EXPLORING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Psychology.

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DEDICATION

To my husband and my children who have shown me that I am capable of far more than I realize
Men and women of a stature equal to the greatest of the past are with us now addressing the problems of the day and pointing to a better way and to a personeity better able to live fully and serenely in these times.

-Robert K. Greenleaf
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I am so incredibly thankful for my family. My husband and my children have been as understanding as they can be during this process. My mom and dad have been supportive of every educational endeavor I have ever taken interest in, and my dad has always encouraged me to never stop asking questions. Since research is mostly about asking and attempting to answer questions, I doubt that I will ever stop!

I would also like to thank my second “family” – my colleagues at the Center for Community Support and Research. My work at CCSR and various conversations with staff members over the years are what convinced me to pursue a graduate degree. An extra special thank you to my friends, Dr. Tara Gregory and Dr. Carissa Coleman, who conducted the data
audit to help confirm the findings presented here and who provided words of wisdom and encouragement along the way.

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ABSTRACT

While leadership development programs have a variety of intended outcomes, personal transformation is a common outcome across most of these programs. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the process of transformation through a leadership development experience and describe what transformation looks like for individuals who experience it and identify what elements of the leadership development experience contribute to that transformation. In-depth interviews with ten individuals revealed nine key themes in the transformation process: multiple experiences, quality of the experience, influence of curriculum and methodology, application of learning, experience of emotion, challenge and support from others, communication with others, recognition of self and others, and transformation of self and purpose.

This qualitative study also sought to examine how a leadership development experience can contribute to an individual’s motivation and ability to exercise leadership that is transformational and for the common good. These findings suggest that for a leadership development experience to do that, the experience should focus on: purpose – leadership for a purpose that is bigger than any individual’s or group’s self-interest; progress – making progress on issues as opposed to “solving” or “fixing” them, which may be nearly impossible for some intractable community issues; people – individuals need others to provide sufficient challenge and adequate support both during and following their leadership development experience if transformation is to occur; and practice – individuals need opportunities to practice applying what they learn in a safe environment, and the leadership development classroom can serve as an appropriate environment in which that practice can take place.
My original plan for my dissertation research was an extension of my second year research project exploring the organizational capacity building needs of faith-based and community organizations. Then three things happened in a short period of time that changed my plan: I participated in a Kansas Leadership Center program, I listened to David Chrislip give a presentation on Leadership as a Field of Knowledge, and I took a qualitative research methods course from Dr. Michael Birzer. I had been involved with evaluation work for the Kansas Leadership Center since its inception, but participating in a program allowed me to witness and experience firsthand the leadership curriculum as an active participant in the classroom. About a month before my participation in the program, I attended a meeting at the Kansas Leadership Center where David Chrislip gave a presentation on Leadership as a Field Knowledge. I found his talk so interesting that I asked him for his notes and references so I could read and learn more about the topic. These two events happened during the same semester I was taking Dr. Birzer’s Seminar in Qualitative Research. Dr. Birzer’s class made me realize what I had been missing in my research experience. Qualitative research methods fit well with my desire to have a deep understanding of something and also fit well with my preference for detailed and descriptive writing. I immediately recognized the value and applicability of qualitative research methods and could not wait to gain more experience with using these methods. This dissertation came about as the result of those three events colliding for me over the course of one semester, and I am excited to have this as the end product.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is a crisis of leadership in America. Issues like healthcare, public safety, and education are so politically polarizing that paralysis has resulted, making significant change or progress on so many issues practically impossible. The myriad problems facing communities are complex and cannot be solved by the relatively small number of people in formal positions of authority. Leadership is a process, not a position (Evans, 2012). As Chrislip and O’Malley (2013) point out, “leadership is often viewed as an individualistic endeavor designed to further one’s own desires about what should be done to address concerns affecting us all” when perhaps a more relevant and effective view would be to “reframe it as sharing responsibility for acting together in pursuit of the common good” (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013, p. 159). Communities need more people involved in and taking responsibility for affecting change on the issues they care deeply about; we need more people exercising transformational leadership for the greater good (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013).

Consistent with the values of community psychology, transformational leadership calls individuals to a higher level of morality and social justice (Burns, 1978). Evans’ (2012) recent article in the Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice outlines five assumptions for a model of community leadership. He argues that community leadership is ultimately about social change and is guided by the principles of critical consciousness, empowerment, and collective action as well as the values of social justice, social inclusion, social self-determination, and social solidarity (Evans, 2012). Upon examining these assumptions, the word “community” could be replaced with the word “transformational” and still hold true.
Critical consciousness involves an awareness of and consideration for the context in which leadership is taking place. There is recognition of the social and political forces at play in the situation and surrounding the issue (Evans, 2012). This level of consciousness allows one to see that what is required to exercise leadership in one context or situation may be different than what is required to exercise leadership in another. An awareness of context also involves understanding group dynamics and identifying the various factions related to the issue in order to find common interests, speak to competing values, and acknowledge what each faction stands to gain or lose, with a goal of involving and working across as many factions as possible.

More often than not, the solutions to a community’s problems are found inside the community rather than outside. Indeed, the ability to lead is present in nearly every individual in every community (Astin & Astin, 2000). Individuals may lack the confidence or motivation to exercise leadership, but the ability to do so is present nonetheless. Rather than needing an outside expert with technical knowledge, what is needed is for those from the community to mobilize collective action around an issue, to help empower the community to solve its own problems. These people become the “agitators and instigators of change” in their communities, challenging the status quo and creating change where change may have previously seemed impossible (Evans, 2012, p. 3). These people are exercising transformational leadership; they are willing to “exercise a moral imagination and moral courage on behalf of the common good” (Parks, 2005, p.2).

Empowering a community to take collective action on an issue involves articulating a shared vision for the future, identifying the gap between the way things are and the way things should be (Evans, 2012). Inspiring collective action requires an understanding of one’s strengths and weaknesses, both individually and collectively, and then a conscious choice to build on one’s
strengths, even while working outside one’s comfort zone. Using a strengths-based or asset-based approach is common in community psychology.

Much like community psychology is about “giving psychology away”, transformational leadership is about “giving leadership away”. Leadership isn’t only for the elite or those in positions of authority; leadership is for anyone who cares enough about an issue to do something about it. Those who are exercising transformational leadership care more about creating change than taking credit and care more about making progress than gaining power. The more people who can be involved and included in helping to create social change the better. With a transformational leadership approach, bringing about social change and social justice becomes the responsibility of the many rather than the few.

If technical knowledge and expertise are not enough to bring about transformational change, how do we move people to take action on issues that are polarizing and paralyzing? If “human capability [is] the critical variable in the new century” (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p. 11), how can this capability be fostered and grown in individuals rather than waiting for individuals with capability to emerge? How can people be motivated to overcome their personal resistance to change to then tackle the larger system’s resistance to change? How can individuals be transformed who will then transform their communities, and how will these individuals behave differently?

While leadership programs have a variety of intended outcomes, personal transformation is undoubtedly a common outcome across most of these programs (Reinelt, Foster, & Sullivan, 2002). What is it about a given program that results in personal transformation? What program elements contribute to individual transformational change? Phenomenological research methods are particularly well-suited to explore the critical “what” of the leadership development
experience (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). Information from this in-depth phenomenological study will have important implications for the leadership development community as it becomes more interested in individual leadership transformation and moves toward a definition of leadership that goes beyond management and positional authority to community leadership for a common purpose and for the common good. Using a phenomenological approach, qualitative interviews will be conducted to explore the following research questions:

- What does transformation look like for these individuals? What changes occurred as a result of their leadership development experience?
- What are the elements of the leadership development experience that contributed to transformation in these individuals?
- How can a leadership development experience contribute to an individual’s motivation and ability to exercise leadership that is transformational and for the common good?

**History of Leadership**

**Trait-based theory and situationalist theory.**

One of the oldest, if not the first, theory of leadership is what has come to be known as the “great man” theory or heroic model of leadership. Put forth by Thomas Carlyle in his 1841 book *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic History*, this trait-based theory suggests that certain individuals – certain men specifically – possess the necessary qualities for effective leadership. This theory was consistent with the idea that history largely consists of stories about the impact of great men on society (Borgatta, Bales, & Couch, 1954; Heifetz, 1994). Prior to World War II, this was the predominant leadership theory, and this theory still remains popular in some leadership circles. The term “great man” was used intentionally, as women were believed to be lacking the qualities needed to be effective leaders (Heifetz, 1994).
More than a century after Carlyle’s book, Borgatta, Bales, and Couch (1954) tested a number of hypotheses relevant to the great man theory of leadership. They found that in order for a man to be “great” he must possess the qualities of task ability (of which IQ was a component), individual assertiveness, and social acceptability. These qualities enable the man to meet the demands of his role as the leader while also meeting the needs of his followers. They also found these qualities to be stable over time, suggesting that great men tend to remain great or “once a great man, always a great man.”

In addition, Borgatta, Bales, and Couch (1954) found group performance, as measured by group productivity/task accomplishment and group member satisfaction, to be largely related to the presence of a “great man”, resulting in the conclusion that “great men tend to make ‘great groups’” (p. 759). Coupled with the finding regarding the stability of “greatness” over time, identifying the “great man” in a given group or context should improve the performance of the group and benefit the group as a whole.

Following the great man theory emerged the situationalist perspective, arguing that, rather than great men, it was great situations that produced great leadership. Rather than the presence of certain traits, the demand of certain times resulted in the emergence of various leaders. Though they argue for different catalysts, the trait-based and situationalist theories both point to the same great leaders in history to make their case (Heifetz, 1994). For example, a trait theorist may point to the American founders/forefathers – George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson – and suggest they must share some set of common characteristics. A situational theorist, on the other hand, would point to those same men and argue that the creation of a new nation required that leadership to emerge; the times called for leadership, and these men provided it (Heifetz, 1994).
The great man theory and other trait-based leadership theories focus on qualities an individual either possesses or does not possess, and these qualities are largely those that are not easily changed or developed over time, such as IQ or personality traits. These trait-based theories would suggest that leaders are predominantly born, not made. The situationalist perspective relies on the characteristics of particular situations to mold and shape leaders into existence. Given the focus on qualities or characteristics specific to individuals and/or situations, neither of these theories readily lends itself to application in leadership development experiences.

**Contingency theory.**

Contingency theory resulted as a synthesis of the great man theory/trait theory and the situationalist perspective. Proponents of this theory argue that rather than the characteristics of great men or the characteristics of great situations, it is the interaction of two that produces great leaders. As the name of the theory suggests, the characteristics of a situation dictate what style of leadership is needed; in essence, the leadership is contingent upon the situation (Heifetz, 1994). The personality or traits of the leader are less important than having the appropriate leadership style or behavior for a given situation (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

Fred E. Fiedler is the founder of the Contingency Model of leadership effectiveness, and he examined and conducted a number of experimental studies that explored this model in detail. The Contingency Model of leadership effectiveness suggests that the “effectiveness of interacting groups or organizations depends, or is contingent, upon the appropriate match between leader personality attributes, reflecting his or her motivational structure, and the degree to which the leader has situational control and influence” (Fiedler, 1978, p. 60). In other words, a leader’s effectiveness (as determined by the performance of his/her group on a specific task) is determined by the interaction between his/her motivational structure (which is considered a
personality attribute that is stable over time) and his/her situational control and influence (which varies from situation to situation based on the group and the task).

An important distinction Fiedler makes is between interacting groups and co-acting groups. In interacting groups, the group members are interdependent in accomplishing their task or goal. In co-acting groups, the performance of the group may be determined by an overall group score or by a compilation of what individual group members have done, but the group members independently work on their part of the overall task or goal. Fiedler (1964) provides a sports analogy to help explain the distinction – a basketball team is an example of an interacting group while a track team is an example of a co-acting group.

The leader’s motivational structure is either predominantly task-motivated or predominantly relationship-motivated and can be determined by his/her least preferred coworker (LPC) score. The LPC score can be viewed as personality attribute which remains relatively stable over time. Fiedler (1964) hypothesized that the leader’s perceptions of his/her co-workers/group members would influence group interaction and group performance. As part of a personality measure, individuals are asked to think of all of the people with whom they have ever worked and then rate their most preferred coworker (MPC) and their least preferred coworker (LPC) on a number of personality attributes. An individual who provides similar ratings for his most preferred and least preferred coworkers is said to have a high LPC score (i.e., views the MPC and the LPC in a largely positive/favorable way). An individual who provides very different ratings for his most and least preferred coworkers is said to have a low LPC score (i.e., views the MPC in a largely positive/favorable way and the LPC in a largely negative/unfavorable way).
Individuals with a low LPC score have a negative view of their least preferred coworker and are therefore considered to be predominantly task-motivated, that is they are typically more concerned with the task of the group than the interpersonal relations of the group members. Individuals with a high LPC score have a more positive view of their least preferred coworker and are therefore considered to be predominantly relationship-motivated; they are typically more concerned with the interpersonal relations of the group members than they are with the task of the group. The LPC score alone does not predict leader behavior, rather leader behavior is the result of the interaction between the LPC score (i.e., the motivational structure) and the amount of control and influence the leader has in the situation (i.e., situational control and influence) (Fiedler, 1978).

Fiedler (1978) has found situational control and influence to be “the key to the development of a dynamic theory of leadership” (p. 62). Situational control and influence is measured by using three subscales – leader-member relations, task structure, and position power. The most important of the three subscales is leader-member relations, which measures the support and loyalty of group members to the leader. The second most important subscale is task structure, which looks at the task of the group in terms of clarity versus ambiguity. The clearer the task, the easier it should be for the leader to organize the group around that task, leading to increased group performance. Finally, position power refers to the ability of the leader to enforce the compliance of group members through reward, punishment, and/or sanctions. Position power is much the same as formal authority. Though these three subscales are the ones used to determine leader situational control, Fiedler (1978) recognizes that other factors may also have an impact on leader situational control and influence (e.g., situational stress, leader experience and training).
Task-motivated leaders (i.e., those with a low LPC score) perform best when situational control is relatively high or relatively low whereas relationship-motivated leaders (i.e., those with a high LPC score) perform best with a moderate level of situational control. Recognizing this, Fiedler says, “It is not appropriate to speak of a “good leader” or a “poor leader.” Rather, a leader may perform well in one situation and not another, depending on the proper match between leader motivational structure and situational control.” Rather than trying to change the individual/leader to improve leadership performance, we should seek to change the leader’s situational control and influence, thus creating a better match or fit between the individual and the situation. Fiedler (1978) developed a program called Leader Match that taught program participants how to change their situational control to create a better fit between their personality and the situation. This thinking is consistent with Lewin’s Equation of $B=f(P,E)$, suggesting that behavior is a function of the person and his/her environment.

Lewin, Lippit, and White (1939) conducted a number of studies exploring the effects of different leadership styles on behavior in groups of 10-year-old boys. The three leadership styles included in the studies were authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire. In the authoritarian group, all work and activities were directed by the adult leader. In the democratic group, work and activities were decided based on group discussion and decision making, which was encouraged and facilitated by the adult leader. The laissez-faire group had complete freedom to determine their work and activities in whatever manner they chose; the adult leader was essentially non-participative in the group.

Of particular interest in this series of studies were the patterns of aggression that emerged within the different groups. The highest levels of aggression were found in the laissez-faire groups. Interestingly, the authoritarian groups developed one of two distinct patterns: one of
aggression or one of apathy. The levels of aggression in the democratic groups were lower than those in the aggressive authoritarian groups but higher than those in the apathetic authoritarian groups (Lewin, Lippit, & White, 1939).

In two of the aggressive authoritarian groups, what began as mutual aggression between/among all members of the group turned into focused aggression on one member – the scapegoat – by all of the other members. In both cases, the child who was isolated as the scapegoat was also identified by his teacher as being the “leader” of the group. The creation of a scapegoat resulted in a temporary increase in friendly cooperative behavior among the remaining group members (Lewin, Lippit, & White, 1939).

They also looked at the behavior of the group in the absence of the adult leader, in part the way individuals exercise leadership (or fail to exercise leadership) in the absence of the designated leader or authority figure. The level of aggression remained the same (i.e., little change in behavior) in the laissez-faire, democratic, and aggressive authoritarian groups; however, the level of aggression rose in the apathetic authoritarian groups. In other words, the apathy of the group disappeared in the absence of their authoritarian leader (Lewin, Lippit, & White, 1939).

In one of the studies, the same adult leaders varied their leadership style with their groups (i.e., from authoritarian to democratic or vice versa). The ability of the adult leaders to successfully vary their leadership style was supported/verified by their scores on a number of quantitative measures (Lewin, Lippit, & White, 1939). Though not the goal of the study, this element of the study suggests that with an awareness of the typical behaviors or characteristics of a given leadership style, one can make a conscious choice to exercise leadership in a particular way.
**Servant leadership.**

In 1970, Robert Greenleaf introduced a new way of thinking about leadership in his essay, *The Servant as Leader*. Greenleaf suggested that great leaders were servants first, and that practicing servant leadership is what makes a leader great. Servant leaders have a “people first” mentality and are focused on being “people builders” as opposed to “people users.” And only by building people up can we build a better community and a better society (Greenleaf, 2002).

For the servant leader, meeting the needs of those being served is the highest priority. This is at the core of leadership for the common good. As a result of exercising servant leadership, others are able to grow as individuals. Others become stronger, healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous and more likely to exercise leadership themselves (Greenleaf, 2002). All leadership – leadership for the common good or leadership for one’s self interests – begins with the act of an individual (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013; Greenleaf, 2002). All of the “forces for good and evil in the world are propelled by the thoughts, attitudes, and actions of individual beings” (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 28). One person effectively exercising servant leadership will lead to other individuals effectively exercising servant leadership, resulting in more people exercising leadership for the common good.

Servant leaders see the gap between the way things are and the way things should be and are bothered by “the wide disparity between the quality of society they know is reasonable and possible with available resources, and, on the other hand, the actual performance of the whole range of institutions that exist to serve society” (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 23). The servant leader can identify and elevate this gap and then articulate the vision and the goal to create a shared purpose and a sense of certainty, even when facing uncertainty, conflict, and the unknown.
Rather than trying to reinvent the wheel, these servant leaders are constantly on the lookout for a better wheel, a wheel that will better fit and serve the needs and demands of the times at hand (Greenleaf, 2002). Greenleaf argues that the enemy of progress toward a better society is not evil people, stupid people, apathetic people or a broken system (these will all still be present in a better society) rather it is the failure of good and intelligent people to think clearly and to exercise leadership.

Kouzes and Posner (2002) echo some of the same ideas. They state that leadership is not about a position; leadership is not a place that one holds or a space to be occupied. Leadership is also “not at all about personality” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 13); leadership is about practice. Kouzes and Posner (2002) outline Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart.

Those exercising leadership set an example for others to follow; they model the way. They clarify their personal values and guiding principles and then behave in a manner that is consistent with those values and principles (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Actions aligned with beliefs earn respect, and one cannot exercise leadership effectively without first earning respect. When one’s actions are congruent with one’s personal values, others can then believe that one will behave in a manner consistent with whatever shared values are established.

In addition to shared values, those exercising leadership are also able to articulate and inspire a shared vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). As Greenleaf mentioned, leaders see the gap between what is and what could be; they notice that there is a disparity between what they see and what they know is possible. In order for others to support the vision, they must believe that vision has taken their needs and best interests into consideration. They can see themselves in the
vision; they can see how they fit and how life will be better for them. A shared vision creates a “shared sense of destiny” (p. 143), which will inspire motivation and commitment over time.

Those exercising leadership are willing to act experimentally and take risks that may help the group or the community make progress toward achieving their goal or their vision. They are willing to challenge the process or processes that are currently in place and work to find new ways for people to engage and make progress on the issues about which they care most deeply (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). They do not blindly accept and follow the status quo, but question it, looking for opportunities to change and improve. When one person acts experimentally with success, this inspires others to also step out of their comfort zone and act experimentally.

One cannot exercise leadership alone; one must engage others in order to make progress. One must enable others to act and to act together. Those exercising leadership are able to build trust among various groups that allows them to work collaboratively (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). By enabling others to act, making progress becomes less about who has power and more about who is willing to participate. People become empowered to act without feeling like they first need to ask for permission.

The journey to making a shared vision the new reality is long and will often involve various detours and pitfalls. Those exercising leadership must find way to encourage the hearts of those with whom they are working (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Find ways to celebrate “small wins” and recognize individuals’ efforts (Weick, 1984). This helps create a sense of community and reinforces the shared values and the shared vision, which in turn helps sustain ongoing efforts.

