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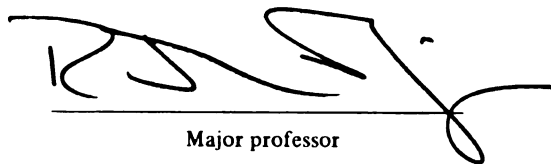
Sustainable Community Leadership Development:
Leadership and Learning in Two Michigan Communities

presented by

Kristin Marie Ramsay

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

M.S. degree in Resource Development



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**SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:
LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING
IN TWO MICHIGAN COMMUNITIES**

By

Kristin Marie Ramsay

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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1997

ABSTRACT

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING IN TWO MICHIGAN COMMUNITIES

By

Kristin Marie Ramsay

Many people who long for a renewed sense of community are involved in voluntary community development organizations. Involvement in such grassroots organizations contributes to leadership development in communities. This study explored community leadership development in two communities in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Through focus groups and in-depth, individual interviews, four themes emerged. First, community leadership develops when decision-making and responsibility are shared by all members; this encourages a broad base of leadership. Second, community development and empowerment are both means and ends to developing leadership in the community. Third, the process involves action and reflection by project participants addressing issues of community concern. Finally, community leadership development requires active involvement by a diverse group of community members. One of the challenges that continues to confront community leadership development is the potential conflict between positional leaders and grassroots leaders within communities.

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Dedicated to the elders in Hulahula

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project required the time and patience of many people. I want to express my appreciation to the people in Iron and Baraga Counties who gave of their valuable time, opening my eyes to the challenges they face improving their communities and developing leadership.

My adviser and mentor, Jim Bingen, spent countless hours challenging my thoughts and ideas while also encouraging me. I am grateful for his insights, his open door, and even his black pen. He is an exemplary mentor; not only have I completed this thesis, I have learned to think deeper and I have grown as a scholar-practitioner.

I also want to express my appreciation to my colleague and friend, Lela Vandenberg. She introduced me to the study of community leadership development, recruited me to work with CLIMB, and continues to help me develop as a professional.

I am grateful to CLIMB for funding this research. To others in CLIMB, including Rita Hodgins, Jim Dompier, Steve Nelson, Evelyn Blair and Bill Reed, thank you for your support and input into this project.

Finally, I want to thank to my husband, Chris, for his patience while I finished this seemingly never-ending project, for the frequent back-rubs, and for encouraging me to continue learning.

PREFACE

“Where does leadership come from, and how can it be sustained?” is the overarching question asked in this study. My desire to answer this question began in 1994 when a Rendille elder, Mzee Galmagar, leaned back in his chair and said, “Waacha, niende fora.” He was responding to our questions about leadership in his community. As an elder, the oldest man in the village and the first to settle in Hulahula, he was highly respected by the people in this community of 2,500 people in Northern Kenya. But after feeling that his hands were tied by externally imposed leadership structures and interventions, he didn’t see a future for leadership in his community. What he told us was, basically, “Just forget about it. I might as well just go back to the lowlands to graze my animals. There’s nothing I can do here anymore.”

I can still hear him; I can still see him. After working in that community for five years, I began to understand more deeply the sense of resignation in the leadership of the community.

For the last three years, I have been thinking about community leadership. How are elders reconciled with government-imposed leaders within a community? After returning to the U.S., I began to notice parallels in our own communities. How are grassroots leaders reconciled with elected officials and other powerful individuals within

the community? How does leadership develop within community organizations? What does it take to keep people involved in these organizations?

When I started working with CLIMB (Community Leadership Development—Michigan’s Best) in 1996, I had the opportunity to begin exploring some of these questions. I was responsible for documenting the histories of and “lessons learned” in twelve community-based leadership development projects throughout Michigan. I then started exploring these questions more deeply with two communities. Through the interviews and focus groups, in addition to other work I had done for CLIMB, several themes emerged. These eventually developed into the Conceptual Framework (presented in Chapter 4), which I then used to organize most of this thesis. The concepts seem to cut across all types of communities. The challenge remains, however, of reconciling positional leaders, mainly elected officials, with grassroots community leaders.

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Chapter 1

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

It seems we have lost hold of our communities. It seems as though our country is pulling apart into separate peoples who do not know each other.

Edward M. Kennedy

INTRODUCTION

There is a widespread perception that a *sense of community* has been lost in today's society. In our fast-paced, time-pressured and individualistic society with dual-income families, cyberspace, telecommuting, cable, satellite television, and cell phones, people rarely make an effort to know their neighbors. Many people, however, long for a deeper sense of belonging and connection to some larger, shared purpose.

City-dwellers often have idealized rural life, thinking of it as simpler, more carefree, with its citizens more connected with each other. This is not always the case. Distances, geography and deeply-rooted animosities can prevent people in rural communities from connecting with one another.

Institutions have also replaced much of what connected citizens in the past, reducing dependence on one another and increasing dependence on government

programs (McKnight, 1992; Shaffer and Anundsen, 1993). Whereas in the past people cared for elderly and ill family members, they now look to nursing homes and hospitals—the “professionals”—to fill this need. Similarly, people look to banks when they need money, to the government when they are out of work and to therapists when they need to talk.

As state and federal government agencies and institutions downsize, they are placing more responsibility and some of the financial resources with local community organizations. The need for communities to become re-connected is growing as local communities and community-based organizations are increasingly expected to be more responsible for their own welfare. It took many years for family and community traditional support systems and interconnectedness to be replaced by professionals and their institutions. It will take time and a great deal of effort by committed, qualified individuals and groups to reestablish community-based support systems.

In order to do this, community organizations will have to depend upon volunteer personnel for leadership and service to address the needs and achieve the hopes and dreams of their communities. Thus, the underlying question of this research is: Where does this leadership come from, and how can it be sustained?

There are many factors that influence people’s involvement in a voluntary organization. Often, people become involved because of a “catalyzing issue” (Rubin and Rubin, 1995), a perceived threat, or a significant event (Kieffer, 1984) which is being addressed or needs to be addressed. Some issues mobilize people over time; others are resolved quickly and require only short-term involvement. Once a particular issue is

addressed, a person may or may not continue to be involved in related issues (Rubin and Rubin, 1995; Beckwith and Lopez, 1997).

When people give their time to address a problem or to work to create a stronger community, there needs to be a degree of self-satisfaction—no matter how altruistic their intent. Often this translates into, “What’s in it for me?” Several authors have dealt with this issue in various ways. The pluralist approach looks at conflict, bargaining, and coalition formation among organized groups in order to advance or protect their interests (Grindle and Thomas, 1991)¹. Public choice theory expands the pluralist approach: interest groups are created by individuals seeking specific self-interested goals, using money, expertise, and political connections to acquire access to public resources (Grindle and Thomas, 1991)². Related to this is the rational choice perspective, which suggests that the personal interest of individual members is the most important driving force behind their behavior within an organization (Robertson and Tang, 1995). This study acknowledges, but will not specifically address, these approaches to understanding human behavior.

In some cases, self-satisfaction is merely a matter of being recognized. A person wants to be involved, but also wants to be appreciated and to feel a part of what is being done in order to continue being involved. For the most part, in community organizations, people are not looking to one person to make all of the decisions; they are there because they want to contribute in some way. The extent to which people *stay* involved, therefore,

¹ See Truman (1951), Dahl (1961, 1971) Lowi (1969), and Lane (1959) for primary sources describing pluralist approaches.

² This is drawn from Olson (1965), Colander (1984) and Srinivasan (1985).

is often related to the leadership of such organizations. The leadership sets the tone for the organization.

Leadership capacity exists within each member of an organization. The extent to which this is recognized and reflected will often influence the degree and duration of participation in the organization; it will also influence participants' level of self confidence as they begin to recognize more of their own strengths and abilities.

THIS STUDY

A great deal has been written about why people get involved in community organizations; much less attention has been paid to *sustaining* people's involvement. This study explores some of the issues that affect people's sustained participation in community organizations. It specifically addresses the following key questions:

1. Does leadership develop as a result of participation in community organizations?
2. What are the factors that influence a person's continued involvement in these organizations?
3. Does involvement lead to greater self-confidence in leadership roles?
4. Does participation in an organization that practices shared leadership and collective responsibility affect a person's determination to apply these principles in other organizations?

In order to address these question, this study looks at two communities in Michigan's Upper Peninsula (U.P.) which have been involved in a leadership development project called CLIMB (Community Leadership Initiatives—Michigan's Best). As part of the effort to get answers to the above questions, this study also attempts to develop a

methodological approach for assessing the effects of shared leadership and a process-oriented approach to community leadership development.

CLIMB

CLIMB (Community Leadership Initiatives—Michigan’s Best) promotes “leaderful”³ community organizations, based on the premise that many or all members share responsibility for leading the organization and developing the capacity needed to address issues of community concern. It attempts to stimulate sustainable community leadership development by promoting innovative ways to develop shared leadership from within communities. CLIMB’s hope is that this will create a renewed sense of community through people’s involvement in and ownership of twelve projects throughout the state of Michigan (Appendix A). While learning and practicing shared leadership, community organizations address issues of local concern and are encouraged to reflect upon and self-evaluate their experiences in developing leaderful organizations.

CLIMB evolved from an effort in the early 1990s by Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) to evaluate, and more effectively address, community issues. Extension services country-wide had been under attack for not being able to deal with current issues of importance, relying on old methods and old definitions of the problem, and being unable “to transform themselves into institutions for meaningful social change”

³ A leaderful organization is one in which “leadership roles and responsibilities are shared and distributed as widely as possible” (Vandenberg and Sandmann, 1995:7).

(LATG, 1993:7). In response, MSUE sought to transform itself into a significantly more responsive and relevant organization, better serving the communities of Michigan.⁴

MSUE carefully examined its own role in Michigan, and sought to identify and prioritize issues at the county, regional and state levels. The three key issues that emerged were Children, Youth and Families; Environment and Natural Resources; and Economic Development. Leadership was identified as a cross-cutting issue.

MSUE's self-examination in the early 1990s resulted in a proposal to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The opening paragraph provides an excellent summary of why CLIMB came into existence:

This proposal has to do with a group becoming steeped in leadership development and coalition building in order to forge a new partnership: one that will stimulate, nurture, and sustain a new generation of community and issue based transformational leadership development programs throughout Michigan; and one that will empower local communities to engage in meaningful capacity building for issue based community development (LATG, 1993:3).

The Kellogg Foundation and Michigan State University Extension funded CLIMB in 1993. It actively sought a diverse membership, and invited people from MSUE, community organizations, and others working with communities to participate in learning and discovering together new ways of developing leadership from within communities. It

⁴ MSUE has a long history of leadership development programs with communities throughout the state. In the 1960s, MSUE collaborated with the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) to develop and implement the Kellogg Young Farmers Leadership Program statewide. In 1970, MSUE started a multi-county leadership development program, calling it "New Horizons." In 1981, this gave way to a new generation of leadership development programs, "Expanding Horizons," which were more flexible, more local, shorter and less dependent on MSU campus resource persons.

MSUE was an active participant in the statewide "Michigan Ag Leadership Program" for agricultural leaders, a forestry-related statewide program, and the WKKF-funded "Family and Community Leadership Program." MSUE developed several youth-related leadership development programs, including "Group Dynamite," "Peer Plus," and "YEA."

set out to experiment with new partnerships between a land grant university and the communities it seeks to serve, and to change the way MSUE engages in leadership development with its own staff and with community constituents (Kaagan et al., 1995).

Specifically, the goals of CLIMB are to:

1. Develop partnerships that value diversity, stimulate resource development and provide leadership for effective community based leadership development programs in Michigan.
2. Cooperate with communities in designing the elements of sustainable community leadership development programs that focus on community issues; particularly economic development, environmental preservation, and children, youth and families.
3. Create methods and support a learning environment in which CLIMB partners and community members enhance their leadership capacity.
4. Collaborate with MSUE in developing methods to expand the development of community and university partnerships (CLIMB, 1996).

A key characteristic of CLIMB's approach to leadership development is that it recognizes the expertise and knowledge that exists within the communities. It seeks to bring together community leaders—current and emerging—with MSUE and MSU personnel to create and develop the kind of leadership that is needed in communities now and in the future. The CLIMB “experiment” seeks to work within communities by: focusing on issues of importance to the local community; developing leadership through the process of addressing problems; and, collaboratively seeking new solutions. It recognizes that leadership is a combination of service, commitment, credibility, skills, willingness, and relationships.

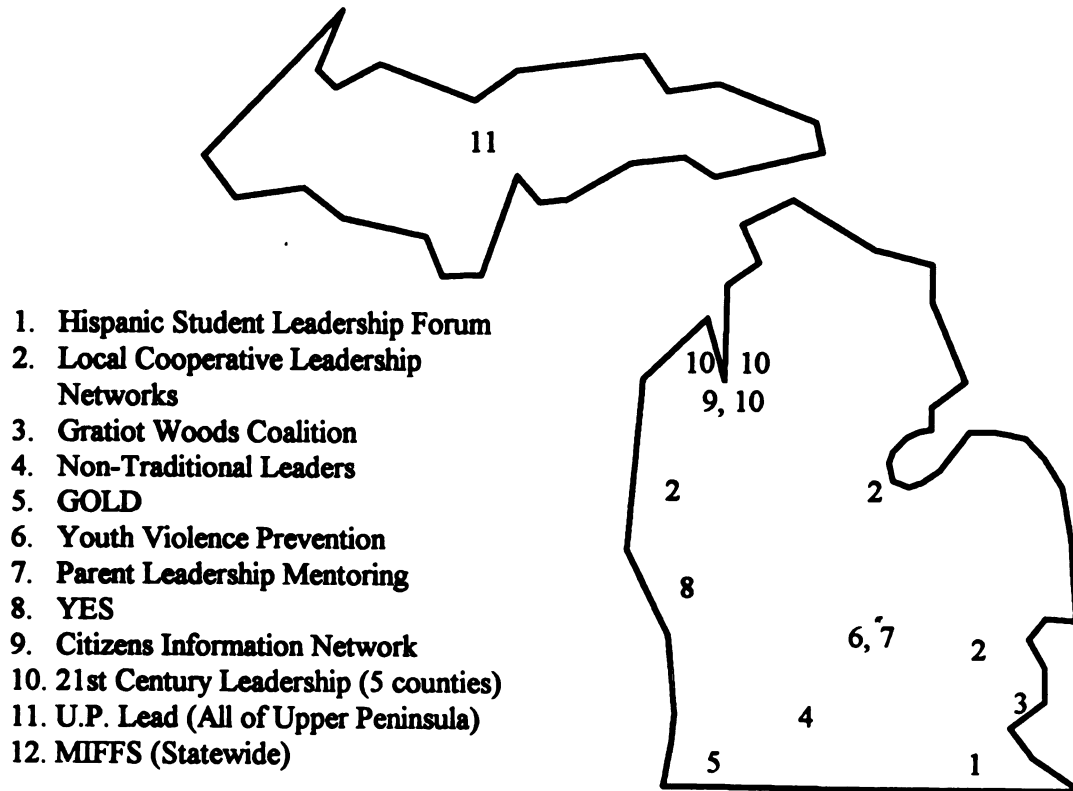


Figure 1: Map of CLIMB projects

In 1995, six community projects were awarded “mini-grants” of approximately \$5,000 each to explore or experiment with new ways of developing leadership within their communities. Six additional communities received grants the following year. (See Appendix A for descriptions of each project.) Each project is unique in size and scope; some projects are on-going and others are completed. Figure 1 shows the locations of CLIMB projects throughout the state. Briefly, they are:

- the Gratiot Woods Coalition, a neighborhood on the East Side of Detroit, covers a 36-block area; community members have organized to clean up the alleys and vacant lots in an effort to revitalize what was once a thriving, close-knit community;
- GOLD (Grassroots Organization and Leadership Development) in the city of Benton Harbor provided training to emerging leaders within the community in order to motivate them to become change agents within their neighborhoods;
- “21st Century Leadership,” a regional leadership development program in five counties surrounding Grand Traverse, used interactive television to train current and emerging leaders in leadership skills to address issues of local concern;
- Local Cooperative Leadership Networks are “communities of interest” that formed in several counties; members of different types of cooperatives meet over lunch to learn from one another and from other cooperative leaders;
- U.P. Lead covers all of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula and focuses on developing leadership while addressing community-based issues within each county;
- the Hispanic Youth Leadership Forum in Lenawee Intermediate School District, works with about 50 Hispanic high school students to develop leadership skills through training and through volunteering in migrant camps; and,

- the Youth Enrichment Services in the City of Holland, worked with up to 50 youth, to develop leadership, career and academic skills among low-income youth.

Other projects include the community outreach area of the Youth Violence Prevention Coalition in Lansing and Ingham County, the Citizens Information Network that linked 2 rural communities to the internet, and a leadership-related portion of MIFFS (Michigan Integrated Food and Farming Systems).⁵

The criteria for receiving the grants included a specific emphasis on leadership development while emphasizing innovation and partnerships with community members, CLIMB members, MSUE, and other related agencies. Some of the projects had definite starting and ending points, like the 21st Century Leadership program; others, like the Gratiot Woods Coalition and many of the projects in U.P. Lead, are persevering and growing.

With one year remaining in the WKKF grant to CLIMB, there is an emphasis on gathering and documenting “lessons learned” and “best practices” related to community leadership development within these communities. This research, focusing on two communities in the Upper Peninsula, is one step in that process.

U.P. LEAD

U.P. Lead was one of CLIMB’s first projects. This section describes the geographic background and uniqueness of the U.P., the goals of U.P. Lead, how it was

⁵ Two of the projects were not implemented, though many lessons were learned: the statewide Parent Leadership Mentoring Project, aiming to link parent volunteer mentors with the parents of children in the Special Education or Mental Health systems, and Kalamazoo County’s Non-Traditional Leader Development program, which intended to address the training needs of non-traditional and grassroots community leaders.

implemented throughout the peninsula, and then specifically describes Iron and Baraga counties.

Background

Surrounded by Lakes Michigan, Superior, and Huron, Michigan's Upper Peninsula (U.P.), the size of several East Coast states, was awarded to Michigan as compensation for a land dispute with Ohio in 1837. It is clear to most people that this was a political, not necessarily *logical*, decision (Carter, 1980). From the 1820s even to today, people have campaigned to make it a separate state, Superior. This is partly because of the fierce independence of the U.P. settlers⁶, or "Yoopers," as they are affectionately known. It also has a lot to do with the fact that the U.P. is united with lower Michigan only because of one of the world's longest suspension bridges, the 5 mile Mackinac Bridge⁷.

This geographic separation made it difficult to administer; in the early years of Michigan's statehood, mail and any visitors had to travel by dog sled through southwestern Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin to reach the U.P. Even now, with the bridge, railroads, airports, and telecommunications, lawmakers in Lansing, the state capital, have little understanding of the U.P.—it's people, problems, and resources (Carter, 1980; Martin, 1986). The western U.P. has much more in common with

⁶ The earliest non-indigenous settlers were French Canadian traders, African American slaves and freemen, and Russian Jews. Mining and logging in the 1800s created many jobs, and immigrants were actively recruited from Finland, Italy, Cornwall, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, Germany, England, Denmark, Ireland, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Poland, as well as parts of the Mediterranean and even China. Many others came because land was available for farming, and because word spread that jobs were plentiful in this area.

⁷ Completion of the bridge in 1957 eliminated such nightmares as the 23-mile long lines of cars waiting to take the ferry.

