year study period (see Table 5.10).

Table 5.9
Parent Leadership Project

Comparison of Post-Participation Group and Post-Test Groups Over Five-Year Study Period by Race of Participants

Group	Black	Latino	White	Other
Post-Participation Group (N=46)	35% (N=16)	43% (N=20)	13% (N=6)	9% (N=4)
Post-Test Groups Over Five-Year Study Period (N=446)	38% (N=170)	45% (N=199)	14% (N=63)	3% (N=14)

Table 5.10
Parent Leadership Project

Comparison of Post-Participation Group and Post-Test Groups Over Five-Year Study Period by Educational Level of Participants

Group	Non-College Grad.	College Graduate
Post-Participation Group (N=46)	78% (N=36)	22% (N=10)
Post-Test Groups Over Five-Year Study Period (N=447)	80% (N=356)	20% (N=91)

The data in Tables 5.8, 5.9 and 5.10 clearly indicate that the demographic characteristics of the respondents who completed the post-participation questionnaire are almost identical to the larger PLP universe that participated in the five years of training surveyed in this study. While there is no way of knowing exactly who the respondents are, this sample would appear on the basis of several critical criteria to be representative of the larger PLP population.

B. Leadership Activity

There were 19 questions concerning the respondents' level of leadership activity "since the training" (all questions are listed in Tables 5.11 and 5.12). For eleven of the questions, parents were asked to consider their level of activity and in the other eight, they were asked to assess their level of skill. A five-point ordinal scale

(with frequency or effectiveness, respectively, being measured) was used for all of the questions:

1-- much less
2-- less
3-- the same
4-- more
5-- much more

For the purpose of reporting the findings in this study, these five categories were collapsed into three -- less, the same, and more. Given the relatively small size of the respondents, this served to concentrate and sharpen the findings.

For every question, as Tables 5.11 and 5.12 indicate, at least 78% of the respondents reported that their level of activity and skill since they completed the training one or two years prior was the **same or higher**. For the following questions, over 90% of the parent leaders felt that they were at the same or higher levels of activity or effectiveness:

* thinking about the effect of their words on others before speaking;
* listening and thinking about the ideas of others before responding;
* planning before taking action;
* welcoming new parents;
* being part of a team;
* speaking in public; and
* communicating with their children

When all of the questions are analyzed as a whole, 89% of the parent leaders thought that their level of activity and effectiveness since they finished the training was the

same or higher. The results were essentially the same for the questions that were included in the pre/post-questionnaire as well as the ones only appearing in the post-participation questionnaire. This is also the case for both the activity and skill questions (averages of 88% and 89%, respectively).

Moreover, for 17 of the 19 questions, the majority of the respondents reported that their present level of activity/skill was actually **higher** than it had been when they last participated in the training. For the questions as a whole, an average of 67% of the respondents stated that they were more active or effective in their work as parent leaders since the training concluded. The only exceptions were the two questions assessing the parents' level of activity at the district level. When asked how frequently they speak at district meetings and with the superintendent, 35% and 45% of the parents answered more often, respectively.

These findings are impressive. In the areas of both personal leadership style and school-based leadership activity, the great majority of the parent leaders reported that their level of activity and effectiveness since the training has continued or actually increased. We cannot determine with certainty the degree to which, if any, the PLP is responsible for this result. However, we do know

that these findings are in keeping with the extremely positive findings from the five-year pre/post-study discussed earlier in this chapter. Taken as a whole, they demonstrate that the Parent Leadership Project was highly successful in developing more active and skilled parent leaders.

Table 5.11
Parent Leadership Project Post-Participation Survey

Frequency of Response for Activity Questions

Question	Less Often	The Same	More Often	The Same or More Often
speak at school meetings	15% (N=7)	22% (N=10)	63% (N=29)	85% (N=39)
speak at district meetings	22% (N=10)	43% (N=20)	35% (N=17)	78% (N=36)
reach out to parents	11% (N=5)	11% (N=5)	78% (N=36)	89% (N=41)
talk with principal	11% (N=5)	17% (N=8)	72% (N=33)	89% (N=41)
talk with superin-tendent	22% (N=10)	33% (N=15)	45% (N=21)	78% (N=36)
remain part of group in face of conflict	11% (N=5)	26% (N=12)	63% (N=29)	89% (N=41)
think of effect before speaking	6% (N=3)	11% (N=5)	83% (N=38)	94% (N=43)
listen and think before giving response	4% (N=2)	9% (N=4)	87% (N=40)	96% (N=44)
plan before taking action	7% (N=3)	28% (N=13)	65% (N=30)	93% (N=43)
welcome new parents	7% (N=3)	17% (N=8)	76% (N=35)	93% (N=43)
develop new leaders	15% (N=7)	22% (N=10)	63% (N=29)	85% (N=39)
Mean Average (N=506)	12% (N=60)	22% (N=110)	66% (N=336)	88% (N=446)

* Question #18 on the Post-Participation Questionnaire (p.250) was also part of the Post-Test Questionnaires over the five-year study period. However, insufficient data prevented it from being part of the analysis of the results of the five-year study period discussed earlier in this chapter. Thus, because there is no basis for determining the reliability of the question or the comparability and context of the results, the question was not included in the analysis in this section. See bottom of p.164 for actual data for Question #18.

Table 5.12
Parent Leadership Project Post-Participation Survey

Frequency of Response for Skill Questions

Question	Less Effective	The Same	More Effective	The Same or More Effective
communicate with one's children	4% (N=2)	15% (N=7)	81% (N=37)	96% (N=44)
recruit other parents	13% (N=6)	28% (N=13)	59% (N=27)	87% (N=40)
run a meeting	17% (N=8)	20% (N=9)	63% (N=29)	83% (N=38)
speak in public	9% (N=4)	22% (N=10)	69% (N=32)	91% (N=42)
plan a project	11% (N=5)*	22% (N=10)	65% (N=30)	87% (N=40)
be part of a team	7% (N=3)	17% (N=8)	76% (N=35)	93% (N=43)
use community resources	11% (N=5)	15% (N=7)	74% (N=34)	89% (N=41)
delegate work	13% (N=6)*	26% (N=12)	59% (N=27)	85% (N=39)
Mean Average (N=366)	11% (N=39)	21% (N=76)	68% (N=251)	89% (N=327)

* one missing case

*** Question #18**
Post-Participation Survey

Question	Less Often	The Same	More Often	The Same or More Often
volunteer in school	22% (N=10)	20% (N=9)	58% (N=27)	78% (N=36)
active on SBM team	30% (N=13)	35% (N=15)	35% (N=15)	70% (N=30)**
active in P.A.	30% (N=14)	28% (N=13)	42% (N=19)	70% (N=32)
active in district	25% (N=11)	43% (N=19)	32% (N=14)	75% (N=33)
active in community group	16% (N=7)	36% (N=16)	48% (N=21)	84% (N=37)

**there were some questions with missing responses

VI. REPORT OF QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: HOW DID THE PARENT LEADERS EXPERIENCE THE PARENT LEADERSHIP PROJECT?

As discussed earlier in this study, the training of grassroots neighborhood leaders has not received overwhelming attention in the scholarly literature. The literature on grassroots leadership training programs that does exist has focused much more on proving, through quantitative measures, that the training works than in identifying the programmatic elements that have led to the positive results. Perhaps, this is not surprising. Grassroots leadership training programs generally operate under financial exigency and funders are first and foremost concerned with results that are generally demonstrated through quantitative data. However, it is looking at **how and why** a program works that the complexity of the intervention and its utilization potential for other programs are revealed.

The purpose of this study is to take a small step in exploring the how and why of grassroots leadership training by examining one program -- the Parent Leadership Project -- in great depth. Previous chapters showed that:

(a) central to the practice of the PLP was the question of how to reflect in its training methodology the commitment to developing group-centered leaders;

(b) the PLP had extensive written documentation of both its philosophy of leadership and its approach to training; and

(c) it had strong success in increasing the confidence and level of activity of the participating parent leaders.

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the relationship between the philosophy and methodology of the PLP -- the inputs -- and the successful outcomes. That relationship will be brought to life through the "eyes" of the parent leaders who participated in the PLP. This chapter, based on data gathered from interviews with 40 parents who participated in the PLP, seeks to tell their story: How did they feel about the PLP? What did they see as its impact upon them? What did they experience? How did they experience it? What did it mean for them? Specifically, this chapter will include brief discussions about the parents' assessment of the PLP and its impact upon them and a fuller discussion concerning what they thought the critical factors were in the program that contributed to their higher levels of leadership activity and confidence.

PARTICIPANTS' RATING OF THE PLP

While most of the parents' experience with the PLP will be told through qualitative data, there is one piece of quantitative data that is relevant to this discussion. The primary instrument used to evaluate the PLP was a pre/post questionnaire. The previous chapter reported on the highly positive changes, as recorded between the pre- and post-questionnaire, in the PLP participants' confidence and activity over a five-year period. The post-questionnaire used during that period also contained several questions concerning the participants' attitudes towards the PLP itself.

Table 6.1
Year of PLP by Participant's Assessment of PLP

Year	Participants who gave the PLP an overall rating of "excellent" or "good"	Participants who felt they learned "a great amount" or "a lot"	Participants who rated the trainer overall as "excellent"
1990-91 (N=55)	98% (N=54)	91% (N=50)	89% (N=49)
1991-92 (N=42)	94% (N=39)	86% (N=36)	89% (N=37)
1992-93 (N=68)	90% (N=61)	89% (N=61)	75% (N=51)
1993-94 (N=152)	94% (N=143)	92% (N=140)	79% (N=120)
1994-95 (N=130)	92% (N=120)	92% (N=120)	85% (N=111)
Total (N=447)	93% (N=417)	91% (N=407)	82% (N=368)

As the data in Table 6.1 shows, the participants not only emerged out of the PLP training as more active and confident parent leaders, but they also rated the training itself very highly. In the final workshop of the 20-week training series, over 90% of the parents in each of the five years rated the PLP training as "excellent" or "good" (the two highest answers on a scale of 1-5). The parents also felt that what they learned in the workshops was quite valuable. Specifically, 91% of the parents over the five years felt that they had learned "a great amount" or "a lot" that will help them as parent leaders (the two highest answers on the same scale). Additionally, the parent leaders thought quite highly of the PLP trainers. Over 80% of the participants during the five years gave the trainers an overall rating of "excellent" (the highest rating on the scale of 1-5).

THE PARTICIPANTS' VIEW OF THE IMPACT OF THE PLP

Beyond their general feeling that the PLP was quite valuable in facilitating their development as parent leaders, what did the participants view as the program's specific impact on their attitudes and behavior? Given the PLP's commitment to the development of a group-centered

approach to leadership, how did the parents feel that the PLP affected their approach or "style" of leadership? While these questions were not the central ones under investigation in the interviews, meaningful data was generated and merit a brief discussion.

In the interviews, the parents identified several areas in which the PLP had an important impact. One was the area of communication, perhaps the critical skill in the PLP's approach to leadership. Several parents mentioned becoming better listeners:

> It let me know that at times it is okay to go there and just listen. You don't always have to be the leader and talk a lot...Sometimes it takes you just to sit down and let other people have the opportunity to stand up and voice their opinions. And that is what happened within our Parent Leadership Project. We had a lot of parents that were very quiet throughout the year and gradually what happened they really started to come out and speak and by the end of it they were doing all of the talking and I was able to keep my mouth shut.

> To get people to talk back to you and how to calm people down, you listen to them. To learn how to listen to the person, that was good, I enjoyed that because people will be talking and you aren't really listening because your mind is going in so many different ways...

Others mentioned the PLP's impact on the other side of communication -- talking -- and the need for leaders to be more reflective about how they speak to others:

> It taught me how to talk to people in a certain way because sometimes you could say things to people but it's not what you say, it's how you say it -- some people get the wrong message...You might think that you are saying it in a nice way but it comes across as, you know, being too harsh or something like that.

> They really helped me a lot to be more outspoken in a positive way because, you know, if you do it in a negative way you are going to lose parents.
>
> I've been learning from church how to speak in front of groups of people, but the leadership training helped me to create a more intimate atmosphere, to get the people in an intimate level from different races and different nationalities... I learned how to speak the language of the people. You have to deal with people where they are, not over their heads or below them, but where they are.

Parents also discussed in more general terms how the PLP affected their ability to deal with people "where they are." They cited a deepened sensitivity to the feelings and circumstances of other people's lives and the need to engage them with an open mind and heart. This meant struggling not to take criticism as personally as many of them say they did prior to the training. Given that the dominant approach to leadership emphasizes telling people what to do or convincing them to follow you, this shift has potentially profound implications for the evolution of the participants' approach to leadership. Parents said:

> The training has helped me to not just look at my focus but at the overall needs of the school and the overall needs of the parents...They are people too and they have situations going with them. Not just to think about what I want dealt with, but they have an issue too. The other person has an issue that is affecting him. When I approach him, is their response about me or are they coming from a place that they have other things happening with them and that is why they are responding that way? I have to realize that people are affected by many different things.
>
> I'm much more confident in knowing when people approach me with an attitude how to calm them down...I'm more

> able to deal with conflict knowing that everybody has different opinions and to be able to respect other people's opinions.
>
> I know I have a problem that I talk more than I listen...I learned how to listen with an open mind and also I don't take things personal like if somebody says something negative about something that I have done I don't have to take it personal because they are not criticizing me as a person...And I take criticism which is part of your daily life because no one is perfect.