Leadership is more a dialogue than a monologue, and leadership is more about relationship than isolation (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Success in leadership requires us to work
together; no one can exercise leadership in isolation. Each of the practices mentioned above involves connection and interaction with others. In addition, “Leadership is an identifiable set of skills and practices that are available to all of us” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 20). As such, leadership is not just for the few, not just for the elite, not just for those who were born great or born into greatness. Leadership is there for nearly anyone who has a passion to make a difference, anyone who wants to see transformation happen.

**Transforming/Transformational leadership.**

James MacGregor Burns (1978) introduced a new theory of leadership called transformational leadership. Though Burns (1978) approached leadership from a political standpoint, his work represented a turning point for the field of leadership. At its core, transactional leadership is a quid pro quo, a social contract in which there is a mutually beneficial exchange between the leader and the followers. This type of leadership is based on reciprocity (Burns, 1978; Heifetz, 1994; Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004). Transactional leadership can also be looked at as a form of contingent reinforcement, where the reinforcing behavior of the leader is contingent upon the behavior of the follower (Bass, 1998). Those exercising transformational leadership are able to call forth others to exercise leadership and bring the group to a higher level of morality and concern for the common good. Transformational leadership motivates individuals to think beyond their own self-interests and results in groups achieving goals that would have not otherwise been possible (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

Kuhnert and Lewis (1987) distinguish between lower order and higher order transactional leadership. Lower order transactional leadership involves the exchange of resources that are concrete or tangible (e.g., money, jobs, votes). Higher order transactional leadership involves
the exchange of nonconcrete, “exchangeable” or modal values such as respect and trust (Burns, 1978; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). Transformational leadership involves end values such as justice, honor, and integrity (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

Bass and Avolio have further developed and researched the topic of transformational leadership, including the development of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), which is a 360 degree measurement of transformational leadership. They view transformational leadership as consisting of four components: idealized influence (or charismatic leadership), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1998; Bass, 1999). They argue that transformational leadership “adds to the effectiveness of transactional leadership” but does not serve as a substitute for transactional leadership; “the best leaders are both transformational and transactional” (Bass, 1999, p. 21).

While transformational leaders may at times use transactional leadership methods, these leaders “have the ability to understand the available leadership options and to act in the manner that is more appropriate to the situation” (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987, p. 653). Higher level thinking is needed in order to exercise leadership in the face of competing values (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). In addition, a certain amount of maturity and moral development is needed in order for one to exercise leadership that is transformational (Bass, 1998; Bass, 1999). Consider Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Transformational leadership helps move those involved toward and beyond self-actualization (Bass, 1998; Burns, 1978). Without the moral aspect to leadership, a leader can be pseudotransformational at best (Bass, 1998). Pseudotransformational leaders are able to inspire their followers; however, the ultimate concern of the pseudotransformational leader is power, authority, and self-aggrandizement as opposed to some “greater good” of the group.
Pseudotransformational leaders often make themselves the focus of the following and may use fear to keep the group aligned with their goals (Bass, 1998).

The research of Bass and Avolio suggests that it is possible to provide leadership development experiences (i.e., teaching/training) that results in the improvement of transformational leadership. The first step in these leadership development training experiences involves the “examination of the implicit theories of ideal leadership that trainees carry around in their heads” (Bass, 1999, p. 15). Most people’s thoughts of ideal leadership are those of transformational leadership, yet many do not behave in ways that are consistent with their notion of ideal leadership. Kuhnert and Lewis (1987) called for more research to “discover/decipher the variables that influence how [transformational] leadership emerges and how it is expressed” (p. 654). This dissertation will explore the role of leadership development programs in the emergence of transformational leadership.

**Defining Leadership**

Leadership is often confused with or misunderstood as being synonymous with power and authority (Astin & Astin, 2000; Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009). Burns (1978) devotes the first section of his book to the distinction between power and leadership. While all leaders hold power, not all of those who hold power are leaders. The key distinction between power and leadership is that of purpose and the degree to which intended effects are achieved.

Leadership is an activity and a process. Leadership is about action; “leadership that does not result in action…is like a work only half completed no matter how eloquent its ideas or passionate its followers” (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. 3). Leadership involves mobilizing and motivating people to do adaptive work, to meet the adaptive challenges in their organization or their community (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). While technical problems often have a “right”
answer and can be solved by finding an experienced expert, adaptive work challenges our existing values and beliefs; we must adapt our way of thinking in order for adaptive work to happen. Leadership is a process that results in people “working together collaboratively to accomplish great things” (Vroom & Jago, 2007, p. 18). Leadership allows a group of people to accomplish more together than any individual could accomplish on his or her own. For the purposes of this study, leadership will be defined as follows: an activity or process that involves mobilizing and motivating people to act together in pursuit of the common good (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013).

In addition to and consistent with the above definition of leadership, this research will also be rooted in the following assumptions about leadership. The first assumption is that leadership is ultimately about change – specifically social change – and therefore is more about action and process and outcome than about authority or position or power (Astin & Astin, 2000; Burns, 1978; Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013). Leadership is something one does as opposed to something one is or is not; leadership, in this case, is much more a verb than a noun (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009).

Out of the first assumption comes this second assumption: all people have the potential to exercise leadership at any time in any given situation. Indeed, leadership begins with the act of an individual (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013). As noted by Astin and Astin (2000), “the capacity to lead is rooted in virtually any individual and in every community” (p. v). Rather than being confined to a special few, leadership is more broadly distributed – most people will exercise leadership at different points throughout their lives, in various situations, in formal and informal roles, in positions with and without authority (McCaulsky, Van Velsor, & Ruderman, 2010). In keeping with this assumption, the use of the word “leader” will predominantly be avoided.
throughout this paper as the word is often associated with position or authority. In most cases, the phrase “those who exercise leadership” will be used in place of “leader”.

A third assumption is that leadership cannot be done in isolation; leadership is a group process involving relationships, interactions, and group dynamics (Astin & Astin, 2000). As a result of the group process, leadership is value-based/value-laden and context sensitive (Astin & Astin, 2000; Heifetz, 1994; McCauley, Van Velsor, & Ruderman, 2010). What it means for someone to exercise leadership in one situation may not be the same as what it means for someone to exercise leadership in a different situation.

A final, perhaps obvious, assumption is that leadership development can be done and is worth doing. Regardless of the extent to which leaders are “born or made” and regardless of the various leadership roles or positions one may have over the course of a lifetime, people have the ability to learn and grow as individuals, which can result in increasingly effective leadership behaviors (McCauley, Van Velsor, & Ruderman, 2010). As Parks (2005) suggests in the title of her book, “leadership can be taught”; not only can leadership be taught, leadership development experiences can result in personal transformation that impacts individual behavior and the exercise of leadership going forward.

**Personal Transformation**

**Creating personal transformation.**

Change is hard. Individual level personal change is difficult, and acting in a system to bring about change is even more difficult. An individual’s behavior, regardless of how ineffective or problematic it may seem at times, serves a purpose and a function for that individual. The old adage that “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks” suggests that as adults, we become so set in our ways that it is nearly impossible to change in any significant way; we
build up an immunity to change (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Immunity to change is a form of self-preservation. This immunity to change must be understood before it can be overcome. We must be able to step back and examine the lens through which we view the world rather than simply look through that lens, because as Covey (2004) suggests, sometimes “the way we see the problem is the problem” (p. 40).

There are a number of possible explanations for why change doesn’t happen – there isn’t a sense of urgency, there is uncertainty or a lack of understanding as to what needs to be done differently, or there isn’t enough of an incentive to change. A medical study found that when cardiologists tell their high risk patients that they will die if they do not make changes to their lifestyle, even with specific instructions regarding what changes need to be made (i.e., related to diet, exercise, smoking), only one in seven of those patients will be able to make the recommended changes (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Even when faced with a life or death situation where there is plenty of urgency and incentive, people struggle to change their behavior. If people struggle to change even when their lives depend on it, how can one expect to bring about individual change when the stakes aren’t nearly so high?

Creating change and personal transformation involves identifying and then closing the gap between what we want to do and what we are able to do (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). This will require moving our thinking from more technical to more adaptive, recognizing our default behaviors, understanding our part of “the mess” (i.e., what we are doing or not doing that contributes to the problem and prevents change from happening), and moving our exercise of leadership from more transactional to more transformational.

In order to change behavior, particularly our habits or default behaviors, there must also be a change in thinking, a change in mental complexity. Significant new learning cannot occur
within the current mindset; a new mindset must emerge (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). The way an individual interacts with and makes meaning of the world around him or her is greatly impacted by his or her level of mental complexity. Kegan and Lahey (2009) describe three levels or plateaus in adult mental complexity – the socialized mind, the self-authoring mind, and the self-transforming mind.

At the core of each of these ways of thinking is the subject-object relationship. The object refers to what is being looked at while the subject refers to what is being looked through (i.e., the lens or filter to which the object is subject). Increasing mental complexity allows one to look at what was previously only looked though – making the subject the object (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). For example, a young child riding in an airplane will look out the window and see the small houses and trees and believe that they actually are small. An older child will look out and see the small houses and trees and recognize that they only appear small; the older child will be aware that it is his or her perception (i.e., the view from the airplane) that results in the houses and trees looking small. The older child is able to step back and consider his or her perception, making the perception the object and experiencing perception in a broader way. To the younger child, his or her perception is the subject. Perceptions impact how we see, and how we see impacts how we behave (Covey, 2004). In order to change how we behave, we must change how we see.

Socialized mind.

An individual with a socialized mind is subject to the values, beliefs, and expectations of those around him or her – at home, at church, at work – and often has difficulty separating one’s own thoughts and opinions from those of others. A great source of anxiety for these individuals is not being aligned with and therefore being excluded by important others in their life (i.e.,
family members, their boss). They seek to maintain alignment with important others in their lives and tend to be loyal. Self-worth is largely determined by what others think; regard for self is based on the regard of others. This person is reliant on others or on the system at work around them. Individuals at this level of mental complexity take direction well and are good team players (Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

**Self-authoring mind.**

An individual with a self-authoring mind can distinguish one’s own thoughts and opinions from those of others. These individuals can take the values, beliefs, and expectations of others into consideration while forming values, beliefs, and expectations of their own. They filter information as they receive it and can screen or prioritize the information for what is most relevant to them. There is a sense of self-authority. A great source of anxiety for these individuals is not living up to the standards they set for themselves, not meeting the personal goals or the agenda that was set (Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

**Self-transforming mind.**

An individual with a self-transforming mind can hold multiple, sometimes even contradictory, interpretations of situations, recognizing that there are flaws or limits to any one way of thinking. Context becomes critical for understanding. These individuals have learned to become more comfortable with ambiguity and conflict. They filter information as they receive it, but are also able to step back and examine their filter (Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

**Sustaining personal transformation.**

Yet this process of growing or increasing mental complexity, moving from socialized to self-authoring to self-transforming, cannot be brought about by simply deciding to think differently; making an adaptive change requires both thinking *and* feeling differently. One must
feel the limits of his or her current thinking; the current way of thinking must prove ineffective in some important way. This type of change requires the presence of what Kegan and Lahey call “optimal conflict”. Kegan and Lahey (2009) define optimal conflict as: “The persistent experience of some frustration, dilemma, life puzzle, quandary, or personal problem that is perfectly designed to cause us to feel the limits of our current way of knowing in some sphere of our living that we care about, with sufficient supports so that we are neither overwhelmed by the conflict nor able to escape or diffuse it” (p. 54). Optimal conflict can then help individuals begin to move toward thinking differently, feeling differently, and ultimately acting differently.

Conditions that are necessary, but not sufficient, for personal transformation include: assessment, challenge, and support (McCauley, Van Velsor, & Ruderman, 2010). Assessment creates an awareness or a diagnosis of what needs to change (Bass, 1998). Assessment helps us see that a change needs to be made and identifies the gap between the way something is and the way we want it to be. Assessment also illuminates how we contribute to the gap, helping us intentionally think through what it is we do or don’t do (and why) that works against closing the gap. Challenge helps us understand the importance of closing the gap, why this change must be made. This forces us to see the consequences of maintaining the status quo. Support prevents us from being overwhelmed at the thought of addressing the challenge. Support helps us to take steps forward as opposed to becoming paralyzed by the daunting nature of the change. Support provides a source of accountability and encouragement as we work to close the gap.

An individual also has to want to change, not just feel like he or she ought to change or maybe should change. There must be a strong desire, commitment, and motivation to change. In order to be effective at creating personal change or transformation, a leadership development experience must help participants articulate what it is they want to change and then provide
assessment, challenge, and support such that the participant experiences optimal conflict (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). If what a participant identifies is not truly something that he or she cares about deeply and is highly motivated to change, then the likelihood that change or personal transformation will occur is greatly decreased.

Bass (1998) makes the following comment regarding the life histories of transformational leaders, “They did not play at being leaders; rather their leadership behavior was an integral part of their persona, based on long-term development rather than a quick dose of training” (Bass, 1998, p. 93). Exercising transformational leadership becomes a way of being. Transformational leadership can be taught; however, any training must go beyond skill training. The principles of transformational leadership must be internalized, which requires self-understanding and reflection as well as an awareness of and appreciation for the range of leadership behaviors (both transactional and transformational) available in any given situation (Bass, 1998).

Knowing what we do about creating and sustaining personal change, how can this information be applied to leadership development experiences? How do we create and then build upon learning experiences that spur individuals toward growth and personal transformation? Even more, how do we know what changes are taking place in individuals as a result of these experiences?

**History of Leadership Development and its Evaluation**

**W. K. Kellogg Foundation.**

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has been a long-time supporter of leadership development programs and their evaluation. Established in 1930, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s leadership development efforts are grounded in the overarching purpose of civic engagement. They believe that “people have the inherent capacity to solve their own problems and that social
transformation is within the reach of all communities” (wkkf.org). This is consistent with the definition and assumptions of leadership proposed above.

In 2000, the Kellogg Foundation funded a study that examined the application of transformative leadership in higher education and the role of higher education in developing and preparing individuals to exercise leadership in a “diverse and democratic society” (Astin & Astin, 2000). In 2002, they funded a scan of 55 leadership development programs to examine common individual, organizational, and community leadership outcomes. In 2005, they funded the development of the EvaluLEAD Guide to serve as a resource for those evaluating leadership development programs.

Reinelt, Foster, and Sullivan (2002) conducted the scan of those 55 leadership development programs to examine how these programs were evaluating their outcomes and impacts. In trying to capture individual leadership outcomes such as changes in values and beliefs and the “leadership paths” participants take following their program experience, they found that these types of “deeper changes” can best be captured through qualitative methods like interviewing, journaling/reflective writing, storytelling, or case studies. These methods allow for a better understanding of the transformation of the individual as well as a better understanding of the program itself. Transformative changes are best understood through careful examination of descriptions and reflections provided by the individuals who experienced those changes firsthand.

With funding and support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Grove, Kibel, and Haas (2007) developed the EvaluLEAD methodology as a guide for evaluating leadership development programs. In this methodology, they discuss three distinct types of change that leadership development programs attempt to create – episodic, developmental, and
transformative – and the three levels at which those changes can occur – individual, organizational, and societal/community. Episodic changes are similar to short-term outcomes and are those outcomes most closely/directly tied to the program experience. These changes can typically be seen during and/or immediately following the program experience. Episodic changes include changes in knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs. Developmental changes are similar to intermediate outcomes and are those that occur over time following a program experience. Developmental changes include sustained changes in behavior. Transformative changes impact an individual in such a way that “fundamental shifts in behavior or performance” occur as a result (Grove, Kibel, & Haas, 2007, p. 79). Individuals who experience transformative change are more likely to contribute to changes at the organizational and community levels. While transformative change may be the ultimate goal of many leadership development programs, these changes will not be evident in every program participant.

In addition to the types of change and the levels at which those changes can occur, Grove, Kibel, and Haas (2007) also discuss two primary forms of inquiry that can be used to evaluate and explore these changes: evidential inquiry and evocative inquiry. Evidential inquiry seeks to report the “hard evidence” and the facts of what is happening or has happened. Evocative inquiry seeks to convey the richness of what is happening or has happened. Evidential inquiry is largely deductive while evocative inquiry is largely inductive.

Center for Creative Leadership.

Consistent with the assumption that leadership is an activity and is ultimately about change, the goal of leadership development is more about moving individuals toward action as opposed to increasing knowledge (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004). McCauley, Van Velsor, and Ruderman (2010) of the Center for Creative Leadership argue that there are three critical
elements that comprise an effective leadership development experience: assessment, challenge, and support. These three elements provide both the motivation and the information needed to bring about learning, growth, and change.

Assessment allows participants to get an accurate understanding of “where they are now” as well as identify the gaps between their current state and their ideal state in terms of ability and performance. The assessment process will ideally serve as the source of motivation for the participant as he or she enters the leadership development experience. Three hundred sixty degree assessments are particularly valuable when integrated as a learning component of the program (Reinelt, Foster, & Sullivan, 2002). This type of assessment involves a self-assessment completed by the individual and also includes observer assessments, which are completed by others who are familiar with the individual and can provide an assessment of his or her typical behavior (e.g., people the individual knows from work, church, community activities, etc.). Input from others during the assessment process is not only valuable but necessary in order to create a full picture and understanding of an individual’s current state.

In addition to providing an assessment of the individual, an effective leadership development experience should also challenge the individual. The experience should move the individual outside his or her comfort zone and cause a sense of disequilibrium, as “comfort is the enemy of growth and continued effectiveness” (McCauley, Van Velsor, & Ruderman, 2010, p. 9). The primary sources of challenge are novelty, difficult goals, conflict, and dealing with adversity. Assessment paired with challenge creates the impetus for change.

To make the changes identified during the leadership development experience, an individual must have support, which can come from a variety of individuals, including friends and family, bosses and coworkers. Some leadership programs employ coaches or mentors to be
an additional challenge and support for participants. In addition to individuals, the organizational culture can serve as a source of support. An organizational culture that promotes continuous learning and staff development can help individuals feel safe enough to risk experimenting with behaving in a different way. Support systems provide encouragement, accountability, and the opportunity for continued learning and practicing new behaviors (McCauley, Van Velsor, & Ruderman, 2010). Support is key in maintaining the motivation to change.

**The Kansas Leadership Center.**

The Kansas Leadership Center was created with a $30 million investment from the Kansas Health Foundation in 2007. The Kansas Health Foundation’s mission is to “improve the health of all Kansans,” with “health” being broadly defined as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being” as opposed to the “absence of disease or infirmity” (khf.org). With this broad definition of health, the Kansas Health Foundation has five focus areas to help in achieving its mission, and building civic leadership is one of those areas. The Kansas Health Foundation believed that an investment in the intentional development of civic leadership would lead to healthier communities (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013).

The mission of the Kansas Leadership Center is to “foster civic leadership for healthier Kansas communities.” The Kansas Leadership Center defines civic leadership as “acts of leadership in which individuals attempt to enhance the common good of their community based on a perceived sense of responsibility.” The exercise of leadership, specifically civic leadership, involves “sharing responsibility for acting together in pursuit of the common good” (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013, p. 159). Much like Burns’ (1978) definition of transformational leadership, this
definition of civic leadership calls both leaders and followers to a higher morality and a higher purpose.

Placing a high value on hearing from Kansans, the Kansas Leadership Center developed its curriculum and theory of leadership by talking to individuals throughout the state and through consulting with national leadership scholars and experts in the field (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013). The resulting framework includes four leadership competencies necessary for effectively exercising civic leadership: manage self, diagnose situation, energize others, and intervene skillfully. Manage self and diagnose situation involve more contemplation and reflection, gaining insight and understanding of self and the context in which leadership is taking place. Energize others and intervene skillfully involve more action, mobilizing others who are needed to make progress on the issue or in the situation (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013).

**Manage Self.**

As the saying goes, we can often be our own worst enemy. In order to overcome the obstacle that is ourselves, we must be aware of our strengths, vulnerabilities, and triggers. Knowing our strengths and vulnerabilities allows us to explore various options for how we might best deploy ourselves in a situation and also identify in what areas we might need assistance. Being aware of our default behaviors – how we typically behave in a given situation – is also helpful. Being cognizant of our defaults allows us to consciously choose to respond in a different way, to experiment with leadership behaviors outside our comfort zone and ultimately expand our range of response options when presented with a leadership challenge. Triggers are those “hot buttons”, that when pushed can often result in an overly emotional and possibly irrational response (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013).
We must recognize the role that we plan in the situation or the system and also try to understand how others perceive that role. What are the stories that others are telling about us? While others’ perceptions may or may not fit our reality, those perceptions are the reality for those who hold them. We must consider how our actions and motivations are interpreted by others and be willing to consider multiple interpretations – those that are noble and those that are less noble (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013).