Wisconsin—Green Bay is less than an hour from the border—than it does with any part of lower Michigan.

Geography continues to present many other challenges in the U.P. Most communities are rural and remote. Going anywhere requires a considerable amount of travel time—not only are places far apart, but nearly all of the roads are two winding lanes. Winters are long and harsh, with snow usually beginning in October and sometimes lasting into May. This presents unique challenges for community groups—even to meet during the winter might be nearly impossible. It also is a testament to the ruggedness and endurance of the Yoopers.

The U.P. was settled mainly as a result of copper and iron mines and logging. These industries formed the base of the U.P.'s economy. Tourism has also grown increasingly important. Many of the mines have closed down in the last few decades, forcing communities to look for alternative sources of income or lose many of their members. Most of the communities that relied heavily on the mining industry have struggled through losing many of their working-age population. Some have successfully attracted new industries; others are still determinedly looking for ways to keep their communities alive.

Despite the harshness and the distance—or perhaps *because* of it—the U.P. attracts many people looking to get away from crowded urban living. In many communities, couples who moved away half a century ago because of educational and/or employment opportunities are returning to the U.P. for their retirement. There is some sort of love affair that many people have with the U.P. According to one U.P. “transplant,” the term applied to anyone not born and raised there, “People born and

raised in the Upper Peninsula (though they may be away temporarily) never really leave it” (Martin, 1986:*vii*).

Many people continue to have romantic notions toward the U.P. It is seen as a wilderness area, a place where time stands still. According to Wisconsin’s former governor, Lee Dreyfus “...this is truly a place described in the Twenty-Third Psalm, given to us by the Creator” (in Carter, 1980:61).

It was in this “paradise,” where there is great beauty, wilderness and peace, in addition to long, harsh winters and scarcity of jobs, that U.P. Lead was initiated.

Goal of U.P. Lead

The goal of U.P. Lead was to “do leadership” in a new way. With community events in each of the U.P.’s fifteen counties, U.P. Lead was intended to be an experiential approach to community leadership development rather than a programmatic approach. The emphasis has been on learning by doing, as opposed to following a set “leadership development” curriculum, which is most common in the traditional approach to leadership development programs. Each county had the opportunity to bring together a diverse, multigenerational group of community members for a 2-day workshop or “mini-gathering,” modeled after the statewide CLIMB gatherings, during which time community concerns were identified and groups self-formed to address some of these issues. The intent was to identify what small groups could do in a short period of time to begin to address some of the community concerns. The planners recognized the importance of early successes for the long-term sustainability of an organization.

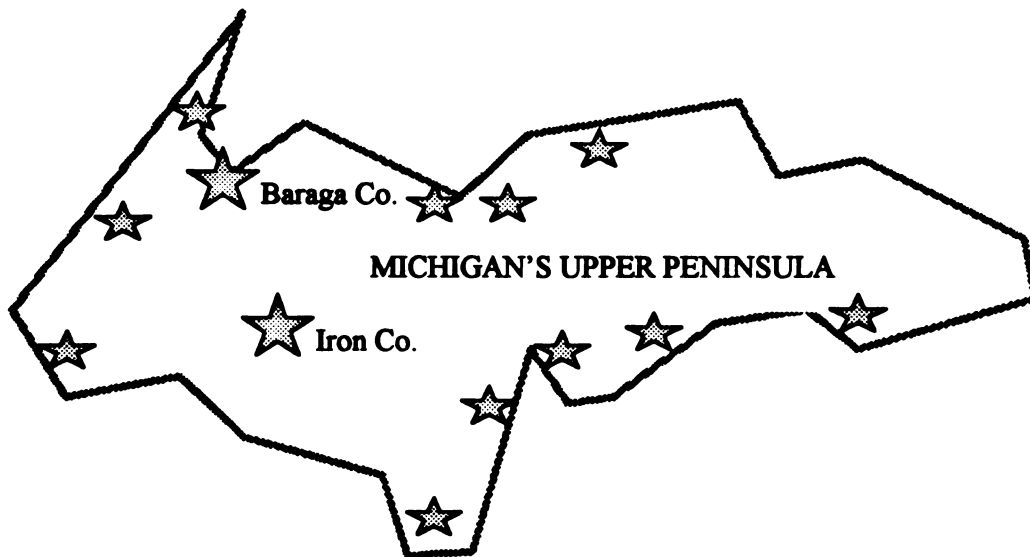


Figure 2 Map of U. P. Lead

Implementation

Thirteen of the fifteen counties in the Upper Peninsula participated (see Figure 2). Each county formed a planning group for the “mini-gathering.” MSUE provided a template (Appendix B) for the workshop, covering such topics as community visioning, collaborating within communities, working with different personality types, community asset building, getting things done in communities, and dealing with conflict. The county planning teams, comprised of community leaders and others who had participated in previous Extension leadership programs, worked with this template and adapted it for their communities. Selecting the presenters was an important part of the process—realizing that the resources and expertise already exist within their communities. Another important part of the process was an emphasis on local control.

The issues identified during the mini-gatherings included such concerns as community apathy, the breakdown of families, substance abuse, encouraging volunteerism, homelessness, recycling, mentoring, land use planning, unifying divided communities, and the lack of activities for youth. Some of the outcomes include repairing outdoor basketball courts so that youth have an alternative, wholesome activity; linking up to create a community theater group to unite a divided county; talking in schools to recruit and promote youth volunteerism; and encouraging students and parents to organize and stand up for what is important to them in the schools.

Most counties held follow-ups approximately six months after the first gathering. In addition, there was a 2-day U.P. Lead gathering in March 1997. This was an opportunity for participants from all of the U.P. counties to come together, share experiences, learn from one another and through sessions on volunteerism, grant writing,

and youth, and learn more about collaborative leadership from an external facilitator. It was also a time to explore the future of working together on common causes and interests across the Upper Peninsula.

This study focuses on two counties in the U.P., Iron and Baraga. They were selected because they attempted to develop community leadership through innovatively addressing community problems.

Iron County

In Iron County, two groups formed as a result of the leadership workshop. One group was concerned with the division between two sides of the county. A hundred years ago, Crystal Falls “stole the courthouse” from Iron River, and the county seat shifted. The county is also divided by geography: Crystal Falls and Iron River are fifteen miles apart, and the river flows between them. Several people commented on the irony that “the only thing between the two towns is the transfer station” for the county’s refuse.

There is a long-standing and deep-seated bitterness on either side of the county. Many community members agree that this has gone on long enough, and it is time to do something to bring the two sides of the county together. During the U.P. Lead/Iron County workshop, a group of people decided to look into ways of doing this. After several discussions, they decided to create a community theater to bring both sides together. At the same time, the theater in Crystal Falls, which hosted traveling theater groups, was looking into starting a community theater. These two groups of people joined together, and they have produced three plays, with more in process or planned.

The other group which formed through the U.P. Lead/Iron County workshop was concerned with youth in the community who face problems of drugs, alcohol, and teen pregnancy. They wanted to provide positive role models to the youth of the community. Several high school students are active members of this group. Building on a project which the Kiwanis Club had been sponsoring, this group has developed a Kinship Mentoring Program. There are adult mentors for any students and high school student mentors for younger children.

Baraga County

Baraga is one of the oldest counties settled in the Upper Peninsula. It was an important mission station and trading post throughout the 1700s and 1800s. Located on the Keewanaw Bay, it was most easily reached by boat, though this was possible for only about half of the year because of ice. By the early 1900s, it had also become an important tourist destination.

Baraga's economy was largely based on logging. Timber remains an important resource, but not to the extent it did in the 1800s. Presently, the largest employers in Baraga County are the Ojibway Casino and Resort and a recently built state prison.

When the people of Baraga County came together for the leadership development workshop, they identified several issues of importance to them. They formed three groups to address these issues: volunteerism within the community, focusing on the schools; alcohol and substance abuse; and family issues.

In addition, there was another workshop especially for the youth. This group wanted to address child abuse and neglect, but has focused on community service projects.

The high school students, together with adult advisers, are trying to offer positive, fun alternatives for other youth in the community. Although there are many outdoor-related recreational activities in Baraga County, there are few other entertainment opportunities. As a result, many youth have developed negative reputations for causing trouble because “there’s nothing else to do.”

LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

This study is exploratory in nature. It does not attempt to describe and interpret in detail the phenomenon of leadership development in each community. It also recognizes but does not address the political forces at work in each community⁸. It was beyond the scope of this study to investigate the political actors and processes. U.P. Lead focuses mainly on voluntary community organizations, not on elected positions; this remained the focus of this study. Both of these factors are limitations of this study; these areas should be addressed in greater detail in future research.

This study also assumes that leadership potential exists within each person. Often the best “leaders” do not recognize themselves as such; they see themselves as “doers” and motivators. Leadership qualities are fostered and drawn out of people through doing. It is not enough to learn about leadership; it must be practiced and it must be locally relevant.

⁸ CLIMB, for the most part, does not directly address political issues. In early CLIMB documents, there was an emphasis on addressing and involving local political leadership. During implementation, however, this has rarely been the case. Reasons for this should be investigated further.

Finally, this study is not meant to be representative of all of the CLIMB projects. Looking at Iron and Baraga Counties provides an illustration of and insights into developing leadership from within a community.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS STUDY

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 2 develops a conceptual framework for CLIMB and then reviews literature relevant to the key CLIMB-related concepts, setting the stage for the questions to be addressed in this study. Chapter 3 provides a discussion of the methods used to gather the data and gain an understanding of these community organizations, and also addresses the relevance and pertinence of these methods for this study. Chapter 4 presents and discusses the key issues that emerged throughout the interviewing process. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a summary of this study, conclusions, and policy research implications related to community leadership development.

Chapter 2

CLIMB:

CONCEPTS, THEORIES AND DREAMS

CLIMB is grounded in the idea that leadership ...involves web-like, non-hierarchical relationships and rejects a pedagogy that emphasizes 'training' in favor of one that emphasizes a continuous process of practical collaboration within a community of learning.

Markus, 1996:16

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 described what CLIMB *does*. This chapter addresses the philosophy of CLIMB: what it *is*, and what its participants strive toward and believe in. It presents and discusses concepts of community leadership development; these key concepts also serve as operating principles for CLIMB, and provide a means for discussing how the CLIMB approach is related to current thinking on community leadership development. Finally, this chapter identifies some of the questions confronting the implementation of CLIMB in Michigan.

THE MISSION OF CLIMB

The mission statement presented in CLIMB's Strategic Plan (1995) states that, "CLIMB seeks to advance community leadership development initiatives for the well-

being of Michigan citizens.” Several key concepts have emerged in the process of carrying out this mission statement⁹. CLIMB partners are interested in new ways of developing leadership within communities, recognizing that community leadership development and empowerment are closely intertwined. Partners also recognize that action and reflection are critical for the sustainability of community organizations and for motivating volunteers. Finally, CLIMB partners encourage and embrace diversity among the projects, communities, opinions, and individual backgrounds. Given the importance of these concepts, the following section examines community leadership development, praxis and diversity.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

True belonging is born of relationships not only to one another but to a place of shared responsibilities and benefits. We love not so much what we have acquired as what we have made and with whom we have made it.

Robert Finch

CLIMB developed in response to a need recognized by Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) to “do leadership in a new way.” CLIMB embraces many approaches to community leadership development, based on the assumption that leadership emerges as people who are actively involved in issues of community concern develop skills and confidence for a greater sense of empowerment. It is “not about applying a pre-planned leadership development curriculum that is ‘taught’ to members. It is about participants

⁹ These key concepts were identified as part of this study through careful examination of CLIMB documents: the original proposal, annual reports, evaluator’s reports, project progress reports, notes from CLIMB gatherings, and through interviews and conversations with groups and individuals involved with CLIMB.

helping to build the curriculum based on individualized needs and collective aspirations” (CLIMB, 1995:17).

CLIMB draws upon Burwell and Killacky’s statement that leadership starts with increasing self-esteem, confidence and personal power (in MRIL, 1992). Based on this understanding, community leadership development and empowerment are considered interrelated concepts, building upon and dependent upon each other. Given their significance, it is useful to look more closely at these concepts, broken down into approaches to leadership, perspectives on community development, and a discussion of empowerment.

LEADERSHIP

A group dominated by a leader will never exceed the talents of the leader

Max DePree

CLIMB projects are based upon the principle that leadership exists only in relationship to others, and it assumes that leadership develops through participation in an organization or group when there is shared responsibility, open communication, and mutual respect. CLIMB partners believe that leadership potential exists within everyone; it can and does come from many places and is directly related to the long-term sustainability of a group (CLIMB, 1996). CLIMB projects embody the idea that leadership is a relationship among individuals (Vandenberg and Sandmann, 1995; Rost, 1993) and that it “involves mutually determinative activity between leaders and

collaborators, in which leaders empower others to achieve ethically-grounded, shared goals” (Markus, 1995:33).

The nature of this leadership relationship is a key distinction between the different approaches to leadership. The approach that CLIMB uses to leadership builds upon the analytic framework presented in Table 1. The Old Paradigm describes traditional views on leadership where power rests in one or a few individuals who control the “followers.” It is a top-down approach to leadership with clear boundaries between leaders and followers. The New Paradigm, which CLIMB strives to demonstrate, is based on leadership that is shared among members. Boundaries are not based upon a hierarchy, but overlap and change based upon the talents of the members. Each set of variables: relational, organizational and operational, as well as the purpose of leadership development, operate along a continuum.

Position and Power

CLIMB rejects the notion that leadership is synonymous with position or authority (CLIMB, 1996), or the “industrial paradigm” (Rost, 1991)¹⁰. This approach builds from other models of leadership, which look at the issue of power differently. French and Raven (in Graham, 1987:74) make this distinction:

Leadership is the use of personal power bases (expert and referent) whereas supervision is the use of position-power bases (reward, coercion, and legitimacy) to influence group members.

¹⁰ The industrial paradigm is described as “a fundamental understanding of leadership that is rational, management oriented, male, technocratic, quantitative, goal dominated, cost-benefit driven, personalistic, hierarchical, short-term, pragmatic and materialistic” (Rost, 1991:94).

Table 1 Approaches to Leadership

Relational Variables	Old Paradigm ←	→ New Paradigm
Leadership	Single, one head	Shared, dispersed, roving
Leader roles	Manager, boss, director	Coach, mentor, steward, facilitator, community builder
Member roles	Subordinates, followers, dependent	Collaborators, partners, empowered
Leader-follower relationship	Control, direct, patronize	Empower, develop, co-learn
Organizational Variables	←	→
Vision	Developed by the leader who persuades, inspires, sells	Developed collaboratively, owned by the members
Organizational culture	Production, compliance, self-interest, homogeneity	Community, commitment, service, diversity
Structure	Hierarchy, clear boundaries	Networks; overlapping, changing boundaries
Governing force	Policies	Vision, values
Operational Variables	←	→
Mode of action	Problem-solving, reactive, adaptive	Creative, inventive, learning-oriented, future-oriented
Action strategy	Plan—do	Engage in group learning cycle: analyze, act, reflect
Decisions	Top-down, consultative	democratic
Leadership Development	←	→
Purpose	To develop leader's skills, traits and behaviors in order to influence others	To learn to facilitate and build community, and to develop, educate and empower others

Vandenberg and Sandmann, 1995

Foster (1989:49) suggests that, “Leadership is not a function of position but rather represents a conjunction of ideas where leadership is shared and transferred between leaders and followers, each only as a temporary designation.” DePree (1992:190) further cautions that, “a group dominated by a leader will never exceed the talents of the leader,” and stresses that good leadership includes building relationships and influencing people, not exercising one’s power over others.

Individual as Leader

Foster (1989) examined the traditional theories of leadership and proposed some alternative considerations for leadership in the modern context. **Transactional leadership** is based largely on exchanges between leader and follower, as with politicians and voters, involving concessions and negotiations. This is also often the case with organizational managers. **Transformational leadership** is the ability of an individual to envision a new social condition and communicate this vision to followers; Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., both exemplified this type of leadership (Foster, 1989)¹¹. It is also practiced in some management settings, where leaders try to motivate people to do more than they originally thought possible. They do this by employing one or more of the “Four I’s:” (1) idealized influence—being role models; (2) inspirational motivation—providing meaning and inspiring others; (3) intellectual stimulation—being innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways; and (4) individualized consideration—paying special attention to needs for achievement and growth, as coach or mentor (Bass and Avolio, 1994).

Despite significant differences, both of these models of leadership emphasize the leader as hero, the “Great Man” theory of leadership. Kofman and Senge (1993) caution that such leadership reinforces the group’s own powerlessness. Looking to the Great Man for leadership absolves citizens of developing leadership capabilities more broadly.

Toward Shared Leadership and Collective Responsibility

Servant leadership has biblical roots¹² but was popularized by Robert Greenleaf, who asks, “Do those served grow as persons; do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?” (Greenleaf, 1993:57). He asserts that true leadership emerges from those whose primary motivation is a desire to help others. This model attempts to enhance personal growth of members and to improve the quality and caring of organizations through teamwork, sense of community, personal involvement in decision-making, and ethical and caring behavior (Spears, 1995).

A new paradigm of shared leadership emerges from the values of servant leadership and transformational leadership. **Shared leadership** recognizes that leadership potential exists within each person, and goes beyond an emphasis on one particular individual as leader (Rost, 1993). According to this model, the most effective form of leadership results when many members share responsibility for the leadership of an organization.

¹¹ Analyzing the life stories of people like Ghandi, Roosevelt, Hitler and others, James McGregor Burns first used the terms *transactional* and *transformational leadership* in his 1978 book, *Leadership*.

¹² “Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant” (Matthew 20:26).

Shared leadership—variously termed post-heroic, dispersed, collaborative, collective, or group centered—is based on the assumption that each person has leadership qualities. It involves “bottom-up transformation fueled by shared power and community building. It requires trust, open communication, shared vision and shared values” (Vandenberg and Sandmann, 1995:1).

Collectivist-democratic organizations operate in a very similar manner. Authority belongs to the whole group and not just a few officers; each person is a valued member (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). When there are insufficient numbers of members who believe themselves capable of taking on leadership roles, however, community groups have difficulty getting established (Kroecker, 1996).

Community Leadership Development: Program or Process

One of the four main goals of CLIMB is to develop a sustainable community leadership base. In order to achieve this goal, CLIMB is committed to a process approach to leadership development, rather than a program of training community leaders. Under a new paradigm of shared leadership, the purpose is “to learn to facilitate and build community, and to develop, educate, and empower others” (Vandenberg and Sandmann, 1995:3). This means involving people in decision-making, empowering them to act and building self-confidence, in order to create the broad base of leadership necessary for developing sustainable community leadership and avoid dependence on a few individuals.

Capacity-building, a combination of skills-development and practice, is necessary for developing community leadership. CLIMB partners recognize that skills alone will not produce leadership within a community. Building skills is only a vehicle for

achieving community change. For example, certain organizational, communication, conflict and management skills are needed, but CLIMB focuses on developing the capacity to identify and seek out resources and those with specialized skills. To encourage this, CLIMB maintains a network of expertise that each community can call upon for developing and strengthening skills¹³.

In other words, it is extremely important that the local community control the process of leadership development. Community residents determine the direction of each project, and are responsible for the outcomes. "Expert knowledge," whether from extension, another CLIMB partner, or any other "outsider," should not overwhelm or disable the community. Each project should be community-driven, not driven and directed by MSUE or any other agency or individual.