This deepened sensitivity and empathy with others seems to have developed side-by-side with a heightened level of self-awareness and a keener ability on the parts of the parent leaders to locate themselves within a spectrum of leadership styles. Many of the parents talked about understanding themselves better and how their behavior affects their ability to be effective leaders. They seemed to have become more reflective as a result of the PLP experience. Ironically, for some of them, this heightened self-awareness led to saying "no" more often in terms of new leadership responsibilities. They clearly saw this in positive terms. This increased awareness is reflected in the following comments:

> For me I think the thing that I appreciate most, that I really got out of it, was being able to look at myself and see exactly where I am at and use that to do things differently, hopefully better. I never looked at myself as an authoritarian before. I don't think that I am totally, but I had the tendencies to lean that way and take on more than I should of because I just believed that I could get it done and kill myself in the process. And I really thought a lot of that. I think from the first I heard him (the trainer) say it I sort of understood. And its helped, and you know what, I have actually learned to say no. And that is something

> I had a real problem with because all these things need to get done. But I actually have learned to say no.
>
> I am the kind of person, and most people probably know that, I don't like to disturb harmony. Say, if I see that people are like uneasy and they look sad, I know I have to be very careful not to say much because I may just disturb something that will cause some kind of conflict with me or maybe between the entire group. So I will kind of lay back and not say anything. What I learned is that being laissez-faire is not always okay and sometimes you must speak up no matter if you disrupt some kind of harmony or not. I guess you just learn that you can work it out, you know, iron out the differences right there.

From these comments, it is clear that parents experienced the Parent Leadership Project in deep and powerful ways. To what degree do these changes coincide with the learning outcomes that the PLP set out to accomplish? The PLP Trainer's Manual includes a section entitled, "Learning Outcomes: What We Want To Happen." It lists "three overarching learning outcomes. They are:

(1) Participating parents will strengthen their ability to address the issue of parent involvement from a strategic perspective. They will identify how the behavior of parent leaders and the functioning of parent associations, among other factors, impact on the level of parent involvement and develop organizational strategies to encourage that involvement.

(2) Participating parents will develop the attitudes and skills of a democratic group-centered approach to leadership and will understand the pitfalls of a traditional, more authoritarian approach to leadership. As part of this process, they will strengthen their capacity to evaluate their own strengths and the challenges they face as leaders.

(3) Participating parents will begin to act, and view other parents, as change agents capable of going 'beyond the bake sale,' to pro-actively impact on improving their schools. As part of this process, they will strengthen their ability

to collaborate with school personnel on SBM teams and in other forums that affect the school." (1992b, p.7)

The data presented in this discussion suggest that the PLP was quite successful in achieving two of its intended goals. Parents were more aware of how their behavior as leaders affects other parents' willingness to get involved. In doing so, their strategic understanding of how to get more parents involved became sharper. They also evidenced understanding of the group-centered approach to leadership and were able to contrast it with the authoritarian and laissez-faire approaches. Tying these two changes together was the parents' deeper understanding of themselves as leaders. On the other hand, the parents said little about how the PLP affected their understanding of organizational development or their knowledge of school reform. The possible reasons for this will be explored in the final chapter of this study.

HOW DID THE PLP PRODUCE THESE OUTCOMES?

All of the data presented up to this point demonstrate that the Parent Leadership Project achieved highly successful results. These results indicate that:

* the parents were significantly more confident and active at the end of the training than when they first encountered the PLP;

* the vast majority of the parents surveyed in a small study of PLP graduates felt that their level of activity and

skill one and two years after they completed the PLP was the same or higher than when they finished;

* the parents were extremely satisfied with the training and felt they had gained a great deal that will be of value to them as leaders; and

* the parents felt that the training assisted them in becoming more effective leaders by improving their communication skills, by helping them become more sensitive to the feelings and needs of other parents, and by deepening their level of self-awareness.

How did the parents account for the extreme success of the PLP? In the parents' view, what was it about their PLP experience that helped to produce the highly positive quantitative and qualitative results already presented? In the interviews conducted for this study, the parents did not discuss their PLP experience as consisting of discrete elements that were neat and separate from one another. Rather, they discussed these elements as overlapping and interacting parts of a total experience. The following presentation of the parents' experience should be read in that spirit.

I. ENGAGEMENT: THE FOCUS IS ON THE GROUP

The starting point for a discussion of the parents' experience is their first moments of encounter with the Parent Leadership Project. How did the PLP first engage parents? How did the PLP, in effect, convince parents to go on a 20-week journey with people they did not know?

*** Icebreakers and Participation**

Parents' initial point of engagement throughout the training was the icebreaker. This was the case not only for the training series as a whole, but also in each individual workshop. It proved to be a specific "ingredient" of the PLP "recipe" that every parent cited as one of the highlights of the training.

What role did they think the icebreakers had in their learning and development? By starting every session, including the first one, with an exercise in which people had to engage each other, the focus was immediately put on the group, not the trainer. The icebreakers helped people get to know one another in a way that was comfortable; they helped to establish a tone of "comfortable participation." By doing so, a foundation was established upon which, as will be seen in later sections, respect and trust could be built:

> The icebreakers help start the mood of the session. It really broke it if you came in there and you weren't feeling all that great. It reinforced the relationships between the participants on a weekly basis and helps everyone open up to each other.

> I think the atmosphere had a lot to do with the icebreakers because, like, people did personal icebreakers that deal with personal stuff, who you are, what do you like to do, what hobbies...It made people feel comfortable about who they are. And you had to know about the other person because we had to interact. It wasn't just sit down and raise your hand. It was go over to a person and introduce yourself and say whatever and I think we bonded much quicker.

> I think icebreakers helped just getting to know people. The icebreaker is so small, but they helped me to be more assertive because, I think, now I'm just not sitting back with an opinion, I'm saying more of it.

The parents talked about the importance of the icebreaker being fun. They were insistent that to keep people together week after week, the training had to be fun. Fun was also an important medium for bringing out the unique qualities of the individual parents:

> If you come in with an attitude, an icebreaker is fun or it is different and it changes your attitude. If you come in not so happy cause of what happened at home or whatever it put a smile on your face.
>
> It was fun. You have to have fun in order to have a group that works. Cause if it becomes boring nobody is going to want to come back. I love the icebreakers. Everyone had their funniness to them. Everybody had a little bit of something that made it fun...Everybody had a different character, different personality and all blended together.
>
> The ingredients would be first of all is that you have to have a good icebreaker. You need that to wake up everybody. You need to throw in some humor. It can't be dull because people would fall asleep.

To the parents, feeling relaxed and comfortable in the training group was essential for learning to take place:

> You get tense and you cannot learn. Because I'm totally relaxed I was able to absorb everything. So the workshops here with the icebreakers make everyone relaxed and then they were able to retain.
>
> I think that it is the Japanese approach. When the Japanese sit down to take care of business, they socialize, they schmooze and by the time they get to business they are relaxed, they are ready, and they are open. With all of the training, there has always been an icebreaker , there has been a relaxed atmosphere, there has been a sharing, a giving and a taking.

> I like the fact that we were able to socialize and get to know each other prior to going straight into business. We made everyone feel comfortable and I think that was the key-- that everyone felt comfortable.
>
> I've been to a lot of workshops at the district. This is the first time we did an icebreaker so we could get to know one another. Yes, because when I used to go to workshops upstairs we did not go through all that. I mean they just jumped right in. The icebreakers would get us to relax more.

Finally, the icebreakers were also the first step in enabling the parents to see and feel their common humanity with others in the group:

> The icebreakers were good because we used to see how stupid we all act.
>
> There were times when people put their guard down if we had any guards, if we had any inhibitions, if we had any worries or anything, they went out the window. I think those icebreakers were excellent.

*** Parent Ownership and the Curriculum**

This engagement phase of the training had another important feature that resonated with the parents. In the course of the interviews, parents remarked that they had been asked by the trainer in the first workshop to identify the topics they wanted the training to cover. While the Parent Leadership Project was brought in by the school district, this behavior provided the first indication that the PLP was the parents' program and that they would help to direct it. By having input into the curriculum, the parents' initial "deposit" of investment toward becoming

collective "owners" of the PLP was made in the first workshop. This left a strong impression with the parents:

> I think it has to do with the initial session. We put a package together and said these are the points we would work on for the 14 weeks or so. We had input. We were not told we were going to learn this. That is what made the first session different and that is what brought me back, yes that is the honest truth.
>
> I had been with the President's Council before and they tried a lot of workshops. It was good, but there was not that much parent feedback. It was kind of like a regular teaching experience and that was the total opposite from what he (the trainer) expected from us. He wanted it to come from within us and that was difficult in the beginning for a lot of people...I was exhausted after the first day but it was a good exhaustion.
>
> At the very beginning we had to write down exactly what we wanted to do. It was a list and we had to prioritize that list. It wasn't her (the trainer), it was us.
>
> He (the trainer) asked us the things that we thought was most important for the group to talk about.
>
> If it was more of like a dictator, a lot of people wouldn't have come. People are turned off by that kind of thing. If he didn't meet us where we were, we would have been turned off.

By the parents having significant input into the training curriculum, it ensured that the training would remain relevant and practical to them. The training was grounded in their needs and experiences:

> I think that the things we covered were real things. Things that we use in our everyday life, not just in our PA situation, but in any situation these were skills that we needed. I think that played an important part in the training in that these were skills that you used in your day-to-day lives...You got it from us.

> The training was applied. Everything that was developed was being actually carried out.
>
> The topics were interesting because they were topics we could apply in our everyday life.
>
> It was important for the trainer to know what we wanted in order to be able to give us what we wanted.

*** Group Responsibility and Ground Rules**

The final piece of the engagement phase was the development by the participants of "ground rules" -- those behaviors and attitudes that they expected from one another to make their experience as positive as possible. Participation in the development of the rules represented another concrete "deposit" of investment by members in the group and the PLP. It was also a concrete expression of the parents' power and sense of responsibility for the PLP. The ground rules were their rules because they defined them:

> You have to have rules in order to create order. There probably would have been a lot of beating up and criticizing...It would have been chaos...It gave us a feeling of being important and having power, as well as we were in a democratic situation. I think the ground rules were very important.
>
> If something is going to be in order, there has to be ground rules, otherwise it is havoc...The whole group should set them, like we did it...No dictatorship.

II. THE CULTURE OF PARTICIPATION: RESPECT FACILITATES LEARNING

How did the parents describe their experience in the PLP beyond the engagement phase? Was the PLP able to build

on that phase to create a participatory culture? If so, how?

*** Developing Safety Through Shared Rules & Experiences**

From the parents' perspective, the development of emotional and psychological safety in the workshops was central to their experience and to their learning. It was this feeling of safety that enabled the parents to actively participate in the workshops, share of themselves, and take risks in their development as leaders. The ground rules were one of several critical tools that the parents identified as helping to establish an atmosphere of safety in the groups. A particularly important ground rule was confidentiality:

> It was all confidential, we were able to speak out on things that we may not have been able to talk to our normal friends from school because we felt confident that everything was kept confidential in the room.

> We had one rule that whatever was discussed in the room stayed in the room and I think that particular rule held because a lot of times before you know it you are discussing personal stuff with the person and it stayed in the room and that broke a lot of people down because you got trust.

This sense of safety for parents was also facilitated by the opportunity to hear from other parents about the problems and issues that they encountered in their schools. As parents realized that they were facing many of the same issues, they felt less alone and more connected to the other parents. They felt safe that they would be understood by the other group members. Additionally, the differences that

emerged from this sharing proved to be less threatening and divisive than perhaps originally assumed:

> I got to meet more people and listen to their concerns, which I realized were just like mine. I found out that a lot of parents were having the same problems in terms of homework...So that made me realize that I wasn't alone. I didn't feel as stressed.
>
> Hearing someone talk and you say, oh gee, I had that problem too or she suffers from being shy also...I think it was having people from all walks of life, we all kind of had the same problems and it's just learning from each other.
>
> I think one of the things that gave us a sense of family is bringing out the things that make us alike. Although we come from different schools, we were going through battling the same situations and problems. That made us kind of one.
>
> Letting people know that you're not the only one having a problem is important. We all have problems. And letting them know and actually bringing it out to people makes the person feel close.
>
> We all have different backgrounds, but we all have some commonality in those backgrounds. Some things are just across the board. We are all poor and we have to work for a living...There was a lot of commonality that really brought us together. Even though you came from Trinidad, and you came from Honduras, and I came from Virginia, we still have those same problems. Differences sometimes can draw you together because you find out that your differences are not so different.