In order to make progress, we often have to choose among competing values (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013). An inability to act when faced with competing values or demands will impede progress. Avoiding making a decision is itself a decision; consequences accompany action as well as inaction. We must be able to hold steady in the face of uncertainty and conflict. As Greenleaf (2002) states, “Leaders must have…an armor of confidence in facing the unknown” (p. 41). Those exercising leadership must be able to demonstrate calmness and confidence and instill that same calmness and confidence in others (Greenleaf, 2002).

Lastly, we must know how to take care of ourselves. What this looks like will vary from person to person, but we must take the time to rest, recharge, and reenergize. While this may sound simple, taking care of self can often be neglected under the guise of doing what is best for the group. Not taking time for oneself can quickly lead to burnout, and effective leadership cannot come from someone who is burnt out and overwhelmed (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013).

**Diagnose Situation.**

We are often in a hurry to just do something – anything – to try to solve a problem that we don’t take the proper time diagnose the situation, to examine what is happening beyond the cursory level and truly try to understand in a deep way the roots of the problem (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013). Rather than taking the time to ask the right questions, we jump directly to
solutions because people want actions and answers; however, when exercising leadership, it is more important to ask the right questions than to know all of the answers (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

One of the keys to diagnosing the situation is distinguishing technical and adaptive work (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013). Adaptive work challenges our existing values and beliefs. Adaptive challenges are often systemic and have no easy fix or evident solution. As such, adaptive work cannot be done by an individual; the group or system must adapt (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). This also means that we need to identify who needs to do the work. In almost every case, those who are part of the problem or part of “the mess” are also an important part of the solution and must be included if progress is going to be made.

Similar to making the distinction between technical and adaptive challenges, we must also be able to distinguish the process challenges from the content challenges. Process challenges are related to how people effectively work together, and these challenges are often adaptive. Content challenges are often technical and can be addressed through the presence of individuals who are recognized as content experts (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013).

In considering the stories others tell about us, we begin to consider multiple interpretations for our actions and motivations. As we begin to consider those interpretations, we should also find ways to test multiple interpretations and points of view. Only through exploring and testing these tough interpretations can we find out which are true and which are based on false assumptions (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013).

We also must “take the temperature” in the situation. How much heat is there surrounding the issue? Pressure and heat are necessary for change to happen; why would anything change otherwise? Without pressure or heat, the status quo would easily be maintained.
We must take the temperature and determine how much heat, if any, needs to be added to the situation to spark movement and inspire action (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013).

**Intervene Skillfully.**

Once we have decided to intervene, we must make conscious choices about how we are going to intervene (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013). What are we going to do? What do we think might happen as a result? Burns (1978) points out that transformational leadership is grounded in making “conscious choice among real alternatives” (p. 36). Leadership acknowledges that there is competition and conflict among choices and options for action whereas power and authority may deny or choose to ignore the various alternatives for action in favor of promoting the one option that most benefits those in positions of power and authority and/or maintains the status quo (Burn, 1978).

In the process of diagnosing the situation, we identified who needs to do the work, and in the process of intervening skillfully we can focus on giving the work back to those who need to do the work. Some people have the mindset of “if I want it done right, I have to do it myself”. Some people want to be seen as the hero or the martyr. Leadership may begin with the act of an individual, but leadership must mobilize and engage others if significant, lasting change or progress is to be made (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013).

In the process of diagnosing the situation, we also take the “temperature” in the situation, examining how much heat is present. Intervening skillfully involves raising the heat to a level that moves people to action; in this productive zone, inaction is no longer an option (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013).

Holding to purpose and speaking from the heart can help keep others and ourselves connected to the work and motivated to continue on, even when conflict arises (Chrislip &
O’Malley, 2013). Those exercising leadership do not try to avoid conflict; they confront it, they mediate it, and they use it to make continued progress (Burns, 1978).

We must be willing to act experimentally; there is no one “right” answer to solving the daunting challenges in our communities. Exercising leadership is both experimental and improvisational, and we cannot know if something will lead to progress if we don’t try it. We have to be willing to take action without the guarantee of success. We also have to be willing to try something again, even if it is something that didn’t work in the past (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013).

**Energize Others.**

Leadership may begin with the act of an individual, but leadership must engage others in order for progress to be made. We must find ways to engage the “unusual” voices, those who are affected by the issue but are often absent from discussions on how to address the issue. In addition to engaging unusual voices, one must also find ways to work across factions. Around any issue there will be multiple factions representing various interests. Finding connecting interests and inspiring a collective purpose can help bring different factions together (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013).

Successfully engaging unusual voices and working across factions will require the creation of a trustworthy process. Different factions or groups who do not usually trust each other may be willing to engage with each other when they trust the process that has been created for engagement. People must believe that the process will allow them to be heard and be respected. Within the process created for engagement, we must also remember to start where they are. Individuals do not come together with the same knowledge and may not have an accurate understanding of the issue or of others’ views on the issue. Starting where people are
and bringing them to a common understanding will be necessary before moving forward (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013).

The challenge of change is often not that change involves something new but rather that change involves loss. Rather than focusing on what there is to be gained through change, people become obsessed with what will or, more often, might be lost. This is much like the self-preservation that contributes to the immunity to change. If we are to help people move toward change, we must acknowledge and speak to the loss that might be involved (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013).

**Principles of Civic Leadership.**

Embedded in each of the competencies are five key principles or assumptions. 1) Leadership is an activity as opposed to a position. 2) Anyone can exercise leadership, anytime, anywhere. 3) Leadership starts with an individual and must engage others. 4) The purpose must be clear. A clear purpose helps to focus one’s efforts and makes it easier to engage others in trying to achieve that purpose. 5) Leadership is risky. The risks of exercising leadership are both personal and professional, and one must weigh the potential risks against the potential benefits, understanding the risks and benefits associated with action as well as those associated with inaction (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013).

**Case-in-Point.**

One of the most well-known and respected places for leadership development in the country is Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. The teaching methods used by faculty at the Kennedy School are the focus of Sharon Daloz Parks’ (2005) book *Leadership Can Be Taught*. The Case-in-Point methodology, which uses the classroom not only as the teaching environment but also as a learning lab, was developed by Marty Linsky and Ron
Heifetz and is used to create a “holding environment” that allows individuals to safely practice exercising leadership in ways they may not have considered before.

The Kansas Leadership Center employs the Case-in-Point pedagogy developed by Linsky and Heifetz. The underlying premise of this methodology is that leadership cannot be learned through traditional teaching methods, rather conditions must be created in which the challenges of leadership can be experienced. Case-in-Point uses the classroom setting as the social system and assumes that the behavior and dynamics present in the group are similar to those present in the larger social context – the environment where people are typically trying to exercise leadership.

Case-in-Point is one way the KLC creates optimal conflict in the classroom setting (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013). Case-in-Point raises the heat for participants by presenting a classroom experience that is counter to the typical teacher-student, lecture-based learning that most are accustomed to and comfortable with. Those who are skilled at facilitating Case-in-Point are able to use what is “in the room” – issues connected to power, authority, deference, competition, factions, and so on – to help participants learn more about leadership and about how they might begin experimenting with exercising leadership in a different way, even while they are still in the classroom (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013). The facilitator may do this by making observational statements about what is happening, by offering alternate interpretations about what is happening, by elevating possible assumptions, by asking questions, or by simply being silent. Case-in-Point can often be a challenge for participants as they work to adjust their thinking about the learning experience/process and attempt to change their default behaviors.
**KLC Summary.**

The Kansas Leadership Center teaches participants the principles of civic leadership and the four competencies, in part via the Case-in-Point method described above. Participants complete a 360 degree assessment as part of their program experience. A number of participants also receive coaching as part of their program experience. KLC incorporates the three critical elements of assessment, challenge, and support (McCauley, Van Velsor, & Ruderman, 2010). KLC wants to help participants begin to think differently about leadership and confront their immunity to change so they can begin behaving differently and adopt a new “way of being.” As Bass articulated, for transformational leaders, their leadership behavior is “an integral part of their persona” (p. 93); leadership becomes part of who they are.

Because leadership is exercised in different contexts with different people and relationships and group dynamics, exercising leadership and learning to exercise leadership is a constant and ongoing process of experimenting, reflecting, learning, and integrating (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013). “Leadership is an improvisational and experimental art…offering no guarantees of success” (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013, p. 144). The Kansas Leadership Center is working to move more people to improvise and experiment with the art of leadership and, in the process, transform people for the common good. While there is certainly something to be learned from those who are not transformed through their Kansas Leadership Center experience, this study will focus on program participants who had a transformative experience.

Using a phenomenological approach, qualitative interviews will be conducted with a purposive sample of Kansas Leadership Center program participants who were identified by KLC faculty or staff and also self-identify as having gone through a transformative leadership experience to explore the following research questions:
• What does transformation look like for these individuals? What changes occurred as a result of their leadership development experience?

• What are the elements of the leadership development experience that contributed to transformation in these individuals?

• How can a leadership development experience contribute to an individual’s motivation and ability to exercise leadership that is transformational and for the common good?

The methods for collecting and examining those individual descriptions and reflections in this phenomenological study will closely follow those outlined by Moustakas (1994) and by Creswell (2007) (who utilizes a slightly modified version of the methods proposed by Moustakas).
CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Identification and Selection of Co-Researchers

The Kansas Leadership Center (KLC) offers a variety of programs to help achieve its mission of fostering civic leadership for healthier Kansas communities. Some programs are focused on individuals while some are focused on teams or organizations. Some programs involve a one-week intense course while some involve one-day sessions spread out over the course of a few weeks or a month. Some programs include coaching while some do not. Some programs focus more on certain competencies while some focus more on others. Some program participants have had previous exposure to KLC while some participants are having their first exposure to KLC and its curriculum. While KLC program participants come in with varying levels of exposure to KLC and have a variety of program experiences, one of the key principles of the Kansas Leadership Center emphasized across all programs is that leadership is an activity as opposed to position or authority, and that everyone has the opportunity to exercise leadership in any given situation (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013). The KLC’s programs are designed for Kansans with the purpose of “equipping people with skills to make lasting, positive change for the common good” (kansasleadershipcenter.org).

Because phenomenological research seeks to provide a description of the essence of a particular experience, it is imperative that all participants/co-researchers have sufficient experience with that phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The quality of data gathered is dependent on the knowledge and experiences of the co-researchers, and co-researchers selected at random may or may not have the knowledge and experience needed to provide valuable insights into the
phenomenon (LeMay & Ellis, 2007). To ensure all co-researchers had experience with the phenomenon of having a transformative experience while participating in a Kansas Leadership Center program, purposive sampling methods were used.

Note the use of the word “co-researcher” as opposed to “participant”. This word choice emphasizes the importance of the participant in the research process. In a qualitative study such as this, the co-researchers share detailed personal experiences and provide feedback/input on the data collection procedures and the results of the data analysis, helping to confirm that the conclusions reached are an accurate reflection of their experiences. Feedback from co-researchers is critical throughout the phenomenological research process (Moustakas, 1994).

A number of purposive sampling methods are available for use in qualitative research. This study employed criterion sampling, wherein all co-researchers had to meet certain predetermined criterion/criteria (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 1990). Criterion sampling is particularly useful in phenomenological research because it ensures that all co-researchers have indeed experienced the phenomenon being explored (Creswell, 2007). For this study, all co-researchers had a transformative experience through a Kansas Leadership Center program, which was determined through a two-part selection process involving possible co-researcher identification by KLC faculty and staff (first criteria – the transformative experience was evident to others) and a preliminary interview with the possible co-researcher (second criteria – the co-researcher self-identifies as having had a transformative experience). The co-researcher self-identifying as having had a transformative experience was of utmost importance.

Qualitative research does not seek to generalize the information gathered but rather to deeply explore and provide a highly detailed explanation of that information (Creswell, 2007). As such, qualitative studies typically involve small sample sizes (Patton, 1990). For this
phenomenological study, data saturation was reached with interviews of 10 co-researchers. This sample size is consistent with sample sizes used in other phenomenological research studies (Creswell, 2007; Greenleaf, 2012; Moustakas, 1994).

### TABLE 1

**LIST OF CO-RESEARCHERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alias</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Dodge City</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Hutchinson</td>
<td>Nonprofit/Social Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cam</td>
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<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Emporia</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Kansas City</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Topeka</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>White/Caucasian</td>
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<td>Public Sector</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugh</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>Dodge City/Wichita</td>
<td>Nonprofit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ike</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Hutchinson</td>
<td>Faith/Nonprofit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>Wichita</td>
<td>Nonprofit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Methods of Data Collection**

Initial information regarding co-researchers was gathered through conversations with Kansas Leadership Center faculty and staff to determine which participants would be most appropriate for the sample. For example, which individuals participated fully in their program experience (i.e., attended the entire program/participated in all program elements)? Which participants exhibited indicators of transformation during their program experience? For example, which participants asked questions and engaged with the faculty and other participants around the concepts during their program experience? Which participants began exhibiting changes in behavior (i.e., began to experiment) during their program experience? Which participants have been in contact with the Kansas Leadership Center following their program
experience? For example, which participants have attended various KLC alumni opportunities, such as monthly conference calls or regional alumni clubs? Engaging with others around the leadership concepts, trying new leadership behaviors, and staying connected with KLC could all be indicators of a transformative experience. Since interviews will ideally be conducted in person, geographic location will also be a consideration. Once the full list of possible co-researchers has been determined, KLC will provide contact information, and preliminary interviews will be conducted to determine the final sample.

**Preliminary interview.**

Of primary consideration during the preliminary interview was whether the co-researcher would consider his/her Kansas Leadership Center program experience to be transformative. Did the KLC experience impact the way that individual views leadership and the way he/she exercises leadership? This preliminary interview served as a screening tool. If an individual did not self-identify as having had a transformative experience, he/she would not be included in the study. All 10 of the co-researchers included in this study considered their Kansas Leadership Center experience to be transformational. In addition, co-researchers had to be willing to be interviewed, have that interview recorded and transcribed, and be available for follow-up for additional interviewing if needed and for member checking, which involved reviewing the findings outlined by the researcher and confirming that those findings apply to them as well as adding any relevant information that seems to be missing in the researcher’s findings (Moustakas, 1994). (See Appendix A for Preliminary Interview Guide.)

**Primary interview.**

Face-to-face in-depth interviews are the preferred method of data collection in phenomenological studies (Polkinghorne, 1989). Written statements may be collected in lieu of
or in addition to in-person interviews; however, the process of writing about one’s experience (as opposed to talking about that experience) results in responses that are more reflective in nature and creates a sense of distance between the co-researcher and the experience (Polkinghorne, 1989; Van Manen, 1990). Phenomenological research requires that the co-researcher stay as close to the experience as possible, describing the situation “as it [was] immediately lived” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 67); the act of writing can interfere with an individual’s ability to do that.

Moustakas (1994) advocates for an informal and interactive interview process, consisting primarily of broad, open-ended questions. Van Manen (1990) suggests that “it is impossible to offer ready-made questions” (p. 67) for these types of interviews, and Moustakas (1994) recognizes that, while questions may be developed in advance, those questions may be “varied, altered, or not used at all” (p. 114) when interviewing the participant. The goal of the interview is to elicit a detailed description of the co-researcher’s experience with the phenomenon under study. As such, the interviewer must create an atmosphere that encourages full disclosure on the part of the co-researcher (Moustakas, 1994). Some individuals will require more conversation and probing to arrive at a full description of their experience; others will provide a thorough description on their own, with much less questioning needed. The General Interview Guide is just that – a general guide for the interview process. The primary questions were asked of all participants with additional probes being used as needed to gain a complete understanding of the co-researcher’s experience with the phenomenon. (See Appendix A for General Interview Guide.)

Nine of the ten interviews were conducted face-to-face (one was conducted via telephone), and all were digitally recorded for transcription purposes. Recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. These transcripts served as the raw data for analysis. Transcripts are
saved in a Word document by co-researcher number and do not have the co-researcher’s name anywhere in the document. The file containing co-researcher numbers and names is kept separate from the transcript files. Any printed versions of the transcripts have also been identified only by co-researcher number and do not contain co-researchers’ names. Word and Excel were used to organize the interview data and any memos or field notes related to the interviews. The computer containing files related to this study and any relevant printed documents are kept in a locked office at all times.

Co-researchers received an e-mail followed by a phone call in advance of the primary interview outlining the purpose of the study and what was asked of them as co-researchers. Signed informed consent letters were obtained from all co-researchers. (See Appendix B for Informed Consent Letter.) Following the interview, co-researchers were sent a copy of their transcript along with a copy of the essential invariant structure that was developed based on the transcript data from all co-researchers. Co-researchers had the opportunity to provide feedback on the accuracy of each of those documents in relation to their experience (i.e., member checking). Following the study, all co-researchers were sent a letter and copy of Chrislip and O’Malley’s (2013) book, *For the common good: Redefining civic leadership*, to thank them for their time and for their willingness to share their personal experiences related to the Kansas Leadership Center and their ability to exercise leadership.

**Methods of Organizing and Analyzing Data**

Of the various approaches to qualitative research, the data analysis procedures for phenomenology are among the most detailed (Creswell, 2007). Moustakas (1994) identifies four key processes that lead to “derivation of knowledge” when using transcendental phenomenological research methods: Epoche, Phenomenological Reduction (or Transcendental-
Phenomenological Reduction, Imaginative Variation, and Synthesis (of Meanings and Essences).

**Step 1: Epoche** also called Personal Bracketing (Moustakas, 1994, based on Husserl, 1931; Patton, 1990). According to Moustakas (1994), “The Epoche is a necessary first step” (p. 34). *Epoche* is a Greek word that means “to suspend or refrain from judgment” (Moustakas, 1994). This involves the researcher providing a detailed description of his/her thoughts and experiences with the phenomenon being studied. This brings to the forefront one’s judgments and biases regarding the phenomenon and better allows the researcher to push these preconceptions to the side and explore the phenomenon and the experiences of others in a new, more open way (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). While listed as part of the data analysis process, the Epoche occurs prior to the interview/data collection process so the experiences of the researcher do not impact the interviews conducted with co-researchers (Moustakas, 1994). The Epoche regarding this author’s experiences with transformative/transformational leadership and her Kansas Leadership Center program experience has been completed.

**Step 2: Phenomenological Reduction** (also referred to Horizontalization by Moustakas and Creswell or Horizontalization by Patton). This step involves identifying and separating the relevant information from the irrelevant information within each of the transcripts. All of the relevant information is then broken down into significant statements, making sure that each statement reflects one (and only one) specific thought. Significant statements are quotes from the transcripts that provide increased insight and understanding into the participants’ experience of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Once the significant statements have been identified, the list of significant statements can be narrowed by eliminating those that are overlapping or repetitive.
Step 3: Imaginative Variation (Delimiting to Meaning Units or Invariant Horizons). This step involves developing clusters of meaning or meaning units from the remaining unique significant statements. These meaning units are also known as “invariant horizons”. These meanings are then organized or grouped into themes. These themes are common to all of the participants. The themes are then used to develop textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon. The textural description is a description of what the co-researchers experienced. The structural description is a description of how the co-researchers experienced, taking into consideration the influence of context of the experience (Creswell, 2007).

Step 4: Synthesis (Essential Invariant Structure or essence/synthesis of the textural-structural description of the experience). The structural and textural descriptions derived in step three are then used to develop a composite description – the essential invariant structure – detailing the essence of the experience/phenomenon (i.e., focusing on the common elements/underlying structure of participants’ experiences) (Creswell, 2007). The essential invariant structure is the unifying meaning or description of the experience provided by the participants.

Creswell (2007) summarizes the steps in the analysis process in four procedural sub-questions: 1) What statements describe the experiences of the participants?; 2) What themes emerge from the statements describing the experiences of the participants?; 3) What are the contexts of and thoughts about these experiences?; and 4) What is the overall essence of the experience?

Trustworthiness of the Data

While quantitative research focuses on measures of reliability and validity, qualitative research focuses on validation strategies to help establish the trustworthiness of the data and the
credibility of the findings derived from the data (Creswell, 2007). By utilizing various validation strategies, we can have a certain level of confidence that our findings and conclusions are accurate. Creswell (2007) outlines eight different validation strategies and recommends that qualitative researchers employ at least two of these strategies in every study. This study will involve three validation strategies.