Most leadership development programs center on offering curriculum taught to leaders and emerging leaders (Hartley, 1997). These programs operate on the assumption that the skills, knowledge and attitudes of a leader can be learned (Bolton, 1991; Taylor, 1997)¹⁴ and many assume a heroic view of leadership that focuses on the development of leader's skills, traits, and behaviors (Vandenberg and Sandmann, 1995).

Little research has been done on these structured, skills-based community leadership development programs (Taylor, 1997). At least one study found no difference, pre- and post-test, in participants' perceptions of their leadership abilities. The author

¹³ CLIMB maintains a "pantry of skills," a listing of the CLIMB partners and their areas of expertise. These partners are available to facilitate sessions or share understanding with the communities that are interested.

¹⁴ Both Taylor and Bolton carried out field studies to test the hypothesis that leadership can be taught: provide the skills, and leadership will result. Taylor compared respondents' self-analysis of leadership competencies between those who participated in skills-based leadership training with those who participated in issue- or networking-based training. Bolton used pre- and post-tests on people who

concluded that, “To know or understand a concept does not always mean that one has the ability to apply it in a specific situation” (Bolton, 1991:133) because the group showed very little change as a result of the leadership development course.

Studying corporate leadership development programs, Conger (1992) acknowledges that there are certain skills that are important for developing effective leadership and that some of these are learnable¹⁵, but they require a strong base of experience, not just a short course.

CLIMB assumes that “community leadership” includes not only elected officials but also people at many levels and in many contexts, such as schools, churches, and neighborhood associations (MRII, 1992). This approach to developing shared leadership draws from several sources.

Drath (1996:1) challenges people to let go of the idea that leadership starts with a leader of some kind. Rather than focusing on the leader, he asks, “What if you got leadership by starting with a community ...*of people making sense and meaning of their work together?*” He continues: “This process of meaning and sense-making would produce leaders *as a result*” (italics in original). Similarly, Rost cautions against focusing on the leader rather than on leadership, defining leadership as, “an influence relationship among leaders and their collaborators who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (Rost, 1993:99). Consequently, leadership development is a process occurring

participated in a leadership development program. Neither researcher found any significant effect of skills-based programs on leadership development.

¹⁵ Conger (1992) also pointed out the difficulties of skills-based leadership training. These include transferability from a structured educational setting back to the workplace; the time commitment required practicing and refining the skills learned; and the fact that the organization as well as the individual may create unrealistic expectations around certain skills.

over time¹⁶. Others draw attention to fostering a sharing and inclusive atmosphere that encourages members to offer their ideas and talents (Bettencourt et al., 1996) and to keep volunteers involved (Kroeker, 1996).

This discussion suggests that CLIMB confront several questions related to community leadership development:

- Is it possible to practice shared leadership within community organizations, when the dominant paradigm—where leadership is vested in an individual and based on positional power—is still prevalent?
- What is the role of voluntary community organizations in fostering a new type of leadership within the community?
- How can this leadership be sustained over time and through different situations?

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

*Community happens only when power is shared and
individuals take responsibility*
Shaffer and Anundsen, 1993:103

CLIMB is concerned fundamentally with the extent of personal and informational interaction and support that individuals have with others within their community¹⁷. This is a reciprocal relationship: the greater sense of community, the more likely people are to

¹⁶ Rost (1993) offers several suggestions for how to construct and deliver leadership development programs, more consistent with the new paradigm thinking of developing *leadership* rather than developing *leaders*. One important difference is to stop concentrating on the leader. He also recommends reconstructing people's basic worldview about life toward a collaborative orientation.

¹⁷ Shaffer and Anundsen (1993:10) suggest that community is a dynamic whole that emerges when a group of people "participate in common practices; depend upon one another; make decisions together; identify themselves as part of something larger than the sum of their individual relationships; and commit themselves for the long-term to their own, one another's, and the groups' well-being."

interact and support each other; the more people interact and support one another, the greater sense of community is developed (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990). The reverse of this is true as well. A sense of community is lost as people become more independent, self-sufficient, busy with multiple jobs or with home entertainment. Examples of connectedness and trust, as simple as neighbors borrowing tools or sugar, are rare in many communities today.

In the past, citizens had more responsibility to care for one another; carrying out this responsibility was an expression of their connectedness, or sense of community. Many citizens no longer feel that same degree of responsibility as they have grown more independent and there are many agencies that provide those services. Some have asserted that “well-intentioned social service providers have ‘invaded, co-opted, overwhelmed, and dominated’ communities, replacing consenting commitment with dependency upon ‘experts’” (Markus, 1995:37). Still, many people yearn for a renewed sense of community with caring and responsibility expressed by each member (McKnight, 1995).

From this perspective, CLIMB views community development as a process of empowering individuals and groups, and restoring or creating a sense of community. It is a “social process by which human-beings can become more competent to live with and gain some control over local aspects of a frustrating and changing world... it involves cooperative study, group decisions, collective action, and joint evaluation that leads to continuing action” (Chambers and McBeth, 1992:21).

This approach to community development is derived from the study of community psychology which describes it as a process that focuses on the development of human ecologies by empowering the community; it also considers the combined community,

human, economic and environmental resources (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990)¹⁸. It involves local empowerment, organized groups, and collective control of decisions on projects, programs, and policies that affect them as a community (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). This approach goes beyond a reliance on economic criteria to assess community development to include a social call to action to expand the degree of control men and women can wield over their destinies (Goulet, 1971:272).

Working with illiterate peasants in Brazil, Freire recognized this power. Education is never neutral but always serves someone's purpose. His model of critical consciousness encouraged people to question critical issues, to participate fully in political life, and to see themselves as creators of a different reality (Freire, 1973; Pilisuk et al., 1996).

Many have asked the question, which comes first: empowerment or participation? Does involvement enhance participation, or do empowered individuals choose to participate? Zimmerman (1990) concluded that the connection between participation and empowerment could be viewed as either an integral component of empowerment or as both a cause *and* effect of empowerment.

In the study of community psychology, empowerment "is thought to be a process by which individuals gain mastery or control over their own lives and democratic participation in the life of the community" (Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988:726). In social psychology, empowerment is conceptualized in three ways: a person's sense of self- or group-efficacy; a characteristic of relationships between individuals, among groups, and

¹⁸ As Daly and Cobb (1989) noted, community development has often been a means of achieving economic development. "Economics, not human growth, drives much of what today passes as community development" (Chambers and McBeth, 1992:21). This approach contrasts sharply with the community development projects that were an essential part of international development projects for many years (Eicher and Staatz, 1984). See also Christenson (1989).

between individuals and groups; and a sociopolitical concept, applied to cultures, ethnic groups and nations (Wittig, 1996). At the individual level, psychological empowerment is the connection between a sense of personal competence and a desire for and a willingness to take action in the public domain. Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988) found that a way to develop psychological empowerment is to become involved in decisions that affect community life, and Wittig (1996) found that people's sense of increasing self-efficacy is related to their involvement in decision-making and leadership.

Clearly, empowerment is inextricably linked with self-perceptions (Kieffer, 1984; Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988). People may not necessarily view themselves as *having* more power but rather as *feeling* more powerful. How powerful they feel, because of newly acquired skills, group solidarity, and achieving goals, is often their definition of being empowered.

Kieffer (1984) explored empowerment at the individual level among grassroots leaders. He looked at factors that led to the emergence of individual activists in citizen organizations, in order to illuminate the process from powerlessness to socio-political empowerment. He found that empowerment grew out of a catalyzing issue that brought individuals to the point of involvement. It required growth, development of skills and competency, and often a mentor, usually an "outsider," to help in this process. While acquiring new practical skills was necessary, the feeling of empowerment requires not just skills, but a change in thinking: a transition from "self as helpless victim" to "self as assertive and efficacious citizen." (Kieffer, 1984:32).

Empowerment is, to some extent, context specific (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990). A person may feel empowered in one situation and without any sense of control in

another. It is possible, however, that a person may gain confidence through involvement in one setting or community organization; this confidence is then carried over into other settings.

While most researchers and practitioners agree on the value of empowerment for community development, there is some concern that it may increase individualism and competitiveness. "Finding one's voice, controlling one's resources, becoming empowered may reduce the interdependence that produces a strong sense of community" (Riger, 1993:289). This individualism is already present in our society, and it would be difficult to conclude empirically that an increased sense of empowerment resulted in a reduced dependence on one another.

These issues form part of the focus and rationale for the present study, and raise some questions:

- Does a feeling of empowerment permeate CLIMB projects?
- Does a sense of empowerment spread into other community organizations as empowered individuals serve in these organizations?

PRAXIS: ACTION AND REFLECTION

*If you tell me, I'll forget.
If you show me, I may not remember.
If you involve me, I'll understand.
Native American Proverb*

Kieffer (1984:25), building upon Freire's notion of praxis, describes it as the dynamic relationship "of experience and reflection through which actions evoke new

understandings, which then provoke new and more effective actions.” The importance of praxis raises several key concerns related to CLIMB’s activities.

Process

As discussed above, CLIMB views community leadership development as a process grounded in issues of community concern, action and reflection (CLIMB, 1996). This process of thinking, learning, planning, doing and reflecting builds skills, enthusiasm and confidence, leading to an increased sense of empowerment.

Christenson et al. (1989) described the process of community development as people arriving at group decisions and taking actions to enhance the well-being of their community. They point out that the task itself is not as important as the process through which people go to achieve a goal. “During the process people may achieve a task or objective, but this is incidental to the long-range implications of teaching people how to improve the situation” (Christenson, 1989:33).

Issues

Community leadership is developed in the context of a community and the issues that concern the community. Whether it is a deteriorating neighborhood or concern for the youth, it takes a pressing issue—often referred to as a trigger event, catalyzing issue, or a gut issue—to get people involved in community organizations. When people feel or perceive a threat, they are most likely to respond (Beckwith and Lopez, 1997; Rubin and Rubin, 1995). A grassroots leader described it this way: “You can’t empower people unless you get them involved. And to get them involved, you’ve got to have an issue that

smacks people somewhere inside that something is wrong... It's got to be an issue that touches them in the gut" (Kieffer: 1984:25).

The more personally relevant the issue, the more likely people are to respond. Sometimes the issue is obvious; sometimes it takes a community organizer or a Saul Alinsky to help people see the relevancy of an issue¹⁹. Those who do become involved recognize that, collectively, they *can* make a difference and effect change. They go beyond blaming the system or blaming the victims, and make a decision to work toward change (Wittig, 1996).

Catalyzing issues usually embody the following characteristics: they must have an immediate impact—victory for those who organize, or harm if no action is taken—in order to shift people from an inactive to an active role; both the problem and solution must be specifically defined; and they must be realizable, within the reach of those who get involved (Beckwith and Lopez, 1997; Rubin and Rubin, 1995). In a community or neighborhood, this often means that locally-based issues have the strongest catalytic effect.

Action

In every CLIMB project, action and accomplishments are part of the process and the goal. People come together around an issue and act upon it. Achieving goals—both

¹⁹ Beckwith and Lopez (1997:2) list components of community organizing as: a process of building power by involving a constituency in identifying problems they share and solving those problems that they desire; identifying the people and structures that can make solutions possible; enlisting those targets in the effort through negotiation and using confrontation and pressure when needed; and building an institution that is democratically controlled by a constituency that can develop the capacity to take on further problems and that embodies the will and the power of a constituency.

large and small—helps to keep people motivated and enables them to practice shared leadership.

Effective action requires a process of coordination and planning strategies and goals (Bettencourt, 1996); action and process are inseparable (Kofman and Senge, 1993). This culture, which is so caught up in separation, makes people think that they can address one without addressing the other. Shaffer and Anundsen (1993) use the analogy of a bicycle to overcome the mindframe that insists on separation; they suggest that one wheel is the “task” and one is the “process.” Both are necessary to move anywhere.

There is potential for conflict between action and process-oriented people, but this tension can be used as an opportunity for growth within a community organization. If the group becomes too absorbed in “process,” it may achieve very little. Those who yearn for a tangible sense of accomplishment will get bored and stop participating; those who stay can become addicted to the group and its process. On the other hand, if the group is addicted to accomplishing tasks, the needs of the members will be ignored and the group identity and connectedness, so vital for sustaining an organization, will be neglected (Shaffer and Anundsen, 1993).

Reflection

Built into every CLIMB project is the value of reflection, the opportunity to stop and think about where the group came from, where it is going, and what it has learned. Evaluation is not necessarily a formal event, but can be an on-going “honest and open sharing of judgements” (Markus, 1996:21). Through this open sharing, the groups identify what they have learned through both what *has* and what *has not* worked. For

example, the Gratiot Woods coalition realized that “what you came in with is not necessarily what you’ll end up with...Our major goal hasn’t changed, but the way of getting there has”²⁰. Revising the original plan enables the group to grow together as they wrestle with issues and create alternative plans²¹.

Reflection is a vital part of the process in effective community leadership development. It means slowing down thinking processes to become more aware of how one thinks and how that affects one’s actions (Senge, 1990). Often people are so busy in community development work that they rarely take the time to stop and think about what they are doing and why. As a result, they may lose opportunities for growth and for change that might make their efforts more effective.

One of the main outcomes of reflection is learning. People learn more when each person is more conscious of what they are learning individually and collectively; this awareness is the key to reflective learning (Vaill, 1996). Noer (1997:16) points out that it isn’t possible to know all that needs to be known: “The best we can do is to develop individuals who have learned how to learn, and organizations that are able to learn in the collective.”

²⁰ See Appendix A

²¹ One CLIMB partner commented that “A plan implemented as planned is a plan doomed to fail,” emphasizing the need, especially when working with communities, to continually revise plans as necessary.

Motivation

Each of these factors: a pressing issue, action and accomplishments, and engaging in the process of reflection, affect the motivation of members. Keeping people motivated is one of the greatest challenges facing voluntary organizations. Most community organizations, including all CLIMB-related projects, depend heavily upon volunteers. In addition to involving people in meaningful ways at every stage of the process, CLIMB's strategies also include an emphasis on having fun, enjoying each other, and celebrating accomplishments.

CLIMB therefore goes beyond the narrow conception of rational self-interest that is widespread in economic and political theory (Olson, 1965). Instead of building from an assumption that individuals weigh only expected costs and benefits before engaging in collective action, CLIMB looks to the values of communitarian commitment, assistance and participation. Some have suggested that it is a unique sense of personal efficacy and self-interest which makes Americans participate, more than most countries, in civic associations engaged in addressing community problems (Perkins et al., 1996).

Nevertheless, CLIMB recognizes the need to identify the costs and benefits of involvement in a voluntary organization, but seeks to retain members and remain viable (Florin and Wandersman, 1990). This may be accomplished through benefits such as a sense of empowerment, a sense of contribution and accomplishment, and feelings of group support as well as opportunities to make friends and have fun (Bettencourt et al., 1996).

Several studies confirm the CLIMB concept of motivation. Kieffer (1984) found that participating in collective action brought the issues beyond personal and emotional

dimensions to social and political dimensions. Individuals found strength in numbers, and benefited by collaborating with others to solve problems.

Similarly, Bettencourt et al. (1996) found that key components of intragroup dynamics, including coordination, motivation, and group identification, are important for determining whether people will become involved, stay involved, and contribute to the success of a grassroots organization. The success of an ongoing grassroots organization has as much to do with group identification as it does with the issue being addressed; the social aspects of community groups are important for sustained involvement. "In general, most individuals have a need to feel included and identified with distinctive social groups" (Bettencourt et al., 1996:173). Tarrow (1994) proposes that volunteers might remain active throughout the cycles of success and failure in an organization because they identify with the group.

Bettencourt et al. (1996) also found that while organizational leaders do not necessarily make a concerted effort to motivate volunteers, there are certain things that contribute to continued motivation. These include a feeling volunteers have of **connectedness, practicing collective decision-making, fostering good communication within the group, and scheduling periodic social events.** These feelings of connectedness and cohesion contribute to high levels of motivation that are sustained over time (Bettencourt et al., 1996; Perkins et al., 1996; Beckwith and Lopez, 1997; Pilisuk, 1996).

For CLIMB, the key questions arise from the relationship between shared leadership and motivation within the group. What is the relationship between shared leadership and sustained motivation within voluntary community organizations? Does increased sharing of responsibility affect the continued participation of members?

DIVERSITY

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever does.

Margaret Mead

Diversity—of its membership, types of projects and points of view—are goals of the CLIMB program. CLIMB has continued to seek a diverse membership by recruiting and welcoming people of all ages, ethnic backgrounds, and professions. Each member is encouraged to share his/her point of view; one of the themes within CLIMB is “to create an environment within which a diversity of points of view, and even a diversity of goals can co-exist constructively” (CLIMB, 1996:20).

The projects range in size, scope, location, and approaches. Table 2 describes different types of “community,” providing an illustration of some of the diversity throughout CLIMB²². This discussion of diversity must include consideration of several types of issues: different communities, different collaborative arrangements within those communities, time commitments of individuals, and the logistics of bringing a diverse group together.

²² CLIMB as a program started with 60 partners statewide who met together to network and collectively identify innovative and effective ways of developing leadership within communities. This is described as a “community of interest,” those who have learned and acted together to develop leadership within their communities and organizations. CLIMB also involves community-based projects involving groups of concerned citizens. Each project is community-based and driven, not determined by the larger CLIMB structure.

Table 2 CLIMB Community Projects: Types of Community

Form of Community	Types of Social and Geographic Integration	Bases for Membership	Examples²³
Neighborhood	Integration based on geographic proximity and on issues facing people within one geographic area	Membership determined by place of residency	The Gratiot Woods Coalition: cleaning up alleys, planting flowers, etc. in an effort to revitalize their community one block at a time
Community of limited liability	People live near one another, but that rarely is sufficient to create social bonds	People who live nearby choose to join together on issues that particularly benefit them	U.P. Lead: identifying community concerns, and organizing themselves to address these issues; GOLD: leadership training coupled with on-going action for concerned community members
Solidarity community	People who share a common heritage whether ethnic, national, cultural or religious, that promotes shared values	People are born into solidarity communities, though the degree of identification varies by individual	The Hispanic Youth Leadership Forum: leadership development for Hispanic youth, with on-going applications
Social network	Integration based on shared interests	Individuals choose to be involved, but personal background factors influence the possibilities to choose from	Local Cooperative Leadership Networks: members come together to learn from one another, share ideas and expertise, work together for both co-ops and community
Community of interest	Integration based on a shared understanding of the importance of collective action	Individuals choose involvement after understanding an issue	YVPC: expanding awareness of community initiatives to prevent violence; MIFFS: collaboration between farmers and consumers, developing farming practices, leadership and policy; CLIMB program: people from diverse backgrounds (personal and organizational) share an interest in community leadership development

adapted from Rubin and Rubin, *Community Organizing and Development* (1995:84-85)

²³ See Appendix A for details and for other CLIMB projects.

Collaboration, a “mutually beneficial relationship between two or more parties who work toward common goals by sharing responsibility, authority, and accountability for achieving results” (Chrislip and Larson, 1994:5). This is a necessary complement to diversity that occurs at many levels and in many arenas. Some examples include CLIMB partners from different regions of the state, CLIMB’s collaboration with MSUE, different groups within a community, and among individuals from different projects. CLIMB recognizes the value of joining together, acknowledging the strengths of each individual and each organization involved, rather than assuming that “ours” is the best approach, or that only the “experts” have the knowledge to make a difference²⁴. CLIMB has learned that collaborative approaches “...broaden the information and experiential base upon which decisions are based, reflect and respect the diverse interests of multiple stakeholders, and convey community ‘ownership’ of decisions and strategies, thereby enhancing collective responsibility for successful implementation and building the leadership capacities of all participants” (Markus, 1996:20).