This sharing among parents not only helped to make parents feel more safe. It also provided parents with opportunities to learn from the experience of other parents in other schools:

> Being that we come from all different schools, each individual school has some kind of problem and...you can learn a lot because maybe the school id doing something that this other school could do and then you

> get ideas from all different parents from different schools.
>
> I got to meet parents from other schools and I got to hear the problems that were in these schools and how they came to a solution in case we ever encountered the same problem

*** Respect for Parents' Experience as the Starting Point for Learning**

The opportunity for parents to share their concerns and learn from one another did not happen randomly. The workshops emphasized interaction and minimized lecturing. This sharing often took place in small groups where all parents, including the shy ones, felt more able to talk and learn from one another:

> I don't think lecturing would have been good because if it was a lecture you get bored...but being able to participate you were part of the group and you got a lot more out of it and if you keep quiet they sort of gave everyone a chance to speak and if you didn't speak they sort of got you to bring out your own thought.
>
> It never went too long where it was just talking. We always broke into groups and I think that makes it more effective. It made it more of a hands-on thing where people had to participate even if they didn't want to participate.
>
> Role plays were very useful because it brought out those who were very quiet, who did not participate. Quite often, it helped them to come out of their shell. Everyone knew from he beginning the agreement was that everyone would participate, not only a few.

By using the experiences and ideas of the parent leaders as the starting point for most of the learning, parents felt a deep sense of respect from the PLP. In

effect, parents felt that they, and their opinions, had value. This feeling of being respected was as central as any other dimension of their PLP experience:

> He (the trainer) showed us respect. And to respect one another, we have to say our opinions are valuable. That we were valuable also. Because sometimes we were dealing so intensely with our children and the administration and educators and we don't feel valued and certainly this shows that we are valuable.
>
> He would not just feed us information. He said you have the information, you just need to discuss among yourselves and come up with it, it is in there...In the smaller groups we were able to talk and show the respect that is really being directed from him to us because we had to listen to each other. And whatever was being said I think we can all agree we were not jumping on someone and saying I don't agree with you, but showing respect.
>
> I think when you talk about respect and how we received it, what I like was when he (the trainer) had his charts up and we were doing the brainstorming-- he put the things up and went through each thing that was there and that lets people know that it was worth putting it up there

This sense of respect can also be traced to the continuation of the parent ownership strategy discussed in the section on engagement. Parents were clear that the trainers did not attempt to unilaterally control or direct the training. The parents talked about the PLP as theirs:

> Really, we made the decisions. It wasn't his (the trainer's) group. We made sure it was us that did things. Even when we got our weekly agenda, it was our agenda. He wrote down exactly what we said.
>
> You know, our culminating action project was what we chose. He (the trainer) didn't do much at all, come to think of it. He gave us ownership and a sense of pride in who we are.

> It wasn't so much what he (the trainer) did, but it was what we did. We really did it. We took better care of the group.
>
> I felt that everyone in the group had input, I really did. When someone had something to say, they put it out on the table. And if it wasn't exactly what the group wanted, then we would add, take away to make it fit for our needs.
>
> The instructor didn't just come in here and say, "here is the paper"...He (the trainer) took some of our opinions. He didn't just appoint his opinions and say this is the way we are going to do it. He would take it to the group and ask them what the best opinion we all thought was...It didn't just come from the head man.

*** <u>Communicating High Expectations of Parents</u>**

This demonstration of respect was coupled with high expectations of the parents. Respect and high expectations went hand-in-hand in the workshops. The parents could not sit back and simply listen, nor could they expect that they would not be challenged to think beyond their existing experiences or to think about them in new ways. In effect, they had to *work* in each session. Ultimately, they experienced this as another manifestation of respect:

> He (the trainer) kept emphasizing the point that we were the ones that were going to do work. He was only there to facilitate, to open avenues but we were the ones that had to do everything...We felt we had to produce, we were backed up against a corner and we had to do something. We could not just sit there and not talk... He pulled from us and we were always made to think, to evaluate, to discuss, it's coming from us.
>
> He (the trainer) provided his own expertise but he always reached to the parents to provide information. He never just gave us information like we were dummies. He was always saying we have a wealth of information--

> just brainstorm among yourselves. I think that is the key -- that he was not just feeding things, he was also drawing from us.
>
> She (the trainer) didn't tell you. She'd put you on a path that would lead you there. She would say to you, "this is what I want from you. What do you think? If you don't like it this way, maybe you should try it another way."
>
> When people made statements, he made them elaborate. He didn't let them get away with "good" or "bad." What was "good?" He narrowed it down and people had to see exactly what people say. He made that person think.

*** Facilitating *Focused* Participation**

There were also specific behaviors on the parts of the trainers that the parents identified as contributing to this feeling of respect. The parents often came back to the role of the trainer in making them feel comfortable and respected, the prerequisites in their opinion for good learning. They talked about the trainer tuning into the group and keeping it focused:

> When he reviewed the agenda and said, "is this okay with everyone"?, it delivered a message that he wasn't there to do a hit or miss. That anyone could say we want to throw your agenda out and that was okay with him.
>
> In the workshops he gave us time for ourselves to write something down. He walked around the group and asked us, "are you doing okay"...And then he would say it's time to bring the meeting back...and ask, "do you need additional time?" He would ask the group whether to stop or start.
>
> Sometimes we had gotten off the subject...and this woman (the trainer) is incredible because she knew how, instead of saying, "listen okay we're getting off track", she would be able to bring us right back by

> saying in essence, "what you are saying is..." and then we would get back on track.
>
> He (the trainer) kept the group on task...he would bring us back...He had a nice way of saying shut up.

The parents thought that the trainers' high level of preparation and organization were also important in keeping the group focused and productive throughout the training:

> Whenever he came in, he had whatever he needed. It was ready. We did not have to wait for him to go flipping to find anything. Everything was laid out. So the session would flow and I think that is important because you don't lose people.
>
> Everything was laid out. The information was right there in your face. Even though it was right there in your face, we talked about each one. We had an agenda. The icebreaker first...what went on the week before. That way even if you weren't there, you still knew what was going on.
>
> He always had his agenda printed out before the meeting started. Like we would do our icebreaker but he always had his agenda on one of them sheets of paper...It was a good thing because it helped to keep us focused on why we are here.
>
> He was so prepared...When you're organized and prepared, you can have that confidence and do things better...By not being prepared, you can lose so many people.

* The Result: A "Culture of Participation" in which Parents Feel Validated

These various tools -- the icebreakers, needs assessment, ground rules, small groups and role plays, group-centered facilitation techniques -- created what might be called a "culture of participation." It was within this

culture that parents discovered how much they knew. They felt validated:

> The Parent Leadership Project was an opportunity to share my intelligence with other parents.
>
> The group activities, where he would divide us up, it allowed us to speak, and it made it clear to me that I know more than I thought I did. It helped bring out some of the knowledge that I already have, not knowing that I had it. Not feeling like I know more than this person or that person. It made me realize more of who I am as a leader.
>
> Sometimes we don't know what we have in us. It takes something or someone to bring it out.

III. THE EMERGENCE OF THE PLP FAMILY: TRUST ENABLES PARENTS TO TAKE RISKS

The "culture of participation" resulted in parents feeling a high degree of connection with other parents and a greater sense of their own individual leadership capacity. Over the 20 or so weeks of training, the characteristics of this culture -- comfort, safety, connection, respect, and validation -- synergized and created, what the parents referred to repeatedly in the interviews, as a sense of "family":

> They made us feel like it was a family or us making us feel like we were a family...We opened ourselves. We opened our minds and hearts to try to understand to become better leaders.
>
> We were like extended family...As a matter of fact, I miss it.
>
> What made me come back more than anything was the atmosphere. It really felt like we were a family. I

> felt like a family with adult people and it made me look forward to every Wednesday...
>
> It was like a sanctuary. Because you come in there, you relax, you feel everybody...

One parent provided a sense of the development of the family:

> At first, it was like everybody's a little standoffish, you know, the new people and as time progressed we got to feel a bit closer to each other...we were like family. We would come in and we would speak to each other and sometimes she (the trainer) would separate us...We would sit with different groups. If you ever notice, if you have a group the black people will tend to be with the black people and the Spanish people and...But at the end I felt like I could sit with anybody and we would hug each other and we would speak to each other like we were brothers and sisters.

What were the characteristics of this PLP family? They included:

* **Mutual Support**

First, parents recognized over the course of the training that they could offer meaningful support and knowledge to each other. This recognition represented a step beyond validation of their own individual capacity. It meant that what the parents could offer to **one another** was substantial and valuable. The beginnings of mutual support, cooperation, and collective identity emerged:

> When we first came together, everybody was an individual. I mean we were still individuals, but then we became a group, one. Everybody formed a oneness.
>
> Everyone looked at what you had to say like it was their own problem. If you had a problem in your school

> we were always there together to help one another solve the problem...
>
> I saw a lot of cooperation in the group. If somebody needed something there was always somebody volunteering...That made the group more united because everybody was very cooperative.
>
> I am a pain in the neck. I asked a thousand questions because that's the only way I learn and I am kind of dumb. I have to ask the same thing twice. I'll ask it but most people won't even ask it the first time. There, everyone was asking questions and everyone was sharing so no one felt afraid to ask something or say I don't know because you felt the warmth in the room and we were all there to learn and to gain experience and help each other and to nurture it. It was a real sense of unity, camaraderie.

*** Mutual Respect**

In what has been referred to as the culture of participation, parents felt respected by the trainer and by the very design of the workshops. Over the 20 weeks of the training, the respect that the parents felt from the PLP served as the primary "lubricant" that enabled them to respect each other. In the latter phase of the training series, individual respect evolved into mutual respect. With this genesis, a sense of family emerged. Discussions grew beyond notions of right and wrong and became more nuanced as group members struggled to understand the feelings and experiences of others:

> To me, it felt like they were listening to me, that they were attuned to my needs and that I was not saying things for the hell of it. I felt that I was being listened to.

> One other good thing about the meetings was that there was no right or wrong. You know, I think that was good. It made people feel free to share. It wasn't--you were entitled to your opinion. We showed importance to whatever people's opinions were. It was your opinion and it wasn't wrong. It wasn't like that. It was like, "what's your experience and where and what are you going through."
>
> I think that was the key that everyone felt comfortable. When we broke into small groups, it was necessary for us to switch roles and there was no right or wrong...everyone had a chance to have input. He (the trainer) gave us a situation. There might be a better way to deal with it, but it was not right or wrong.

During one of the group interviews, a parent provided a wonderfully spontaneous example of her process of internalizing this sense of respect for other parent leaders:

> It's been emphasized that all of us have important ideas. We need to respect each other. I mean I was just going to interrupt her a minute ago and I remember the fact that she is saying something important. I'll say something important afterwards. This was brought out to us all the time -- not to break down what the other person is saying but to consider that important. I may not like what she is saying but she feels it's important.

The parents did not feel judged by the other parents in their PLP groups:

> And I think that is important when people don't feel threatened that they are going to be made a fool of. Then every response is an important response.
>
> He (the trainer) let us know that we are unique in our individuality and that because I may say something different or out in left field, I'm not to be made to feel ashamed. We're not here to make the person feel small. We're here to share in their experience...

> In our group, I felt like I could have said anything and nobody would have looked down at you or look up at you.
>
> I never hesitated to ask a question. I don't ever remember ever stopping to question, "oh my gosh-- is this going to be silly?, am I going to be snickered at?"

*** Trust**

The mutual support, climate of respect, and lack of judgment enabled people to relax and be themselves. The parents felt a base-line acceptance from the group. Trust emerged:

> People learned not to be ashamed in front of the group. The feeling was -- let them know who you are. We're not God. We don't know it all. We learned how to just do our little part and not try to pretend like you know it all.
>
> The freedom to be yourself. Speaking or not speaking...
>
> I think that more than anything else it was the family atmosphere because with family you can be yourself, so it allowed us to be ourselves.
>
> If I said something, it was not going to seem silly to the other person. So that makes you feel comfortable in talking. In some groups you go and you feel that you want to say something but don't know how to say it because people may look at you and think that's a silly question to ask. I didn't feel that when I was there. I felt like I could say anything.