One strategy outlined by Creswell (2007) involves stating researcher bias at the beginning of study. The researcher must be aware of his/her previous experiences or prejudices that may impact the way the study is conducted and/or the interpretations of the data collected. The Epoche process described in Step 1 above includes describing my previous experiences with the topic of this study along with any thoughts or biases I may have that could shape my approach to this research.

Creswell (2007) also discusses having another researcher who is not connected to the study conduct an external audit of the data. To allow for an audit, a researcher must provide an audit trail, which involves maintaining detailed records of all of the steps in the data analysis process. For this study, a subset of the data (seven of the ten of the interview transcripts or 70% of the data) was provided to two additional researchers along with the audit trail. These researchers then used the audit trail to examine the data subset, determining if the findings provided were supported by the data. The additional researchers verified the accuracy of the data analysis process as well as the end product of the analysis. Any disagreements in the findings were discussed by the lead researcher and two additional researchers until consensus was reached. This can be considered a form of inter-rater reliability (Creswell, 2007).

The essential invariant structure (or essence/synthesis of the textural-structural description of the experience) was distributed to all co-researchers for review/confirmation. This
process of member checking (an additional validation strategy) allows co-researchers to individually examine the essence derived from their interviews and determine: 1) whether that essence captures/resonates with their experience and 2) if any changes/modifications/additions to the essential invariant structure may be needed. The co-researchers were able to confirm the accuracy of the findings, suggest possible changes or alternate interpretations, and identify anything that might be missing. Eight of the ten co-researchers provided feedback on the essential invariant structure. Feedback gathered from co-researchers during member checking was considered and incorporated into the final description of the essential invariant structure.
CHAPTER 3
RESULTS

The 10 in-depth interviews resulted in more than 50 pages of transcript data containing nearly 30,000 words. From these data, 320 significant statements were identified. From these significant statements, 36 meaning units or invariant horizons were developed, which were then grouped into the 9 themes listed in Table 2. The textural and structural descriptions were developed, and the essential invariant structure was then derived.

TABLE 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Multiple Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Quality of the Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Influence of Curriculum and Methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Application of Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Experience of Emotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Challenge and Support from Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Communication with Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Recognition of Self and Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Transformation of Self and Purpose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 1: Multiple Experiences**

This theme consisted of 33 significant statements and 4 meaning units (see Table 3). The quotes used throughout this section are examples of significant statements included in this theme. All of the co-researchers reported having multiple leadership development experiences with the Kansas Leadership Center (KLC). Some of the co-researchers had experiences that came just before or during KLC’s early stages of development, some have continued to pursue formal learning opportunities offered through the Kansas Leadership Center, and some have continued
their learning by teaching or sharing what they learned from KLC with others in formal and informal settings. Some of the co-researchers have participated in all of the above (i.e., experiences prior to KLC, continued experiences with KLC, and experiences in teaching and/or sharing KLC with others).

TABLE 3

THEME 1: MULTIPLE EXPERIENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Meaning Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Prior to the Kansas Leadership Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>With the Kansas Leadership Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Teaching Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Sharing with Others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Prior to the Kansas Leadership Center (1.1).**

Some of the co-researchers mentioned leadership development experiences they had prior to the formation of the Kansas Leadership Center and/or during the early development of the Kansas Leadership Center through an initiative called the Kansas Community Leadership Initiative. The Kansas Community Leadership Initiative was, like the Kansas Leadership Center, funded by the Kansas Health Foundation. Prior to the establishment of the Kansas Leadership Center, the Kansas Health Foundation’s primary efforts related to building civic leadership were through the Kansas Community Leadership Initiative (KCLI). The KCLI included programs that were designed to help build and support community leadership programs across the state. These place-based community leadership programs focus on building leadership capacity in individuals located in specific cities, counties, and/or geographic regions in Kansas and are often sponsored by the area Chamber of Commerce or community foundation. Program names often indicate their geographic focus, such as Leadership Emporia, Leadership Reno County, and Southeast Kansas Regional Leadership Academy. Following the founding of the Kansas Leadership
Center, the Kansas Health Foundation transitioned responsibility for the Kansas Community Leadership Initiative to the Kansas Leadership Center.

Once transitioned to the Kansas Leadership Center, the Kansas Community Leadership Initiative (KCLI) provided additional resources for community leadership program facilitators, including assistance with curriculum development, marketing, and evaluation. Each community leadership program was also assigned a consultant from the Kansas Leadership Center who was able to work one-on-one with that program to provide assistance and answer questions as needed throughout the year. KLC also hosted a workshop for community leadership program facilitators. This workshop was a three-day training that provided opportunities for facilitators to learn new leadership content and facilitation techniques and also practice teaching and facilitating in an environment where they could receive feedback from their facilitator peers and from Kansas Leadership Center faculty. The facilitators could also attend sessions related to growing and sustaining a community leadership program, covering topics such as board development, recruitment, and funding. The workshop also provided a time for facilitators from community leadership programs across the state to come together, support each other, and learn from one another.

In addition to resources for community leadership programs and their facilitators, the Kansas Leadership Center also hosted the Kansas Community Leadership Initiative (KCLI) Summit, which was a three-day leadership development experience for community leadership program participants. Like other Kansas Leadership Center programs, the KCLI Summit utilized Case-in-Point to help teach participants the KLC leadership principles and competencies. The KCLI Summit provided the opportunity for community leadership program cohorts to “get away” from their home communities and have an intense leadership development experience
together as a group. This also gave community leadership program facilitators a way to expose their class to the KLC ideas and curriculum without the burden of having to teach all of it themselves.

The KCLI program experience that occurred for participants prior to the Kansas Leadership Center’s existence was quite different than the KCLI program experience provided to participants by the Kansas Leadership Center. Ann described the program facilitators as being a key and marked difference between the KCLI experience provided by the Kansas Leadership Center and the KCLI experience prior to the Kansas Leadership Center. The two KCLI facilitators who conducted the program prior to KLC focused on creating comfortable environments for participants and providing encouragement to participants throughout their experience, and the co-researcher perceived those facilitators as being “more maternal” and as trying to take care of everyone during the experience. On the other hand, at the Kansas Leadership Center, the faculty were less focused on comfort and more focused on the learning that needed to take place, and they trusted that program participants were adults who were capable of taking care of themselves. Ann said she still found the faculty to be “very friendly and happy to see me,” but she also described the program experience with KLC as being “much more a cerebral and intellectual kind of experience.”

These previous leadership development experiences served as an immediate point of contact for these individuals; most of these individuals were aware of the development of the Kansas Leadership Center from its inception. These individuals were already part of the work of civic leadership development in Kansas and were already connected to the Kansas Health Foundation, making them a natural fit to be participants in the Kansas Leadership Center’s early programs and to be partners in letting others know about KLC. Their previous knowledge and
experience with other leadership development programs may have served as a primer for their transformational experience with the Kansas Leadership Center.

**With the Kansas Leadership Center (1.2).**

All of the co-researchers have pursued additional learning opportunities provided by the Kansas Leadership Center. Many of the co-researchers talked about how having additional experiences helped bring greater clarity to their initial experience. With each exposure, they walked away having gained something from the experience; another “piece of the puzzle” was filled in for them.

After the struggle and the discomfort they experienced during their initial Kansas Leadership Center experience, co-researchers who have participated in subsequent KLC programs talked about witnessing other participants – usually first-time KLC participants – in their struggle and having a greater understanding of the value and importance of that struggle and discomfort in the learning process. Fern found that during her second program experience at the Kansas Leadership Center, “it was fun to be able to see what others were struggling with and having a little bit more understanding of why it was so important to do that.”

The continued participation in Kansas Leadership Center programs and activities serves as a reminder of the leadership skills and concepts and how to go about applying them in the “real world”. Cam said that, while she now views these ideas as being part of her everyday life and thinking, “It’s not hard to…get away from [the ideas], so these [additional experiences with the Kansas Leadership Center] are good reminders.” During additional experiences with KLC, sometimes ideas are phrased in a slightly different way that brings new understanding, results in additional clarity, or makes a concept “really click” in a way it had not before. Cam also recognized that learning about leadership – like all learning in life – is a continual process.
Elle said someone had told her that it was “ok if you go home…and cry” after being at the Kansas Leadership Center. She realized after being at KLC that “they say that because they know it’s different and it makes people uncomfortable,” and she was relieved that she did not have that reaction following her experience. Elle then went on to talk about how having multiple experiences helps to desensitize one from what can initially be an uncomfortable situation for those who are unfamiliar with the Kansas Leadership Center and the teaching methodology of Case-in-Point that is utilized in KLC programs. When an individual has multiple experiences with KLC, one also has multiple experiences with Case-in-Point, becoming more aware of the purpose of the process and how it works. The experience becomes less foreign and more familiar.

While the experience can often be uncomfortable for KLC program participants, Ben pointed out that there is value in the discomfort and in the experimental and experiential process that the Kansas Leadership Center uses. He noted that, “as painful as it is, I have become a believer in the value of the experimental process, beyond the didactic.” One of the elements that makes KLC different from other leadership programs (i.e., teaching leadership through Case-in-Point) is also one of the elements that participants see as contributing to their transformation.

In addition to participating in formal training events and learning opportunities provided by the Kansas Leadership Center, some co-researchers talked more generally about continuing their learning and keeping the ideas in front of them, recognizing that it is easy to return to previous patterns of behavior rather than continue to practice and implement new behaviors, which may produce different (and not always positive) results. Repeated exposure to the ideas and repeated experiences in the Kansas Leadership Center environment were a key piece of the transformational experience for each of these co-researchers.
Teaching Others (1.3).

Given the transformation these co-researchers experienced through their encounters with the Kansas Leadership Center, they were also interested in finding ways to share their experiences with others and to help others experience a similar transformation. Rather than try to teach the information and recreate the experience for others, some co-researchers encouraged their co-workers to attend a Kansas Leadership Center program, realizing the possible impact this could have on their work environment. After a number of staff members had participated in KLC programs, Cam said, “It’s affected our culture at work…there [are] changes now happening in my office.”

Some of the co-researchers are sharing their KLC experience by teaching the competencies and principles for the Kansas Leadership Center, for their local community leadership program, and/or in other formal leadership development program settings. Gail noted that not many people “consider a walk down to the [Kansas] Leadership Center a part of their normal work life,” but she has found that working with people on leadership development, regularly teaching and practicing the competencies, has been “really fun” and has also helped contribute to her transformation.

The majority of co-researchers teaching these concepts to others are teaching them to adults; however, Ike is also exploring ways to teach middle school students the KLC competencies and principles and get them to actively engage with these ideas. He said he has been impressed by “the never-ending transformative effect that that has, no matter what group I’m in front of.” He has witnessed firsthand the impact these ideas can have on youth and adults alike.
Jane said her Kansas Leadership Center experience was so powerful for her that she left the experience knowing she wanted to change her career path and move toward working in the leadership development field as a coach and a teacher/trainer. She said, “I walked away from that experience knowing I want to recreate this thing for other people. It was that big for me.” Ike said that, while he did not necessarily plan on teaching others, the teaching opportunities developed “just because I was trying to think through what these competencies mean for my life.”

Each of these co-researchers talked about wanting other people to have the opportunity to experience the same type of transformation they experienced, saying things like, “I wanted other people to get what I was getting,” and, “I wanted to help people to understand these competencies that changed me in such an amazing way.” Co-researchers have found that teaching the KLC competencies and principles is a way to continue working on their own transformation while also working on creating conditions for others to experience a similar transformation.

**Sharing with others (1.4).**

While some co-researchers have shared their experience with others in formal ways (i.e., through teaching), other co-researchers talked about sharing what they learned and experienced with others in informal ways, recognizing that in order to be successful in their work or in their community, others need to have at least a basic understanding of these concepts – even if they are never able to attend a KLC program or learn to “speak the language.” Cam talked about returning to her community and attempting to explain what she had been through at the Kansas Leadership Center. She remembered going back to others in her community and saying, “We – not just me – we need to get others to go through this so that we can all talk together and try to
figure this out – whatever this is – for our community and for our local [community leadership] program.”

Not everyone who has heard about the KLC ideas in these informal ways has embraced them in quite the same manner as the co-researchers. Jane added that her friends “got really really really really really tired” of listening to her talk about her Kansas Leadership Center experience. She kept trying to explain all of the elements of the program and help her friends understand “how awesome” the experience was for her. She said, “Because [my experience] was so good, I wanted to tell everybody.” Ben noted that it is not necessary for everyone to embrace the concepts; they just need to understand them. He has been working to integrate the vocabulary and the ideas into his work culture. Some of his co-workers are engaging with the ideas more than others, but he said that is to be expected, and he does not expect everybody to “go geeky on it” or “love it” like he does. What he does expect is that when he uses terms like “raising the heat” or discusses adaptive and technical challenges that people understand what he is saying.

Ben made the following point about the importance of language in building culture:

“One of the things that I believe very strongly is when building a culture, vocabulary matters, having a common language matters. …If I say to the leadership team, ‘That sounds like a technical interpretation,’ and they don’t know what I’m talking about, then we’re really not being very productive.”

Dan said that figuring out how the leadership competencies make sense for him in his life has been one piece of his transformation, but another piece of his transformation has involved finding ways to share his experience with others. He talked about how sharing the knowledge he has learned and trying to create similar opportunities for others is “part of the mission when it comes to leadership.” Much like community psychology is about “giving psychology away”, these co-researchers have realized that transformational leadership is about “giving leadership away.”
Theme 2: Quality of the Experience

This theme consisted of 24 significant statements and 4 meaning units. The quotes used throughout this section are examples of significant statements included in this theme. All of the co-researchers mentioned something about the quality of the experience – the people who were teaching and participating in the program, the concepts that were learned during the program, and even the building in which the program took place.

TABLE 4

THEME 2: QUALITY OF THE EXPERIENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 The People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 The Program and Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Pushing the Kansas Leadership Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 The Building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The people (2.1).

Most of the co-researchers talked about the quality of the individuals who were part of their Kansas Leadership Center program experience, mentioning both those who were at the front of the room teaching or facilitating during their experience as well as those who occupied the seats with them as participants during the experience. Ben said he was impressed with the quality of the event, and he found “that the people…were bright people, not only leading it but sitting in the seats learning from it.” The faculty and the participants each play an important role in the KLC program experience.

Fern recognized that “the facilitators who lead this process [are] really important.” The faculty at the Kansas Leadership Center come from a variety of educational backgrounds and professional experiences. Some have PhDs and have taught at universities. Others have Masters degrees and experience in Social Work or Education. Some have worked as consultants in
communities and organizations throughout the state. All of the faculty have been through leadership development training with the Kansas Leadership Center, and many have also been through training at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, where the Case-in-Point methodology and the ideas of adaptive leadership originated. All of these individuals have many years of experience working with Kansans, and they are all people with a passion for Kansas.

The faculty truly care about Kansans making progress on adaptive challenges in their communities, and their caring is conveyed through their help and encouragement to participants during program sessions, during breaks in between program sessions, and after programs have ended.

While some co-researchers mentioned the faculty in general, other co-researchers mentioned being impressed with specific KLC faculty and/or staff members during their program experience. Ben talked about a faculty member who was really able to “stretch” him and “raise the bar” for him on his ability to exercise leadership. He appreciated that this faculty member seemed “to look back [at participants] with a sense of appropriate value,” recognizing that the participants also bring valuable thoughts and experiences that can contribute to the learning process. Ann noted how two specific KLC faculty members are effective in different ways and then explained that part of what is so attractive about the KLC curriculum and ideas is that they can be effectively taught and applied in different ways and in different situations by different individuals. She talked about how she loves “to watch [the KLC faculty] work,” noting that by watching them she learns more about how to tolerate and facilitate and remain “unflappable” in front of different groups of people in different settings with different group dynamics.

Some of the co-researchers were impressed with the diversity of the participants in their KLC program cohort. The Kansas Leadership Center tries to engage people from all parts of the
state and from all walks of life to participate in its programs – those in faith-based organizations, nonprofits/social services, government, businesses, and academia; those in urban settings and in rural areas; and those with formal authority in their jobs and those without much authority. While reflecting the diversity of the Kansas population in its programs has always been a goal of the Kansas Leadership Center, this goal has been given more attention in recent years. Participants can often learn as much, if not more, from participants who are different from them as they do from participants who are similar to them. Cam said that the diversity of participants during the experience “changes what you think you know.” The people connected to the co-researchers’ leadership development experience were a key part of their transformation.

The program and curriculum (2.2).

Some of the co-researchers shared something related to the curriculum or the training that they perceived as being of high quality. One co-researcher had the following three words to say in describing his Kansas Leadership Center experience: “Valuable. Informative. Thoughtful.” Other co-researchers also echoed the notion that the Kansas Leadership Center’s curriculum was well-founded and thoughtfully presented. In addition to helping participants understand the leadership competencies and principles, the faculty and staff at the Kansas Leadership Center also try to help participants understand the process that led them to arriving at those competencies and principles and to choosing the Case-in-Point methodology as a way to help teach the curriculum.

Some of the co-researchers were more general in their description of their KLC program experience as being a high quality experience, with Ben saying he felt “encouraged just by having found [the Kansas Leadership Center]…because most of my leadership type stuff at this point in my life was largely underwhelming.” Gail mentioned that her perception of the program
as being high quality contributed to her ability to tolerate the discomfort of the situation and overcome any barriers to learning that may have been present. The quality of the training allowed her to “really focus on how I was thinking about leadership, how I wanted to deploy myself either in the room or in the world.” The quality of the experience helped co-researchers move past or work through the challenges they encountered during the program.

**Pushing the Kansas Leadership Center (2.3).**

A few of the co-researchers made comments related to “pushing KLC” in its work as an organization and in its efforts to stay relevant and have an impact. These individuals feel a sense of responsibility as it relates to the Kansas Leadership Center’s mission and presence across the state. Elle talked about how the Kansas Leadership Center “broke down some boundaries on what leadership education” was and what it meant to her, which motivated her to feel like she should do the same for KLC, helping KLC to break down some of its own barriers, “because the longer they exist the more boundaries are created…on what they’re doing.” She wants the Kansas Leadership Center to stay relevant, and she said that KLC builds a sense of community where that kind of challenge and push back is acceptable. Dan wants the Kansas Leadership Center to have a larger and continued presence in his city and his part of the state. He feels like part of his responsibility following his Kansas Leadership Center experience “is to push KLC in directions that…they’re not involved with” at the moment because that is important work to him.

Ben was so impressed with his initial KLC experience that he just wanted to continue taking part in anything the Kansas Leadership Center had to offer. He recognized that in life he has a tendency to “see the shiny thing and run toward it,” and the Kansas Leadership Center was a “shiny thing” for him. Now that the newness and the “sheen” have worn off, he has a new understanding of what he wants and expects from KLC. He recognizes that there is still a lot he
can learn from the Kansas Leadership Center, but he also wants “to lean into KLC now with my expectations as opposed to just running after whatever KLC is moving toward just because it’s so shiny.” The Kansas Leadership Center has pushed these individuals and helped them grow, and now they want to do the same for the Kansas Leadership Center – pushing KLC to continue to learn and grow as an organization.

**The building (2.4).**

A few of the co-researchers mentioned the Kansas Leadership Center’s new building as a source of inspiration and a physical embodiment of the quality of the organization. The Kansas Leadership Center’s first office location was in a two-story, multi-occupant, black and white plantation style building in downtown Wichita. KLC had some offices and classroom space on the first floor of the building, which also contained a restaurant and another business. KLC had additional offices on the second floor, which also housed a few other businesses. Programs were held in the classroom on the first floor, and only one program could be held at a time without securing another location. Given the size of the classroom, participant numbers for leadership programs held in the building was limited to about 40 people.

As part of its ongoing commitment to building civic leadership in Kansas, in 2012 the Kansas Health Foundation announced plans to build a new building to house the Kansas Leadership Center. The new building opened in 2013 and is located in downtown Wichita next door to the Kansas Health Foundation. The new building is three stories and over 30,000 square feet. The largest classroom (called the Konza Town Hall) can seat approximately 200 people, with two additional classrooms on the second floor that can hold 50 people each. There are a number of small meeting rooms and a large room with work space for KLC staff. The building was designed with the Kansas Leadership Center in mind and with the idea that this space could
serve as “a living room for the state, a place where Kansans can gather, challenge each other and learn together” (quote from O’Malley in Stanley, 2012). Figure 1 shows the completed Kansas Leadership Center building.