It is important to create an attitude and environment that “seeks out, empowers, and recognizes good ideas, no matter what the source” (DePree, 1992:188). This is extremely relevant in working with communities, which have diverse interests and groups. There is diversity in age, ethnic group, profession, economic status, and religious beliefs, to name a few. This diversity needs to be recognized and specifically targeted in

²⁴ In Iron County, for example, a group of citizens comprised of high school students, parents, and grandparents, was concerned about drugs, alcohol, teenage pregnancies, and gangs affecting the youth. They wanted to mentor younger students in order to provide positive role models. One member of this group was aware that Kiwanis was involved in a similar program; she provided the link, and the U.P. Lead group linked with the Kiwanis Club, and there is now a Kinship Mentoring Program within the Iron River Schools.

community leadership development initiatives if these are to be relevant and grounded in the local community. The level of learning and impact felt by participants is increased by including a diverse group in community leadership development initiatives (MRIL, 1992).

Diversity also refers to the length of time one has lived in a community. New residents look at the community through eyes that have had different experiences; they have different expectations than those of long-term residents. Based on their other experiences, new residents often see possibilities for change, how they could “improve” things. Sometimes they serve as powerful, positive catalysts for change in the community (Quinn, 1994). Extension agents and church leaders also serve as catalysts for change in the community.

Taylor (1997) noted the lack of diversity in her study of community leadership development programs, and found that most of the participants were highly educated professionals. She suggested there is a need for additional research in this area, questioning whether the high cost in both time and money to participate in structured, skills-based training programs contributed to this lack of diversity.

Many authors write about the need for diversity; few offer advice for how diversity is achieved. This suggests that CLIMB needs to address the question of how diversity can be achieved and maintained, giving equal voice to all members, especially when dealing with local power structures in the community.

SUMMARY

This chapter identified key concepts related to understanding the CLIMB approach to community leadership development. A review of the literature concerning these

concepts raised questions that provide the basis for inquiry of this study. These concepts and questions include:

Community leadership development: leadership, community development and empowerment.

- Is it possible to practice shared leadership within community organizations, when the dominant paradigm—where leadership is vested in an individual and based on positional power—is still prevalent?
- What is the role of voluntary community organizations in fostering a new type of leadership within the community?
- How can this leadership be sustained over time and through different situations?
- Does a feeling of empowerment permeate CLIMB projects?
- Does a sense of empowerment spread into other community organizations as empowered individuals serve in these organizations?

Praxis: issues, action, reflection and motivation.

- What is the relationship between shared leadership and sustained motivation within voluntary community organizations?
- Does increased sharing of responsibility affect the continued participation of members?

Diversity: different projects and people collaborating

- How is diversity achieved and maintained, giving equal voice to all members, especially when dealing with local power structures in the community?
- What is the role of “outsiders” in community development?

Chapter 4 addresses these questions based on research involving two CLIMB-related projects in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.

In order to answer these questions and get at the heart of understanding community leadership development from a community perspective, it is necessary to use qualitative methods, ideally engaging participants in a discussion of the topic and related issues²⁵. Chapter 3 describes the methods used for this study, and also begins to develop a methodology by which CLIMB and others might gather and process the lessons learned within community organizations.

²⁵ Both Taylor (1997) and Bolton (1991), after completing their studies of community leadership development programs, realized that they were unable to “measure” any changes using quantitative methods. Taylor noted that future research should include focus groups in order to learn more by engaging people in more discussion.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The heart of this study is to explore the phenomenon of sustained participation in voluntary community organizations. Primarily relying on such qualitative methods as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions preceding and following the interviews, this study seeks to identify key issues and themes related to leadership and participation. It also attempts to develop a methodology which CLIMB, and other community leadership development organizations, might use to systematically gather lessons learned about community leadership development.

This chapter describes the methods used to conduct this study. It includes an explanation of the rationale for using qualitative methods as well as the rationale for the particular methods employed. It also describes the preparation that was necessary for this study, including selection criteria for the locations and the participants, entry strategies, and implementation of the methods used.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research has been described as research “that entails immersion in the everyday life of the setting chosen for the study, values and seeks to discover participants’ perspectives on their worlds, views inquiry as an interactive process between the researcher and the participants, is both descriptive and analytic, and relies on people’s worlds and observable behavior as the primary data” (Marshall and Rossman, 1995:4). It recognizes the importance of context, setting, and the participants’ unique experiences and frames of reference. It does not pretend to be replicable; rather than trying to control a situation as in traditional, reductionist research, qualitative research records the complexity of contexts and interrelationships. It recognizes that the real world changes, and does not try to control it. When each design decision and rationale behind it is recorded, however, other researchers may inspect and learn from procedures and decisions made throughout a qualitative study.

RATIONALE

This study was exploratory; as such, it required a methodology that allowed for participants’ ideas to emerge and to be expressed in their words and thoughts. Through focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, observation and review of existing data about the communities, this study explored the dynamic of leadership within two communities.

The conventional positivist paradigm requires that systematic inquiry address internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that four alternative constructs might more accurately reflect the assumptions of

the qualitative paradigm. First is **credibility**, demonstrating that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described. Second is **transferability**, or generalizability, to other settings; these authors suggest that this responsibility rests more with the investigator who would wish to make these generalizations, rather than with the original investigator. Triangulation, or using multiple sources, multiple informants, or multiple data gathering methods strengthens the transferability of qualitative research. The third construct is **dependability**, which recognizes and attempts to account for the changing nature of the phenomenon being studied as well as changes in the design of the study. It assumes that, “the social world is always being constructed, and the concept of replication is itself problematic” (Marshall and Rossman, 1995:145). Finally, the fourth construct, **confirmability**, is more useful in qualitative research than the positivist concept of objectivity. It involves asking whether the results of this study can be confirmed by another researcher.²⁶

Focus Groups

Morgan (1988) encourages using focus groups at the early stages of research in order to guide the later construction of the interview questions. This helps to ensure that the topic is being looked at from the perspective of the participants. The researcher’s desire to involve participants from the outset and to gain an understanding of their priorities formed the rationale for starting the field research with a focus group in each county.

²⁶ See Marshall (1990) in Marshall and Rossman (1995:146-148) for a “subjectivity checklist” with criteria for assessing the value and trustworthiness of qualitative research.

Whyte (1984) concluded that using a genuinely non-directive approach in research, such as asking someone, "Tell me what's important to you," makes people uncomfortable. He found that they often respond by asking, "What do you want to know?" which not only puts the direction of the conversation back on the researcher, but the original uneasiness felt by the informant also affects the remainder of the discussion.

This supports Kruger's statement, that "Focus groups possess the capacity to become more than the sum of their participants, to exhibit a synergy that individuals alone can not achieve" (Kruger, 1994:45). Focus groups are especially valuable when the researcher desires ideas to emerge from the group.

In-Depth Interviews

The in-depth interview has been described as "a conversation with a purpose" (Marshall and Rossman, 1995:80). Whyte (1984) stressed the importance of allowing the informant the freedom to introduce materials that were not anticipated by the interviewer; this was definitely practiced during these interviews. Qualitative in-depth interviews are "much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories. The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's meaning perspective, but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses" (Marshall and Rossman, 1995:80).

Follow-Up Sessions

A follow-up session was built into the original design of this research²⁷. This step is critical for a number of reasons. First and foremost, it *gives back* to the community the information that they have freely shared with the researcher. In addition, the extractive nature of much research was cited in the Leadership Academy Task Group (LATG, 1993) survey as something that has had a negative impact on communities' view of the university. The LATG also specifically pointed out that any information gathered must be shared back with the community.

Knowledge is power, and this knowledge and understanding belong within the community, not to any outside researcher. Kieffer (1984:29) noted, "To the extent that knowledge of one's setting helps to deal the one's setting more effectively, generation of knowledge is empowering."

Next, triangulation, the "act of bringing more than one source of data to bear upon a single point" (Marshall and Rossman, 1995:144), greatly strengthens the validity and transferability of the data. Morgan (1988) encourages beginning and ending the research with focus groups.

PREPARATION

Preparing for this study involved several steps. In addition to identifying the issue to be studied and reviewing relevant literature, sites were selected and issues of entry and ethics were addressed.

²⁷ This session had not yet taken place by the time this document was written. This was due to scheduling difficulties of the project coordinators and the researcher. There was some on-going communication

Site Selection

CLIMB is involved in twelve projects throughout the state of Michigan. A few of these projects have been particularly innovative in their approaches to leadership development. Some appear to be quite dynamic, maintaining higher levels of enthusiasm and participation and looking for ways to continue, expand or branch out from the original project.²⁸

U.P. Lead, one of the twelve CLIMB projects, has embodied much of what CLIMB was meant to be; that is, a learning laboratory for developing leadership at the community level around issues of community concern. It is community-based, community-driven, and utilizes community expertise. The MSUE regional community and economic development specialist for the U.P. is very enthusiastic about and extremely committed to the potential that exists for community leadership development. This enthusiasm is contagious and her commitment is admirable.

Thirteen counties participated in U.P. Lead. Two counties were selected in order to obtain different perspectives and dynamics on a similar process which each county followed: developing a workshop utilizing local expertise to come together to learn and discuss issues related to leadership development and the local community. The intent was not to compare the two counties, but to draw from them the lessons learned about community leadership development.

between the researcher and the coordinators, which provided some feedback on earlier drafts of this paper. Efforts are still being made to reconvene the participants for follow-up to this study.

²⁸ This is based on CLIMB internal documents: project descriptions, quarterly reports, and minutes from the meetings of CLIMB's Coordinating Team, as well as discussions which have taken place within the Research Advisory Committee.

One of the main purposes of this research was to develop a methodology for gathering and analyzing lessons learned within communities about leadership development. While these two counties are not necessarily representative of all of CLIMB's programs, they do provide valuable lessons that are, in many ways, cross-cutting. As a result, the methods can be adapted for use in other communities.

Iron and Baraga Counties were selected because of the potential to explore the question of participation and leadership in voluntary community organizations. There were several considerations affecting the decision to study these counties. First of all, a number of participants are still active in the projects. Second, the ways in which these counties have attempted to address the issues of community concern are innovative and creative. Third, the County Extension Directors (CEDs) are very actively involved both in their communities and in the CLIMB program; they were also interested in this research and willing to support it by arranging for the focus groups and providing office space when needed. Finally, it was assumed that since these counties are located in the far western half of the peninsula, they would not have been saturated by other researchers in the past.²⁹ It was hoped that people would look forward to talking about their projects and their communities rather than dreading talking with "another researcher who jets in and jets out, taking up our time but giving us nothing in return."

²⁹ This assumption was not necessarily valid; a group of students and faculty from MSU is working to develop a "heritage loop," highlighting sites of historic value and natural beauty that will benefit tourism in the area. Baraga County is near Northern Michigan University and Michigan Tech, so there is a lot of university-county interaction there. Nevertheless, researchers had not *overwhelmed* the communities in the past.

Entry and Ethics

The decision to work in Iron and Baraga Counties and the types of questions to explore were a collaborative effort by members of CLIMB, the researcher's guidance committee, the U.P. regional community and economic development specialist, the County Extension Directors (CEDs), and the researcher. It was important that this study would not merely extract information from busy people for the sake of research; this collaboration continued throughout the planning, implementation and analysis of this study. Those who were collaborating with the researcher were very interested in this topic and in working together to explore some of the issues related to sustainable community leadership. For the most part, however, they did not have specific questions that they wanted to be explored.

MSUE personnel were assured that this study would not consume large amounts of their time. They were extremely supportive of this research, but each had already over-extended schedules. They provided a list of the names of people to contact and some logistical support (arranging a venue for the focus groups), and were invited to participate to the extent that they were able and willing.

Letters of introduction were sent based on the lists of U.P. Lead participants (Appendix C). The letter described the purpose of the study and invited each person to participate in a general discussion of the project. The letter also mentioned that they might receive a phone call requesting an individual interview about the project and their involvement in it. Interviewees were selected based upon their involvement in the

projects; for the most part, people who were no longer active were not interviewed.³⁰ To know who was still involved, the researcher first asked the CEDs. In the process of calling the participants, people mentioned the names of others who influenced their decision to get involved or who had been very active in the project. The goal for this study was to interview ten people in each county. Most of these interviews were scheduled prior to beginning the fieldwork; some of them were arranged after the fieldwork had begun.

IMPLEMENTATION

The introductory focus groups and the in-depth interviews were carried out in May 1997. The research in Iron County took place from May 5-10 and in Baraga County from May 11-15. The general strategy involved three main components: meeting with a group of 5-8 people for an introductory focus group discussion; conducting individual interviews with approximately 10 people; and following-up a few months later with another larger group discussion after preliminary analysis of the data. The researcher also actively observed the settings of these projects including the geographic area and the people, sought to understand some of the history of the area, and reviewed relevant statistical documents about the area.

³⁰ This was a deliberate decision. The intent was to explore some of the issues related to *sustained* involvement in community projects. Although the researcher acknowledges the fact that much could also be learned about why people are *no longer* involved, she needed to limit the study to one which is “do-able” (see Marshall and Rossman, 1995: 5-7, for a discussion of decision criteria). In addition to the time and resources that would have been needed to interview more people, it was also clear that people who were no longer involved were reluctant to talk with the researcher.

Initial Focus Group

In Iron County, the initial focus group met on May 6th, the first full day of this study. In Baraga County, the focus group met on the evening of May 13th, which was almost three days into the study.³¹ Participants introduced themselves and briefly described their involvement in the community. They then discussed the purpose of this study—from the perspective of CLIMB, of the researcher, and the participants. Their input was actively sought on designing the remainder of the study. Participants were also asked if they had any questions. A few people asked how long the study would last, what would be done with this information, and requested that they receive whatever documents are developed from this research. Participants were asked if they had any questions related to community leadership and to these projects which they would want explored during this study. People seemed to be caught off-guard by this question, more accustomed to the traditional research approach: the researcher is the one with already-prepared questions and participants just answer these questions.³²

There was one question raised in Iron County. In an apparently frustrated tone, one member asked, “*How* can we get these different groups who are doing similar things to start working together?” He commented that he has joined as many organizations as his schedule permits in order to be a cross-pollinator, one who knows what the different

³¹ The timing of this focus group was dependent upon the schedules of participants; many of them were involved in other meetings earlier in the week. Although meeting halfway through the research was not ideal, it was necessary to accommodate the schedules of the participants.

³² At times, it also seemed as if the people thought the interviewer was not prepared, if she was asking *them* for questions. This is not an unusual reaction: Freire (1970) refers to the “banking method” of education, whereby the teacher deposits knowledge and the students receive it. In this system, knowledge is seen as a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Chambers (1993) issues a call to reverse such power relationships. Professionals are not “experts” in working with communities, but they become “learners.”

groups are doing and who then communicates that to others. The importance of this question emerged throughout discussions in each county.

It was evident throughout this study that focus groups allow ideas to emerge from the group, often yielding a richness and synergy that is not possible from the perspective of just one person. This was evident in the question raised above, as well as in discussions that took place among the participants. For example, participants were asked to describe the project; there was general agreement on the descriptions given, but several people added information that provided a richer, deeper description of the project.

The focus groups provided necessary introductions between the researcher and some of the community members. It was also important to describe the relationship between U.P. Lead and CLIMB; first of all, several people are familiar only with “U.P. Lead” and had not considered it in relationship to a larger program, CLIMB. Second, it was important for them to realize that this study would contribute to CLIMB and U.P. Lead by developing a methodology for exploring community leadership issues. It helped to establish the context of this research, and also began to establish the trust that is so greatly needed in qualitative research.³³

An unintended benefit of the focus groups was that they brought people back together who may have had little contact since the workshop. In each county, the workshop participants divided into two or more issue-focused groups; these groups then

³³ Every author who has written about qualitative research has emphasized the importance of establishing trust among the community informants. The researcher does not claim to have established a great depth of trust in such a short period of time, but her approach was non-threatening, as a learner, with respect for the people and their values. As a result, it appeared that most of the participants were quite comfortable disclosing information to her. This is especially significant because, in most U.P. communities, a person is still referred to as a “transplant,” someone not born and raised there, even after 20+ years in the community.

continued working among themselves, with little formal contact with the members of other groups³⁴.

Another unintended benefit was that the history of these projects emerged through the discussions. This was especially beneficial to the people who did not participate in the workshop but joined the projects later; they had not realized the history or the process through which other members had participated. These discussions provided the context for each of the projects.

In-Depth Interviews

The interview guide (Appendix D) was prepared in advance to anticipate a logical flow to the interviews. The guide was not visibly followed during the interviews because it would have been a distraction and would have interfered with the flow of the conversation. In certain cases, the guide was referred to toward the end of the interview to ensure that the questions had been addressed.

For the most part, the interviews were very much like conversations. In a few cases, however, especially where the informant allowed only a short period (less than one hour) for the interview, there was an expectation to “get to the point,” and do it quickly. By necessity and the frame that had been established by the informant, these interviews were much more formal. They also, for the most part, provided less depth.

Several authors have stressed the importance of context and setting for the interviews. Not only is it important for the informants to feel at ease in a setting where they are comfortable, but it also offers the researcher additional valuable information

³⁴ Workshop participants came together after six months to discuss and celebrate their accomplishments.

which is gathered through observation (Marshall and Rossman, 1995; Whyte, 1984). In every case, the informant was asked to suggest a place to meet. These locations included eleven offices, a coffee shop, four restaurants, three school conference rooms, a museum, a spare room at a rummage sale, and a home. Each interview lasted at least one hour; several were more than two hours.

The goal was to interview ten people per community. The interviews were set up in not less than three hour blocks of time: two hours for the interview and at least one hour to make additional notes before the following interview. Every evening, the notes from each interview that day were reviewed and additional notes were written. A different color pen was used to denote what was said verbatim and what additional comments were made.

Extensive notes were written during each interview. Although there are certain limitations of recording notes during an interview, it was a deliberate decision not to use a tape recorder. Not only would a tape recorder impose formality on what should be an open conversation, but to record and then transcribe every interview is not a sustainable or suitable method for CLIMB or other community organizations to follow in their attempts at exploring lessons learned about community leadership development. By writing very quickly, using abbreviated words and filling them in immediately after the interview, and writing while looking at someone, it is possible to take notes during the interviews.

In Iron County, there were ten individual interviews. In addition, one interview was with a husband and wife together; another interview was with a group of four high school students. The reason more than ten people were interviewed was because after talking to someone or a few people, they may have mentioned someone else who “you

really need to talk to.” It was important to have the flexibility to follow these leads; one lesson learned was not necessarily to allow extra time for additional interviews, but to not schedule all of the interviews in advance. Ten interviews per county would have been sufficient; sixteen was, perhaps, excessive.

In Baraga County, there were nine individual interviews. Of these, there was a time when two of the people overlapped, intentionally; they work closely together, and this was most convenient for their schedules. In addition, groups of high school students were interviewed: thirteen in L’Anse and six in Baraga. In L’Anse, the most valuable part of the interview was after most of the students had to leave for a class, and 4-5 students remained in the room.

Follow-Up

There are several advantages to bringing the group back together after preliminary analysis of the data. For example, a follow-up session in each county allows for clarification on issues that emerged from the initial focus groups and individual interviews, allowing the researcher to explore issues that came up during her analysis of the data. Also, people may have had additional thoughts on the issues discussed in the earlier interviews. This is an opportunity for these thoughts to be expressed.