The trust in the group developed from the training tools, facilitation techniques, and resulting group dynamics already described. But it also grew out of the opportunities the parents had to share of themselves on a personal level. While the icebreakers played a critical

role in this dimension of the parents' experience, the parents also talked about a general flexibility in the PLP that allowed parents to direct sessions into the realm of the personal:

> It wasn't a script...One of the women came in very upset because she had to have surgery so they sort of set aside what they were doing to comfort her and to discuss fears and put her at ease.
>
> It was a time during the Parent Leadership Project that a parent had a problem with her child and she brought it to our attention. You know she talked about it -- and we told her avenues to take. Then she came to us afterwards and she let us know that everything was fine.
>
> We were able to talk about our problems. Hey, we went personal sometimes, so you know that it was a very relaxed atmosphere. And we didn't know any of these people. Of course, I knew some because I've been going to the district a lot, but some of those people I had never seen before in my life...The feeling of trust and warmth. I don't know what else to say. That's my honest feeling.
>
> I think after a few sessions and everybody letting themselves go and telling of their personal lives and how things are going we felt as if we could trust each other. I think that is what helped a lot of us, we were able to let go and cry, crying literally, crying the emotions in there...

*** Equality**

The parents also identified a powerful sense of equality as a major ingredient of their PLP families. No one was better than anyone else and no one's ideas and comments were more important:

> Nobody wanted to be boss. Everyone was doing a share thing. It wasn't like, "I am the top honcho and you do this and you do that because I said so." It was

> everybody did things, you know, like at ease...So that made us feel more comfortable, there was no big boss that was going to tell us I am the chief and you are the warriors.
>
> We were all one group, nobody was better than another.
>
> Everybody was on the same level, whether you were there as a grandparent, as the mother, as the aunt, as a visitor, as a facilitator.

The trainer's behavior was critical in this dynamic. While the trainer had a different role in the workshops than the participating parent leaders, their status was no different. Central to this lack of status differential was the trainers' ability and willingness to share their experiences and vulnerability in a responsible way with the groups:

> She (the trainer) made everyone feel comfortable and at the same time she made everyone feel as if they were somebody...She said, "listen I am from the projects and I didn't have it easy. I had to start from scratch to get where I am today." She was very honest and she did discuss personal things that had happened in her life, not too deeply. But she did because when people were becoming emotional she said, "well, listen, it has happened to me..." She was a very very open and honest person. I have a lot of respect for her.
>
> He (the trainer) let it be known that he has these feelings too, that he makes these mistakes...and that he is there to help us grow...
>
> If he (the trainer) did something wrong, he did not hesitate to say he was sorry and that he made a mistake...It is easy to respect a person who is an authority figure who made us feel equal, he did, he made us feel equal.
>
> Through her own personal experiences with us she (the trainer) made herself a part of us. Where some facilitators put themselves on a platform and kind of

> look down on us, she never did that. She blended in with us.
>
> His (the trainer's) attitude of "I'm not your trainer." In a way he let us know that he was our trainer, but he also let us know that he was down-to-earth. He was a real person. He talked at a level that all of us understood.

This accessibility on the part of the trainer did not mean that he or she was always "nice." In fact, one parent mentioned that it was when the trainer showed his anger that the group's trust of him deepened:

> A few times he got angry and was honest enough to let us know he was angry. I appreciated his honesty because most leaders would not have done this...Once he let it go, it was over. That made me comfortable because I said, "hey, we can trust this guy."

*** <u>Skilled Facilitation</u>**

The parents also mentioned specific skills and techniques that the trainers utilized that helped to forge this familial-type atmosphere. Specifically, while effective icebreakers were critical to the development of the PLP family, the parents knew that the selection and facilitation of the icebreakers required thought and talent:

> Icebreakers can be aimed at different things because you can aim an icebreaker at making people feel comfortable and very relaxed or you can aim it making people sensitive and stirred up. It depends on what is your motive, why are you doing this icebreaker. They vary...He (the trainer) did a good job at settling and claming things down at times. Having a group like we had...sometimes they may insult other people or an organization...A good facilitator needs to be able to know when to draw it back and let us know not to make it a personal thing.

> I've been in other workshops and other meetings before and they did some icebreakers that made you feel more tense...Icebreakers can mess you up and make you want to leave.
>
> I think you have to know how to handle an icebreaker from the beginning to the end. If it's relevant to what the class is about, then you might want to deal with certain feelings. But if not, you can be opening up a can of worms. Sometimes you open up a can of worms and you can't get them back. Choosing the right icebreaker is very important.

The parents mentioned other facilitation techniques that made a difference in their experience:

> He (the trainer) would also say, "don't talk to me, talk to the group." So it's not about you and me. It's about us, the whole group.
>
> He kept it on the same level as everybody, he didn't try to take it above their heads or below their heads, didn't talk down or above you...Some people do talk down. You can use a simple word instead of trying to make them look stupid, because you know a lot of people do that.

Finally, parents talked about the importance of having fun and a sense of humor. Parents did not experience learning, having fun and laughing as mutually exclusive activities in the PLP:

> It was a lot of fun. It took away a lot of the stress that you go through every day being a parent leader.
>
> We really had a good time learning.
>
> It was fun-- it was serious but fun.
>
> I think another thing that was important was humor. There was a lot of humor. When people were getting a little tense, or the room was too cold or the room was too hot, someone would always say something funny and it would just break everybody up. And we would forget we were cold or hot or you forgot you were upset with somebody...

> You have to go with a sense of humor. Can't be too serious all the time. She (the trainer) sure did have a great sense of humor.

* **The Result: A PLP Family that Stayed True to its Mission and Supported Individual Parents to take Risks in Order to Grow**

What did the parents describe as the result of these various elements -- mutual support, mutual respect, trust, equality, humor -- interacting over 20 weeks? They identified two primary outcomes, one involving the group and one focused more on the individual parent. The result for the group as a whole -- and much of the source of the vitality of the PLP family -- was a remarkable ability to stay focused on its purpose-- children, schools, and education. While parents talked about their discussions in the workshops sometimes going off on tangents and the trainers bringing the discussion back to the agenda, pettiness and rivalry were never mentioned as major themes of the groups. The PLP groups stayed true to their mission:

> We were all here for the same goal. Our purpose is to become good leaders so that we can bring other parents in and it's not about me as a person, it's not about you as a person or you as a Hispanic or me as a Black person. It's about us and people. I think form the mid to the end, we were really a cohesive group.

> He (the trainer) always brought us back to the same point, that we are here for a purpose, for the children and the school.

The outcome of the PLP family in terms of individual learning was that the parents took risks. The safety, respect, support and trust in the groups allowed the parents to take risks in their development and growth as leaders--the ultimate purpose of the training:

> I have to go back to the respect because even if you are not used to public speaking and you did the best and maybe to yourself it wasn't much but you tried, we gave you a standing ovation.
>
> I know the changes that I have made this year...I would never have gotten up on stage that way I did for that Legislative Breakfast because I am very self-conscious about my weight and stuff. But when it came to the kids and talking about what we learned and we can share with the other parents in the school, I had no trouble getting up in front of those people.
>
> For me I am heavy, right, I don't like standing in the middle of a crowd and doing, like, a little icebreaker. It would make you feel uncomfortable. But after I got into that I didn't feel uncomfortable. I didn't care.

VII. SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter begins with a summary of the study and its findings. This is followed by a discussion of the meaning and implications of the findings for practitioners in the field of grassroots leadership training. The last section of the chapter offers recommendations for further research.

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The 1960's through the mid-1980's witnessed a sharp decline in the quality of life in many urban neighborhoods. Levels of poverty, housing abandonment, arson, crime, and other indicators of social decline all increased dramatically during this period (Zachary, 1983; Wilson, 1987; Fisher, 1994; Ewalt, 1997). Along with these tangible indicators of decline was an erosion of the quality of relationships between people in the communities that experienced this deterioration. Levels of fear and mistrust between residents increased and had a profound impact on the lives of many communities: "If fewer and fewer people venture out of their homes in the evening, the vibrancy of collective life in a community is diminished. The logical consequence of such cycles of threat and retreat is the heightened isolation of community members" (Fabricant, 1997, pp.1-2).

Over the last decade, this decline has prompted attention in the scholarly literature and the foundation world on the need to rebuild community in poor and working-class urban neighborhoods (Ewalt, 1997; Fabricant, 1997; Mediratta, 1995; Walsh, 1996). The community-building approach focuses on revitalizing the economic and physical dimensions of a neighborhood as well as its relational life. The Rockefeller Foundation, which has devoted significant resources to community building programs, offers one definition:

> we define it as continuous, self-renewing efforts by residents and professionals to engage in collective action, aimed at problem solving and enrichment, that creates new or strengthened or social networks, new capacities for group action and support, and new standards and expectations for life in the community...Community building assumes that associations within a geographic are important for community well-being; that bringing together a broad spectrum of stakeholders will provide a better understanding of problems; that sustainable solutions are based on knowing the facts, building on assets, and having a shared vision of improvement; and that an independent community-based capacity for analysis, planning and convening is essential for success. (Walsh, 1997, p.ii)

While the decline of urban neighborhoods is a complex social phenomenon -- its causes are found in the interaction between macro-level shifts in the national and global political economies and local conditions in cities and neighborhoods (Wilson, 1987; Fisher and Kling, 1993) -- central to most efforts to rebuild them is a focus on the

role of indigenous leaders in facilitating citizen participation.

One survey of the literature on this issue concluded, however, that "most community-building initiatives stress leadership, but few offer a clear view of what the term means. Who should lead? How are they prepared to lead? What kind of leadership capacity is needed? What is leadership built for?" (Mediratta, 1995, p.24). In other words, while there is consensus that grassroots leaders must play an important role in the community rebuilding process, there is much less clarity about the kind of indigenous leadership that is best suited to this effort.

Unfortunately, as shown in this study's literature review, this lack of clarity and depth concerning grassroots leadership is also found in the more general community organizing literature. While embodying many useful insights about the need for democratic and shared leadership at the grassroots level, this literature is characterized by the absence of comprehensive frameworks that conceptualize and operationalize this approach to leadership.

Given this lack of in-depth treatment regarding the philosophy of grassroots leadership in the community organizing literature, it is not surprising that the literature emphasizes "learning from experience" as the dominant method for leadership development. The issue of

training methodology receives little attention in this literature. The literature that reviews actual leadership training programs similarly devotes little attention to it.

This study was undertaken to explore this gap in the literature. Three central questions were investigated:

- what is the kind of grassroots leadership that is needed to rebuild poor and working-class urban neighborhoods?;
- what is the training methodology that is best suited to advance this kind of leadership?; and
- what is the relationship between philosophy and methodology in grassroots leadership training programs?

Given the dearth of rich literature on the subject, an exploratory case study approach was utilized. The study sought to generate broad themes and categories as a starting point for future investigations.

The case that was chosen -- the Parent Leadership Project -- had a substantial body of practice training grassroots leaders using a methodology that sought to reflect the group-centered approach to leadership, possessed extensive written documentation, and afforded the researcher full accessibility. Additionally, there were preliminary indications that the PLP had produced successful outcomes.

A triangulated research methodology was employed. It had four components:

* a content analysis of program documents to understand what the PLP intended to accomplish and how;

* a secondary analysis of existing quantitative outcome data for more than 400 parent leaders over five years to investigate how effective the PLP was;

* a quantitative study of PLP "graduates" to ascertain whether the impact of the intervention was sustained beyond the point of the parents' participation in the PLP; and

* a series of qualitative interviews with 40 parents to understand the PLP through their "eyes."

FINDINGS

Leadership development is one of the most hallowed phrases in both the practice world and the literature of community organizing (Burghardt, 1982; Staples, 1984; Kahn, 1991). The phrase rightly implies that leaders *develop*--that they acquire new skills, confidence, attitudes and information or deepen existing ones *over time*. The strategy for developing new leaders most favored in community organizing is that of "on-the-job experience."

This study of the Parent Leadership Project demonstrated that training can also be an effective method for developing grassroots leaders. The PLP was highly successful in increasing the level of activity and confidence of the parents who participated in its training programs. The changes in the parents were both significant and meaningful. For two-thirds of the questions on a pre- and post-questionnaire that over 400 parents completed over five years, the change between the pre- and post- was

statistically significant. Additionally, for 81% of the total questions over the five-year period, the percentage of parents who perceived themselves to be at the most positive point of the ordinal scale increased by at least 10% between the beginning and conclusion of the training program.

As significant, these positive changes in the parents' activity and confidence were found to be sustained beyond the point of their completion of the training. In a survey of parents one and two years after they participated in the PLP, over three-quarters reported that their level of activity and skill was the same or higher since completing the training. Additionally, for 17 out of the 19 questions, a majority stated that their activity/skill was actually higher than it had been when they last participated in the PLP.

While the data from the questionnaires revealed positive changes in the parents' level of activity and attitudes, the parents were also explicit about how much they felt they learned in the PLP. Over 91% of the participants felt they had learned "a great amount" or "a lot" that would help them as parent leaders.