Figure 1. Photo of the Kansas Leadership Center. Photo by Jeff Tuttle Photography and used with permission of the Kansas Leadership Center.

The Kansas Leadership Center’s new building is LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified. LEED is a green building certification program provided through the United States Green Building Council (http://www.usgbc.org/leed), which provides different levels of certification based on meeting various design and construction requirements for green building. Many of the walls (both interior and exterior) are made of glass, letting in as much natural light as possible. Artwork commissioned by Kansas artists fills the walls that are not glass, and a large metal moving sculpture hangs from the ceiling over the grand staircase leading from the first floor to the second floor open library area. Figure 2 shows part of the library with a classroom visible in the background. Ben talked about going on a tour of new building prior to its completion:
“I remember being exposed to that building for the first time and thinking…‘This is a place I want to be a part of. This is a place I want to know more about.’ The quality, the thoughtfulness that went into that building…just the structure alone is an inspiring place...”

Ike pointed out that, “now that KLC has the [building], they have a space.” The Kansas Leadership Center has a space that was created specifically for its programs and for its mission of fostering civic leadership. The environment matters and can have an impact on how participants experience a program and how they interpret that experience. As Winston Churchill said, “We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us” (http://www.winstonchurchill.org/resources/quotations/famous-quotations-and-stories); this point was not overlooked in the building of the Kansas Leadership Center.

Figure 2. Photo of the Kansas Leadership Center’s David D. Chrislip Library. Photo by Jeff Tuttle Photography and used with permission of the Kansas Leadership Center.
Theme 3: Influence of Curriculum and Methodology

This theme consisted of 29 significant statements and 3 meaning units. Co-researchers talked about how certain aspects of the methodology were transformational for them and how specific concepts significantly impacted the way they think about and/or exercise leadership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning Units</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>3.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Different Kind of Learning Experience (3.1).

Some of the co-researchers mentioned that they could immediately tell their leadership development experience with the Kansas Leadership Center was different than any previous leadership development experience they had had. Some of the co-researchers said they were “shocked” by how different the KLC experience was for them, especially for those who had previous leadership development experiences through the Kansas Community Leadership Initiative. Jane described her experience as being powerful, particularly when she realized she was learning a lot without anyone really “teaching”; the faculty were “just asking questions.” She found she was able to learn without anyone providing the traditional instruction most people are accustomed to experiencing in a classroom setting. She went on to say, “…this is a very valid way of teaching; it is causing other people to have an experience that is different from anything they’ve ever had in the past.”

Two of the co-researchers mentioned the experiential nature of the program as being part of what made their leadership development experience so different from anything they had
experienced previously. Cam said, “It’s experiential. You’re doing it. It’s staying with you, so it makes you think.” Jane said her KLC experience was “radically different from any other learning experience” she had ever had. During the program, a lot of emphasis was placed on paying attention to what was happening in the room, answering questions like, “What are you hearing? What are you feeling? What are other people doing? What do you observe happening around you?” Jane said this was the first experiential learning environment where she was “present enough to know that’s what was happening.” Having an experiential learning environment added another layer to the co-researchers’ understanding of the concepts, and the memory of having such a different kind of learning experience helped them better remember and internalize the concepts.

**Importance of the debrief (3.2).**

Two of the co-researchers specifically emphasized the importance of having time to think about and debrief the experiences that participants have in the classroom during the program, particularly as it relates to the Case-in-Point methodology and the strong emotions that can be elicited during those experiences. Since Kansas Leadership Center programs usually occur over multiple days, the debrief sessions often take place in the morning so participants have the evening to think about and reflect on their experiences. Jane talked about a specific experience during her program that involved an intense discussion about racism and factions in the room around the issue of racism. She identified herself as being part of the faction who no longer thought the conversation was “alive” for the group, until someone became upset and walked out of the room. She went on to describe what happened for her following that experience:

“…and then something shifted in me because I realized I wasn’t looking deep enough, I was missing something. That night…it hit me like a ton of bricks, and I came back the next day and was able to share my thoughts in the morning debrief, which helped us all move forward. From this experience I learned to look deeper, beyond what seems
obvious to me, but also the importance of allowing time to process and come back and
debrief the experience. What would have been different if we hadn’t had a time
dedicated to sharing our thoughts?”

Absent the debrief that occurred following that heated and emotional group experience,
participants may have left the program thinking and feeling differently about what had happened
and would have missed the opportunity to consider the question, “What does this have to do with
leadership?”

Ben echoed the importance of having time devoted to debriefing those “hot experiences”
that happen during the program. After emphasizing the importance of the debrief time, this co-
researcher added, “And I’d have to say I think I’m a believer in that now… I’ve become a
believer not only in what’s being taught but the methodology of how it’s being taught.” The
debrief discussions help participants make sense of their experience. The debrief is not a time to
rehash what happened or repeat conversations that already occurred; rather it is a time to
acknowledge individual thoughts and reactions, to make additional connections and
interpretations, and to deepen the learning and understanding of the leadership concepts.

Specific concept (3.3).

Most of the co-researchers talked about a specific concept or idea that was particularly
transformative for them. The idea that was mentioned most frequently by co-researchers was
related to their definition of leadership and viewing **leadership as an activity that is separate
from position or authority**. Ben described how, prior to his Kansas Leadership Center
experience, he would not have talked about “leadership” as being something anyone can do; he
believed “leadership” was something that some people had the ability to do while others were
lacking that ability. Prior to KLC, he admitted he would have said, “…some people have some
leadership gifts, some people have more leadership gifts, but some people don’t have any…and
that’s not a sin; it just is what it is.” Gail said her KLC experience “very clearly” shifted her thinking about leadership. She went on to contrast her definition of leadership following her KLC experience with the definition of leadership she provided during a non-KLC leadership development experience she participated in a number of years ago. In looking back at her definition of leadership from the previous program, she realized her definition at that time was much more consistent with what she now considers to be management and authority. Both of these co-researchers shifted their thinking of leadership from being more about authority to being more about taking actions that result in mobilizing individuals to make progress on issues they care about.

Another idea that was mentioned by co-researchers was related to the idea of multiple interpretations and thinking about how a situation or an issue can be viewed or interpreted in different ways by different people. They talked about the importance of including conflictual interpretations – interpretations that may raise the heat or may be viewed less favorably – as opposed to only making interpretations that are more benign. Some also mentioned the importance of challenging people (including themselves) to move beyond the initial one or two thoughts generated in a discussion and being willing to “try on an idea,” giving that idea fair consideration even if just for a moment.

Other co-researchers talked about raising the heat to move a group of people into the “productive zone,” the point at which a group is able to work together to begin to make progress on their challenges. Ben indicated he learned how to raise the heat and be conflictual in a group while serving the purpose of making progress and without having to be a “jackass” in the process. He went on to describe his experience like this:

“...if you’re going to raise the heat, if you’re going to go to the productive zone, then be productive for crying out loud…early on with KLC, I didn’t know how to do that. I saw
a lot of bombs blowing up, but I didn’t see how we were getting productive. And I think the farther I went with KLC, I understood that we weren’t just blowing things up to create scorched turf...we were seeking to go somewhere and...learning more about how to help people move to that as opposed to just help them learn how to blow things up.”

Ann said she became more aware that leadership is risky and of the risks inherent in choosing to exercise leadership, and that new awareness led to trying to make sure the decision to take on that risk is a conscious one and then finding ways to manage that risk while making conscious choices about what leadership behaviors would be most beneficial in a given situation. She realized that exercising leadership, in part, is about taking the time to “think [through] and evaluate what a space and process needs” and then deliberately decide who she wants “to be in the space and not being accidental or thoughtless about it.” She has become more strategic and intentional in her interactions.

**Theme 4: Application of Learning**

This theme consisted of 36 significant statements and 4 meaning units. All of the co-researchers discussed applying and/or experimenting with the concepts they learned during their leadership development experience. Some of the co-researchers talked about the general applicability of the concepts while others talked more specifically about applying the concepts in different contexts.

**TABLE 6**

**THEME 4: APPLICATION OF LEARNING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning Units</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 General Applicability</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2 During the Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 At Home or With Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 At Work or in the Community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
General applicability (4.1).

Some co-researchers found the Kansas Leadership Center’s concepts to be immediately applicable while some were less certain about how to apply what they had learned during their leadership development program experience to their life outside the classroom. Even in expressing some uncertainty about applicability, Cam recognized that what she had learned was “good stuff”; she just needed some time to figure out how to incorporate what she had learned into her everyday life.

Elle compared applying the KLC concepts to “eating your veggies,” making the point that the more often one puts the ideas into practice, the better one gets at using them. The more one applies the concepts, the easier it becomes to exercise leadership effectively. Not everyone likes vegetables, but the more often one eats vegetables, perhaps tried in different ways, one can grow to like them. And while one may not particularly enjoy eating vegetables, vegetables are part of a healthy diet, and there are a number of benefits to eating them. Similarly, people may not initially enjoy putting these concepts into practice, even though in the long run, it may be beneficial to do so.

Ann talked about the concepts not being “cookie cutter” in their application; an individual can experiment with applying the ideas in ways that work for him/her. While the concepts are clearly articulated, this co-researcher likes that the flexibility in applicability “gives me permission to not do it [her] way or [his] way, but to figure out my way to interact with the material.” An individual is not limited to applying the concepts in exactly the same way the faculty demonstrated during the program; one can take the ideas and find unique ways to apply them in any given situation, which is a primary goal of the Kansas Leadership Center.
During the program (4.2).

Many of the co-researchers talked about their experiences in experimenting with the concepts during their Kansas Leadership Center program experience, sometimes with successful results and sometimes not. Experimenting to find out what works and what does not work in the classroom setting is intended to be a key part of the learning process during the program experience. Practicing in a “safe” space like the classroom helps participants think through where and how they might practice these applications in “real world” environments, which is a primary goal of the Case-in-Point pedagogy employed by the Kansas Leadership Center.

Ike found that experimenting with new behaviors during his KLC program experience gave him insight into his “default behavior” (i.e., the way he typically behaves in a situation) and how he might go about changing that behavior, which was something he had never experienced in a leadership program before. By trying experiments that “backfired” on him during the program, he moved “deeper into the rabbit hole to change the way I function. I don’t know that anything I’ve ever done in the leadership development realm worked that way.”

Elle, who recognized herself as more of a “talker” than other participants in her KLC program, began to practice writing down her thoughts in a journal prior to sharing them with the larger group. She would then think through whether sharing those thoughts with the group was mostly for her benefit or mostly for the benefit of the group. In addition, she began to spend more time intently listening to what others in the group were saying. Careful listening and thinking more before speaking were not activities she viewed being possible ways to exercise leadership prior to her experience with the Kansas Leadership Center.

A few of the co-researchers mentioned the value of spending time during the program processing their leadership challenges or dilemmas when they had access to the resources of
others in the room for ideas and feedback on what they might do to make progress on their challenge when they returned home. Ben described his thoughts when he was asked to share his leadership dilemma with the group:

“Personally, I considered it a great honor. I had some friends that said, ‘Are you crazy? Why would you do something like that?’ But I’m just geeky enough to think, ‘Are you kidding me?’ I’ve got a dilemma, and I’ve got this whole panel of gurus…I’ve got Yoda and Obi Wan. I’ve got the whole group right here. And they’re going to process my dilemma. And I’m going to get the benefit of their experience. That was quite a privilege to me, and I really appreciated being asked.”

Gail talked about the difficulty of being in the “hot seat” when her case was used as an example in front of the group (with her permission). She needed one-on-one time with a coach to help her debrief the experience, but in the end, she recognized that experience was “extremely valuable” in helping her learn about leadership.

Dan described the process of experimenting during the program and trying new behaviors as being, “Fun in the way that I just like to experiment and just try different things, and I had no preconceived notion of what I thought it was going to be.” While not all of the co-researchers described the experience of experimenting during the program as “fun,” they all recognized the value in experimenting as part of the learning experience.

At home or with friends (4.3).

Some of the co-researchers went home and started to apply the concepts during interactions with their family members or friends, though not necessarily in ways their family and friends were able to notice or articulate. Ike said, “I don’t know if my wife would be able to explain what the difference is, but I think it affects things [at home] in some way.” Gail said something similar, referring to applying these concepts in interactions with her children, “I don’t think my kids know when I’m giving the work back…or when I’m trying to raise the heat so that they will own and lead.”
In some cases, the co-researchers’ attempts to apply what they learned were noticeable to others and not always welcome. Dan said he started to practice applying what he learned with the individuals who were closest to him, which he later realized might have been the safest option but not necessarily the best option. He laughed as he talked about having friends say things like, “Don’t use that stuff on me,” or, “Where is this coming from?” While family and friends may seem like a natural starting point to begin practicing these concepts, as this co-researcher recognized, they may not be the best place to start in applying what was learned during the KLC program experience.

**At work or in the community (4.4).**

Some co-researchers returned home and began to apply the concepts they had learned at work and/or in the community. Those in management or supervisory roles talked about how their Kansas Leadership Center experience immediately impacted the way they worked with and supervised their staff. Co-researchers who are in professions that involve educating others, such as teachers or pastors, also found the KLC concepts to be helpful in their work environments. Ann talked about how, even as a public speaking teacher, she has found ways to incorporate leadership in the classroom:

“For me professionally, [my KLC experience has] been a really cool enhancement of what I teach… it gives me incredible depth of experience to share with people. I can go beyond the mundane examples that I might use as a typical public speaking teacher. And I start to see in my classroom leadership being a tool to use in a lot more situations. So if I see somebody stepping into a leadership role in the classroom and I can encourage that and give them advice on how to effectively do that, it probably is not going to make them necessarily a better speaker, but it’ll make them more successful as a student. I’ve found that the overlap there has just been really interesting.”

Ike, who is a pastor, talked about being able to make changes at his church – changes to things the church had been doing for 25 or 30 years. He also noted that churches are typically not quick to change; indeed, they are often notorious for their inability to change! And when
there is change, it is often accompanied by a fair amount of emotion and conflict. He specifically credits the Kansas Leadership Center with equipping him with the tools to effectively make those needed changes at his church in a way that generated little conflict because he stayed focused on purpose and progress and engaged “unusual voices” throughout the process. (“Unusual voices” refers to individuals or groups who are often overlooked or not given a voice in a discussion even though they are likely to be impacted by the outcome of the discussion.) He said, “Had I not had [my KLC experience], maybe it would have turned out the same way, but I doubt it; it was really marked in specific ways through that experience.”

Dan talked about trying to apply the concepts in his work and feeling like his attempts were unsuccessful, in part because of the larger system that was in place at his organization. The individuals on the team he managed had all been at the organization longer than he had, so they were especially suspicious of his encouragement to experiment with new behaviors when they felt they had witnessed people in other departments lose their jobs for being perceived as non-conforming. Dan realized he was not successful at breaking down barriers and creating a space that was trustworthy enough for those changes to occur and for everyone to begin moving in the same direction. He said it was hard to “work upstream” in that particular environment. Not long after his KLC experience, Dan left the job he had for a new career opportunity.

Ben applied these concepts in his work with one organization in the community, which led to him being invited into other organizations in the community to do similar work. While these other organizations are not familiar with the Kansas Leadership Center or the KLC curriculum, he said that when he asks people questions that are “absolutely off of [the KLC] playbook,” he can tell that no one has asked them these types of questions before. He said, “I’m inviting them into understanding [these ideas]. And you can see the lights begin to come on in
their eyes.” Even without a direct connection to the Kansas Leadership Center, these concepts are resonating with individuals who have connections with those who have participated in KLC programs. These co-researchers are taking what they have learned and finding ways to apply it and share it with others, creating an additional level of impact for the Kansas Leadership Center.

**Theme 5: Experience of Emotion**

All of the co-researchers mentioned some emotion or feeling that they experienced during the leadership development program and/or some emotion or feeling that they witnessed others experiencing during the program. This theme consisted of 40 significant statements and 6 meaning units.

**TABLE 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning Units</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Love or Emotional Reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Uncomfortable or Outside Comfort Zone</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.3 Confused or Frustrated</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.4 Excited and Exhausted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Overwhelmed or Overstimulated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 Emotion in Others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Love or emotional reaction (5.1).**

Co-researchers used the word “love” when talking about their Kansas Leadership Center experience and/or the KLC ideas, with some saying things like, “I’m just in love with those ideas,” and others talking about their love for the topic of leadership in general. Other co-researchers talked about how “it wasn’t love at first sight” when they came to the Kansas Leadership Center nor was it love at first sight for those with whom they tried to share the KLC ideas.
In addition to the significant statements from the transcripts that are included as part of this theme, memos/notes on the interviews indicate that three of the co-researchers had an emotional reaction at some point during the interview that resulted in them being on the verge of tears. Gail had an unexpected emotional response when reflecting on how much her work has changed since her introduction to the Kansas Leadership Center. Elle talked about her experiences with her coaches and how those experiences contributed to her learning about leadership. She referred to coaching as “an acceleration,” saying her coaches “accelerated my leadership learning faster than I can really describe to people.” Then she started to tear up as she emphasized that, as young person herself, she wishes more young people were able to take advantage of opportunities like the one provided to her at the Kansas Leadership Center. Ben’s emotional response came as he was talking about working purposefully with others to make progress on issues they care about in their community:

“…as it relates to why we are here together and the thing we are seeking to make progress on…we are together on that. And that’s a beautiful thing to me…And I don’t shy away from that word: that is a beautiful thing to me.”

These co-researchers have emotions connected to their experience with the Kansas Leadership Center and emotions related to the changes they have seen in their lives as a result of that experience.

**Uncomfortable or outside comfort zone (5.2).**

A number of co-researchers talked about how, particularly at the beginning of their experience or during their initial experience, they were uncomfortable or outside their comfort zone while in their Kansas Leadership Center program. Some co-researchers mentioned that the lack of traditional classroom structure during the program contributed to the discomfort; their KLC program experience was starting out noticeably differently than previous leadership
development experiences they had had. Fern said the first few days of the program “were very unnerving because it was unlike any other process or training” she had ever attended, and Elle said, “I was immediately really uncomfortable with the lack of structure and how the presenters were asking us what to do next.” Co-researchers found some of the immediately noticeable differences in the program to be a bit disturbing for them.

While some of the co-researchers were uncomfortable at the beginning, they began to understand later in the experience that those feelings of discomfort were supposed to be part of the experience; the discomfort is part of the program design and is intended to add to the learning experience. Hugh acknowledged that he was definitely out of his comfort zone during his initial Kansas Leadership Center and realized as he got further into his experience “that’s their intent.” Fern described the beginning of her KLC experience as feeling like a “useless process to be in the moment in the room without any real issue,” but she said as the group began to debrief those experiences, “the ahas start to happen.” Similar to significant statements included in Meaning Unit 3.2 Importance of the Debrief, some co-researchers found the debrief time helpful in making sense of the discomfort they had been experiencing during the program.

Confused or frustrated (5.3).

Some of the co-researchers were confused or frustrated during their program experience as they tried to make sense of what was going on, particularly trying to figure out what exactly the faculty were doing and why. Often during a program, one KLC faculty member will be at the front of the room taking responsibility for most of the facilitating and content delivery while other KLC faculty and/or staff members are in other parts of the room observing, taking notes, and sometimes intervening by asking questions or stating their observations of the group. Gail said that she and other participants in her cohort found it “really disconcerting… that there were
so many people who were not at the front of the room who were copiously taking notes.” The group was confused about the role of these other individuals in the room, what they were doing, and what it was supposed to mean. She also acknowledged that the increased awareness of those individuals also resulted in a heightened awareness of what each person in the room was doing (i.e., self, other participants, and KLC faculty), which then led to increased insights about what was happening in the group.

Elle was especially frustrated by the lack of feedback provided to participants during KLC programs, saying “I really need positive and negative feedback…And the Kansas Leadership Center doesn’t give you positive or negative feedback, so it’s miserable.” Hugh talked about the first couple of days of the program being especially frustrating, trying to “grasp the understanding” of what is going on and why. He went on to explain how the confusion and the frustration experienced during the program may be more than some participants can handle:

“…there is part of the process where people have absolutely no clue what’s going on. They’re like, ‘Why are we here? Are we rambling over and over? I came here to talk about issues in Southeastern Kansas; we haven’t talked about any of them in the last 5 hours. We’re still going around about something [and] I’m not for sure I understand what we’re talking about.’ …I understand it’s a process and it’s a learning experience, but if you lose someone completely before they really understand the meaning behind it or understand that this is an exercise, what justice are you doing to that individual? Or for that individual that represents a small town in Southeastern Kansas or Southwest Kansas or a community in Wichita? What is their perception of the Kansas Leadership Center?”