Originally, the goal was to conduct this follow-up session approximately six weeks after completion of the focus groups and in-depth interviews. It was hoped that the follow-up sessions would provide reinforcement or revisions to the initial data analysis. Due to extremely busy schedules during the summer months for extension staff as well as the schedules of participants and the researcher, it was not possible to conduct this session

early enough to be included in this document; it will, however, be included in other documents related to this study.

Supplemental Data Collection Techniques

Data was also collected from other sources to supplement the interviews and focus group discussions with community members. These methods are described below.

Observation

For this research, observation was used as a supplemental tool. Notes were taken on how people interacted with each other during the focus groups: if there was an obvious “leader” within the group, how people shared leadership roles, and their courtesy and respect for one another. The communities were also actively observed: the age and condition of buildings, population density (or scarcity), and the great distances between locations.

Such observation aids in understanding the other data collected. For example, when people talk about their town “dying,” seeing the empty buildings and streets makes that statement more real. Also, certain behaviors were observed during the focus group and then further understanding was sought in the interview. For example, one participant seemed extremely timid during the focus group. During the interview, however, she spoke openly and with confidence. She does not consider herself to be a leader, but several people pointed out that she is a natural and caring leader within the community.

History

The initial strategy for this research did not include looking in-depth at the history of Iron and Baraga Counties, but it quickly became evident that their histories have so

much to do with their present situation. For example, in Iron County, the economy was nearly entirely dependent upon the iron mines. Since these have closed down, large numbers of people have left the county, leading to near-ghost towns. The dwindling population and poor state of the economy have had a profound effect on local community organizations. There is much which people feel needs to be done, but there are few left to do any of it. Many of the volunteers are retired persons—some who never left, others who left to find other work but returned because “this is and always was home.”

The history has also had an effect on perceptions of leadership. The mining managers held the positions of gods. They were the leaders in the community, in every way. To this day, people are reluctant to consider themselves “leaders” because of the negative and extremely powerful images that these managers left behind.

Two of the people interviewed were the founders of the Iron County Historical Society. That interview covered much more of the history of the area than specific questions about leadership. In addition, other documents about the history of Iron County were read. In Baraga County, displays at the County Historical Museum, a conversation with president of the historical society, and several documents provided a great deal of information about the history of this county. The early missionary activity, Ojibway Indian reservation, and history of logging have had a significant impact on what Baraga is today.

Review of Documents

In addition to the historical documents, socio-economic data on each county were reviewed. These are available both in print and on the internet. These provided information on the population, which has been decreasing; on the economic base (income, industry, etc.); and on the population age. As noted above, most of the volunteers in Iron

County are retired persons. Looking at the statistics regarding population age, it is not surprising: in 1990, 27.7% of the population in Iron County is older than 64. Contrast this with Baraga County (19.54% over 64) and Michigan overall (11.92% over 64) (MSUE internal document, based on 1990 census), and it is clear that this is an issue which has a significant effect on sustainable community leadership.

The local newspapers also provided some background about what goes on in each community, what the community priorities are, and what types of information about the community is being communicated.

ANALYSIS

All of the interview and focus group responses were recorded in several notebooks. After completing the fieldwork for this research, these responses were reviewed numerous times. Several themes emerged. These recurring themes then provided a basis for organizing the results of the interviews and focus groups.

The recurring themes also provided the groundwork for a **conceptual framework** of CLIMB, the guiding principles by which it operates. This was an iterative process. In addition to the themes that emerged, such as the power of diversity and the value of shared leadership, other issues emerged that are valuable for understanding this experiment in community leadership development through the review of other documents and interviews with CLIMB partners statewide.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

This chapter has provided a description of qualitative methods and why they were necessary for this study, which methods used, why they were selected, and briefly mentioned some of the outcomes using these methods. It also described the emergence and development of a conceptual framework of CLIMB.

Chapter 4 addresses several questions related to the process of community leadership development. Based predominantly on the interviews, it presents and describes the findings of this study.

Chapter 4

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: LEARNING FROM THE FIELD

CLIMB encourages appropriate, locally based approaches to community leadership development. Each community and each project is unique; there are, however, some crosscutting concepts and issues. Chapter 2 identified and discussed these concepts and also identified some outstanding questions confronting CLIMB as it strives to develop community leadership in new ways. This chapter looks at these questions in relation to two CLIMB projects in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Because each CLIMB project is unique, these projects are not necessarily *representative* of CLIMB; they are, however, *illustrative* of what CLIMB strives to be and provide some valuable insights into the process of community leadership development. This chapter concludes with a summary of participants' responses to the questions related to community leadership development.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Through the analysis of data collected in the U.P., along with other CLIMB documents and on-going research, several recurring themes were identified. Based upon



Figure 3 Proposed Conceptual Framework for CLIMB

these themes, this research developed a framework for understanding CLIMB's approach to community leadership development (Figure 3). Community leadership development is, first and foremost, a process, not an event or a short-term program. It links community development and empowerment, diversity and collaboration, praxis (issue, action and reflection), and leadership that is shared among members. Certain principles are woven throughout this process: that the leadership development is sustainable, the local community controls it, and that building the capacities of citizens to provide leadership within their communities is an important component. The following sections describe how these concepts are understood and practiced in Iron and Baraga Counties.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

CLIMB operates under the assumption that community leadership development and empowerment result when individuals participate in voluntary groups where leadership and responsibility are shared among the members³⁵. Is this a valid assumption? What *is* the role of voluntary community organizations in fostering a new type of leadership within the community? This section explores the dynamics of leadership and empowerment in Iron and Baraga counties.

In U.P. Lead, community leadership development is a process of involving a diverse group of people around issues of local concern. Leadership develops through interacting with others and through acting on the issue. U.P. Lead's approach was to recruit a diverse group of community members to participate in a 2-day workshop.

³⁵ Shared leadership assumes that each person has "leadership qualities that can be pooled and drawn upon as needed, when working with others on vital common issues" (Vandenberg and Sandmann, 1995:2).

During the workshop, relevant topics were presented³⁶ to provide a common foundation of skills and understanding about leadership, power structures, and about the community. Toward the end of the workshop, participants grouped themselves around the issues in their community that concerned them. The groups then decided how they would address the issue, breaking it down into components that could be addressed in a relatively short period of time. They came back together with the other groups after six months to celebrate their accomplishments and share what lessons they had learned through this process of leadership development centered on addressing an issue.

LEADERSHIP

CLIMB is attempting to develop new forms of leadership within communities. It rejects the dominant approach to leadership development, which is to select an elite group of individuals, bring them out of their communities, and train them to be leaders. Rather, CLIMB and U.P. Lead assert that community leadership development must be based within the community.

Position and Power

Traditional views of leadership are still quite dominant in these U.P. communities. Leadership is often based on power and political position. How is CLIMB addressing the relationship between position and power within communities?

³⁶ See Appendix B for a general outline of the workshop topics; there were minor variations in different counties. Presenters included MSUE staff, CLIMB partners, and local community members with expertise in a given area.

Most community members are well aware of the difficulties of working within the current system³⁷. Several people expressed frustration because of the bureaucracy that hinders community groups from getting anything accomplished. “Anyone doing anything deserves a *lot* of credit—it’s *tough* to do anything around here because of the bureaucracy, so many different councils to get approval for anything.” Another member suggested that a change in local leadership is needed for anything to happen: “In some cases, the older guys need to get out. They’ve become anchors.”

Many project participants expressed similar sentiments. They referred to these leaders as the “old guard” and the “good old boys club.” Most participants want to see positive and progressive change in their local leadership, but many of the current leaders are still too powerful for anyone to run against them.

While many people pointed out the difficulty of working in such an environment, they also recognized the need to understand the community power structure³⁸. U.P. Lead addressed this challenge in the design of the workshop³⁹ and sought the participation of local political leaders in these projects. This served two main purposes: it brought a diverse group of people together and also recognized the importance of the political players in getting things done within a community.

Political leaders participated in only a few cases. Those who did participate were, like everyone else, involved because of their concern for the community and issues facing

³⁷ The system the participants referred to is the current local political structure, including Village, Town, and City Boards, School Boards, etc.

³⁸ The community power structure includes elected officials as well as other powerful individuals or groups. The first group gets its power through position; the second group gets its power through influence (economic, historic, etc.). There is some overlap between the two groups.

³⁹ Seminar topics included “Power in Communities” and “Working within the Political System” (see Appendix B).

their community. Referring to the challenges of being a political leader within the community, one of them noted, “Everybody should do it once so they know how difficult it is.” Another community member observed that “once you cross the line to being a ‘bigshot leader,’ people will respect you, but they won’t trust you.”

Several people noted the absence of most of the “traditional leaders” in the workshops and resulting projects. Although they would have appreciated seeing these people in a different light, one participant pointed out that “they *are* leaders, and may have taken over. He who has the loudest voice gets to be the leader for the day.”

Why is it that political leaders participated in only a few cases? One participant proposed that “the way it was advertised, maybe someone who has been in a leadership position for a long time would think, ‘oh, I don’t need this.’” Another pointed out that “these guys keep the barriers up and no one comes close to the pedestal.”

Individual or Shared Leadership?

Is it possible to practice shared leadership within communities where the traditional view of leadership, based on power and position, is still prevalent? CLIMB and U.P. Lead are trying to develop and practice leadership in new ways, alternatives to the traditional power structures and institutions within communities. They recognize the existence and importance of these power structures for governing the community; they also, however, recognize the value of involving more people effect positive change within the community. One way they are doing this is through sharing responsibility and leadership within voluntary organizations.

At the end of each workshop, the participants formed groups around certain community issues⁴⁰. These groups then worked together over the next six months to address that issue. The leadership of each group, which varied significantly, developed over time. How the leadership evolved significantly affected whether the group continued.

In two different projects, people identified one person as the leader—not because he controlled the group in any way, but because he had the resources⁴¹ to coordinate the group's activities. In one case, people went along with his willingness to coordinate everything and they became passive and eventually inactive in the process. In the other case, people knew that there was too much to do to allow one person to do too much, and everyone shared responsibility for the direction of the group. In both cases, the sustainability of the group rested with all the members of the group, not one "leader."

In the first group, the participants saw themselves as a "group of leaders" coming together around an issue of common concern. "A lot of people who got involved are natural leaders, so we just went along with it." By "natural leaders," they referred to people who are "willing to take on a job, not trying to take power... willing to do it responsibly." But, they admitted, "we were willing to let one person do everything." After several months, members of this group realized where they "went wrong." "We weren't involving enough people. If one or just a few people do everything, the other people fall away." A few members are committed to reviving this group, but will make some changes. They will encourage everyone who is involved to take on some

⁴⁰ In Iron County, two groups formed: one concerned with youth (drinking, drugs, pregnancies, and gangs) and one concerned with the division and bitterness between the east and west sides of the county. These are described in Chapter 1.

⁴¹ In both cases, he had an office that could be used for meetings; he also had the use of a phone, computer, and photocopier.

responsibility; they will hold each other accountable for this. If it seems that one person is taking on too much, they plan to stop and ask, “Who else...?” They don’t want to let any one person take on too much because they have learned that the other members become passive and the “leader” gets burned out.

In the second group, the “leader” was admittedly reluctant. “I went kicking and screaming. I agreed to get the ball rolling, and then I was out of there.” But in the process of working with such a wonderful group of people, watching how people took on responsibility and carried it out so well, he had a change of heart. He did not, however, change his “hands off” approach to leadership. He arranged for meeting venues and got word out about the meetings, but admitted, “I don’t know who had the ball.” There were several active and committed people working on this project and his role as leader was facilitative, not directive. “No one in the group could have been eliminated and had it turn out this way.” Each person shared in the responsibility for what this group has become and continues to be.

Sustainable Leadership Base

There are several factors that contribute toward sustainability in community leadership development. Are new people continuing to get involved? After one issue is addressed, does the group re-focus or redirect its energies toward other issues? U.P. Lead emphasizes that leadership is situational and rooted in relationships and issues; is it also transferable? In other words, as people develop their leadership potential, both individually and collectively, do they take that increased leadership capacity into other

situations and settings? As a result, does leadership “spread” throughout the community, creating a sustainable, replicating leadership base?

One example of transferability of leadership that emerged was among Iron River high school students. The students experienced an equal voice in the U.P. Lead workshop. They realized that *everyone*’s ideas are important, not just the ideas of a few key decision-makers. They narrated a story about something that the school was doing to raise money and how they—as student leaders—decided what they would do: “the same thing we always do” to raise money. Remembering the importance of seeking others’ input, they asked for ideas “instead of just assuming no one has any ideas.” Even so, they still thought, “we’d end up doing our own thing anyway.” Even if people had ideas, they certainly would not carry those ideas through. They were surprised when a group of students, who are not usually very involved in student affairs, came up with an idea. They continued to assume that these people would not carry out the idea. They were extremely surprised when this group of students carried out their idea—and even more surprised when this idea caused them to raise a record amount of money. This experience showed them the importance of listening to other people, not assuming an air of superiority, and of learning from each other.

The Kinship program provides another example of transferability. The ideas and principles of collaboration, commitment and shared responsibility that were encouraged in the U.P. Lead workshop were brought into the Kiwanis club as the mentoring group joined with a Kiwanis project and created something new⁴². “What Kinship has become is

⁴² The Kinship program has been evolving for over a year. Participants in the U.P. Lead Workshop were concerned about issues affecting youth, such as drop-outs, broken homes, drug use, teen pregnancy, and gangs. There was an existing program, sponsored by Kiwanis, to mentor older students. The high school

solely out of MSUE and CLIMB. It would not have become what it is becoming if not for the workshop.” Specifically, this person was referring to the active involvement of students as well as adults, emphasis on collaboration and networking, and concentrating on an issue leading into action. Kiwanis experienced a degree of transformation as a result of interacting and working with the U.P. Lead group.

Community Leadership Development: U.P. Lead

How is leadership, based on shared responsibility and trust, developed within a community? Leadership development is not an occasional event, it is a process over time that includes not just skills, but an understanding of each concept discussed in this paper (see Figure 3).

Each U.P. Lead workshop was planned and coordinated by a team of community members. The emphasis on local community control was maintained throughout the planning and implementation of these workshops and projects. The coordinating team invited local people to facilitate sessions in their areas of expertise; they recruited a diverse group of community members; the workshops were held within the community; and the focus was on issues of local concern. In the interviews, some participants talked about the value of learning more about their community. A group of high school students commented that “We got to know people we never knew existed. We also learned how much was wrong in our community—and ways to make changes.” Another community

students who participated in U.P. Lead, however, wanted to be mentors *themselves* to younger students. This did not fit into the structure of the Kiwanis program, so the group explored alternatives. It was a long and frustrating search, with several people putting in many months of planning, but at the time of this study, people felt that that process, though frustrating, had brought the group closer and helped to clarify their vision for working with youth.

leader pointed out that it was eye-opening to realize how many needs there are within the community: “You know it’s out there, but you don’t really think about it.” The issues that concerned participants were posted on the walls in the workshop, so people had the chance to see them all at once.

When asked what was most significant about the workshop, nearly every person said it was sitting down with people from different backgrounds, of different ages, each person having an equal voice (see Diversity below). All of the participants were from the same communities, but they had never come together like this before. A common sentiment about bringing such a group together was, “You see the world differently when you hear (other people’s) perspectives.”

Other things that were significant about the workshops included the link between ideas and action. “All of the enthusiasm and teamwork were unique. Not just *talk*, but ‘this is what we’re going to do about it.’” Another person commented that “sometimes you don’t consider yourself a leader” because people equate “leadership” with “position.” Realizing that leadership need not be based on position was enlightening to her, and opened up her thoughts on leadership.

Several people, including nearly all of the high school students, mentioned that the sessions on listening and on personality types were extremely valuable to them. “It’s important to listen first, then speak. A good leader must first be a good listener.” This participant commented that it is more important to ask questions than to tell other people what to do.

The students were very enthusiastic about personality types. “You learn why you are the way you are, and why other people are the way they are, and it’s okay.” One of

the students said that she used to think people who weren't like her were lazy or didn't care; she began to realize that people see things differently, and it's important to understand this instead of judging people.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

Community development and empowerment are inextricably linked—when the local community controls community development and many members are involved. As people become involved in their communities, they gain confidence and skills both individually and collectively, empowering them to address other issues.

Sense of Community

What is the relationship between involvement and having or developing a sense of community? As described in Chapter 1, there is a tremendous sense of pride among people living in the Upper Peninsula. There is a rich heritage with very deep roots where people have endured isolation and very long, cold winters. One participant pointed out that the winters *do* affect people, and described life in the U.P. as “an endurance run.” As a result, many have developed a fierce independence. At the same time, however, especially in the towns, they have also developed interdependence upon one another. The beauty of the area and the small-town closeness are what keeps people in the U.P. even when the economy is difficult.

Many people do feel that there is a strong sense of community where they live. When asked why he is involved, one participant responded enthusiastically “Because I *love my community!*” Most participants expressed a genuine and deep-seated

appreciation for these communities. One pointed out, however, that people are “*very* community oriented—but (the emphasis is on) *my* community” at the expense of working with others. There is a strong feeling of pride. This is evident in some of the problems facing both Iron and Baraga Counties. In Iron County, the east and west sides are divided by a river and by deep-seeded bitterness that goes back more than a hundred years when “Crystal Falls stole the court house from Iron River” in 1887⁴³. The situation in Baraga is similar: “L’Anse hates Baraga; Baraga hates L’Anse. It’s been like this forever.” People say it is mainly the “old timers” who feel this way. The students say that it is not a problem with them. It is still one of the greatest hindrances to community development in these counties, especially when both sides should be collaborating. Most people who are involved in community change are fed up with these divisions; “I wish I could wave a magic wand and get rid of this east-west crap.”

That hasn’t stopped people from trying. In Iron Country, for example, one of the strongest issues to come out of the workshop was the need and desire to bring both sides of the county together. People formed a “unification group,” which sought ways of doing this. They ended up collaborating with another group to create a community theater, in hopes that this would bring people from both sides together not only to see the performances, but to act in the plays also.

⁴³ In 1887, after a series of “questionable” arrangements, the county seat was changed from Iron River to Crystal Falls. In the fall of 1886, a vote was to have taken place on the permanent location of the county headquarters. That never happened. “What transpired behind the scenes in the ensuing several months were not recorded and the facts may never be known. It is obvious, however, that every trick was resorted to by both east and west at this time to secure the county seat...” (Hill, 1976:57).

Empowerment

Empowerment is seen as both a cause and effect of community leadership development. Do people feel a greater sense of empowerment through their involvement in voluntary community organizations? Does involvement in the U.P. Lead projects give people increased confidence to be involved in leadership elsewhere?

Through involvement, each person has grown in his/her personal sense of efficacy, and has gained a sense of self-empowerment with greater confidence to stand up and speak out in other situations. People have learned to value diverse backgrounds and opinions; this has freed them to speak openly and effectively not only in the U.P. Lead groups, but also in other contexts.

It was especially significant for the students. “We were equals.” Adults *listened* to them. They were surprised and encouraged to realize that adults had the same views on some issues. This gave them the confidence to speak out and express their views within the workshop, in the groups that formed as a result, and also within their schools.

Two students in Baraga County were asked to give a presentation, with another adult leader, to the Township Board. The meeting time changed, but the adult leader didn’t get that message. The students, who hadn’t expected to do much of the talking, gave the entire presentation on their own. They surprised themselves *and* the Board members, who were very impressed. This experience increased their confidence to speak out about what is important to them.