What was it about the content and process of the PLP training that helped to produce these outcomes? What were the elements of the training that provided the conditions for learning and growth to take place? Given the

exploratory nature of this case study, the following findings are not meant to be generalizable to all grassroots leadership training programs. Rather, they are specific to this study and offered as possible central themes to be considered by practitioners. They include:

(1) The Integration of Philosophy with Skill: The specific leadership skills that were covered in the PLP training -- from running meetings and recruiting parents to negotiating and strategic planning -- were always connected back to the group-centered approach to leadership that was the underlying philosophy of the PLP. By doing this, parents were encouraged to think holistically about leadership. The separate skills were viewed as being at the service of a larger vision. This served to catalyze the learning. The group-centered approach to leadership became greater than the sum of its parts;

(2) The Focus on the Personal Nature of Leadership: The PLP stressed that a leader's behavior was the factor that he/she had most control over that affected whether or not other parents got involved and the level and quality of their involvement. Through interactive and self-assessment exercises, parents were provided with consistent and frequent opportunities to examine their own behavior and its impact on others. This personal focus encouraged parents to "own" their learning and take risks to grow as leaders;

(3) Rituals of Engagement: The PLP effectively used icebreakers to establish an atmosphere in which the parents felt comfortable participating, what might be called a tone of "comfortable participation." The icebreakers, which were different at every session and skillfully chosen to correspond to the level of comfort and trust that developed among the participants over time, put the immediate focus of the training on the group. They were also central to the building of a sense of community among the participants and helped them to relax in order to maximize learning. These exercises became a ritual-- an element of the training that the parents looked forward to every week and that distinguished their PLP experience from other learning experiences that were more teacher-led and less engaging;

(4) Parent Ownership: From the first workshop, parents' investment in the PLP was sought and developed. The PLP consciously and consistently sought ways to share power and responsibility with the parents. This was done through several specific means, including:

* in the first session of each group, parents were asked what their learning needs and concerns were as leaders. Their expressed needs constituted the core of the training curriculum for their group.

* parents devised "common considerations" that they expected from one another to make the training a positive learning experience

• on every workshop agenda, the second item was always, "review the agenda," so that parents would have direct input into the workshop

* parents always chose their action project;

(5) Structure Combined with Flexibility: The parents appreciated the structured training approach of the PLP. The workshop objectives and agenda kept the group focused and gave the group a sense of control. At the same time, the parents felt that they could shift the focus of the workshop if needed and could even inject personal issues. This flexibility reinforced their sense of investment in, and ownership of, the PLP;

(6) A Culture of Participation: The richest source of learning for parents was in their interactions with other parents in the group. A culture of participation developed that required sharing and listening. Two conditions were essential in facilitating the development of this culture:

* Safety -- The "common considerations" or ground rules were instrumental in establishing an atmosphere in the training groups in which most, if not all, of the parents felt safe to participate. Without exception, each of the training groups included the following items: confidentiality, respect for other's opinions, and no right or wrong answers. The trainers referred the participants back to these ground rules when an individual's behavior was in gross violation.

Additionally, the emphasis on discussion and the minimal use of lecture provided parents with constant opportunities to hear from other parents about the issues and problems that they encountered in their schools. They quickly realized that the difficulties that they faced were often shared by other parents. As a result, they felt less alone and more connected to the other parents. These connections, which caused the parents to feel that they would be understood by the other members of the group, generated a sense of safety among the participants. These feelings of safety and security enabled parents to take risks in expressing themselves and trying new skills and techniques first in the workshops and then in the schools.

* Respect: The parents experienced a deep sense of respect from the PLP which then facilitated their respect for one another. The parents' experiences and ideas were always utilized as the starting point for learning. Small group discussions and role plays were used to encourage all of the parents, including those who were initially more shy, to "find their voices." The parents found that their experience and intelligence were validated in the PLP. This increased their self-confidence and enabled them over time to take on new leadership responsibilities.

This respect for the parents was also reflected in the PLP's high expectations of them. If the "raw materials" for

learning were primarily the parents' experiences and ideas, then the PLP expected the parents to think critically about them. Parents were "pushed" to think more deeply and analytically than many of them were accustomed. Ultimately, they experienced this as another manifestation of respect; and

(7) Skillful, Yet Humble, Facilitation: While the design and structure of the PLP training was clear and explicit, it required highly skilled facilitators to implement it. The trainers were perceived by the parents as well prepared and organized in the workshops. Additionally, in their selection of icebreakers, their ability to balance structure with flexibility, and their support of the parents combined with high expectations, the performance of the trainers was central to the success of the PLP.

At the same time, the trainers were both able and willing to acknowledge their mistakes and imperfections. By sharing these with the parents, a powerful sense of trust and connection was forged. This contributed to the participants feeling a deep sense of solidarity and equality in their groups. While their roles within a group might be different, this did not automatically lead to differences in status.

Perhaps, as significant as any of the preceding findings, is the final one of this study: that none of these

elements can be viewed in isolation from the others. The ultimate meaning and power of these elements reside in their interaction, not their isolation. For example, by providing the participants with opportunities to share pieces of their personal lives with one another, the icebreakers established a connection between the personal and leadership components in an individual's life. This eased the participants' way into acknowledging and sharing their strengths and challenges as leaders in the group. Another example of such interaction is in the relationship between ownership and respect. In the engagement phase of the PLP training program, the parents were asked to identify their learning needs and to develop the "common considerations" for the group. These were woven together into a learning agreement that was signed by all of the parties involved in the training and served as guidelines for the program. By asking the parents what they wanted and needed, the PLP demonstrated respect for them. And, because they felt respected, the parents made their first "deposit of investment" toward becoming "owners" of the PLP.

Leadership development can be viewed as a never-ending process of growth, of "...working on and developing one's talents" (Bennis and Nanus, 1985. p.59). Risk-taking is an inevitable and central feature of that process. When one tries something new, there is often the fear of the unknown,

the inevitability of risk, and the possibility of failure. An essential question in the analysis of grassroots leadership training is: what are the conditions that will facilitate the taking of risks by the participants inside and outside of the training? In this study, it was the elements of comfort, safety, and respect that generated the mutual support and trust within the group that allowed the parent leaders to take risks in their leadership journeys. The learning and the risk-taking were ultimately rooted in the deep sense of community that developed among the parents.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment Between the Micro- and Macro-Levels

Throughout this study, it has been argued that the philosophy and methodology in grassroots leadership training should not be developed or analyzed separately. Rather, the practitioner should begin with a vision of the kind of leadership to be developed and design a methodology that reflects and reinforces that vision. The training is most powerful when these two elements are **aligned**. The caveat, of course, is that leadership training, as with all forms of intervention, is in a constant process of evolution. The practitioner never reaches perfect alignment between content

(the operationalization of the vision) and method. Rather, there are always new ways to make this connection.

Stephen Covey, in The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, is eloquent in describing the consequences when leaders don't "begin with the end in mind." In the following passage, he writes about vision as it applies to personal alignment. It is equally applicable to the alignment of a social intervention. He writes:

> To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination. It means to know where you're going so that you better understand where you are now and so that the steps you take are always in the right direction.
>
> It's incredibly easy to get caught up in an activity trap, in the busy-ness of life, to work harder and harder at climbing the ladder of success only to discover it's leaning against the wrong wall. It is possible to be busy -- very busy -- without being very effective.
>
> ...If the ladder is not leaning against the right wall, every step we take just gets us to the wrong place faster. We may be very busy, we may be very efficient, but we will also be truly effective only when we begin with the end in mind. (p.98)

What is the destination point or the "end in mind" for the progressive practitioner in the field of grassroots leadership training? Is it the development of leaders who have the technical skills to lead a grassroots community organization and increase turnout at organizational events? Or does it begin with a vision of the type of society that the practitioner seeks to create, albeit in quite modest

ways through the efforts of the leaders that the training develops, works back toward the kind of leadership needed to bring about that society, and allows for a back-and-forth interaction between them?

The answer lies, in part, in one's view of the purpose of the grassroots leader. If one of the essential roles of a leader is to fight for and "model the way" (Kouzes and Posner, 1988), then a critical question that flows out of this role but receives little if any attention at this moment in history is: What constitutes the **"Way"?** What is the "way" -- the vision of the social order -- toward which the leaders are working?

The risk that the practitioner runs in not aligning his/her vision of leadership with his/her vision of the society that the leaders "model the way" toward is that the dominant values of the society will be reproduced, perhaps unintentionally, in the training. Steve Burghardt draws this connection between leadership development and social reproduction in The Other Side of Organizing. Every society, in order to maintain itself, must reproduce itself in the minds of its citizens so that they don't challenge it and so they stay "subservient to the routines of daily life" (p. 239). Without being simplistic, he suggests that leaders either reproduce the social order's dominant values of hierarchy, individuality, and authoritarianism, or

through their behavior more than their words, challenge those assumptions and create "...political alternatives quite different from traditional models" (p.83). Because these dominant values are pervasive and constantly reinforced by the dominant institutions of our society, unless the practitioner consciously challenges those values, they are likely to be reproduced in his/her work.

The role of a larger or macro-level social vision in the development of a grassroots leadership training program has particular relevance to this study. The social backdrop for the study has been the decline of community in poor and working-class urban neighborhoods. The roots of this decline can be found, in part, in macro-level factors, such as the globalization of capital: "as capital flow increasingly supersedes state control in the global economy, the welfare state faces increasing fiscal crises" (Fisher and Kling, 1993, p.5). Other factors include shifts in the domestic labor market and technological advances that have intensified individual consumption patterns. It is the normal operation of the political economy, not an aberration or an unforeseen disaster, that has contributed to the deterioration of poor and working-class urban communities against which the progressive practitioner is battling.

Therefore, while it is certainly difficult for the community-based progressive practitioner to engage these

macro-level forces, a starting point for such engagement lies in adopting and/or constructing a philosophy of grassroots leadership that is connected to a vision of an alternative social order. Robert Fisher, in Let the People Decide: Neighborhood Organizing in America, suggests that such a vision "...for our times needs to combine new demands for autonomy and identity with older ones for social justice, production for human needs rather than profit, and a spirit of connectedness and solidarity rather than competition" (Fisher, 1994, p.232). He also underlines the result of the practitioner and community organization not having a larger social vision:

> A vision of non-capitalist transformation has to be attentive to such American ideals as equality, self-help, local self-reliance, participatory democracy, group solidarity, cultural pluralism. Lower-class and working-class neighborhood organizing must develop long-range goals that address imbalances in a class society, an alternative vision of what people are fighting for, and provide a context for all activity...Otherwise, as has happened repeatedly, victories that win services or rewards will undermine the organization by 'proving' that the existing system is responsive to poor and working people and, therefore, in no need of fundamental change. (Fisher, 1994, p.229)

When Fabricant and Burghardt write, in The Welfare State and the Transformation of Social Service Work, about the importance of the social service worker "imbuing daily work with a social vision," it also applies to the grassroots leadership training practitioner:

> ...any long-term social goal must at least be approximately envisioned. Clearly, this ultimate objective is not fixed and, depending on personal or social change, will be reconfigured over time...It marks a general direction for the larger change process, and is an idealization against which concrete objectives can be set and incremental progress evaluated. (1992, p.235)

During this historical period in which both a left critique of the social order and progressive social movements are virtually absent from the political landscape, it is easy for the practitioner to view grassroots leadership development as the "end in mind." However, it is the other approach -- in which the macro-level vision of the larger society and the micro-level vision of grassroots leadership are aligned -- that minimizes the risk of the progressive practitioner, in Covey's words, "leaning against the wrong wall."

The Joining of Philosophy and Method in Grassroots Leadership Training

This study has identified the development of critically conscious group-centered grassroots leaders as the micro-level "end in mind" for the progressive trainer. It is this approach which is most likely to succeed in mobilizing residents because it "fits" the neighborhood context. It is also the approach which "models the way" toward a more egalitarian and collectively-oriented society by standing the dominant values of the social order -- including

inequality, authoritarianism and individualism -- on their heads. It is an approach that:

* locates power and meaning in the **collective**, not the individual leader;

* considers leadership a largely **functional** position that does not confer special privileges and status; and

* views mutual **dialogue** between leaders and members as the dominant method for charting future direction.

It requires leaders who can:

* share responsibility and power with others;
* understand the importance of vision;
* question orthodoxy of any kind; and
* share their full humanity - strengths and challenges -- with others.

The ultimate goal of this kind of leader is to work with others so that "...as many people as possible develop as subjects of history, those who constantly seek to engage in history by choosing how they will act on it" (Burghardt, 1982, p. 108).

How can the trainer contribute to this kind of leadership development? In general, the role of trainer provides a practitioner with much opportunity for individual creative expression. There are numerous ways, for example, of leading a workshop about meeting facilitation. However, the trainer who is committed to developing this kind of leadership faces a particular challenge. It is the same challenge that the grassroots leader faces who embraces critically conscious group-centered leadership: to "model

the way." For the trainer who seeks to model the way, it requires the transmission not simply of knowledge and skill, but also a set of values and a view of the world that runs counter to much of the dominant socialization. Because the trainer is working toward a vision of society and leadership that does not yet exist except in isolated instances, there is no "map" that must be followed. While there are training guidelines, some of which are discussed below, the trainer must also invent them.