Hugh also mentioned possible ways KLC faculty or staff might consider responding to those individuals – by taking time to explain the purpose of a particular process and to describe in an explicit way what they are trying to accomplish and what concepts they are trying to help participants understand. He said, “Everyone doesn’t respond the same way,” and some people need the additional information and context to make sense of and find value in their experience. His final comment was, “Would you rather completely lose someone? Or pull them to the side
and say, ‘Ok, let’s talk about this. How are you feeling? Is there anything I can [do to] help you?’”

Excited and Exhausted (5.4).

A number of co-researchers talked about being excited or enthusiastic about their Kansas Leadership Center experience. At the same time, a number of participants also mentioned being exhausted by the experience. Gail said her experience was both exhausting and exhilarating, which she noted is “pretty standard when you’re doing something really good.” In talking about her exhaustion and her anxiety, Elle compared her time at the Kansas Leadership Center to playing a sport:

“…now after I’ve [been to KLC] multiple times…it [is] more like, ‘Let’s play.’ …I don’t go home and worry about what happened like I did in the beginning because I think, ‘Ok, we played our sport in the room.’ And then we leave it on the court.”

The exhaustion and the anxiety have been lessened now that she knows what to expect when she comes to the Kansas Leadership Center.

Some co-researchers also noticed that, while they were feeling excited and intrigued by the experience, that was not necessarily the way everyone in the room was feeling during the experience; some of the other participants appeared to be confused or frustrated, with Jane saying, “Unlike many people in the room, I wasn’t experiencing much confusion or loss; I was feeling very excited and intrigued by the process.” Jane said she felt supported, present, and engaged during the program, but also felt like she was “catching on in a way that my peers weren’t catching on.” She noticed that while she was excited about what was happening in the room and what was yet to come in the experience, others in the room were obviously “frustrated by the process.”
Overwhelmed or overstimulated (5.5).

While co-researchers felt excited during their experience, similar to their feelings of exhaustion, they also reported feeling overwhelmed or overstimulated by the experience. Cam said she left the program feeling like she “could not stuff anymore into my brain.” Elle attributed her overstimulation to the amount of observation one does during the KLC program, paying attention to group dynamics and what others in the room are doing and saying (or not doing or not saying) as opposed to just listening to an instructor lecture on a particular topic.

Some co-researchers talked about trying to take notes and write down as much as possible to help deal with the overstimulation and try to capture what they were thinking and feeling and learning during the program. Cam said that even though she left the Kansas Leadership Center feeling really overwhelmed by the ideas and exhausted by the experience, she was excited because she thought that what she had experienced was going to be life changing for her.

Emotion in others (5.6).

Co-researchers recognized the emotions they themselves experienced during the program, and they also recognized the emotions experienced by other participants during the program, particularly during Case-in-Point sessions. Case-in-Point uses the classroom as a teaching environment and also as a learning lab, pointing out how group dynamics and behavior in the classroom mimic those encountered in other community settings. Case-in-Point forces the group to look at the system at play in the room rather than talking about past experiences with other people who are not in the room and with whom others are not familiar; the focus is on what is happening right here, right now, in this room, with this group, of which everyone in the room is a part. Elle explained that sometimes Case-in-Point is about “letting what happens happen” in the
group rather than a faculty member or someone else intervening to try to “pacify people” or make sure everyone is happy.

Co-researchers talked about “watching people get upset” and having “these tough, heated conversations” during the program. Witnessing other participants in emotional states were memorable experiences for co-researchers, who said moments like these “stand out in my mind,” “continue to stay with me,” and are “something…I’ll never forget.” Co-researchers also observed that different participants reacted differently to experiences throughout the program. Jane recognized that the emotions she was feeling were not necessarily the same as the emotions that others were experiencing, which led her to question what it was about the experience that made individuals experience it in such different ways:

“…I remember…watching other people in the room with a smile on my face because I’m feeling, ‘Whoa, this is really good. And whatever this is, I like it a lot.’ And people in the room with completely different emotions…frustration, anger, this is a waste of time…people were having a very different experience than I was, and I remember wondering about that. What makes this experience different for someone else in the room?”

Personal emotions and other participants’ emotions stayed in co-researchers’ minds following their experiences at the Kansas Leadership Center, with some of these emotional experiences standing out as their most memorable moments from the program.

**Theme 6: Challenge and Support from Others**

This theme consisted of 43 significant statements and 4 meaning units. Connecting with others was an important part of the transformational experience for these co-researchers. The individuals connected to the leadership development experience – KLC staff, faculty, coaches, and other participants – were able to challenge and support the co-researchers during and after their program experience.
TABLE 8

THEME 6: CHALLENGE AND SUPPORT FROM OTHERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning Units</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Challenge from Others</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.2 Support from Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Connection with Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 Trust in Others</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Challenge from others (6.1).

A number of co-researchers said they were challenged during their program experience, and they felt like that challenge was beneficial for them. Elle said she went into her first Kansas Leadership Center experience wanting to have an experience that really challenged her, and she was definitely challenged. Upon reflection, she found the challenges she experienced during the program were “making new things happen in my brain that weren’t happening before.” Some of co-researchers described the challenge of the experience as being “fun” for them. Gail said her first experience at the Kansas Leadership Center was “awkward and difficult,” but she thought that was “sort of fun.” Dan said he enjoyed the self-exploration that comes as part of the experience, even in the midst of feeling uncomfortable that certain values and perceptions he held were being challenged. He ultimately found the challenge and the discomfort to be “a good thing.” Ann said she knows that she will always be challenged when she comes to the Kansas Leadership Center, but that KLC provides a safe environment for that type of challenge to take place:

“I think that what I’ve come to expect and appreciate is…a way to practice really hard work in a fairly safe environment. And so, if I feel myself getting triggered or having an unexpected response, I know that I have this space to work it out and figure out what’s going on. But…I don’t think, ‘Oh, this is going to be easy.’ I never think that [when I go to a training with KLC]. I always think it’s going to be challenging and tough, but I also don’t fear that experience.”
Jane talked specifically about how her coach helped her realize some ways she had been limiting herself and challenged her to be open to the possibilities in her life, which ultimately led to a job change for her. In addition to coaches, a couple of co-researchers spoke about how other participants were able to challenge them during the program and also how they were able to challenge other participants. Gail remembered specific classmates who challenged her to more closely examine and experiment with the leadership behaviors she seemed least willing to exhibit, those that were most outside her comfort zone. Hugh talked about how he and other participants in his cohort were able to identify each other’s triggers (i.e., topics or conversations that consistently result in an individual having an emotional and/or irrational response) and intentionally use those triggers – rather than avoid them – to take people out of their comfort zone and challenge them to respond in a different way. They viewed this as a way to motivate and “get the best out of” each other.

**Support from others (6.2).**

In addition to being challenged by other participants, some of the co-researchers talked about how other participants were able to support them during the program. Cam pointed out that “some people pick up on [these ideas] faster than others,” and the participants who “get it” right away often encourage other participants to keep at it until they can get there too. During a program, she says, “you really see the passion to work on this together.” Jane’s program cohort established that one of their group’s values was providing support to each other during the program experience. Jane would often confront the group when it appeared they were not providing support to participants when they needed it. Another participant helped Jane realize that when she would call out the group on not providing support to someone during the program,
she was actually saying that she personally did not feel supported, which led her to a profound insight about her behavior outside the classroom:

“…instead of speaking up and saying, ‘I feel unsupported, and I would like support,’ I would start modeling that behavior hoping to get it back. And I started to see that happening in every aspect of my life. …It changed me…that was a big thing for me.”

Participants work to support each other in, what can at times be, a challenging environment.

Some of the co-researchers view others from their KLC program and from other KLC programs as a source of support now that their program experience is over. Several co-researchers talked about the benefit of working with others who have been through a Kansas Leadership Center experience, noting that staying close to the language and the concepts serves as a “constant dose effect” that is helpful in continuing to think about and apply the ideas. Fern said learning about leadership and exercising leadership are “a journey” and recognized that “I’m not ever going to get this exactly right. But there are others on this journey with me, and that makes it all much easier.” The KLC experience was viewed as a “significant event” that serves as a connector for the participants so that, even as times passes, these individuals feel like they can call on one another for support.

**Connection with others (6.3).**

For some of the co-researchers, just going through the leadership development experience with the other participants has created a bond and resulted in relationships that have lasted beyond the program experience. Fern said the relationships she built during her KLC program experience have been invaluable in her work throughout the state. While participants made connections during the program, Cam indicated she was more willing to take risks in building relationships with others in her community that she might not have considered building prior to
her experience with the Kansas Leadership Center, and those relationships have proven beneficial in helping to make progress on issues in her community.

Some of the co-researchers found that being around other people who care about exercising leadership and making progress was motivational, with Hugh saying, “…just being in the building and being with so many like-minded individuals that are there to be better leaders, it motivates you. It energizes you.” In addition to being motivational, some co-researchers talked about how being around others who care about community issues and are wrestling with these leadership principles increased their confidence and helped them realize, “I can do this too.”

Elle talked about KLC’s effort to make a personal connection with the participants in her cohort and how she thinks that relationship aspect helped contribute to her group’s success. This personal connection also created a sense of accountability that had been missing in her other leadership development experiences:

“…the transformational piece of it is…the personal connection, that’s what made our group successful in a way that I’d never experienced in a leadership training before…You’re accountable to somebody other than your own insecurities. You’re accountable to somebody other than your parents. And it’s not a therapist. It’s not a boss. You’re accountable to somebody that’s all about increasing the conversation.”

Continued connections with other individuals from their Kansas Leadership Center experience expanded co-researchers’ networks of people they could go to for support and advice in exercising leadership.

**Trust in others (6.4).**

Some of the co-researchers mentioned that having trust in the faculty and/or trust in the other participants was beneficial during and following their program experience. Gail said her group was willing to put their trust in the faculty because “they seemed knowledgeable, and we knew what we were doing was a little bit different than any kind of other experience, but there
was a level of trust and a willingness to be vulnerable.” Ben expressed similar thoughts, saying that while his initial KLC experience was both confusing and intriguing, he had “a level of trust” in the faculty that they knew what they were doing. He figured “there was something that they were up to; I just didn’t know what it was.” His trust in the faculty allowed him to observe what was happening in the room and describe it “fascinating,” even if he did not yet completely understand what was going on or what he was supposed to be taking away from the experience.

Gail said that in her work she has interactions with others who have been through KLC experiences, and having those shared experiences has helped them make progress on issues in their work together in the community. She said that because they have “practiced raising the heat together” in classroom environments, they trust each other and “don’t hesitate… to take challenging issues on because we know that we can and come out on the other side.” Ike talked about trying to create the same type of trustworthy environment when he is involved in teaching and facilitating leadership development programs, in part because he recognizes the importance of that trust from a participant’s perspective. He and his co-facilitators “do a lot of work to create a system that’s safe for [participants], where they trust us.” Establishing trust in a group of participants who are often strangers at the beginning of a program can be challenging; however, this trust is also critical to the participant experience.

**Theme 7: Communication with Others**

This theme consisted of 34 significant statements and 4 meaning units. All of the co-researchers mentioned something about how their leadership development experience has impacted the way they communicate with others.
### TABLE 9

**THEME 7: COMMUNICATION WITH OTHERS**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Meaning Units</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Listening and Asking Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Vocabulary/Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Making Progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Common Good</td>
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**Listening and asking questions (7.1).**

Some of the co-researchers said they are better listeners and/or are able to ask more questions and ask better questions. Not only have they increased the quantity of questions they ask, they have also improved the quality of those questions. They also talked about being more open-minded and understanding of others while at the same time trying not to make assumptions about what other people think and feel. Dan described his attempt to begin asking more questions during board and committee meetings he was a part of, pushing these groups to think more about diversity and who is not “at the table.” He wanted them to think about diversity as more than just race, but also diversity of thought and including people who come from “different walks of life.” He worked on “interjecting the normal and traditional conversations with questions” to help the group think about what they want to make progress on and how diversity – or a lack of diversity – could impact their ability to reach their goals.

Ben made an analogy comparing the person asking thoughtful questions to help a group move forward to a Sherpa helping to guide someone to the top of a mountain. When he finds himself in environments where people need to make progress, he asks himself:

“How can I raise the level of leadership or influence the potential for the highest degree of leadership to come to this moment? How can I guide people along the path? How can I ask better questions? How can I listen better to the [various] factions? And take seriously that everybody’s voice matters…And guide people up the mountain a little farther. Whatever that means. And maybe it means just getting more people engaged in the thoughtful processing of defining what matters and making progress on it.”

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Asking more questions of more people and really listening to their responses has been an intentional behavior change for many of these co-researchers.

**Vocabulary/Language (7.2).**

Nearly all of the co-researchers mentioned having a new vocabulary, having a new way to think about, talk about, and frame the concept of leadership and its related components. For some of the co-researchers, the language was the first change they noticed following their Kansas Leadership Center experience. Ann indicated that she uses the KLC language almost without even realizing it; the language has become so ingrained in how she thinks and speaks that using that vocabulary is now automatic for her. She said she finds herself saying things like, “Let’s stop and really look at the situation; let’s really diagnose what’s going on,” or, “That sounds like a technical solution; this seems like a bigger problem.” The co-researchers have found the language to be really important, recognizing that how we communicate about civic issues and challenges matters and can impact the way people engage around those issues and challenges.

Gail likened the way the Kansas Leadership Center provides a language and a way of thinking about leadership to the way religion often provides a language and a way of thinking about the world:

“This is going to sound really strange…but I think religion works really hard to give people a vocabulary and a way of thinking about the world, and I think that, different from other leadership training experiences, the KLC model provides a language and vocabulary and a way of thinking about exercising leadership...”

Similar to the unification that can be experienced by those who share the same religious background or experience, using the KLC language around others who have been through a
Kansas Leadership Center program immediately identifies an individual as another KLC alumna; the language has become a unifier among those who are familiar with it.

Ann said the KLC language has provided additional clarity and a way to better articulate concepts they had tried to unclearly articulate in the past in their local community leadership program, particularly around the notion that exercising leadership can be risky. She felt they used to send their leadership program alumni out into the community “with this incredible sense of optimism, without any sense of danger or problem ahead.” Incorporating some ideas and vocabulary from the Kansas Leadership Center has helped her community leadership program’s alumni understand the potential risks that can be involved in exercising leadership.

A couple of co-researchers mentioned thinking and talking about things from a systems level. They began thinking about how everything – each situation and each individual – are part of a larger system, a larger whole, a piece of a “larger puzzle.” Jane said she “thought a lot about the fact that most of the people walking around…in the world have no idea that they are part of a system…they’re part of something larger that they don’t even know is happening.” Exercising leadership involves helping people understand the bigger picture, and the language can help provide a framework for that understanding.

Making progress (7.3).

A number of co-researchers described a shift in their thinking from problems and challenges as things that need to be solved or fixed to problems and challenges as things to make progress on together. The ability to see and look for progress is something co-researchers credit to their Kansas Leadership Center experience. Before Dan gets involved with an organization or a particular cause in his community, he now stops to ask himself, “Do I have the time and ability to make a difference?” And since his KLC experience, he defines “making a difference” as
being able to “bring in some new thinking around leadership and how to help the group make progress.” Similarly, Ann said when she is working in a group, she now spends much more time thinking about, “What’s the goal? How do we get people toward that goal? And what process is going to lead us in the right direction? How do we move ourselves in that direction?” Cam said she can look back on issues in the community and see how progress has been made, even on those issues that feel overwhelming. The challenges may have changed over time, but progress has been made, and that is what helps keep her going.

Fern discovered that sometimes making progress on an issue may mean “some initial setbacks…or giving up my own interests a little bit so that everybody can go in on the topic.” She identifies that insight as having “the most profound impact” on the way she exercises leadership. Ike said his KLC experience has had “a very real effect in a lot of facets of my life,” including finding ways to change and make progress on the things he cares about. Ben said that when people ask him if he really loves his job, his honest answer is, “No, I don’t, but it’s how I live.” So if he does not really love his job, what does he really love to do? Since going to the Kansas Leadership Center, he said:

“I love to create environments where people and organizations can make progress on the needs of what they believe their mission and the perceived needs of their community really are, whether it’s an individual, whether it’s an organization, whether it’s a for-profit, whether it’s a nonprofit.”

Ben is thankful his job allows him to do some of that and allows him time to participate in programs and events at the Kansas Leadership Center.

**Common good (7.4).**

In addition to talking and thinking more in terms of making progress, some of the co-researchers talked about “the common good” and about feeling like they are better equipped to make a difference in their community. Hugh said he has always been active and involved in the
community, but the Kansas Leadership Center motivated him to be more than just involved; now he wants to be more focused and invested in making an impact in the community:

“I think the whole purpose is the common good. To me, that’s a powerful statement ‘for the common good.’ And I really am invested in the community, and to me, it’s an opportunity for me to do something. I really look at the Kansas Leadership Center as an opportunity to continue to pursue the goals and ideas that I really feel passionate about.”

When asked what their leadership development experience means and has meant to them, a couple of the co-researchers talked about feeling like they are better equipped to make a difference in their community, even if they are not exactly sure what that looks like or how they might measure that difference. Dan said he hopes “there will be some kind of lasting long-term effect” as a result of his involvement in various groups and communities. He admitted, “I don’t know how you translate that into numbers…I’m not sure how you quantify that,” but he hopes his efforts make a difference and contribute to the common good.

**Theme 8: Recognition of Self and Others**

This theme consisted of 37 significant statements and 4 meaning units. Co-researchers described their leadership development experience having an impact on how they view themselves and others.

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<th>Meaning Units</th>
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<td>8.4</td>
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**Awareness of Self and Others (8.1).**

Many of the co-researchers shared that they have an increased awareness of themselves and others following their leadership development experience. They spend more time
considering others’ perspectives. For Ann, her increased awareness of others has become evident to others, to the point that the president of her college called to ask her advice on something. He led by saying, “You just know everything that’s going on on campus.” Ann realized he had that perception of her because, “I’m frequently bringing up alternate viewpoints, [which] increases my credibility at the table because other people are like, ‘Oh…we forgot about them.’”

Other co-researchers talked about the awareness of being “in the room” and being present in the moment. Jane went on to talk about being more present in her life as a result of her experience with the Kansas Leadership Center. She explained “being present in her life” as:

“…not being so focused on the day-to-day mundane stuff, but taking the time to take a step back and look objectively at where you are, what are you thinking, what are you feeling, and why might all of this be happening for you. I feel like before, I had never done that in my life. Not in my work life, not in my personal life, just not ever. I was so busy just being on the ground running all the time.”

In addition to being more present in her life, Jane also talked about being more aware of “how people come to be,” thinking about all of the events in their lives that cause them “to be the way they are, to say the things they say, to act the way they act.” She has come to realize there is “more at play” in a room than what can initially be seen.

Fern recognized she had a lack of sensitivity to what others might be feeling in group situations, which she now tries to be more aware of. She realized that individuals may have underlying personal challenges that can contribute to a group’s inability to make progress. Co-researchers have an increased self-awareness and an increased awareness of others that leads them to make fewer assumptions. A few co-researchers talked about not assuming that others have the same knowledge, thoughts, feelings, and reactions that they do in a given situation and
that it is important to ask and give others the space to talk about those things in order to make progress.

Importance of engaging and mobilizing others (8.2).

In addition to an increased awareness of others in a given situation, co-researchers also mentioned that through their leadership development experience they began to recognize the importance of engaging and mobilizing others in order for progress to be made. Gail summed this up by saying, “…I feel like when I’m the best version of myself and exercising what I learned, I’m working to create space and conditions for other people to do that important work, whatever is of value or meaningful to them.” She emphasized that more progress can be made when more people are mobilized, and if she can create opportunities for that to happen, that is transformational. She said, “It’s not about me; it’s about creating space for others and then just amazing things that I don’t expect to happen happen…it’s kind of been powerful.” Cam said nearly the same thing as Gail, “It’s not just me…I don’t have to do it all. I may be passionate about something, but it’s really better off in somebody else’s hands...And my [job] is to hand it off and support that other person in making it happen.”