Another participant, who had been in several leadership positions in the past, talked about his concerns being in leadership. “I had some concerns about the outcome, that we wouldn’t end up with a motivated, capable entity.” Through this experience,

however, he realized that by working with a committed group of people who willingly shared responsibility, he did not control the outcome of the group. He learned that leadership is letting go. He gained confidence in himself, being able to let go; he also gained confidence in the process itself of letting go and not controlling the group.

Another participant pointed out that as a result of her involvement in U.P. Lead, she realized that there's "something else" out there for her. Although she loves it, she doesn't want to be in her present career forever. After realizing that it is possible, she decided that she wants to be more involved with the community, effecting positive change.

Others pointed out that they realized that they *can* make a difference in their community. In some cases, it may be as simple as writing a letter to the editor; in some cases it means speaking out at a school board meeting. Empowerment starts when people realize their voices count and begin to use them effectively. In the words of Peter Block (1993: 9), "Empowerment embodies the belief that the answer to the latest crisis lies within each of us." People realized that they could have a voice within the community, that they are self-empowered and not dependent only on those in power within the formal community leadership structure.

PRAXIS: ACTION AND REFLECTION

Praxis refers to the on-going process of action and reflection. CLIMB recognizes that voluntary involvement requires an issue to get people involved, action toward goals, on-going reflection for learning, and some kind of sustained motivation. This is a new approach to leadership development. What are some of the tensions that need to be addressed to successfully implement this approach? Is there a relationship between this

process and sustained motivation? How does this process contribute to shared leadership?

Does increased sharing of responsibility affect the continued participation of members?

These questions are explored in the following section in terms of issue, action, reflection and motivation.

Issue

Most of the people who participated in U.P. Lead did so because they care about their community. People are concerned about certain issues, and they want to do something about them. Prior to the U.P. Lead workshops, each participant wrote down community issues about which they were concerned; these issues were posted around the meeting room. Some of them were addressed during the workshop. Toward the end of the workshop, participants organized themselves around these issues. Participants in Iron County formed two groups: one concerned with the East-West division of their county, the other concerned with youth in the community. In Baraga County, three groups formed: one that focused on volunteerism in the community, one concerned with youth, and the other was organized around economic concerns and child welfare.

Some of the youth-related issues had to do with drugs, alcohol, and teen pregnancy. Young and old alike, people are concerned about the youth. "The youth are our future" is a sentiment shared by all generations. This pressing issue is what unified and motivated busy individuals from diverse backgrounds.

For example, a single mom with young children said, "I love kids. I want to do something about the problems (gangs, violence) before they get out of hand." Another person said, "Kids need to know that someone cares." There was a group of high school

students who proposed mentoring the younger students. “*We* want to be able to mentor the younger kids—not just adult mentors.” They want to be positive role models to the younger students in the community. One of them said, “If I see something I don’t like, I want to do whatever I can to make it right,” expressing a feeling shared by many of the participants.

Action

Most of the people consider themselves to be action-oriented. One student appreciated that the workshop was “not just *talk*, but ‘this is what we’re going to do about it.’” They are involved to get something done. “I’m a do-er, not necessarily a leader” was the way one person described the sentiment of many. Another commented that, “I have no right to complain unless I work on something myself.”

They also realize the importance of knowing when and how to say “no.” A common sentiment was, “I’m willing to do what needs to be done—but I can’t take on too much or I become ineffective,” and “My interest level is high, but my time availability is low.”

This came as no surprise. Most of the participants are very active and already over-committed. “The people who *want* to do something are already the busiest people.” For example, most are involved in 3-6 other community organizations; some are involved in as many as eight different groups. After realizing that she ended up with another commitment as a result of the workshop, someone moaned, “How did I get onto *another* board?” Most people appreciated the workshop for the interaction with a diverse group of people. They also appreciated that the focus was on community issues.

Reflection

Reflection was built into each of the U.P. Lead workshops, with each day ending with a period for reflection. Evidence of systematic reflection within the projects was not clear, though this research attempted to engage people in more reflection. It is evident that the groups that have *continued* are engaged in on-going reflection, asking themselves what they have learned and where they are going, leading toward necessary modifications in their approaches.

For example, the group that allowed one member to do almost everything realized that this was counter-productive. “We realized what we were doing wrong... If we do everything, then other people fall away.” This isn’t something that happened immediately—they came to this realization over time. They then talked about what changes they would make for the future.

Motivation

The idea for this study originated with the question of how to keep people involved in voluntary organizations. The study itself found that there are nearly as many types of motivation as there are types of people involved.

Initially, people were motivated by interest in the issue. This included youth or East-West unification or even leadership as a broad issue. Some people got involved because they were asked—not because they were out looking for something to do. A few mentioned their desire to “give back” to the community. A few mentioned that they are involved because they have the time—either because they are retired or because “there isn’t much to do up here—and want to do something meaningful.

A retiree talked about the desire to “give back” to the community, now that he’s “free” from so many other responsibilities. Another couple talked of their active and extensive volunteerism throughout the years. “That’s how we met,” they said with a smile, and told the story of how they met while in college, both of them active in 4-H. They talked of their many activities for the community as “pure joy.”

There was only one person who admitted that he was a very reluctant participant in the project. The very first time he was involved in any community activity was because his boss told him he needed to get involved in community service “because it’s good for business.” He admitted, “Now I’m hooked.” Even so, he was reluctant to participate in a U.P. Lead project. Another participant asked him to work on the project, knowing that he had the skills and drive to get it off the ground. He said he “went kicking and screaming” because he already had several other commitments, but agreed to “get it off the ground—then I’m *out of here*—you guys are on your own then.” But he feels differently now, and is excited to see where the project is going to go.

He is excited and continues to be involved because this project has made a lot of progress and is really taking root within the community. He said that he intends to continue because “this has been an incredible experience.” They succeeded in accessing additional funds to continue, the community has demonstrated support, and many people have volunteered. In addition, he enjoys working with this group of people who accept and carry out responsibility, and who have fun together.

Several people talked about continuing to be involved because they enjoy the people they are working with. When asked why the group sticks together, one person said, “People *like* each other. When they kid and joke with each other, making jokes

about themselves—that says something about the dynamics.” Another person mentioned that “If we enjoy each other, we’ll stay together.”

The students emphasized this as well. “It’s important that we make it so that we *want* to come back—not making it another hassle,” referring to their involvement in the youth group. They emphasized that adults need to realize that “we do things differently. We want to get things done, but we want to have fun too.” It seems, from the previous statement, that the adults want to have fun too.

Some people mentioned the need to always have something for everyone to do, so that each person feels valued. Others mentioned the importance of having on-going activities and projects, so that the enthusiasm doesn’t fade. For example, between productions, the theater (unification) group has fund-raising events, work bees to clean the theater, parades and picnics to “keep up the momentum.”

Another factor in keeping people motivated is appreciating them. Most of the people interviewed are not interested in public displays of appreciation; in fact, some of them are very opposed to this. “No one in the group has a ‘stand up and look at me’ personality—no one is looking for credit.” But nearly everyone expressed their desire to be appreciated for what they are doing. One couple has been especially successful at keeping people motivated throughout the years. They said one of the keys is to thank people. “Everyone gets a hand-written thank you note. This is a cardinal rule of ours.” Another person mentioned that this makes everyone feel appreciated: “It doesn’t matter whether you volunteered for three hours or three weeks.” This encourages people and brings them back for other activities and opportunities to volunteer.

DIVERSITY

These projects and the people involved demonstrated diversity of age, socio-economic status, interests, concerns, and points of view. How is diversity achieved and maintained, giving equal voice to all members? How is it sustained, given the different schedules and priorities of diverse members—for example, students, moms, business people, service workers, retirees, etc?

Each U.P. Lead workshop sought participation from a broad cross-section of the community. The coordinators wanted it to be “multi-generational.” They recruited participants from the high schools, service agencies, local government, businesses, as well as the general public. For the most part, all sectors were represented in the workshops. Some participants said they would have liked to see more representatives from the local government and boards, but most people were very encouraged by the diversity of participants.

Bringing together a diverse group of people to talk about and act upon issues of community concern was a very powerful experience for everyone involved. This came out most strongly regarding the youth, who experienced for the first time an *equal voice* among “elders.” Everyone was encouraged to actively *listen* to and respect one another. It was powerful for the adults as well, who discovered how much they can learn from the youth and were encouraged to find positive role models among the youth. “Most of the time here, you’re working with older people—the enthusiasm of the kids was very significant.” One participant admitted, “We sometimes have the wrong idea about the youth.” The students impressed her with their desire to make a difference and because they share some of the same concerns.

The students were also surprised to realize that adults share their concerns. “We were equals. The adults listened to us. We were surprised and encouraged to realize the adults had the same views.”

The Kinship program is a very diverse group, including high school students, a banker, city manager, retired professor, school teacher, and others who are concerned with youth. They have shown respect for their differences, and have learned to appreciate them. A member talked about how they have become a team now. People with different ideas and talents came together because of something they feel is important—these diverse ideas and talents have made it what it has become. “No one in the group could have been eliminated and had it turn out this way.”

One of the challenges that these diverse groups face is scheduling. If every member were a retiree, or a business person downtown, or a student, the difficulties scheduling meetings would still exist, but not to the extent that it is very difficult to bring people from each of these groups and others together. For example, high school students are on the board of the Kinship program in Iron County. The board changed its schedule to meet after school, but the students are also involved in extra-curricular activities like sports and band, so they cannot make the board meetings. Other groups face similar difficulties. The unification group wants to bring people from both sides of the county together, but because it meets in Crystal Falls, the majority of members are from Crystal Falls. Driving home to Iron River through frequent snowstorms last winter, one participant often asked herself, “Why am I doing this—am I crazy?” In Baraga County, the youth group intended to include students from both L’Anse and Baraga, but they can only meet in one place at a time. There are more participants from L’Anse and they have

the use of a facility there; as a result, they regularly meet in L'Anse and have very little participation from Baraga. These groups are still grappling with this difficulty⁴⁴.

Even in the midst of such difficulties, participants are committed to collaboration. Several people mentioned that they participated in the workshop because it was an opportunity to network with other individuals and organizations that are doing similar work. One participant bemoaned the fact that organizations doing similar work are not talking enough. "You've got seven different groups doing almost the same thing—and they're not talking to each other!" He has taken it upon himself to get involved in as much as he is capable of doing well, with a goal of sharing information between these groups in hopes of eventually bringing them closer together.

In other cases, U.P. Lead provided the opportunity to establish strong collaboration. The group that formed around youth-related issues ended up collaborating with a Kiwanis youth initiative. The joining of these two groups made both stronger, and helped them get through some of the challenges they faced in getting established. "Kinship may have never gotten past the frustrating, long process if there wasn't already something (Kiwanis) in place to work with."

The unification group learned that there were others in Crystal Falls who wanted to start a community theater, so these groups linked up. In Baraga County, the youth group joined with an already existing group called YACs. In each case, the U.P. Lead participants brought with them new ideas about leadership and a desire for collaboration and action.

⁴⁴ In both cases, these groups tried alternating their meeting sites. This poses problems like remembering where the meeting is; it also means that people from one side or the other do not travel to the other side for the meeting.

One aspect of diversity that one does not immediately consider, but that became significant in this study, is the length of time one spends in a community. This influences attitudes toward change. Several long-term residents said that they are still considered “outsiders,” even after twenty years. Of 21 adults interviewed, 12 were born and raised elsewhere. Seven were born and raised in the U.P., but spent at least three years elsewhere. Two were born and raised there, and were not away for any length of time. For those born and raised in the U.P., they spoke of their roots going down very deep. Everyone spoke of their love for the U.P. and for their community. Whether life-long resident or relative newcomer, each participant desires positive change in the community. They often hear, “We can’t do that—we’ve never done it that way before.”

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

Through an exploration of two communities in the U.P., this chapter has provided some insights into community leadership development. Most significant within the groups that have continued are: the importance of shared leadership and collective responsibility; allowing an equal voice to all participants; recruiting a diverse membership; uniting around an issue and linking that to action. This chapter addressed several questions related to the process of community leadership development. The responses to these questions are summarized below.

How is CLIMB addressing the relationship between position and power, still so dominant in leadership thought? The U.P. Lead workshops encouraged diversity, practiced listening skills, and enabled people to have an equal voice in the conversations through small group interactions and facilitation that discouraged domination by one or a

few individuals. The workshop also specifically addressed power structures within the community, so that people would be more familiar with these structures and how to work within them.

Is it possible to practice share shared leadership within communities where the traditional view of leadership, based on power and position, is still prevalent? This is a continuing challenge. Shared leadership is practiced in the groups that formed as a result of the U.P. Lead workshop. This concept has not yet spread into the traditional decision-making bodies in the community. The groups that *are* practicing shared leadership are committed to involving many people and not looking to one person for all of the decisions or to do most of the work. They have learned that sometimes a leader needs to keep his/her “hands off” in order to share responsibility, along with both frustration and satisfaction, with others in the group.

How is a sustainable leadership base created within a community? It is difficult to answer this question when such a relatively short period of time had gone by between the workshop and this study. It does lead to several other questions though: *Are new people continuing to get involved?* There were examples of new people getting involved with the community groups. The membership was not the same at the time of this study as it was at the end of the U.P. Lead workshop. New members joined and other people’s priorities and commitments caused them to leave these groups. *After one issue is addressed, does the group re-focus or redirect its energies toward other issues?* None of the groups claimed to have fully addressed the issue, but they had achieved some of their immediate goals, and were in the process of longer-range planning for a greater impact on the issues. *As people develop their leadership potential, both individually and collectively, do they*

take that increased leadership capacity into other situations and settings? As a result, does leadership “spread” throughout the community, creating a sustainable, replicating leadership base? A few people were able to point to examples of applying in other situations what they had learned about shared leadership and valuing each person through their experience in U.P. Lead.

How is leadership, based on responsibility and trust, developed within a community? The key points include local community control, involving a deliberately diverse group, coming together around issues of community concern that they have identified, building the skills needed to address these issues, and linking this to action toward addressing the issues. This is a process that requires time and committed individuals.

What is the relationship between involvement and having or developing a sense of community? The people who are involved in these projects expressed a love for their community, and a desire to see positive change within the community. Some of these people are long-time residents who are deeply rooted in the community; some who arrived more recently are seeking connectedness to the community through involvement in community issues. This study also illustrates how sometimes a “sense of community” translates into excessive pride in “my community” at the expense of collaboration with other communities.

Do people feel a greater sense of empowerment through their involvement in voluntary community organizations? Does involvement in U.P. Lead projects give people increased confidence to be involved in leadership elsewhere? Through involvement, each person has grown in his/her personal sense of efficacy, and has gained a

sense of self-empowerment with greater confidence to stand up and speak out in other situations. People have learned to value diverse backgrounds and opinions; this has freed them to speak openly and effectively not only in the U.P. Lead groups, but also in other contexts.

What are some of the tensions that need to be addressed to successfully implement a process approach to community leadership development? Most of the participants appreciated the process approach to community leadership development, but several also mentioned the difficulties they had with making another commitment and finding the time to carry it out effectively. For some people, participation in these community groups ties very closely with their jobs, so they can justify taking time away from work to participate. For many others, participation in these groups means that they are forced to take time away from work and/or their family.

Is there a relationship between this process and sustained motivation? How does this process contribute to shared leadership? Does increased sharing of responsibility affect the continued participation of members? Some people felt a greater sense of commitment to these groups because responsibility and leadership are shared. Concern about an issue is what motivated most people to action. People were not interested in “just talk;” they wanted to *do* something about the issues. People wanted to see positive results in order to continue being involved; they also realized that *enjoying each other* was an important factor toward their continued involvement. Additional factors contributing to continued involvement include being appreciated and making sure that everyone has something to do and feels responsible to/for the group.

How is diversity achieved and maintained? How is this sustained, given such challenges as different schedules and powerful personalities? First of all, it was necessary to deliberately recruit participants from diverse backgrounds. U.P. Lead sought to be multi-generational, and recruited high school participants, baby-boomers, and retirees. They also sought to represent all sectors of their communities. Once the participants came together, it was necessary to “level the playing field” to allow each participant an equal voice. They did this through working in small groups, learning and practicing effective listening skills, and by learning to appreciate the differences among them. This respect and these skills carried over into each of the projects.

Chapter 5 will address some of the continuing challenges facing these projects and others involved in community leadership development. It includes a summary of this study and recommendations directed toward these specific projects, the CLIMB program, and community leadership development practitioners; it also identifies gaps in the understanding of community leadership development that practitioners and scholars should address.

Chapter 5

THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a brief description of the purpose and methods used for this study. It then summarizes the major findings and presents conclusions based on this study of community leadership development in two communities in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Finally, it presents research and policy implications for additional consideration.

SUMMARY

This section summarizes the purpose of this study and the methods employed. It then summarizes the findings by answering the four key questions of this study.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to explore leadership and participation in voluntary community organizations. It also developed a conceptual framework, or operating principles, of a statewide project in Michigan, CLIMB (Community Leadership Development—Michigan's Best). Additionally, it tested a methodological framework for

CLIMB and other programs for gathering lessons learned in the process of community leadership development.

This study addressed four key questions:

- 1. Does leadership develop as a result of participation in community organizations?**
- 2. What are the factors that influence a person's continued involvement in these organizations?**
- 3. Does involvement lead to greater self-confidence in leadership roles?**
- 4. Does participation in an organization that practices shared leadership and collective responsibility affect a person's determination to apply these principles in other organizations?**

This study looked at two communities in Michigan's Upper Peninsula in an attempt to address these questions. These communities, in Baraga and Iron counties, are part of U.P. Lead and CLIMB, a process-oriented community leadership development project. To initiate this process of community leadership development, a group of community members planned a 2-day workshop; this planning committee then sought a diverse group of participants in this workshop, with high school students, retirees, businesspeople, elected officials, and many others represented. The workshops covered several of the same topics that form most community leadership development programs, such as views of leadership, diversity, conflict, planned change, visioning, power structures, and working within the political process (see Appendix B). A key difference in the U.P. Lead approach to community leadership development was that, before the workshop had ended, groups self-formed to address and then act upon issues of local

concern. The assumption was that leadership would develop as people within these groups worked together to address the issues that concerned them.

METHODS

To understand a process approach to community leadership development, it is necessary to learn from the participants themselves. This study employed qualitative methods of inquiry, facilitating focus group discussions and in-depth individual interviews with project participants in each county. The interviews were conversational as participants responded to open-ended questions about their involvement in the projects and the dynamics of leadership within these groups. Most interviews lasted 1-2 hours.

Several categories emerged from these interviews, including motivating factors, group dynamics, the value of diversity, and the power of having an equal voice. Data from the interviews and focus groups were listed under the categories that emerged. These categories, along with CLIMB documents, formed the basis for creating a conceptual framework of CLIMB. This then provided a framework within which to analyze the responses from the interviews.

FINDINGS

This study was based on four key questions. The findings of these questions are summarized below. Additionally, this study found that one of the most significant factors in the U.P. Lead process was the diversity of participants, in an environment where each participant experienced an equal voice within the group. Most participants commented that they had never sat down to discuss issues with such a diverse group. Each participant

felt the power of their voice—their thoughts and opinions—being of equal importance with all of the other participants. This led to a growing sense of empowerment in several members. Some people shared examples of how they had begun to use their voices in other situations to seek positive change in ways they had not done before.