The challenge can be both exciting and daunting. It demands that the trainer constantly grapple with how they "live" their values in the design and implementation of the workshops. It isn't just the grassroots leader who has been socialized to believe that the authoritarian approach is the best approach-- the trainer has, as well. Therefore, the trainer will need to consistently examine their own values and behavior, "...including the manner of decision making, how open we are to suggestion, how well we share power and so on" (Burghardt, 1982, p.83). In this process, he/she will inevitably encounter their limitations and strengths. Finding and embracing their humility, discussed below, will be critical.

The findings from this exploratory study shed the "beginnings of light" on how the progressive practitioner can reflect this approach to leadership in a training

methodology. The purpose of the trainer, as is the case with the group-centered leader, is to **motivate** people to be involved, encourage their **participation**, and facilitate their **ownership** of the training experience (Vandenberg, 1993, p.136). It is an approach that includes the following basic principles:

(1) **Build Community:** If grassroots leaders are living and working within a neighborhood that needs to rebuild the sense of community between residents, those leaders are not exempt from that need; they also need to deepen their connections with one another, particularly if they are working together. Moreover, if they are going to lead the community rebuilding process in their neighborhood, the leaders need opportunities to experience it and see it. The training workshops offer a rich opportunity.

In this study, it has been argued that the philosophy of group-centered leadership must be contextualized to fit the everyday realities of grassroots leadership -- understanding, for example, that those leaders can be their "own worst enemy" because they have been socialized to adopt a paradigm of leadership that does not fit their circumstances. Similarly, the methodology of training must be based on an understanding of the prior learning and group experiences that many low- and moderate-income neighborhood leaders have had and which they bring to the leadership

training workshops. Many of those experiences have been less than respectful and relevant to their lives. In the interviews conducted for this study, the parent leaders repeatedly mentioned how different the Parent Leadership Project was compared to other experiences in which their ideas were not respected and they functioned as isolated learners. The initial stage of the training is critical in demonstrating that this experience has the potential to be qualitatively different than others. As one analyst of the community building process within social service agencies writes, the

> ...earliest stage of relationship greatly influences the possibility of participation. Community residents will have to first be invited to the possibility of participatory relationship. Cynicism, apathy and distrust must be peeled away gradually. Such shedding can only occur if independent and patient attention is paid to the need for engagement. In much of the literature on community building, there is an assumption which can be likened to the oft repeated phrase in *Field of Dreams*, "if you build it, they will come." More specifically, it is anticipated that if forms of participatory services are created individuals will take advantage of the opportunities. This discussion disputes such notions. (Fabricant, 1997, pp.21-22)

Building a sense of community within the training group is the underlying strategic goal of the training methodology. However, it is in that initial stage that the first steps must be taken. One of the underpinnings of this training methodology, confirmed in the findings from this study, is that the richest source of learning lies in the

group; the leaders learn as much from each other as they do from the trainer. Icebreakers are an important tool with which to establish the centrality of the group right from the beginning. By including everyone in the exercise, and by being thoughtfully chosen so as not to ask the participants to take inappropriate risks with one another, the icebreakers constitute an important first step in establishing a "culture of comfortable participation." It is this culture that generates much of the raw material for learning.

Icebreakers also enable leaders to get to know each other beyond the category of "leader." When people share elements of their personal lives -- likes and dislikes, struggles, and joys -- their connection with and trust of one another grows. They often discover and embrace both their commonalties and differences. It is precisely this appreciation of the complexity of a group that is central to the work of the leaders in rebuilding the sense of community among residents in their neighborhood.

Other tools for building community in the training group include:

* closing exercises,
* food and refreshments, particularly when prepared by the participants
* graduation/acknowledgment ceremony

Underlying these different tools is the element of consistency without repetition. Icebreakers and closing exercises are part of the structure of every workshop. Because the same exercise is never repeated, and because they are sequentially chosen to build the connections between the participants, these tools distinguish the training from the many alienating and inconsistent experiences in the leaders' lives. These exercises become rituals to which the leaders look forward;

(2) Training is about Skills, not Status: The Importance of Tactical Self-Awareness: The traditional leader views his/her job as telling or convincing people what to do. It is based on the premise that a leader "knows best" by dint of intellect, experience, or contacts. In contrast, the group-centered leader's distinguishing characteristic is his/her ability to effectively exercise specific skills that assist the group in identifying what it believes and wants to do and implementing it. These skills include: running a meeting in a way that enables the group to reach consensus; delegating work in a way that builds the confidence of members and also ensures that the work gets done; and speaking on behalf of the group in public. In this view, "...groups, organizations, and societies do need leadership...they need the functions to be filled" (Kokopeli and Lakey, p.7). While groups cannot be effective without

skilled leaders fulfilling different functions, this does not confer special privilege on these individuals.

In a similar vein, the trainer's role is fundamentally to use his/her skills to create a positive environment in which participants can learn from each other and from them. It is not to impose his/her ideas on the group, dominate the learning process, or unilaterally control it. In The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species, Malcolm Knowles identifies several of these key functions:

* provide "physical conditions that are comfortable...and conducive to interaction" (p.83)

* "build relationships of mutual trust and helpfulness among the students by encouraging cooperative activities and refraining from inducing competitiveness and judgmentalness" (p.83)

* "help the students exploit their own experiences as resources for learning through the use of such techniques as discussion, role playing, case method, etc." (p.84)

* "help the students develop and apply the procedures for self-evaluation..." (p.85)

This approach requires that much time and thought be given to the design of the workshops. If the richest source of learning resides in the group, the emphasis must be on designing exercises and creating an overall learning environment that will help the leaders bring their experiences and ideas to the forefront of their consciousness and challenge themselves and each other.

If the trainer's priority is to use his/her skills to establish and facilitate a process in which the participants gradually share more of themselves and their experiences with the group, what does he/she do with his/her own ideas, beliefs, and feelings? This is particularly the case in this situation because the trainer is struggling to model for the participants how they can exercise power and control differently than the manner in which they have all been socialized.

This may be the central dilemma facing the trainer who is committed to this approach. Other specific dilemmas, which were outlined in Chapter II, include:

* the balance between task and process, between how much time is devoted to the content and relational dimensions of the workshops;

* the balance between the quantity of issues addressed and the depth of inquiry; and the

* balance between following an approved structure and allowing for flexibility in deviating from it.

As has been discussed in Chapter VI and in this chapter, the commitment to a training methodology that reflects the group-centered approach to leadership certainly provides the practitioner with theoretical guidelines for addressing these dilemmas. However, how the practitioner adapts and uses these guidelines will be highly individualized. For instance, how does the trainer feel when he/she thinks that the group is taking too long with a

particular issue? Or when the group wants to change the agenda that he/she spent much time preparing?

Each trainer will inevitably have their own reaction to these dilemmas. Therefore, he/she needs to develop a keen and ever-evolving understanding of their personality and political tendencies in the array of circumstances and dilemmas they will face. This is what Burghardt, in The Other Side of Organizing, refers to as *tactical self-awareness*. It is based on the notion that practitioners, no matter how skilled and experienced and self-aware, "...are just like other people in their varying effectiveness at work" (Burghardt, 1982, p.53). The challenge for the trainer is to acknowledge his/her strengths and become aware of and work with his/her areas of discomfort and difficulty to minimize their impact on their effectiveness.

This means, inevitably, that the trainer will exhibit behavior and attitudes that will be consonant with their vision and be sources of great pride. It is equally inevitable that the opposite will occur. The way in which a trainer shares these vulnerable moments with the leaders in the group will transmit a powerful message about leadership. The trainer's ability to acknowledge his/her "mistakes" serves two critical purposes. It breaks down the distance between trainer and trainees and builds the sense of equality and solidarity within the group. This can

facilitate the participants' commitment to the training program and to the group. It also contradicts the myths that leaders have to be able to perform all leadership functions well and that it is inappropriate for a leader to admit mistakes because people will view him/her as "weak." This "sharing of self" gives the participants an opening to do likewise. This kind of behavior has powerful implications: "while hardly equal to the drumbeat cadence when thousands march, the quiet sounds of mutual dialogue between people once perceived as helping and being helped may someday make deeper reverberations than some now expect" (Burghardt,1982, p.108);

(3) Sharing Power: Building Investment and Ownership

The traditional approach to leadership may involve bullying or it may be manipulative (Kokopeli and Lakey). In both variations, however, real power remains in the hands of the leader. The group-centered approach to leadership locates power fundamentally in the collective, with the leader having a particular role to play within it.

In the training context, this approach seeks to build the will and capacity of the group to exercise power and be the center of learning from the beginning to the end of the training. The icebreakers can initiate this process. The following strategies, among others, can serve to continue it:

* participating leaders help to shape the training curriculum. While the trainer may have extensive experience with the issue of leadership, imposing a curriculum not only short-circuits the development of the group, it also sends a message that is antithetical to the one that will be advanced in the workshops (unless the training is issue-focused and/or of short duration, i.e. less than five sessions). No matter how well thought-out and field-tested a trainer's curriculum may be, each group of grassroots leaders is genuinely unique. For example, there are many ways of sequencing a leadership training curriculum so that the most pressing needs of a particular group can be addressed at an early stage of the training. Perhaps more important, though, is that grassroots leaders are more likely to learn how to engage residents in a certain manner if they are treated in that manner.

* the trainer "...helps the students to organize themselves...to share responsibility in the process of mutual inquiry (Knowles, 1984, p.84). An example is the participants establishing a set of group norms or "common considerations," as the PLP referred to them. Group-centered leaders want their group to take responsibility for itself and not simply look to the leader for all things nor to blame him/her for all problems. In training, group norms are one way that the participants begin to take responsibility for *their* group. It bears mentioning that the trainer offering a set of norms for approval by the group is not what is being suggested. It does not build the capacity of the group to chart its own destiny. While it will take longer, the participants taking the time to define these norms will serve to deepen their investment in, and ownership of, the training program.

It is important to point out that the trainer is not simply a silent partner in these processes. While the participants' ideas must be the driving force behind the development of the training, the trainer also has relevant experience and knowledge that bears on the training. Malcolm Knowles captures this nuance well when he writes that the trainer

> …involves the students in a mutual process of formulating learning objectives in which the needs of the students, of the institution, of the teacher, of the subject matter, and of the society are taken into account. The teacher shares his thinking about options available in the designing of learning experiences and the selection of materials and methods and involves the students in deciding among these options jointly. (1984, p.84);

(4) Respect for the Participants: Too often, because the authoritarian leader is intent on telling or convincing people what they should do, he/she doesn't ask, actively listen to, and perhaps does not even value the concerns and experiences of others. Consciously or otherwise, many people experience this as a sign of disrespect because "...in any situation in which adults' experience is ignored or devalued, they perceive this as not rejecting just their experience, but rejecting them as persons" (Knowles, 1984, p.58).

How does the trainer demonstrate respect for the participants? First, their respect is revealed through the very design of the learning process. This training methodology starts from the notion that because adults have a great reservoir of experiences built up over many years about which they have often thought deeply, the richest resources for learning reside in the adult learners themselves. Therefore, the starting point for learning is the participants' experiences. The use of creative exercises that ask people to reflect on and share their

experiences is at the center of the training. Brief lecturettes are used only after the participants have had this opportunity.

The trainer's job is not only to assist the participants in bringing their experiences and the beliefs that derive from them to the forefront of their minds. It is also to challenge them to think about these ideas in new ways because, as Knowles suggests, "...the fact of greater experience also has some potentially negative effects. As we accumulate experience, we tend to develop mental habits, biases, and presuppositions that tend to cause us to close our minds to new ideas, fresh perceptions, and alternative ways of thinking" (Knowles, 1984, p.58). As safety and trust are established in the training group, the participants and the trainer are able to challenge each other's ideas and assumptions . Respect is demonstrated not only by validating an individual's experiences, but by challenging that person to reach beyond easy or habitual answers. Respect is conveyed by expecting nothing less than struggle.

In the training workshop, respect is also conveyed through what initially may appear to be "small" things. It is in the accumulation of these seemingly small and minor elements, combined with the larger dimension discussed

above, that a deep respect for the participants is demonstrated. Two examples of these "small" elements are:

* the inclusion of "review the agenda" after the icebreaker on the agenda in every session. This provides the participants with the opportunity to discuss an issue or action that took place since the last workshop. It also sends them the message that this is *their* workshop; and

* when a participant asks a question of the trainer, the trainer throws it out to the group before offering his/her answer. Once again, this demonstrates the belief that the experiences and ideas of the participants are valuable;

(5) Build Individual Leadership Capacity: Critically conscious group-centered leaders view the development of new leaders as central to their work. They are always looking for opportunities to share power and responsibility with the group and with individual members. The trainer of these leaders seeks to do the same. Over time, and with the assistance of the trainer, participants can: lead icebreakers and closing exercises, facilitate small groups, record the group's ideas on flip chart paper, and set up the learning environment. While the participants are developing these important leadership skills that they will be able to use in their day-to-day neighborhood work, they are also deepening their investment in the training group.