Hugh talked about how, before his Kansas Leadership Center experience, he had this notion of being able “to tell my story…and get everyone to see things my way” in a given situation. He credits KLC with helping him learn that everyone’s point of view is important and that getting everyone’s feedback and involvement leads to a situation where more individuals are empowered to pursue a common goal. Following his experience with the Kansas Leadership Center, Dan said he realized, “I can’t do it by myself, whereas before I thought I could.” The co-researchers came to understand that they cannot make progress alone; if they hope to create change in their community, they need others engaged and mobilized to work alongside them.
**Others do not always understand (8.3).**

Co-researchers noticed that what they perceive as trying to make progress in a situation may be perceived by others as trying to slow down the process or cause problems. When others in a situation have not had the same experience, they do not necessarily understand the purpose or the benefit of a slower, more inclusive process. Ann said she is no longer willing to “accept the quickest solution” without additional discussion or explanation. She said she asks a lot more questions than she used to, and when she is in a group of people who have already decided what the “right” next step is, “…they can feel like [asking questions is] a profound waste of time. And if they don’t engage in that process and see value in it, I’m sure it’s incredibly frustrating to be slowed down.”

Elle said she “feels bad” for people who are in meetings with Kansas Leadership Center alumni when they have not had a KLC experience themselves “because they don’t understand…they don’t hear the situation in the same way.” Spending time trying to diagnose a situation or explore multiple interpretations can result in people asking, “Why are you causing so many problems?” The additional questions can make people uncomfortable, but Cam pointed out that once people from her community go through a Kansas Leadership Center program experience, then they understand and appreciate why she says or does certain things. They come back and say, “Now I understand why you use this.” They see the value once they have had the experience themselves.

**Self-confidence (8.4).**

Many of the co-researchers described how their leadership development experience has increased their self-confidence and their belief that they can make change happen, that they can impact or influence a situation and help a group make progress. Elle said she better understands
the value she brings and what she can contribute in a situation. She said, “If I ask a question that
leads to discovery, that’s enough…it makes you feel like you can make an impact.” Ben said his
KLC experience has allowed him “to be even a little more comfortable and at peace with living
in my own skin,” and he feels a sense of “coming into my own self.” Hugh said he just feels
more capable now; he feels more equipped because “I am more aware of myself and my defaults
and I am free to share those with others which is empowering.”

Some co-researchers also talked about how they were prior to their leadership
development experience, trying to prove themselves as individuals and do things on their own.
Fern described herself as being “much more competitive before and that if I could solve the
problem or if I could be the one that made the difference…maybe narcissistic would be a better
word.” She said she felt like “if I could only do it better, then we could get better results.” Dan
said he used to get involved with various organizations or committees in the community so he
could say, “Look at me. Look what I’m doing. Look who I’m associated with.” And he did not
give much thought to whether he was making any difference. Gail summarized her thoughts
related to this as follows:

“This may be just the maturity of just growing up a little bit, and it may be very much
tied to the experience I had at the Leadership Center. I feel like I spent a lot of time for a
long time in my life just trying to make sure other people were aware that I had some
level of competence and trying to prove that, and…reflecting on that is both embarrassing
and frustrating for me.”

Co-researchers have more self-confidence and feel less like they have to continually prove they
are capable individuals.

**Theme 9: Transformation of Self and Purpose**

Given that this study is focused on individuals who have experienced transformation
through a leadership development program, the fact that transformation emerged as a theme is
not surprising. This theme consisted of 44 significant statements and 3 meaning units. Co-researchers talked about transformation in themselves, and they also talked about how their leadership development experience transformed their purpose and/or helped them focus in on the collective purpose of a group in which they are working.

### TABLE 11

**THEME 9: TRANSFORMATION OF SELF AND PURPOSE**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning Units</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.1 Transformation of Self</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.2 Transformation of Individual Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3 Transformation of Collective Purpose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Transformation of self (9.1).**

Nearly all of the co-researchers talked about how their leadership development experience was transformational for them – transforming the way they think, the way they process information, the way they make decisions, and the way they exercise leadership. Ike found it “meaningful to know that there [are] tools that can help me transform the way I am.” He said, “The deeper I go in to understanding the competencies and principles, the more I see how I can change … I can see where I can develop and grow.” And, for him, that is the transforming nature of what the Kansas Leadership Center does and what it teaches. While transformational for some, Gail recognized that might not be the case for everyone who comes in contact with the Kansas Leadership Center. For her, working through the challenge and conflict experienced in her KLC program was transformational, but she said, “I have a personal opinion about for whom this stuff really works, and I think that there are folks who have a higher degree of appreciation for what you can gain out of conflict.”

Several co-researchers described their KLC experience as being a life changing event for them. Jane said she “started a new chapter” in her life after her Kansas Leadership Center
experience. Dan said his KLC experience was “a life changing event that certainly stands out as one of a handful of significant memories in my time.” He went on to say:

“I’ve thought about other life experiences I’ve had that have been transformative…but this certainly is one that’s probably top five experiences that I’ve had up to this point in my life because I’ve taken so much from it and have been able to exercise what I’ve learned. I just think differently about leadership and continue to find ways to use the experience…life changing is probably the best way to describe that.”

**Transformation of individual purpose (9.2).**

Many of the co-researchers talked about how their Kansas Leadership Center experience impacted the way they think about purpose in their life and in their work. Ike and Ben both credit the Kansas Leadership Center with their renewed sense of purpose and their passion for being purposeful in their life and in their work. Ike refers to his awareness of purpose as being “one of the lasting residual benefits” of his time with KLC. Elle warned of the possible danger in encouraging people to identify and pursue their life purpose:

“…I’ve always worked at nonprofits where I adopt the cause of where I work…The Kansas Leadership Center made me really look at what do I as an individual…internally what drives me…that’s what’s dangerous about the training…you don’t always have the flexibility to change your whole life based on learning about purpose. You can make changes, but it can be dangerous because work takes up so much of your time you all of a sudden want to work in a job that’s really specific to your purpose. And so I had to really wrap my head around that and decide, ‘Is it going to be a hobby that’s my purpose? Is it going to be a day job that’s my purpose? How do I live my purpose?’ …the Kansas Leadership Center really challenged me on purpose because before I could just give the blanket answer of [my organization’s mission] is my purpose.”

Since the time of her interview, Elle left her job to pursue other interests and passions which then resulted in a new job for her.

Related to the concern expressed by Elle, Gail talked about how working with her coach to identify her purpose led to finding a different job that better fit with that purpose. During her coaching sessions, Gail realized that the work she was doing in her job was not what really what she wanted to be doing, but she also was not sure exactly what she wanted to be doing. Her
coach encouraged her to write a personal mission statement, being clear about “What is your purpose? What do you think you can do and where do you think you can make a difference?’ What are the skills you have and how and where do you want to deploy them? What is it you care about?” Gail had no intention of acting on her mission statement or doing anything differently as a result; however, when another job opportunity arose, she realized how well that job fit with her newly established personal mission statement. Five of the ten co-researchers – Dan, Elle, Gail, Hugh, and Jane – have experienced a job change since their initial KLC program experience. Some, like Gail, credit their Kansas Leadership Center experience in them making that transition while others, like Elle, talk about KLC playing a more indirect role in that process.

**Transformation of collective purpose (9.3).**

In addition to being able to better articulate their individual purpose, co-researchers also talked about being able to help groups identify their collective purpose. Identifying this collective purpose has resulted in more progress being made. Hugh talked about how the practice of identifying a collective purpose and common goals helped bring his group together and helped them stay focused. For one organization Ike was involved with, identification of a clear purpose led to receiving grant dollars:

“…I just kept pressing [this nonprofit] on purpose because I felt like we were doing good work, but it was really purposeless…I wanted us to have a common purpose, so I just began pressing. I would have never made that connection apart from KLC things…I think that’s brought us together as a board. It’s helped us make progress. And then also gave clarity where we were able to get this amazing grant that we just got.”

Ike also said his talk about purpose has led to others in his church to start thinking more about purpose and behaving in ways that are consistent with that purpose. He also talked about how being able to identify a common purpose can be a way for people, who would otherwise not be able to agree on something, to work together and make progress.
“And I really feel like I can engage even people that I might drastically disagree with on certain issues...because there’s somewhere, there’s a purpose that we’re sharing that, if we can unite around that, then we can make progress in maybe the areas that we differ on. I really believe that...It’s been really helpful. I feel like I’ve grown through that and understand so much more about the issues we’re facing as a state, as a community. Just thinking through that question of purpose.”

For Ike and other co-researchers, the focus on purpose was a key part of the transformation they experienced.

**Essential Invariant Structure**

Each of these co-researchers experienced transformation through a leadership development program that led them to a new way of thinking about, speaking about, and exercising leadership. They have a new vocabulary to use and are better able to listen and ask thoughtful, intentional questions. A shift in thinking has occurred – from thinking about technical solutions or “quick fixes” for problems to thinking about how to make progress. These individuals spend more time thinking about the common good and how to have an impact on the larger system or the community than about individual gains.

These co-researchers have an increased awareness of others and of themselves. They are more aware of their role in a situation and are more tuned in to what others might be thinking or feeling and how various factions might interpret or experience a situation differently than others. In addition to being more aware of others, they also recognize the importance of engaging and mobilizing others in order to make progress on the issues they care about in their communities. The responsibility of making progress is not theirs alone; others must own and take part in that responsibility as well.

How did this transformation happen? Challenge and support from others played an important role in the transformation process. Connections with faculty, staff, coaches, and/or other leadership development participants were an integral part of the leadership development
experience. The experience also included some level of emotion experienced by the individual and/or witnessed as experienced by others in the program. Something about the environment – perceptions of quality, trust, and/or support – allowed the co-researchers to make sense of what they were experiencing and interpret the experience in a positive way. The co-researchers also continued their learning by participating in additional leadership development experiences, which they acknowledge as a way to bring additional clarity and understanding to their initial experience.
CHAPTER 4
DISCUSSION

The purposes of this study were to explore the process of transformation through a leadership development experience and answer the following research questions:

- What does transformation look like for these individuals? What changes occurred as a result of their leadership development experience?
- What are the elements of the leadership development experience that contributed to transformation in these individuals?
- How can a leadership development experience contribute to an individual’s motivation and ability to exercise leadership that is transformational and for the common good?

The first two purposes are largely addressed through the essential invariant structure and the findings detailed in the Results. Though related responses can be found throughout the Results, the first three themes of Multiple Experiences, Quality of the Experience, and Influence of Curriculum and Methodology focus primarily on the leadership development experience itself – the who, what, and where of the experience. The three themes of Application of Learning, Experience of Emotion, and Challenge and Support from Others focus primarily on the how of the experience – what co-researchers thought, felt, and did during and following their leadership development experience. The final three themes of Communication with Others, Recognition of Self and Others, and Transformation of Self and Purpose focus primarily on the changes that occurred as a result of the leadership development experience. Exploring possible answers to the third purpose requires a complete look at the findings from this study in conjunction with other existing literature and related studies.
Connections to Previous Research and/or Theories

What does transformation look like?

*Transformational leadership.*

Transformational leadership motivates individuals to think beyond their self-interests and encourage others to exercise leadership in pursuit of a common goal (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). Transformational leadership involves empowerment for collective action. The three themes of Communication with Others, Recognition of Self and Others, and Transformation of Self and Purpose each contain meaning units that connect to the concept of transformational leadership. In the theme of Communication with Others, co-researchers talked about asking more questions of more people and listening to their responses, really taking into consideration the thoughts and feelings of different factions connected to an issue in order to make progress on the issue together. Ben talked about the importance of “getting more people engaged in the thoughtful processing of defining what matters and making progress on it.” Ben’s statement provides another practical definition for transformational leadership. This theme also contained a meaning unit related to the “common good” and co-researchers feeling better equipped to truly make a difference in their community.

Additional connections to transformational leadership can be found in the theme of Recognition of Self and Others where co-researchers described exercising leadership as being less about self and more about others. Gail explained this by saying, “...I feel like when I’m the best version of myself and exercising what I learned, I’m working to create space and conditions for other people to do that important work, whatever is of value or meaningful to them.” A few co-researchers said something similar to, “It’s not about me,” recognizing that leadership is not about proving themselves as individuals or about receiving the accolades when progress is made.
or goals are accomplished. All of the co-researchers expressed the importance of engaging and mobilizing others if meaningful progress is to be made on adaptive issues in their communities, which is a key part of transformational leadership.

In the theme of Transformation of Self and Purpose, co-researchers focused on the importance of having clarity of purpose when exercising leadership, both individual purpose and collective purpose. Identifying a common and collective purpose allows more progress to be made. As Ike pointed out, identifying a common purpose can be a way for people who would otherwise not be able to agree on something to come together and work to make progress. Each of these three themes includes elements related to finding ways to connect with and engage others for the purpose of making progress on issues that contribute to the common good in their communities.

**Personal transformation.**

Kegan and Lahey (2009) argue that for personal transformation to occur, one must overcome his/her immunity to change, which requires a change in mental complexity – moving from the socialized mind to the self-authoring mind or from the self-authoring mind to the self-transforming mind. Kegan and Lahey (2009) suggested looking for an individual’s increased mental complexity over time as an indicator of transformation. Possible changes in mental complexity can be seen in some of the co-researchers’ comments. Jane said her language changed after her time with the Kansas Leadership Center; she started talking about “the system” and “factions” and realized that everyone is “part of a larger puzzle.” Ann had the following to say about her change in thinking following her experience with the Kansas Leadership Center:

“…I’m much more likely to take a 30,000 foot view, and I worry less I think about what’s in it for me personally, and I look much more system wide…and look at the system and very deliberately try to remove my own personal filters and think about, ‘What would it look like if I were this other person?’”
Consistent with Kegan and Lahey’s (2009) language about changes in mental complexity involving an individual’s ability to step back and examine his/her filters, Ann talked about being able to remove her “personal filters” to really think about how another person might view things. This is an ideal example of an individual moving from the self-authoring mind to the self-transforming mind. These co-researchers indicated they have started to think more at the system level than they did prior to their Kansas Leadership Center experience. They are able to think more about context and how others might perceive a situation differently.

Kegan and Lahey (2009) also talk about the important role of optimal conflict in creating personal transformation. Kegan and Lahey (2009) define optimal conflict as: “The persistent experience of some frustration, dilemma, life puzzle, quandary, or personal problem that is perfectly designed to cause us to feel the limits of our current way of knowing in some sphere of our living that we care about, with sufficient supports so that we are neither overwhelmed by the conflict nor able to escape or diffuse it” (p. 54). Case-in-Point is one way the Kansas Leadership Center creates optimal conflict in the classroom setting (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013). In the theme of Experience of Emotion, co-researchers talked about the emotions that are elicited during the Case-in-Point process – feeling uncomfortable, confused, frustrated, and overwhelmed. Hugh specifically mentioned those participants who are unable to handle the heat or the frustration of the leadership development experience and indicated that he thought it was not only a disservice to the individual but also a disservice to the individual’s community and the issues that individual cares about to allow a participant to leave the program upset. Hugh also said he understood this was part of the learning process and experience and then proposed a possible solution:
“…take the time out and say, ‘Ok, this is the purpose of this exercise. This is what we were trying to accomplish with this particular process.’ …Some people might want to know, ‘Ok, this is the purpose of this, and this is what we’re going to do to get you to understand that.’ Would you rather completely lose someone? Or pull them to the side and say, ‘Ok, let’s talk about this. How are you feeling? Is there anything I can [do to] help you to understand?’”

Though Kansas Leadership Center faculty and staff likely address these situations on a case-by-case basis as they arise during a given program, finding ways to be more intentional about identifying individuals who are not dealing well with the challenges associated with the program may help those participants who might otherwise leave feeling they had a pointless negative experience at the Kansas Leadership Center.

While Kegan and Lahey’s (2009) definition of optimal conflict includes experiencing frustration, their definition also includes having sufficient support to avoid feeling overwhelmed. In the theme of Challenge and Support from Others, co-researchers outlined the importance of being challenged by others during their Kansas Leadership Center program experience while also feeling supported, staying connected, and being able to trust others during the experience and also following the experience as they began to apply what they learned in environments outside the KLC classroom.

The themes of Communication with Others, Recognition of Self and Others, and Transformation of Self and Purpose largely outline the personal transformation that occurred for these co-researchers as a result of their leadership development experience. Interestingly, the themes from this study that most closely connect to personal transformation through leadership development are also the same themes that most closely connect to transformational leadership (i.e., the three themes of Communication with Others, Recognition of Self and Others, and Transformation of Self and Purpose). Perhaps part of the personal transformation experienced through Kansas Leadership Center programs is connected to a new awareness of
transformational leadership, which is consistent with the Kansas Leadership Center’s idea of leadership for the common good.

**What elements contribute to transformation?**

**Assessment, challenge, and support.**

The Center for Creative Leadership argues that assessment, challenge, and support are three critical elements that are necessary but not sufficient for an effective leadership development experience (McCauley, Van Velsor, & Ruderman, 2010). The elements of challenge and support are overtly present across a variety of comments from co-researchers, with one theme entirely focused on Challenge and Support from Others. While challenge and support are mentioned explicitly, assessment is mentioned in more subtle ways. Co-researchers talked about becoming more aware of their default behaviors and their triggers; their increased awareness of these behaviors is evidence of assessment. As co-researchers worked with their coaches, the coaches were helping them assess their past behaviors and plan future behaviors.

For example, Jane described how questions from a KLC staff member ultimately helped lead her to a place of peace in her life:

“…for a long time, felt like I was drowning in my own life without really knowing it. And towards the end of my KLC experience…finally it felt like I had found peace. I found that stride where my head wasn’t underwater…or I wasn’t just always out of breath. And it had nothing to do with how much work I had or how much responsibility I had; it had everything to do with where I was internally…It felt like I’d finally hit my stride and I found where I needed to be going and I was happy with that…”

Through the questions and conversations that followed with this staff person, Jane was able to assess how she was feeling before and after her Kansas Leadership Center experience.

Assessment is necessary in the process of transformation. Without assessment, challenge would not be experienced. Without assessment, support could not be provided. “No one learns only by staring in the mirror. We all learn—and are sometimes transformed—by encountering
differences that challenge our own experience and assumptions” (p. 101, Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). Assessment is a way of helping people “look in the mirror” and see themselves clearly, which is an important first step toward transformation; however, without satisfactory challenge and support to follow that assessment, transformation will not occur. Assessment, challenge, and support each play a vital role in personal transformation; subtract any one of them, and the transformation process will be subverted.

**Self-attribution of emotion.**

Though not a concept that was initially thought to be relevant to this research, following analysis of the interview transcript data, the theory of self-attribution of emotion appeared to have application as an element that contributes to transformation. Jane had the following insight while sitting in her Kansas Leadership Center program:

“I’m a pretty observant person, and I remember being in the room…watching other people in the room with a smile on my face because I’m feeling, ‘Whoa, this is really good. And whatever this is, I like it a lot.’ And people in the room with completely different emotions. Frustration, anger, this is a waste of time. Things like that. So people were having a very different experience than I was, and I remember wondering about that. What makes this experience different for someone else in the room?”

Some of the participants interpret the disequilibrium and discomfort they experience during the program in a positive way while others find the experience to be much more negative. Why is this? What might contribute to these differences in perceived participant experiences? Two studies published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* may provide some insight into these differences.

The first study, published by Dutton and Aron (1974), explored the relationship between high anxiety and heightened sexual attraction. Their study used two bridges over the Capilano River in Vancouver, British Columbia in Canada. One bridge was considered to be fear-inducing – the Capilano Canyon Suspension Bridge located over 200 feet above the river which
would tilt and sway and had low handrails. While safe to cross, travelers could also find themselves feeling like they might fall over the side of the bridge. The other bridge used in the study (the “control” bridge) was wide and sturdy and located about 10 feet above a narrow section the river. A female researcher approached young men traveling without female companions and asked them to complete a short questionnaire while on the bridge. Men crossing the fear-inducing bridge experienced heightened sexual attraction to the female researcher in comparison to the men crossing the control bridge. Sexual attraction was measured by sexual imagery score on the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) item included on the questionnaire and by the number of men who contacted the female researcher following the encounter. An identical procedure was used with a male researcher instead of a female researcher; the findings were not replicated when using a male researcher, further suggesting heightened sexual attraction for the men who encountered the female researcher on the fear-inducing bridge (Dutton & Aron, 1974).