Does leadership develop as a result of participation in community organizations?

In the groups that practiced shared leadership, where each member was responsible for the process and outcomes of the group, leadership developed. Through involvement in decision-making and tasks, members grew in their leadership abilities. Being part of a diverse group, where each member's voice was listened to, and linking important issues to action and reflection also contributed to leadership development.

What are the factors that influence a person's continued involvement in these organizations? Again, the emphasis on shared leadership and collective responsibility was significant. The groups that remained viable recognized the importance of each member sharing responsibility, and the unique contribution each member had in making the group what it had become. Members of groups that did not continue commented that the lack of shared responsibility was a key factor leading to the decline of the group's viability.

Another factor was a desire to improve the communities. Some participants expressed a love of their community, but dissatisfaction with the *status quo*. They were committed to working toward positive change—to create a better future for the youth, to unify a divided community, or to promote volunteerism within the community.

The commitment to work toward positive change in the community is one indication of shared values. Shared values helped to develop connectedness and commitment, to each other and to a cause or issue, within the groups. In addition, the

people in the groups that remained viable *enjoyed* working together. This was an important factor in their decision to remain involved.

Finally, people wanted to see results. People remained involved in groups that were accomplishing what they set out to do. In some cases, such as the Kinship program, it was a struggle to finally establish a mentoring program. But people remained involved because they were committed to the issue, they felt a part of the planning, and they enjoyed working with each other.

Does involvement lead to greater self-confidence in leadership roles? Some people found their voices and began to use them through involvement in this process of community leadership development. People who did not consider themselves to be “leaders” often accepted responsibility and were actively involved in decision-making. Realizing that leadership is not limited to position and power enabled some people to accept leadership roles, and to grow in their self-confidence to fill these leadership roles effectively.

Does participation in an organization that practices shared leadership and collective responsibility affect a person's determination to apply these principles in other organizations? People who have had a positive experience with shared leadership want to promote this idea. They use what they learned through involvement in U.P. Lead and apply it in other situations, thereby spreading the practice of shared leadership and collective responsibility. People enjoyed each other, and even though there were times of frustration, they knew that they were “in the trenches” together. This was a feeling and environment that they wanted to spread to other organizations.

CONCLUSIONS

This study commenced with the broad question, “Where does leadership come from, and how can it be sustained?” The research has shown that leadership, as promoted and practiced in U.P. Lead, is a fluid phenomenon based on relationships between individuals and within groups. This section examines a few of the key cross-cutting themes that emerged from this study: the value of diversity; the fact that leadership development is a process, not a short-term program or an event; and that there may be a relationship between sustained motivation and shared leadership. It also offers conclusions and recommendations regarding the methodology used to learn about community leadership development.

DIVERSITY: A POWERFUL EXPERIENCE

It was a very powerful experience for participants to learn that people they did not usually come into contact with share the same views/values. This, in itself, was an empowering experience for many.

Such diversity does not come naturally—it requires a deliberate effort. Organizers actively and deliberately recruited participants from diverse backgrounds throughout the community. Facilitators created and maintained an environment in the workshop where people had an equal voice and were on a level playing field.

The recent emphasis on diversity in this country has focused on factors related to race, culture, gender and sexual orientation. In the U.P., there is quite a bit of homogeneity of race and culture. The emphasis in U.P. Lead was on generational diversity. This is often overlooked. The youth experienced a powerful transformation

when they realized that older people were listening to them—actively and intently. The older generations were struck by the fact that youth shared many of the same concerns about the community. Many prejudices were minimized or eliminated as these multigenerational groups communicated openly with each other.

Another aspect of diversity that is not often addressed is the role of outsiders, or newcomers, or even people who have spent a considerable amount of time outside of the community. These people come in with a different worldview from that of those who have always been a part of the community. They have ideas about what things *could* be like, and some have a lot of zeal to make changes within the community. This can result in tensions as they begin to disrupt the *status quo*. On the other hand, “predictable answers grow in most organizations like weeds, often choking out an original idea” (DePree, 1992:194). In other words, people who are relatively new to a community are willing to speak out and share new ideas, with no regard to the “predictable” solutions. Sometimes the newer ideas will be choked out; other times they may be able to succeed and grow.

Taylor (1997), in her study of community leadership development programs, found that there was very little socio-economic diversity among the participants. This was most likely related to the very high cost of the leadership programs; it also could be because of the time commitment required for the training. Most participants worked for large corporations that sponsored and provided the time off for their training. There were very few small businesses and other professions represented. The financial cost of U.P. Lead was very low, so that it did not prevent most people from participating. The cost of

people's time for the workshop and in the resulting projects may have prevented some people from participating when it required that they take time off of work or school.

SHARED LEADERSHIP

Shared leadership actively involves more people in decision-making and responsibility for the group's success. Involving a number of people in leadership does not mean that the group is "leader-less," but that the roles and responsibilities of leadership are distributed as widely as possible (Vandenberg and Sandmann, 1995; Kofman and Senge, 1993). Such sharing of leadership and responsibility influences continued participation within the group. Some people experience increased motivation and sense of worth because they share responsibility. For some others, this increased responsibility means additional commitments that they cannot keep, and so they withdraw from the organization.

While the people involved in these projects often practiced shared leadership, they also recognize the importance of understanding the dominant paradigm of leadership, which is based on position and power. Each project operates within, not apart from, the community. Within the communities, there are certain leadership structures. The U.P. Lead projects have had some success in involving the traditional and institutional leaders within their projects. There was a two-fold purpose in this approach: (1) to promote diversity of participants by including different types of leaders as well as potential leaders, and (2) to involve, rather than exclude, the more traditional community leaders.

Table 1 (Chapter 2) illustrated that approaches to leadership vary, and these approaches operate along a continuum. Sometimes one approach is more appropriate

than another might be. An individual is not locked into always operating within one approach to leadership.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: A PROCESS

Leadership development is a process, not a short term program or event. This process involves bringing a diverse group together around issues of common concern. It requires a level playing field so that each voice is heard and valued. Beyond talking, it requires action. Learning takes place through practice and performance (Kofman and Senge, 1993); in other words, through the process of action and reflection.

Most people are do-ers—they want to be a part of getting something done, not just talking about it. Shaffer and Anundsen (1993) point out that tension between task-oriented and process-oriented people is natural; in fact, it is a growing edge, a means to organizational health. U.P. Lead managed the tension between action and process people by encouraging each group to link their concerns about issues with action.

Shared leadership implies that leadership development shifts from centering on the individual to centering on the group. It shifts from being a packaged curriculum that is taught, to an evolving process of customized learning. It also shifts from being a discrete leadership development program to embedding leadership development in concrete issues that are identified by participants in the process (Vandenberg and Sandmann, 1995).

A process approach to leadership development does still require some skills-based training. It is not just talking about new ways of “doing leadership,” it is learning new ways of being more effective leaders. Part of this learning takes place by working together—this is CLIMB’s emphasis. But part of the learning also takes place as people

improve their skills together through a more structured program. A key difference is that the participants collectively identify the skills that are desired.

Most leadership development programs center on skills-based learning. Few studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of these programs; both Taylor (1997) and Bolton (1991) found no significant effect on the participants in skill-based community leadership development programs. Taylor (1997) still argues that skills-based training is more effective than issue-based or networking-based methods of community leadership development.

METHODOLOGY

This study also intended to develop and test a methodology for learning from communities about leadership development. This methodology, based largely on focus groups and in-depth individual interviews, was generally effective for learning from the communities. It provided in-depth explanations of individual's experiences in community leadership development. It had certain limitations, however. First of all, there were no baseline data from the participants. Future research would ideally begin at the time a project is conceived. Interviews before people participate in a project such as U.P. Lead and the issue-based groups that came out of the workshops would provide baseline information against which to compare perceptions of leadership and approaches to leadership development. An open-ended survey would also help.

Second, if determining sustainability of leadership development is one of the goals, it is necessary to conduct a longitudinal study. Approximately one year had passed since

the groups studied had been formed; it is too early to determine whether these groups are sustainable and if leadership has spread throughout the communities.

Third, the follow-up session is important for the validity of community research. It did not happen in this case because of scheduling difficulties and distance. Future research should include a follow-up session; this should be agreed upon and scheduled by the researcher and participants before the initial fieldwork is completed.

Finally, it is important to interview a diverse group of people to get a broad view of the projects and of leadership development. Some participants were more active than others; some went through the U.P. Lead workshop while others joined later. It was important to get their perspectives. In this study, however, the number of people interviewed was excessive, given the time allocated for fieldwork.

POLICY RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Several issues emerged through this study that call for additional consideration by policy researchers and community development practitioners. They are presented below based on the four key concepts that emerged through this study: leadership, community development and empowerment, praxis and diversity. Additionally, issues that arose as a result of this study requiring further research are also presented.

LEADERSHIP

The field of community leadership development is still relatively new. There are several issues that researchers and practitioners need to address to effectively address leadership within communities.

Position and Power

Several questions emerged in the process of analyzing the interviews. The voluntary community groups studied are not yet posing any threat to the traditional leadership of the community. The issues being addressed are common, shared concerns that few people would argue with. It is likely, however, that conflict will arise when the traditional leaders perceive that the voluntary groups are posing some sort of threat. How, then, should community groups address traditional and institutional powers when conflicts do arise?

Each of these groups is striving toward shared leadership and collective responsibility. Due to the nature of these groups, the question of whether shared leadership can be practiced with people who believe that leadership is synonymous with power and position has not been adequately addressed.

Sustainability

This study found a few examples of new members joining the groups, of the projects redirecting their efforts, and how leadership is transferred between different community groups. These might be considered indicators of a sustainable leadership base; it is necessary, however, to define additional indicators.

It is also necessary to carry out a longitudinal study to better understand how to develop a sustainable leadership base within the community. Not enough time had elapsed since the conception of these projects to provide conclusive evidence related to sustainable leadership.

Community Leadership Development: Program or Process?

The projects involved in this study practice leadership development as a process approach: based within the local community, occurring over time, involving a diverse group of people, linking issues identified by participants with action and reflection, sharing leadership and responsibility for the process and outcomes. This differs from a program approach that often is an event: a workshop that follows a pre-planned curriculum, drawing participants out of their communities and then sending them back to put into practice what they have learned.

Which approach is more effective, a process approach or a program approach? Programs often emphasize skills-based training. The process approach just described addresses some skills, but emphasizes experiential learning. What is an appropriate balance between skills training and experiential learning?

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

This study found that people get involved in their community because they want to see positive change within the community. Often people get involved because they feel a strong sense of community; to what extent does involvement in local projects lead to developing a stronger sense of community, individually and collectively?

People also develop a greater sense of personal and collective power through their involvement. To what extent does involvement build empowerment? Does participation in an organization that practices shared leadership lead to an even greater degree of empowerment in comparison with more traditional organizations, where people depend on one or a few people for leadership?

PRAXIS

Central to the U.P. Lead approach to community leadership development was the idea of praxis, an on-going process of action and reflection. People united around an issue of community concern and then involved themselves in action and reflection. The process of linking issues with action and reflection was an important outcome of U.P. Lead. However, some of the workshop participants were not prepared to make additional commitments by involving themselves in action and reflection. Other people are very action-oriented and have little patience with the time required in a process approach. How should this tension between action- and process-oriented people be addressed?

In U.P. Lead's approach to community leadership development, the participants addressed the issues that were most relevant to them. They held ownership from the start—what, then, is the long-term effect of their ownership of the process? Is a process approach more sustainable than a more directive, programmatic approach to leadership development? Considerably more time is required to address these questions.

DIVERSITY

The coordinators of U.P. Lead deliberately sought a diversity of participants, recruiting people of all ages, occupations, and backgrounds. The result was the formation of very dynamic groups. This diversity presented some challenges, however. For example, students do not have the flexibility to meet when business-people meet. They also may not have transportation. Arranging to get a diverse group of people together on an on-going basis will be a continuing challenge.

Another challenge to diversity is how to keep the voices “equal.” During the workshops, an atmosphere was created that respected diversity and allowed each person to speak as an equal. The “real world” does not often function in this manner. Is continued intervention required to maintain diversity and to keep the voices equal? Such intervention might seem artificial, though it might be analogous to training a tree to grow straight and not curve against the wind: it requires ropes or metal bars until it is not only straight but strong enough to stay that way on its own.

One aspect of diversity that emerged through this study was the length of time spent in the community. The majority of participants were not life-long residents of the community. They are called “transplants.” What is the role of “transplants” in community leadership development? This study only scratched the surface of this question. In many cases, an outsider refers to a community organizer or someone else who intentionally tries to effect change within a community. But these transplants are residents, not deliberately “change agents,” who want to see change happen in their community.

Another aspect of diversity that needs to be explored further is whether it is possible to maintain diversity when powerful individuals within the community get involved in these grassroots organizations. Powerful individuals tend to dominate groups. The U.P. Lead workshops were facilitated in a manner that minimized domination by one or a few; to what extent is this possible within the projects?

OTHER ISSUES

Additional issues that arose as a result of this study include:

Community Leadership Development Research: Little research has been done in the field of community leadership development. Most of the leadership literature centers on organizational management, not on communities. Many of the community leadership initiatives have adapted methods employed in the field of business. This is effective—to a limited extent. There is a great need for further research on appropriate strategies for developing a sustainable leadership base within communities.

Government and Volunteerism: One of the reasons that a deeper understanding of community leadership development is important is that the U.S. government has been decentralizing and allocating some money at local levels. They expect communities to deal with more responsibility but they still hold the strings. For example, the Strong Families—Safe Children program requested proposals from communities. In both Iron and Baraga Counties, several very busy, but very concerned and committed people, came together to develop proposals and budgets. The government cut the budgets (most by about 65%) before allocating any money. At the time this research was conducted, no money had yet been allocated even though it was many months later than when the programs were scheduled to start. For the most part, this has left a very sour taste in the mouths of community members who worked so hard to see these programs develop.

The government expects communities to accept more responsibility for social services. They say they are decentralizing, but they are not empowering the community groups at all when they dictate what the community projects should be and funds get tied up in red tape. In light of government bureaucracy, *can* they allow communities the freedom to design and develop their own projects? With so many strings and regulations attached, is it even possible to decentralize?

Transferability and Comparative Studies: Another aspect of community leadership development that should be explored is the transferability of concepts between communities. This study looked at two communities that are relatively similar geographically and demographically. Do the concepts apply in urban settings? Do they apply in other countries? There is very little overlap in the literature between domestic and international community leadership development; in fact, while much has been written about international community development, the issue of community leadership is rarely addressed at all in the international literature.

Learning Organizations: Much of the literature about learning organizations is written from a business or academic perspective (Senge, 1991; Noer, 1997; Vaill, 1996; Kay and Bawden, 1996). Some of the principles do apply to community organizations, but they should be explored in a community context. Some of the inherent tensions between business and community organizations include time commitments: in a business that is trying to be a learning organization, people are being paid to take the time to develop into a learning organization. In a voluntary community organization, a process or learning approach requires additional commitments of time that people are not being compensated for.

Methods: This study attempted to develop a methodological framework that could be used for gathering and documenting lessons learned in community leadership development. The approach used in this study included preliminary work: contact with local extension officers, letters inviting project members to participate in this study followed with phone calls. In the field, the research started with focus group discussions in each community, followed by individual interviews. After analyzing the interviews and

identifying themes, the intent was to meet with a group of participants to share with them these themes and seek additional input. This step did not occur due to time constraints and other commitments by the participants and researcher. Distance to the field sites was also a factor.

This approach was effective in learning about individual's experiences in this community leadership development process. The initial focus groups provided an overview for both the researcher and the participants. The in-depth interviews provided a greater understanding of the process of community leadership development.

Additional research should focus on who should be targeted for the interviews, and how to make the research more beneficial to the participants.

THE FUTURE

This study explored community leadership development in two rural communities. There are few formal studies that have been done in this area and there are many opportunities for exploration, examination, analysis and comparison. While this study has contributed to the literature and understanding of community leadership development, it has raised many more questions than it has answered. It is hoped that these questions will stimulate additional research in the field of community leadership development.

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

CLIMB PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

1. **21st Century Leadership—Leading and Learning at a Distance: A Land Use Perspective**
2. **Citizens Information Network**
3. **Grassroots Organization and Leadership Development (GOLD)**
4. **Gratiot Woods Community Development Project**
5. **The Hispanic Student Leadership Forum**
6. **Local Cooperative Leadership Network**
7. **Michigan Integrated Food and Farming Systems (MIFFS)**
8. **Non-Traditional Leader Development**
9. **Parent Leadership Mentoring Project**
10. **U.P. Lead**
11. **Youth Enrichment Summer (YES)**
12. **Youth Violence Prevention Coalition**

21st Century Leadership
Leading and Learning at a Distance: A Land Use Perspective
Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Benzie, Kalkaska and Antrim Counties

Background

The five counties around Grand Traverse are geographically and economically interdependent (70.2% of the jobs in this five-county region are in Grand Traverse County). Over the years, the counties have collaborated on many issues and concerns, but due to vast distances it is difficult to involve people from all locations for activities and programs. The director of the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation came up with the idea to link the communities via interactive television (ITV) for a leadership development program. At the same time, CLIMB was supporting issue-based leadership development initiatives. In addition, Northwestern Michigan College (NMC) was looking for ways of getting ITV technology into more communities. The Foundation and MSUE then planned a community leadership development program around land use issues, using ITV.

Implementation

Seven training sessions took place. The 84 participants represented businesses, school teachers, citizens, planning officials, land and title associations, architects, planning commissions and township boards from five counties. The first session brought all participants together at NMU. Case studies on land use issues and conflicts had been prepared; each county worked with a case study throughout the training program. The intent was that they would apply what they had learned at a given session to the case study. The five training sessions which followed covered building effective personal and group communication skills; identifying and clarifying local issues and fostering community consensus; fostering effective boardmanship and organizational governance; working with community leaders and identifying community power structures; and engaging in conflict management and community problem-solving. These sessions were “live” at one location (which rotated each time) and via ITV at a location in each of the other counties. A final wrap-up session took place with all participants back at NMU to learn about facilitating community issues, reflect on the experience and ITV method, discuss possible future collaboration and networking across counties, and receive certificates of completion.

Lessons Learned

During the final session at NMC and in discussions with a group of eight community and MSUE representatives, many ideas for future leadership development initiatives were discussed. Some of the key lessons learned and changes they would make in the future include:

- “Everything that happens in the 5-county region affects the 5-county region. This made it clear that we *truly* need to work together. Issues and solutions cannot be discussed in isolation—‘per county’—but need to be addressed regionally.”
- “We thought that our problems were unique. Realizing that the counties experience common problems made it not seem so overwhelming.”
- It’s extremely important to focus on common interests, not differences—find the common ground when trying to deal with different groups of people or individuals.
- The focus on an issue—land use—was important for bringing in many of the participants. The speakers, however, did not necessarily focus on land use issues. More time should be allowed for questions and interaction—with less time lecturing.
- There is a great need for formal leadership development programs. “Sometimes leaders ‘emerge’ who don’t necessarily have the skills needed to lead effectively.” Even many people who have been involved in leadership for many years need or want more skills. “Leadership is not self-taught—skills like grant writing, public speaking, and conflict resolution need to be learned.”
- Each community organization works within “the system.” It’s extremely important to know how to operate within that system in order to get things done.
- ITV was distracting and intrusive—people really didn’t yet know each other and were expected to interact over a television screen.