Questions about the Culture of Community Organizing

As discussed in Chapter II, community organization practice and literature do not devote sufficient attention

to exploring the philosophy and methodology of grassroots leadership development and the connections between them. While this certainly has something to do with the huge gap between the demands and resources that community organizing groups have at their disposal, it may also have something to do with the *culture* of community organizing. The role of organizational culture may have bearing on this discussion because "...patterns of belief or shared meaning, fragmented or integrated, and supported by various operating norms and rituals, can exert a decisive influence on the overall ability of the organization to deal with the challenges that it faces" (Morgan, 1986, p.121). While this study has not investigated how community organizing groups function internally, its findings do raise a series of questions about their culture. These include:

(a) The Role of Vision: Throughout this study, the importance of both professional practitioners and grassroots indigenous leaders having a vision that guides their work has been emphasized. While a vision evolves over time and is not static, it does require that individuals and organizations make the time to reflect and think. Do most community organizing groups invest sufficient time in thinking about their long-term vision in relationship to: the society they are seeking to create, the organization they want to build, and the grassroots leadership they are

seeking to develop? In the same way that the individual practitioner needs to align the various levels of his/her vision, the community group seeking to organize in low-income and working-class neighborhoods needs to, as well.

While it is certainly understandable why some community groups may fail to put the necessary time into this long-range planning -- their financial instability as well as the depth of need in the community are two factors -- there is a price that goes along with it. How can these groups help to create indigenous leaders who have the skills, attitudes, and knowledge to lead the community rebuilding process if there is no rich conceptualization of the kind of leadership that is required for such an effort? How can these groups create models of leadership if they don't engage in the back-and-forth between vision and practice? As Covey has written, "...all things are created twice. There's a mental or first creation, and a physical or second creation to all things" (1989, p.99).

(b) Task vs. Process: Do most community organizing groups invest sufficient time in thinking about "process"? For a variety of reasons, including the often urgent need to act, most community organizers and organizations are more "task-oriented" than "process-oriented" (Burghardt, 1982; McNeil, 1995). While there is no formula for how to balance these two competing dimensions of practice, the limitation

of the former is that the "how" of practice gets inadequate attention. Implicitly or explicitly, the emphasis on task suggests that there is little or no "political" content to the process. The findings from this study demonstrating that training methodology transmits powerful political messages to grassroots leaders concerning their role with both community residents and the dominant institutions in their neighborhood and society certainly provide evidence to the contrary.

(c) Experience Is Not the Only Teacher: Do these groups invest in developing the critical thinking capacity of their indigenous leaders? While it can be argued that experience is the best teacher for organizing, it certainly is not the only one. To develop critically conscious leaders -- those who have the capacity and the confidence to question orthodoxy of any stripe -- structured opportunities for reflection and challenge are critical. It is the back-and-forth between action and reflection that produces leaders who are equally comfortable in both arenas.

(d) The Role of the Grassroots Leader: The final question flows out of the others: Are community organizations willing to grapple with the inevitable dilemmas and tensions that occur when critically conscious grassroots leaders move from challenging the power structures within their community to questioning the power

structure within the organization? Effective training of the kind discussed in this study is intended to strengthen the ability and willingness of the leaders to question persons and organizations in positions of power. While the focus in the training is clearly on external power relations, the effect is wider. Critical consciousness cannot be selective. By its very nature, it is used to understand and act upon all facets of social reality, including how power is exercised within a community organization. This can make for "messy" dynamics at times, particularly in organizational settings in which the professional and grassroots leadership have grown accustomed to exercising control over the rank-and-file membership. Is the relative downplaying of leadership training in the world of community organizing a conscious or unconscious expression of the desire to avoid this inevitable "messiness"?

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations for further research flow, in large part, from the limitations of this study. The limitations and accompanying recommendations are related to **what** was studied, as well as **how**. They include:

Recommendation #1: To conduct research that will investigate the impact of training when it is tied to an organizing

strategy and how training and organizing affect one another and the larger organization of which they are parts.

One of the arguments that has been advanced in this study is that organizing without training inhibits the development of critically conscious grassroots leaders. The findings from this study, however, also reveal the consequences of providing training that is divorced from organizing.

The Parent Leadership Project is an example of a training intervention without an organizing component. As outlined in Chapter VI, the PLP accomplished two out of its three intended learning outcomes. As a result of the training, parents strengthened their ability to approach the issue of parent involvement from a strategic perspective. They also evidenced greater understanding of the group-centered approach to leadership and their own leadership strengths and challenges. The findings from the interviews with the parent leaders, combined with the researcher's impressions of the conditions in the schools before and after the training, suggest, however, that the parent leaders did not become more effective "...as change agents capable of going 'beyond the bake sale' to proactively impact on improving their schools" (PLP, 1992b, p.7).

This, in turn, suggests the limitation of a training intervention that has no follow-up or complimentary

organizing strategy. Training that is divorced from organizing may inhibit the leaders' capacity to produce meaningful institutional change. Grassroots leaders may need the ongoing support and assistance of a staffed community organization in order to have a meaningful impact on an unresponsive institution. Certainly, this issue demands further investigation.

Recommendation #2: To conduct research that will explore how grassroots leadership training programs can provide participants with meaningful leadership roles within the training workshops as a means of further developing their leadership capacity.

Only in its final years did the PLP begin to experiment with providing leadership roles for the participants in the workshops. This is an area that can be a rich source of learning for grassroots leaders and deserves greater investigation.

Recommendation #3: To conduct an experimental study that includes a control group of leaders who do not participate in the training to be able to more precisely assess the impact of the intervention.

As pointed out in Chapter IV, the pre/post-test design that was used in the PLP does not allow a causal connection to be drawn between the intervention and the findings. An experimental study in which similar groups of leaders -- one

of which participates in the training program and one of which does not -- are surveyed before and after the intervention would reveal with greater certainty and precision the impact of the training. This type of study might also convince those who are skeptical about the value of leadership training.

Recommendation #4: To conduct research of leaders in "action" to develop a clearer and richer understanding of the impact of the training on their leadership activity and style.

The data that was analyzed in this study was collected from self-administered questionnaires and from interviews with the parent leaders. Because it was all self-reported, it measured the participants' perceptions and memories about themselves, and not their actual behavior. How can parents' assertion that they attend school district meetings more often or that they listen more effectively to other parents be independently confirmed? A combination of analysis of attendance data and observation of leaders in "action" can shed additional light on the impact of the training. Of particular interest is the degree to which the training affects the participants' style or approach to leadership. To what degree and in what ways are they exhibiting more of a group-centered leadership approach when they are observed in interaction with other residents?

Recommendation #5: To conduct research on variable elements of the training, including the length of individual sessions and the length of the training as a whole. For instance, is there a differential impact when the training consists of 10 sessions or 20 sessions? This would allow the specific elements of the training to be designed to have the greatest impact.

Recommendation #6: To conduct further research on the findings from this exploratory study.

The findings from this study are tentative and not meant to be generalizable. How useful and on-target are they? Do they "fit" the realities of grassroots training? Clearly, the findings require further field-testing to determine their utility and meaning.

There is no simple formula for the development of grassroots leaders who can, in the midst of struggling to defend and develop their communities, also create new models of community life. Central to the effort, though, is the integration of practice and theory, action and reflection, organizing and training. The development of critically conscious group-centered leaders demands no less.

APPENDIX

The City University of New York
Parent Leadership Project

Parent Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is for us to learn more about your ideas concerning parent leadership. We are not asking your name. The information you provide will remain confidential. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in what you think. If you have any questions, please speak to the trainer. Your responses will help us evaluate the project and plan changes that will benefit future parent leaders.

Background

1. Are you: (Please check one) 1_____Male 2_____Female

2. What is your age? (Please check one)

   1._____25 years or younger
   2._____26-45 years
   3._____46-55 years
   4._____56 or older

3. Do you have children in: (Please check all that apply)

   1. Preschool (or younger)_____
   2. Grades K-5_____
   3. Grades 6-8_____
   4. Grades 9-12_____
   5. Other_____

4. What is the primary language spoken in your home?

   1._____English 2._____Spanish 3._____Other (specify)_____

5. How much education have you completed?

   1._____Grades 1-8
   2._____High School
   3._____Some College
   4._____College Graduate

6. What is your ethnicity?

   1._____Black/African-American
   2._____Latino
   3._____White (non-Hispanic)
   4._____Asian American
   5._____Other-specify

7. In what parent leadership training group are you participating?

Child's School_____ District _____

Trainer _____

8. How long have you participated in the Parent Leadership Project? (Please check the one that applies)

1. _____ your first year in the Parent Leadership Project

2. _____ your second year in the Parent Leadership Project

3. _____ your third year in the Parent Leadership Project

4. _____ your fourth year in the Parent Leadership Project

5. _____ your fifth year in the Parent Leadership Project

9. Are you a member of the Executive Board of your Parent Association?

_____ Yes _____ No

If you checked "Yes", what is your position? _____

Attitudes and Beliefs

Please answer the following questions by circling the answer that best reflects your feelings.

10. How confident are you in speaking at a school meeting?

1	2	3
not very confident	somewhat confident	very confident

11. How interested are you working with other parents or school staff to address problems in the school?

1	2	3
not very interested	somewhat interested	very interested

12. How confident are you in taking on a leadership role in an activity or project to improve the school?

1	2	3
not very confident	somewhat confident	very confident

13. How confident are you in running a meeting?

1	2	3
not very confident	somewhat confident	very confident

14. How confident are you when meeting with a teacher?

1	2	3
not very confident	somewhat confident	very confident

15. How confident are you when meeting with the principal?

1	2	3
not very confident	somewhat confident	very confident

16. How confident are you in advocating on behalf of your child?

1	2	3
not very confident	somewhat confident	very confident

17. How strongly do you believe that other parents can be recruited to attend parent association meetings and work on important school issues?

1	2	3
don't believe	somewhat believe	strongly believe

18. How likely are you to remain a part of a group, as opposed to dropping-out, when faced with conflict between members?

1	2	3
not very likely	somewhat likely	very likely

19. How likely are you to listen to and think about the ideas of other group members?

1	2	3
not very likely	somewhat likely	very likely

20. How effective are you in persuading others to your point of view?

1	2	3
not very effective	somewhat effective	very effective

21. How likely is it that your contributions will make a difference in the school?

1	2	3
not very likely	somewhat likely	very likely

Activities

Please answer the following questions by circling the answer that best reflects how often you participate in the following activities.

22. How often do you attend parent association meetings?

1	2	3
not very often	often	very often

23. How often do you attend school board and other district meetings?

1	2	3
not very often	often	very often

24. How often do you speak at school meetings?

1	2	3
not very often	often	very often

25. How often do you work with other parents, teachers and the principal on activities to improve the school?

1	2	3
not very often	often	very often

26. How often do you reach out to other programs or resources that help parents?

1	2	3
not very often	often	very often

27. How often do you reach out to friends and neighbors to try to get them to participate in parent association meetings and activities?

1	2	3
not very often	often	very often

28. How often do you discuss issues of concern with the principal?

1	2	3
not very often	often	very often

29. How often do you discuss issues of concern with the superintendent or other district staff?

1	2	3
not very often	often	very often

30. How active are you in the following areas? (For each category, circle the answer that applies)

1=not very active 2=somewhat active 3=very active
4=does not apply to me

A.	Parent Association Executive Board	1	2	3	4
B.	School Based Management Team	1	2	3	4
C.	Serving on principal selection team (C-30)	1	2	3	4
D.	Volunteering in the classroom(s) of my local school(s)	1	2	3	4
E.	Community Group(s)	1	2	3	4

The City University of New York
Parent Leadership Project

Program Rating Form

1. Overall, the Parent Leadership Project has been (circle one):

1	2	3	4	5
poor	below average	average	good	excellent

2. In general, how much have you learned that will help you as a parent leader? (circle one)

1	2	3	4	5
almost nothing	a little bit	an average amount	a lot	a great amount

3. How much have you learned in each of the areas listed below? Please rate them (1=a little; 2=learned some; 3=a good deal). You may add other subjects that are not listed.

_____to conduct a meeting

_____to involve other parents

_____to plan a project

_____to do outreach and recruitment

_____to be part of a team

_____to build my child's self-esteem

_____to work cooperatively with teachers and administrators

_____to identify community resources to help parents

_____public speaking

_____to organize a group

_____to delegate work

_____to work with a committee

_____to communicate with my child

_____strategies to improve the school

_____

_____

4. Using the scale below, please rate the trainer's:

1	2	3	4	5
very poor	poor	average	good	excellent

Knowledge.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5

Clarity of
presentation.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5

Allows for discussion.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5

Preparation.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5

Allows for input
into the program.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5

Overall style.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5

5. Please describe two new behaviors that are a result of your participation in the Parent Leadership Project (things you are doing or would do differently as a parent leader).