The other study conducted by Laird (1974) involved having subjects smile or frown without knowledge of their expression. This was achieved by putting electrodes on subjects’ faces between their eyebrows, at the corners of their mouths, and at the back of the jaw. While the electrodes were not actually used to measure anything, this allowed the researcher to manipulate subjects’ faces into the appropriate positions by touching the electrodes and saying, “Contract these muscles.” For the smile position, the researcher would provide instruction on contracting the muscles at the corners of the mouth. For the frown position, he would instruct subjects to contract the muscles between the eyebrows and at the back of the jaw. Laird (1974) found that, without awareness of their expression, subjects reported being happier when their face was in a smile position and reported being angrier when their face was in a frown position.
In addition, subjects reported cartoons as being more humorous when they were smiling than they did when they were frowning (Laird, 1974).

Participants have been in classroom settings before and, going into their Kansas Leadership Center experience, they likely anticipate that classroom environment to be consistent with classroom environments they have encountered in the past. They believe they know what to expect – how they will feel, how they will behave, how others will behave. Then the Kansas Leadership Center experience is noticeably different from previous classroom experiences, resulting in an unexpected physiological response. The physiological response to the situation can then be interpreted in different ways. Just as the men crossing the suspension bridge interpreted their physiological response of fear or anxiety as sexual attraction toward the female researcher, participants in Kansas Leadership Center programs could interpret their unexpected physiological response as a type of attraction – an experience that was exhilarating as opposed to distressing. Could asking participants to stop for a minute to focus on their physiological response – heart rate, breathing, other physical sensations – and ask why they might be having this reaction impact the way they interpret that physiological response? Intentionally helping participants understand and interpret their self-attribution of emotion could lead to greater clarity and potential transformation instead of increased frustration and anger.

**Leadership that is transformational and for the common good?**

To address the third research question, for a leadership development experience to contribute to an individual’s motivation and ability to exercise leadership that is transformational and for the common good, the experience must attempt to answer the question: Leadership for what purpose? The fundamental purpose for exercising leadership must go beyond any one person’s or group’s self-interest; the end goal must be about more than just self. The concept of
leadership “for the common good” certainly seemed to be one that stayed with the co-researchers in this study and contributed to their overall transformation.

In addition to purpose, a focus on progress appears to be beneficial. Community issues like poverty, health, and education are daunting and hardly solvable. Rather than talking about how to “fix” these issues, transformational leadership begins to explore the question of, “How do we best make progress on these issues together?” There is also recognition that, as progress is made, new challenges will arise. Leadership is about finding ways to make progress on intractable issues in communities by working to engage and mobilize individuals in those communities to help make change happen.

Perhaps the most important element present in a transformational leadership development experience is the people – the individual who participates in the experience, the other participants who are also part of the experience, and any faculty, staff, or coaches who are involved in the experience. All of the people who are connected to the experience have an impact on the individual participant. Those who are part of a transformational leadership development experience work to find ways to challenge and support one another in the difficult work of bringing about community change. In addition to the people who are part of the experience, another important element is the lesson that ultimately leadership is about people. Leadership is about people taking action – and not just people in positions of power and authority. Transformational leadership or leadership for the common good recognizes the importance of engaging and mobilizing others to take action too. For progress to be made, collective action toward a common purpose must be taken.

Finally, participants should have the opportunity to practice exercising leadership in a safe environment. Participants in leadership development programs must be willing to
experiment with applying these concepts both in the classroom and in the “real world” back home. This is where the Case-in-Point methodology can be beneficial; Case-in-Point “recognizes that there is no division between theory and practice” (p. 73, Yawson, 2014). The classroom is also the “real world”, and the dynamics and challenges present in the classroom are the same dynamics and challenges present in the community. This forces participants to move past the discussion of behaviors in hypothetical situations or case studies and actually begin to exemplify the behaviors they are discussing and also identify the behaviors as they observe them in themselves and in others in the room, in the moment, and in real time. This type of practice, particularly as it relates to Case-in-Point, can elicit emotions in participants, including feelings of discomfort, frustration, and sometimes even anger. In experiences like these, a certain level of trust in the individuals in the room and in those leading the process is necessary for participants to be willing to engage and to risk behaving in a new way. Again, the people connected with the transformational leadership development experience are paramount.

**Strengths of the Study**

The 10 co-researchers who participated in this study were a diverse group – men and women ranging in age from 29 to 51 living in different parts of the state and working in various job sectors. In addition, these co-researchers participated in a variety of Kansas Leadership Center programs, some having their first program experience within the last year and some having their first program experience at one of the Kansas Leadership Center’s early program offerings more than five years ago. While these co-researchers have different backgrounds and experiences, definite similarities emerged as they provided detailed descriptions of their transformation through their Kansas Leadership Center program experience.
Another strength of this study is that the author has participated in a Kansas Leadership Center program and has an in-depth understanding of the program elements and the language and pedagogy used in these programs. This familiarity contributed to the rapport between researcher and co-researcher. While extensive previous experience can be viewed as a strength, that experience could also be viewed as a source of bias. This bias was countered in several ways. First, the author completed the Epoche prior to conducting any interviews, outlining all thoughts and experiences related to the topic. Memos were written immediately following each interview to capture initial thoughts, feelings, and insights. Finally, one of the additional researchers involved in the data audit had minimal exposure to the Kansas Leadership Center prior to assisting with this research.

Limitations of the Study

Co-researchers were asked to think back and remember what they were thinking, feeling, and experiencing during their Kansas Leadership Center program. The length of time that had passed since their initial KLC experience and/or since their most recent KLC experience varied from co-researcher to co-researcher. In addition, the length of time that had passed since the experiences they were being asked to recall may have had an impact on what they were able to remember (or what they failed to remember).

In addition to the length of time that has passed since their initial and/or most recent Kansas Leadership Center experience, the fact that all co-researchers had multiple experiences could also be seen as a limitation in this study. As individuals talked about their experiences, they talked about their initial exposure to the Kansas Leadership Center, but also included descriptions of subsequent experiences they had with KLC. However, this could also be viewed as a strength, as the co-researchers were able to describe their transformation over time.

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number of co-researchers immediately realized that something was changing for them during their Kansas Leadership Center experience, but it took time and additional experiences for them to more fully understand what those changes entailed.

At the request of one of the co-researchers, due to her time availability and travel schedule, her interview was conducted at the Kansas Leadership Center. Ideally, all of the interviews would have been conducted somewhere other than KLC to avoid any unintentional influence or bias. This was the only interview conducted at the Kansas Leadership Center, and all interviews were scheduled at a time and location most convenient for the co-researcher. In addition, one interview was conducted via telephone due to the co-researcher having recently moved out of state. The co-researcher and the author of this study had met in person prior to the interview, so appropriate rapport had been built in advance of the interview.

This study focused on a small sample of individuals who had transformational experiences through Kansas Leadership Center programs. The majority of individuals (including these ten co-researchers) self-select to attend programs at KLC; of their own accord, they apply to attend these programs and make appropriate arrangements to accommodate their participation. These individuals feel they have the time to take off of work to have this kind of experience and/or they work for organizations that find some value in leadership development. In addition, some of the co-researchers already had an affinity for leadership prior to their exposure to the Kansas Leadership Center. Ben admitted during his interview that he just loves the topic of leadership, and he finds himself to be an anomaly in that regard. Other co-researchers like Ann and Cam had extensive experience in their local community leadership program and in the Kansas Community Leadership Initiative that preceded the founding of the Kansas Leadership
Considerations for Future Research

Perhaps a similar study could be conducted with a group of Kansas Leadership Center participants who were not transformed by their leadership development experience. What elements of their experiences are the same as those who had a transformational experience? What elements are different? One hypothesis to explore might be that what the transformed and untransformed participants experience during their leadership development program is similar (e.g., they are uncomfortable and in a challenging and experiential environment), but something about how they experience the situation is different (e.g., they do not feel the same level of trust and support in the midst of the challenge and discomfort they are experiencing). In addition, perhaps a quantitative scale or instrument could be developed to provide a numerical rating to correspond with the level of transformation experienced by an individual.

A number of co-researchers talked about making progress on issues they care about and/or exercising leadership for the common good. Another possibility for future research could involve exploring what actions Kansas Leadership Center participants have taken to affect the common good and what have been the results of those actions. While the Kansas Leadership Center’s work involves impacting individuals, the overall goal of the organization is that these individuals who participate in KLC programs will ultimately change the civic culture and the overall health of Kansas. For example, Ike serves on the board of a nonprofit and was able to help board members focus more on purpose, which led to the organization securing a grant. What impact did that grant have on the organization and on those served by the organization?
What other examples do individuals have related to how applying what they learned through KLC has impacted groups or organizations they work with?

A future study could also focus on transformation through a leadership development experience provided by an organization other than the Kansas Leadership Center. Would the themes that emerged in this study be similar for other organizations that provide leadership development programming? What program elements that contribute to transformation are unique to the Kansas Leadership Center experience? What program elements are common across multiple leadership development organizations?

**Implications of the Findings**

**For the Kansas Leadership Center.**

While the Kansas Leadership Center’s leadership framework involves five principles and four competencies (summarized in Tables 12 and 13 from Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013), some of the concepts seem to resonate with participants more than others or are at least mentioned more often by those who have experienced transformation as they think about and talk about their Kansas Leadership Center experience. One of the concepts that was mentioned by nearly all of the co-researchers is that leadership is an activity that is separate from authority. Other ideas mentioned by multiple co-researchers were related to purpose, factions, multiple interpretations, raising the heat, and the difference between technical and adaptive challenges. Of course, one cannot expect that when there are more than 30 concepts presented that all of them will resonate equally with participants, but as those from the Kansas Leadership Center review the findings from this study, are there any key principles or pieces of the competencies they find to be notably absent?
TABLE 12
LIST OF KANSAS LEADERSHIP CENTER PRINCIPLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Leadership is an activity as opposed to a position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Anyone can exercise leadership, anytime, anywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Leadership starts with an individual and must engage others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 The purpose must be clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Leadership is risky</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 13
LIST OF KANSAS LEADERSHIP CENTER COMPETENCIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MANAGE SELF</th>
<th>INTERVENE SKILLFULLY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know your strengths, vulnerabilities, and triggers</td>
<td>Make conscious choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know the story others tell about you</td>
<td>Raise the heat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose among competing values</td>
<td>Give the work back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get used to uncertainty and conflict</td>
<td>Hold to purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiment beyond your comfort zone</td>
<td>Speak from the heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take care of yourself</td>
<td>Act experimentally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIAGNOSE SITUATION</td>
<td>ENERGIZE OTHERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore tough interpretations</td>
<td>Engage unusual voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguish technical and adaptive work</td>
<td>Work across factions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the process challenges</td>
<td>Start where they are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test multiple interpretations and points of view</td>
<td>Speak to loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take the temperature</td>
<td>Inspire a collective purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify who needs to do the work</td>
<td>Create a trustworthy process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the ideas presented during Kansas Leadership Center programs are themselves transformational for individuals, the way those ideas are presented and learned during a program also contributes to the transformational experience. Co-researchers talked about the emotion that they and others in their program experienced, and much of the emotion experienced by
participants in KLC programs likely stems not from what is being taught but rather from how it is being taught. The content is not creating the emotional reaction; the Case-in-Point methodology is. In some ways, this study confirms the value of Case-in-Point as a way to teach leadership. A number of co-researchers mentioned being “believers” in the methodology of Case-in-Point and the importance of an experiential environment in learning about and practicing leadership. That being said, the co-researchers also emphasized the importance of debriefing those Case-in-Point experiences and the importance of building a trustworthy environment for those experiences to take place. Minus a certain level of trust and time to debrief what happened and what was learned in the process, these experiences could do more harm than good in a group.

The co-researchers who participated in this study are passionate about the Kansas Leadership Center and the leadership development experiences they have had through the Kansas Leadership Center. These individuals could be useful when thinking about staffing and recruitment for future programs at the Kansas Leadership Center. They want others to have the opportunity to experience a similar transformation and could be beneficial to the Kansas Leadership Center to help achieve that going forward. The Kansas Leadership Center should also find ways to continue to serve these individuals and provide programs that allow them to continue learning about and practicing leadership.

**For the field of leadership.**

Personal transformation through leadership development is not a “one and done” experience. Transformation may begin during a particular experience; however, transformation takes place over time, through multiple meaningful experiences. Transformation is an investment that is made in individuals and an investment that is made by individuals. All of the
co-researchers in this study reported having multiple experiences with the Kansas Leadership Center. While some of the co-researchers indicated they could tell almost immediately that something was changing for them, they also continued to pursue additional learning opportunities with the Kansas Leadership Center. Some of the co-researchers even pursued learning opportunities that led to teaching or facilitating opportunities with the Kansas Leadership Center and/or with their local community leadership program. It is unrealistic to think that transformation happen during a single leadership development program experience. As Cam said about leadership development, “It’s always a continual learning. Isn’t everything in life?”

While confirming the value of the Case-in-Point methodology is relevant for the Kansas Leadership Center, this study also suggests other leadership development programs may want to consider employing Case-in-Point to teach leadership. While those who are skilled at facilitating Case-in-Point in the classroom make it look easy enough, this methodology takes a lot of time and practice to do well. In addition to being able to facilitate the “in the moment” program part of Case-in-Point, one must also be able to build a trustworthy environment for the experience to take place and effectively help the group debrief the experience to make sense of what happened and how what happened connects to learning about leadership. The experience of Case-in-Point will be different every time, depending on the individuals in the room and the person facilitating the process. This is because what is learned during the Case-in-Point experience “is co-created by the teacher and the participants present in real-time and the issues that arise in the moment of learning cannot be the same for different dimensions of space and time” (p. 74, Yawson, 2014). Only so much “lesson planning” can go into a Case-in-Point session, as the end result of the session will be dependent upon those in the room at the time. At the very least, a leadership
development experience should provide an opportunity for participants to actively practice and apply what they are learning, more than talking about how what they are learning applies to their life and work away from the program and more than talking about how what they are learning applies to case studies and examples.

Conclusions

While it is not realistic to expect all individuals who participate in a leadership development program to experience transformation, understanding the key programmatic elements that contribute to transformation could increase the number of participants for whom transformation occurs while also making the experience more powerful for more participants.

How do the Kansas Leadership Center and other leadership development programs and organizations create more experiences that result in participants feeling the way Ben describes?

“…there were these moments when doors opened and you sat down in environments and you realized that…you were being invited into an occasion that the bar was higher. The people were brighter. The brain lumens in the room were higher than normal. The questions that were being asked were more intentional and more thoughtful than normal. And where people were inviting you to go was farther and a little higher than normal. They were even taking into account that the people at the table were even capable of being a little brighter than normal…when you get opportunity to walk through the doors of those environments, that’s special. Because that’s not the norm; that’s the exception…when I went into the Kansas Leadership Center experience, the brain lumens were higher, the bar was higher, the questions were more intentional and thoughtful. And I remember walking out of that experience and saying, ‘These are the people. This is the special opportunity. Wake up to this one.’”

Transformation through leadership development happens over time and across multiple experiences. Challenging content delivered in a provocative way with the proper support and opportunities to practice and experiment with applying the content contribute to the transformation. Balancing challenge and discomfort with support and trust for a variety of individuals during a program can be difficult. Support is critical during and after the experience, with other participants playing an important role in that support. In addition, ideas connected to
transformational leadership appear to contribute to personal transformation through leadership development.

The co-researchers in this study were part of a leadership development experience where they felt sufficiently challenged and adequately supported. They were willing to engage and experiment and learn in that environment. They were willing to return to that environment again and again, and they wanted to find ways to recreate that environment for others with the hope that others could experience a similar transformation. The experience was life changing for some of these co-researchers and one they wanted to share with others in an effort to bring them along on this journey of exercising leadership for the common good.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


Date: February 3, 2014

Principal Investigator: Greg Meissen

Co-Investigator(s): Sarah Jolley

Department: Psychology

IRB Number: 3101

The Wichita State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your research project application entitled, “Exploring Transformational Leadership”. The IRB approves the project according to the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects. As described, the project also complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research.

This approval is for a period of one year from the date of this letter and will require continuation approval if the research project extends beyond February 2, 2015.

Please keep in mind the following:

1. Any significant change in the experimental procedure as described should be reviewed by the IRB prior to altering the project.
2. When signed consent documents are required, the principal investigator must retain the signed consent documents for at least three years past completion of the research activity.
3. At the completion of the project, the principal investigator is expected to submit a final report; the form is attached.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact me at ext. 6945.

Sincerely,

Michael Rogers, Ph.D.
Chairperson, IRB
Dear (NAME),

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research on transformational leadership. I value the unique contribution you can make to my study, and I am excited about the possibility of your participation. The purpose of this letter is to inform you about the nature of the study and your rights as a research participant.

This research requests descriptions of your leadership development experience. Through qualitative interviews with participants, I hope to answer the following research questions:

- What does transformation look like? What changes occurred as a result of their leadership development experience?
- What are the elements of the leadership development experience that contributed to transformation?
- How can a leadership development experience contribute to an individual’s motivation and ability to exercise leadership that is transformational and for the common good?

Through your participation, I hope to understand the essence of your leadership development experience. In a face-to-face interview, I will ask you to recall the specific episodes, situations, and events that you experienced.

Thank you for your consideration of this request to participate in this research. If you have any further questions before signing the informed consent form, I can be reached at 316-978-5487.

Sincerely,

Sarah E. Jolley, MA
Wichita State University PhD Candidate
**Purpose:** You are invited to participate in a study of transformative leadership development experiences. I hope to learn more about what it takes to move an individual toward exercising leadership that is transformational/transformative. What is the essence of that experience?

**Participant Selection:** You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you participated in a leadership development program and reported that your experience had an impact on the way you think about and exercise leadership. Up to 20 leadership development program participants will take part in this study.

**Explanation of Procedures:** If you decide to participate in this study, you will participate in a face-to-face interview lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes. That interview will be recorded and transcribed for data analysis purposes. In addition, you will be sent a copy of your transcript and will be asked for an additional follow-up interview lasting no more than 30 minutes for additional information or clarification regarding the initial interview.

**Discomfort/Risks:** Risks associated with your participation in this study are minimal. If you have any uncomfortable thoughts regarding leadership during the interview, this may cause you some discomfort. You may skip any questions that you feel uncomfortable answering. Your involvement as a participant will involve a minimum of one hour of your time and a maximum of two hours of your time. The researcher will make every attempt to minimize any inconvenience to you by scheduling interview times/locations that work best for you.

**Benefits:** Providing a detailed description of your leadership development program experience may provide you with additional insight into your experience and into how that experience has application in your life and/or in your work. Information from this study will have important implications for those in the leadership development community as they become more interested in individual leadership transformation.

**Confidentiality:** Any information obtained in this study in which you can be identified will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Other than during the time of the interview, your name will not be associated with your interview responses. The audio recording of your interview will be destroyed/erased following transcription. The transcript of your interview will not include your name, but rather will include only a participant identification number. Any printed documents related to the study will contain participant identification numbers only (not participant names) and will be shredded upon completion of the study.
**Refusal/Withdrawal:** Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Wichita State University and/or your leadership development program. If you agree to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

**Contact:** If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at sarah.jolley@wichita.edu or 316-978-5487 or you may contact Dr. Greg Meissen at greg.meissen@wichita.edu or 316-978-3039. If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a research subject, or about research-related injury, you can contact the Office of Research and Technology Transfer at Wichita State University, Wichita, KS 67260-0007, telephone (316) 978-3285.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have voluntarily decided to participate. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

__________________________  _______________________
Signature of Subject        Date

__________________________  _______________________
Witness Signature        Date
APPENDIX C

PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW GUIDE

To what extent would you say your Kansas Leadership Center program experience has impacted the way you think about leadership? In what ways?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

To what extent would you say your Kansas Leadership Center program experience has impacted the way you exercise leadership? In what ways?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

In order to be included in the study, individuals should indicate that their KLC experience impacted their thinking and exercise of leadership to a great extent, and they should be able to articulate distinct differences in their thinking about leadership and their exercise of leadership before and after their KLC program experience.
How would you describe your leadership development experience? What did you experience? What was it like for you?

   How would you describe the “in the moment” program experience?

   How would you describe the experience now that you’ve had time to reflect?

   What ideas and impressions were generated by the experience?

   What thoughts, events, and/or people connected with the experience stand out for you?

   ____________________________________________________________

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   ____________________________________________________________
How did the experience affect you? What changes do you associate with the experience?

How did the experience affect others in your life and/or in your work?

How would you describe your underlying purpose in exercising leadership? How would you describe this purpose prior to your experience? How would you describe your purpose now (i.e., post-leadership development experience)?
What would you say your leadership development experience means/has meant to you?

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Have you shared all that you think is significant related to your leadership development experience?

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