_____

_____

_____

6. Please describe the <u>one</u> thing that you found least helpful about the Parent Leadership Project.

_____

_____

_____

7. What suggestions do you have for improving the Project?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

JOHN JAY COLLEGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The City University of New York
899 Tenth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10019
(212) 237-8000

August, 1994

Dear Parent Leader:

It is now a year or two since you participated in the Parent Leadership Project. I am writing to ask you to fill out the enclosed form about your experiences since then. This will help us to evaluate and improve the Project for the future. Filling it out should take you about 10-20 minutes.

As you know, the goal of the Parent Leadership Project is to help parents, like yourself, become more effectively involved as leaders in improving their children's schools. For the first time in the six years of the Parent Leadership Project, we are sending out a questionnaire to about 200 "graduates" to see how their work as parent leaders has been progressing since they were involved in the training.

This information will help us find out how well the Project has been meeting the needs of parents and plan ways to make it even better for the future. In the training, we spoke a good deal about helping new parent leaders. By completing this form, you will be helping other parent leaders who participate in the Parent Leadership Project in future years. For that reason, your honest response is very important.

I am sure that you have many things to do during the course of your day. I would greatly appreciate it, though, if you could please take the time to fill out this form. There is a stamped envelope with our address for your convenience. All responses will be confidential, we are not asking your name.

I will be happy to share with you what we find from this questionnaire. You can call me at (212) 237-8425 in October and I will send you the results.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me. I would greatly enjoy hearing from you.

I hope you are well.

Thanks for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Eric Zachary

Eric Zachary
Coordinator
CUNY Parent Leadership Project

The City University of New York Parent Leadership Project

FOLLOW-UP PARENT SURVEY FORM

This survey asks you questions about your experiences since you participated in the Parent Leadership Project. We are not asking your name. Please answer honestly. There are no right or wrong answers. Your responses will help us evaluate the Project and plan changes that will benefit all future parent leaders who participate.

Background

Please put a check next to the appropriate answer.

1. Are you: _____Male _____Female

2. How much education have you completed?

   a.___Grades 1-8
   b.___Grades 9-12
   c.___Some College
   d.___College Graduate

3. What is your ethnicity?

   a.___Black/African American
   b.___Latino
   c.___White (non-Hispanic)
   d.___Asian American
   e.___Other-specify

4. In which parent leadership training did you participate?

   District _____ Trainer_____

5. For how many years did you participate in the Project?

   _____ 1 _____ 2 _____3 _____4

6. When did you last participate in the Project?

   ____still participating ____last year _____two years ago

Activities

Please complete the following statements by circling the answer that best reflects how often you do the following things since the training.

7. Since the training, I speak at school meetings

1	2	3	4	5
much less often	less often	the same	more often	much more often

8. Since the training, I speak at district meetings

1	2	3	4	5
much less often	less often	the same	more often	much more often

9. Since the training, I reach out to other parents to become involved in the school and parent association

1	2	3	4	5
much less often	less often	the same	more often	much more often

10. Since the training, I discuss issues of concern with the principal

1	2	3	4	5
much less often	less often	the same	more often	much more often

11. Since the training, I discuss issues of concern with the superintendent or other district personnel

1	2	3	4	5
much less often	less often	the same	more often	much more often

12. Since the training, when faced with conflict between group members, I remain part of the group

1	2	3	4	5
much less often	less often	the same	more often	much more often

13. Since the training, I think about the effect of my words on other group members before I speak

1	2	3	4	5
much less often	less often	the same	more often	much more often

14. Since the training, I listen and think about the ideas of other group members before I respond to them

1	2	3	4	5
much less often	less often	the same	more often	much more often

15. Since the training, I encourage the group to engage in a planning process before taking action

1	2	3	4	5
much less often	less often	the same	more often	much more often

16. Since the training, I welcome new parents to the group

1	2	3	4	5
much less often	less often	the same	more often	much more often

17. Since the training, I work to develop new parent leaders

1	2	3	4	5
much less often	less often	the same	more often	much more often

18. Since the training, to what extent has your level of activity in the following areas changed? (Circle your answer for each area).

1 = much less active 2 = less active
3 = the same 4 = more active 5 = much more active

A.	Volunteer in the school	1	2	3	4	5
B.	School-Based Management	1	2	3	4	5
C.	Parent Association Executive Board	1	2	3	4	5
D.	District-Wide Activity/Committee	1	2	3	4	5
E.	Community Group	1	2	3	4	5

19. Since the training, how has your effectiveness in the following areas changed? (Circle your answer for each area).

1=much less effective 2=less effective
3=the same 4=more effective
5=much more effective

communication with my child(ren)	1	2	3	4	5
recruiting other parents	1	2	3	4	5
running a meeting	1	2	3	4	5
public speaking	1	2	3	4	5
planning a project	1	2	3	4	5
being a part of a team	1	2	3	4	5
using community resources	1	2	3	4	5
delegating work	1	2	3	4	5

20. Have you gotten a job since you participated in the Parent Leadership Project?

___Yes ___No

If "No," skip to questions #22.

21. If you checked "yes," did the training help you get the job? Please explain briefly.

_____

_____

_____

22. Have you gone back to school since you participated in the Parent Leadership Project?

___Yes ___No

If you checked "No" skip to #24.

23. If you checked "Yes" did the training help you return to school? Please explain briefly.

_____

_____

_____

Program Evaluation

We are interested in your opinions about the Parent Leadership Project. Please answer each of the following questions.

24. Overall, how would you rate the Parent Leadership Project in helping you to become a more effective parent leader?

1	2	3	4	5
poor	average	good	very good	excellent

25. Looking back, in what ways did the Project most help you in strengthening your leadership skills?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

26. Looking back, what was it about the organization of the workshops that was most helpful to you? (i.e., exercises, etc.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

27. Looking back, what about the training was least helpful to you?

28. What suggestions do you have for improving the Parent Leadership Project?

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction: "Thank you for coming down to the school this morning. I know that this is a particularly busy time of year for you and other parent leaders. I am a doctoral student in social welfare at the Hunter College School of Social Work and I am studying leadership training programs for grassroots leaders. I'm conducting this interview to learn more about how you view your experience in the Parent Leadership Project. I hope to better understand what you've experienced so that I can learn more about leadership training and also make the Project even better. I want to know what worked for you. But I also really want to know what you think could be improved, should have been done differently or was missing. Please share with me the good stuff but also what could be better. Everything you say today will be totally confidential. I will be taking notes so that I don't forget what you say. Do you have any questions? Okay, let's get started."

1. What were your expectations of the PLP? What did you hope to get out of it?

    a. Why did you "join"?
    b. What information were you hoping to get?
    c. What area(s) of leadership did you want to explore?
    d. How did you want to get more involved in the school? district? community?
    e. How did you feel about meeting other parents who were dealing with the same issues?

2. What was your experience like in the PLP?

    a. How would you describe it? (Interviewer can offer possible adjectives, based on the response, including "exciting", "fun", "boring", "long", etc.).
    b. What was your commitment like during the program? Can you remember any moments when you weren't sure

you wanted to continue?

3. How has the PLP affected you?

   a. How has the PLP experienced affected your activity in the school?
   b. How has the PLP experience affected your activity in the district?
   c. How has the PLP experience affected your activity in the community?
   d. How has the PLP affected your personal life?
   e. How has the PLP experience affected **how** you act/behave as a leader? (if needed, the interviewer can offer specific skill areas for the parent to consider).
   f. How do you **feel** (differently) as a leader? How has your confidence been affected? sense of your own competence?
   g. Looking back, are you doing things that you could not have imagined before PLP?

4. How would you describe the PLP's approach to leadership?

   a. Was it different than what you were used to?
   b. What topics/skills stand out the most for you?
   c. Has your approach to leadership changed as a result of your participation in the PLP?

5. What was it about the PLP that contributed to the changes that you just described?

   a. What stands out most for you about the PLP?
   b. What do you remember most about the workshops?
   c. What was it about the training that you liked the most?
   d. What kept you going (for about 20 weeks)?
   e. What affected you the most?
   f. What worked for you?
   g. How does PLP compare with any other training experiences you've had?
   h. How would you describe the role of the trainer? Was it important in how the PLP affected you? How?
   i. How would you describe the role of the other parents (the "group")? Was it important in how the PLP affected you? How?

6. What do you think about the following characteristics of the PLP? How important were they to your involvement? (This question may not have to be separate from #5. If #5 does not generate enough of the specific program elements, this question may need to be asked. This is the improvisational "jazz musician" element of the interview process).

a. Needs assessment in the first session?
b. Ground rules?
c. Learning Agreement?
d. Icebreaker starting every session?
e. Objective and agenda for every workshop?
f. Room set up in a circle?
g. Interactive exercises?
h. Action project?
i. Handouts?
j. Number of workshops?

7. How well did the PLP meet your expectations? (refer back to question #1).

a. How did it help you in the ways that you hoped?
b. How did it not meet your expectations?
c. Did it help you in ways that you didn't expect? If so, how?
d. How well did it help you for your particular school?
e. How could it have better met your needs?
f. What is still hard for you as a leader? How could the PLP have helped you with that?

8. Do you have any other suggestions for the PLP?
   a. Was there enough flexibility in terms of meeting the parents' needs? Please explain.
   b. Should the PLP:
      * organize trips to visit other schools?
      * organize social activities outside of workshops?
      * provide parent leaders with a greater leadership role in the sessions?, i.e. do icebreaker
      * lecture more?
      * invite guest speakers more to the workshops?
   c. Do you want to stay involved in PLP? If so, how?

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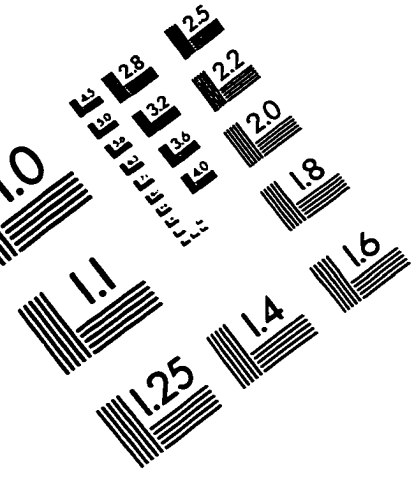
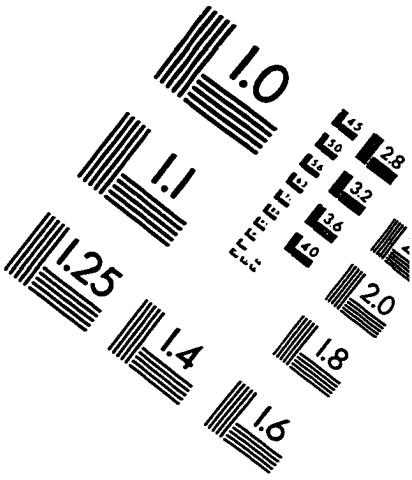
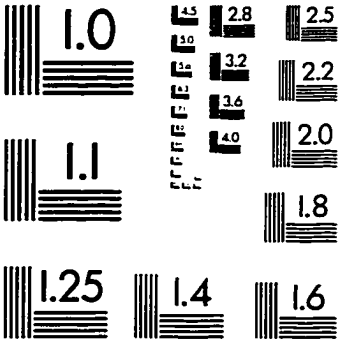
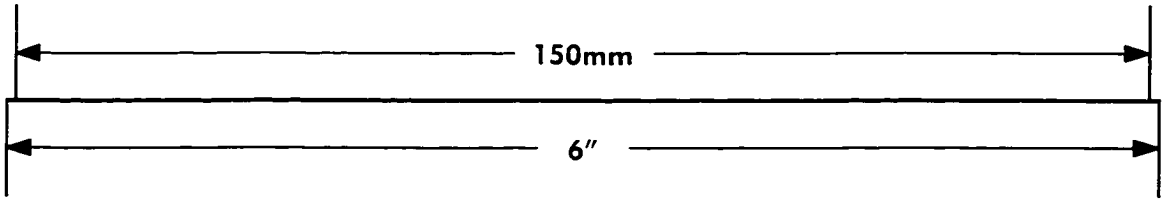
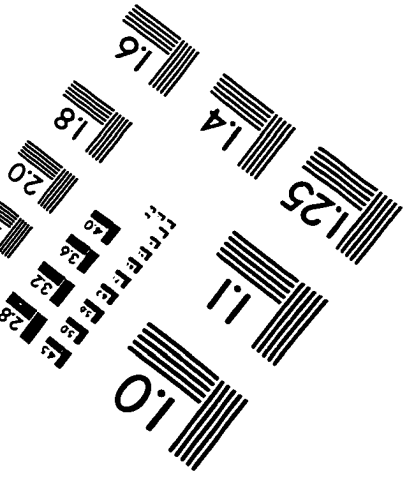
IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)











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