- What it *did* do, though, was make it possible for people in different counties to learn needed skills and gain further understanding—if people were expected to be at the same location for each session, not as many people would have been able to participate. This method, though not exactly ideal, allowed more people to participate and also respected the valuable time of participants, by not requiring several hours of travel for each session.

Citizens Information Network South Grand Traverse County

Background

Communities in the southern part of Grand Traverse County are quite isolated. They are mainly very small towns that are geographically distant*. According to the 1990 census, the total population for this area (of five townships and two villages) was 5,819.

Visions South Grand Traverse is the strategic plan for community and economic development in that region. The planning process was carried out over the course of a year (1993). The need for improved communications was identified through that process: "Establish communications network and newsletter for Visions South Grand Traverse." The main objective of this project was to improve communication and knowledge within and between isolated communities by providing opportunities to participate in citizen information networks.

Implementation

Local government leaders, Visions South Grand Traverse, Inc., MSUE, and other stakeholders worked together to meet this need. Computers were set up at the Fife Lake Township Hall and at the Kingsley Library. These computers were connected to the Internet, and community members were trained on the use of this equipment. There were two training sessions at each location, for 20 people per session. These people were then expected to train at least five other community members on how to use the Internet.

The purpose in this approach was to improve the flow of information between citizens, townships and villages. By being adept at using both electronic and print communications, people will be more able to access resources and information for the betterment of their community. This will also build leadership capacity within the community.

The Grand Traverse District Library is involved in their strategic planning. One thing they are considering is how to fund electronic (internet) connections with their branch libraries. It is possible that this project helped to bring this need into their discussions.

Lessons Learned

One of the challenges when working with technology is that everything needs to be working in order for anything to work. The computer at Fife Lake needed repairs, so was down for a while. Project funds from CLIMB were able to support the repairs and internet charges for several months, but alternative sources of funding need to be identified. Ideally, people would have realized the great value of communicating via the internet and would be willing to pay for the charges—either individually or as a community.

* This area covers 35% of the land area in the county, but comprises only 9.1% of the population.

Grassroots Organization and Leadership Development (GOLD)* Benton Harbor

Background

GOLD is a project of the NISE (Neighborhood Information & Sharing Exchange) program. The objective of GOLD is to motivate individuals to become change agents within their neighborhoods. NISE hoped that the GOLD program would enable people to become knowledgeable about the process of changing oneself and changing others for the success of a project or organizational growth.

To understand GOLD, it is important to understand NISE. According to its Mission Statement, "NISE is a non-profit community based organization whose purpose is to enable citizens of Benton Harbor to bring about long-range institutional and community change." It works on four main areas of concern: organizing, housing, education and health, with an active newsletter and forums for sharing the information among all who are interested. NISE started in 1986, and has been involved in many projects and activities throughout the community, serving as a leader and advocate for city residents.

In their efforts to organize Block Clubs, NISE realized that the skills needed for organizing citizens were lacking. NISE members realized that this was a need that they could address—not in the form of doing things themselves, but in training community members. The underlying philosophy of NISE is, basically, "we'll help you get started, then you're on your own." One of the things they realized was that, even when people *are* talking to each other about issues and problems, it is difficult to get beyond complaining and move onto action. This was part of what NISE hoped to do through GOLD.

Implementation

In the fall of 1996, GOLD trained community members in the following areas: effective communication, decision-making, effective meeting structure, community organizing (including a road trip), visioning, conflict resolution, leadership styles and consensus building. These sessions were facilitated by community members, MSUE and CLIMB partners.

The training provided needed skills and also increased confidence. Several participants in GOLD have spearheaded and are currently involved in community projects, such as:

- trying to build communication links between the various housing complexes in the area
- working with youth to build and repair bicycles, teaching the necessary skills as well as responsibility
- working with children/youth to plant flowers and vegetables in vacant lots—letting the children express themselves through their work and experience the gratification that comes from growing plants, providing vegetables for families, beautifying the community, and giving the children productive things to do
- seeking to provide an environment which is conducive for learning for students

NISE would like to offer the GOLD training again, perhaps regularly (often enough to meet the demand). They have been seeking funding for this, and will likely offer another series of training in the near future. In addition, they would also like to be able to offer "GOLD—Phase II" to people who complete the first phase, put it into practice, and desire/need additional training. Phase I offers an excellent overview, enough for people to get started, but more training on such topics as fund raising/grant writing and conflict resolution is needed as projects grow.

Lessons Learned

- For effective leadership, people need certain *skills* in order to get beyond complaining and moving toward action.
- The best way to recruit people is one-on-one. Ask them. Use the contacts you already have with individuals and groups—if they can't make it, ask if they know of someone who can.
- "Lecture-based" training needs to be well-balanced with hands-on experience and road trips.

* GOLD evolved from "Community Building Blocks"—the title which had been used for this project the past documents.

- Don't try to control the process—let the people (participants, community) take it and make it what's important to them.
- Leadership starts with an interest→through that, one acquires/builds skills→the interest expands→there are obstacles to overcome→through all of this, growing takes place and leadership emerges.

Gratiot Woods Community Development Project
A Neighborhood on the East Side of Detroit

*It was a joy to live here 30 years ago. Now it's a struggle. It's a changed neighborhood.
That's why we want to make a difference here.*

Mrs. Mamie Ferguson, the Gratiot Woods Coalition, March 8, 1997

Background

Gratiot Woods is a community covering 37 square blocks on the East Side of Detroit. It is a neighborhood of single-family homes on small lots. Many homes have been abandoned, vandalized and/or used as crack houses. Vacant lots are filled with trash, and alleys provide protection for thieves and drug pushers. Like in many areas of Detroit, deterioration of the neighborhood started after the riots in 1967. Businesses, like stores and filling stations, left the area. People left, and many continue to leave as soon as they can afford it. Most people realize that it took time for the neighborhood to become what it is today, and it will take time to notice significant change.

The Gratiot Woods Coalition was formed in 1991, after a meeting organized by Martha Winbush of MSU Extension. She had organized a workshop for the residents of Gratiot Woods; a motivational speaker talked about how your environment affects how you live. In small groups, the residents talked about their dreams for their community. As a result of this workshop, the participants came together and cleared out several vacant lots and began creating a park across from the 4-H Center.

Although the Coalition was born in 1991, people had been working together prior to that time. There were block clubs in various parts of the community that used to be quite active and pulled the community together. The clubs organized to keep the streets and alleys clean, and also kept in close contact with the police. A few people realized that if the block clubs could join together, collectively they could have a greater impact. People felt the need and desire to do more.

Implementation

After the Coalition was formed, the members decided that they wanted to focus on cleaning up the community. This goal of revitalizing their community has not changed—but the strategy has.

They started with the 37-square-block area as a target. Some clean-up days were organized. It is mainly the senior citizens who have been active; some youth have also been involved. But the demands of time and the physically difficult demands of this work were more than a small group of senior citizens and a few youth could do. Rather than giving up, members of the Coalition met together and decided to focus on a small section—2-3 streets—at a time. They acknowledged that change would be gradual.

The Coalition is determined to make a difference in their community. They are planning to hire some young people who went through a job service training program last summer to do some of the heavier and more physically demanding work. They continue to try to involve more members of the community. In addition, they are exploring possibilities for a community-based housing renovation project and a health center.

Lessons Learned

The group continues to evolve, learning and changing as they go along. In the words of community members, for the most part, some of the key lessons the Gratiot Woods Coalition has been learning include:

- “When you’re working in grassroots community organizing, the most important thing is to realize that what you came in with is not necessarily what you’ll end up with.... Our major goal hasn’t changed, but the way of getting there has.”
- “‘No’ means something. When people don’t want to help or get involved, it means something... It makes you angry when you’re out there sweating and cleaning someone’s alley or around their house—and they’re sitting inside refreshing themselves... You keep on going, though, because you realize that each person (us included) needs something. You gain inner strength to continue.”
- “You need to take things slowly. Reality checks—and the time required—were not built in at the beginning,” and so things have taken longer than expected. These things are now being taken into consideration—and always should be in the future.
- “You have to have *patience* when working with communities!”
- The best way to get people involved is through personal contact—for example, most of the people who showed up for a recent coalition meeting were there because they received a phone call, not because of the flyers which were sent out advertising the meeting.

The Hispanic Student Leadership Forum Lenawee County Intermediate School District

Background

The Hispanic Student Leadership Forum (HSLF) is a program of the Lenawee Intermediate School District (ISD). It is designed to help Hispanic high school students gain necessary skills to take on positions of leadership within their communities. It was started in the early 1990s, and continues to develop each year. With support from CLIMB, a summer component, working with the migrant community, was added in 1996. In 1997, the HSLF model was adapted for a group of African-American students in the Lenawee County schools. Past participants in the HSLF have written articles for the local newspaper, one participant ran for public office, and many of them have graduated and gone on to college.

Implementation

The HSLF involves up to fifty Hispanic high school students from several different high schools within the Lenawee ISD. The number is limited in order to maintain a quality program; criteria for acceptance include expressed interest and motivation as well as parental support. The students meet together monthly throughout the school year, following a curriculum developed by the ISD Multi-Cultural Coordinator, Mrs. Emily Martinez.

The curriculum covers such topics as listening skills, public speaking, diversity training, financial management, and leadership styles. The forum also arranges visits to local colleges and universities. Several students have participated in regional events/conferences for Hispanic students and/or leaders. During the summer, students put their leadership skills into practice through working with the migrant communities in Lenawee County. Students took the initiative in arranging clothing drives and helped support health campaigns in the camps. They also organized Cinco de Mayo celebrations, other dances for the migrant youth, and worked with the younger children in the camps as mentors and tutors.

Some of the students have also been trained by the 4-H Youth Agent to use puppets for diversity training with the younger students. This has given them the opportunity to teach the younger children as well as be positive role models.

Lessons Learned

The students have gained skills and confidence through participating in the HSLF. These include:

- Confidence to speak up. For example,

- ♦ Several students had never spoken publicly before. Through participation in the forum, they gained some of the skills for public speaking and then also were given opportunities for speaking publicly—at the middle schools, at CLIMB events, etc.
- ♦ Two students talked about new laws about the driving age. They were angry that the laws were being changed, and talked about writing a letter to the newspaper and to their State Representative expressing their views. They felt that the adults making the decisions had not considered all of the perspectives—such as high school students who have to work and need a car to get there, single-headed households or those where both parents work—which is in the majority—perhaps even multiple shifts, and so they need the help of their teenagers for shopping and taking other siblings to school, sports, etc. These students pointed out that before being part of the HSLF, they probably wouldn't think of making their voices heard in any way.
- Importance of keeping commitments. This is stressed throughout the program, and students are held accountable—by Emily and by other students.
- Be yourself.
- Importance of helping others.

When asked what advice they would give others interested in starting a similar project, the students came up with a very extensive list. When asked to prioritize the *most important* principles in developing a student leadership development forum, they agreed on the following:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| • Set clear goals | • Set high standards |
| • Respect one another | • Be a role model |
| • Trust one another | • Serve the community |

Local Cooperative Leadership Networks Several Counties throughout the State

Background

The Local Cooperative Leadership Network (LCLN) program brings together co-op leaders to share ideas and to stimulate innovation, making the benefits of such innovations available to everyone. It is a program of the Michigan Alliance of Cooperatives, which was established in 1980 when a group of cooperators came together from different types of co-ops in order to share ideas and learn from one another. It is a non-profit educational public foundation, organized to advance cooperative concepts and practices; expand mutual aid among cooperatives; foster cooperation among cooperatives; disseminate information about cooperatives; advocate the interests of cooperatives and their members; and organize new cooperatives and provide consultation to cooperatives.

There are many different types of cooperatives from which the LCLNs draw their members. Housing, farmers, buyers (food, vitamins, etc.), credit unions, optical services, nursery schools, and electricians, to name a few. Although one type of cooperative may be quite different from another, they face similar issues, have similar community-based goals, and can learn from each other.

Implementation

Five networks have been established: for Muskegon/Oceana Counties, Washtenaw County area, Wayne County area, Oakland/Livingston Counties, and Bay/Saginaw/Midland Counties. The purpose of these networks is to:

1. bring together all types of local cooperatives in regular meetings
2. develop leadership skills and concepts among cooperators
3. exchange ideas and information among the cooperatives
4. create solidarity among cooperatives and cooperators

5. give cooperatives opportunities to do business with one another
6. raise the public consciousness of the important role played by cooperatives
7. expand mutual aid among cooperatives
8. celebrate the values of cooperation

Each network selects a convenient location and meets for lunch. Over lunch, the members share with and learn from one another. In addition, the Alliance makes available programs which would be of interest to the co-op leaders. For example, at the second meeting of the Oakland/Livingston LCLN, one of the co-op leaders gave a presentation on food buying co-ops to the other LCLN members, sharing her expertise as well as the many resources used for establishing buying clubs. She is a leading authority on buying clubs and is active and respected among cooperatives. She is also a member of that cooperative network.

It is evident that there is a great deal of expertise within each of the groups—the LCLNs provide a forum for sharing that expertise. They may also have sessions on motivating volunteers, managing crises, improving communication with members and the public, effective use of committees, resolving conflicts, etc.

The LCLNs will soon be gearing up to fight decisions which were made recently which may affect many types of cooperatives throughout the country. Banks have brought lawsuits against credit unions; in short, there is an injunction against all credit unions, and they cannot accept new members. The Local Cooperative Leadership Networks provide a forum for discussing pressing issues such as this which affect cooperatives, as well as fostering the leadership needed to “fight this to the highest level.”

In addition to the networks, there is also a newsletter which shares ideas and innovations among the cooperatives.

Lessons Learned

- Sharing of ideas is an important way of fostering leadership within a community
- A great deal of expertise already exists within the community (of cooperators)—what is needed is more opportunities to learn from one another
- Meeting over lunch is difficult for some potential members who are already extremely busy and/or work in jobs which do not allow them to take an extended lunch
- In organizing local co-ops, the networks are also organizing local communities

Michigan Integrated Food and Farming Systems (MIFFS) Statewide

Background

MIFFS was created in 1993 to foster collaborative community action around agricultural issues. MIFFS works in three main areas: developing farming practices, building community leadership, and influencing policies that affect the decisions farmers and consumers make. It is a statewide program with at least 15 “innovation projects” throughout the state or at a more local level; these projects explore and model new production, marketing, community-building and networking strategies.

MIFFS recognized the role and importance of leadership development, and it is like a thread throughout all of the innovation projects. “Leadership development” may be explicit, but more often it is implicit in what people are doing, learning, and sharing.

Implementation

Because of the importance of leadership development, the MIFFS/CLIMB partnership seemed ideal. A group of MIFFS collaborators and CLIMB partners met together to plan for this collaboration. The intent was to have a core group of CLIMB partners available as resource-persons for the Innovation Projects. It was then up to the project partners to ask for help, and CLIMB partners made presentations or facilitated sessions with the projects. A few projects seized this opportunity, but not all of them could see what CLIMB could do for them.

A small group of CLIMB partners also planned one of MIFFS' quarterly meetings (for "collaborators and friends") to focus on leadership development and networking; this took place in December 1995.

Lessons Learned

MIFFS has spent quite a bit of time looking at lessons learned about leadership development throughout their innovation projects. These do not necessarily have a direct link to the role of CLIMB, but are valuable and much can be learned from their experiences.

- leadership development requires a sharing component—more than education or even a practice event
- leadership requires experience—the *doing*—more than expertise
- opportunities to provide leadership can precede formal educational efforts, and may even prompt individuals to get more education or experience
- we should not expect leadership development efforts to result in improved leadership skills or action unless there is a way to build in the active, sharing component—putting it into practice

Leadership develops and is evidenced by:

- *team members taking on project activities*, such as responsibility for activities that were important work for the project, assuming responsibility for facilitating the work of the project, recording and documenting the team's work, and originating as well as carrying out project work
- *stepping forward to tell the project's story*, speaking about what they know to interested audiences—whether formally or informally, to a large or small group or another individual
- *working with other people to help them learn what you do*, leading to both formal and informal replication of the innovation
- *taking on bigger or different responsibilities as a result of their project activities*, personally and professionally

In addition, the coordinator and evaluator of MIFFS and CLIMB partners have identified several other lessons:

- "A plan implemented as written is doomed to fail"—you need to learn and be willing to change, and realize that sometimes opportunities look like barriers
- "Leadership" is not necessarily the term people use to identify their need—they are more likely to mention a skill that they need, like learning how to deal with conflict, which might then translate into "leadership development"
- Among the CLIMB partners, a deep level of trust had developed—they were able to share divergent ideas, to listen with respect and openness, and to spend the time needed to resolve their differences—so they were able to work together more effectively
- The collaboration between MIFFS and CLIMB still has a great deal of un-tapped potential. The relationship and roles, if more fully understood, could be beneficial to both groups.

Non-Traditional Leader Development Kalamazoo County

Background

This project originated with the intent to address the lack of leadership development opportunities for non-traditional and grassroots leaders involved in neighborhood and community based issues. This need surfaced in discussions among community members active in the Forum for Kalamazoo County, a broad-based group concerned with community change and improvement. A member of the Forum was also active in the development of CLIMB, and saw this as a valuable link. Other Kalamazoo community members became involved with CLIMB. They saw the potential to address non-traditional leader development through CLIMB. It would also provide the opportunity for them to put into practice, within their community, what they were learning in CLIMB. To do so, they put together a proposal for

providing a series of in-depth training and skill development opportunities over the course of a year, for non-traditional and grassroots community leaders, focusing on community issues and concerns.

Implementation

The group was comprised of a diverse group of Kalamazoo community members, including people from MSUE, the MSU-Kalamazoo Center for Medical Studies, Kalamazoo Valley College, the *Healthy Futures* project, and others. They met in the spring of 1995 with community members in Benton Harbor and explored the possibility of collaborating for a regional program of community leadership development. This did not work out, and the proposal for Kalamazoo County was prepared in the fall of 1995.

After the proposal was approved and funded by CLIMB, the members of the group were so involved in other projects and volunteer activities that it was difficult to implement their ideas for this project. Since that time, they have met occasionally to discuss next steps for implementation, including linking this leadership development project with already existing community programs, like *Healthy Futures* or the Youth Leadership Project.

The project has not yet been implemented, but people have not given up on it either. They believe that this type of training is needed within their community; however, they also realize that someone needs to be willing to spearhead the effort.

Lessons Learned

- The project was not grounded in something already existing, and so had to be developed from the ground up. This was more time and energy consuming than most people were able to do.
- No one was willing to take the lead on this and really get it going. Everyone is actively involved in their community, and this wasn't closely enough aligned with what they were already doing, so it was one more commitment that they had trouble taking on.
- Related to this, the group was made up of people involved in different things and having different interests. "The energy was scattered."
- There wasn't something pressing—a compelling issue, need, or crisis—to address. This project was "an application looking for a problem." (It was more pro-active than reactive—important, but difficult to stir people to action and commit to involvement.)
- It is important to deal with different schedules. For some people, this was closely related with their jobs, and so they could take the time to meet during the day. For others, the evenings or weekends work better. In the future, this needs to be addressed. One possible solution is to create 2 parallel teams, meeting at different times, with some overlap.

In the future, members of this group said that they would be more aware of the need for having

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| • a clear focus | • one to spearhead the initiative |
| • the "right players" | • roots within an existing program |
| • a strong team | |

Parent Leadership Mentoring Project Ingham County/Statewide

Background

This leadership initiative was developed to benefit children, youth and families. Through a strategy of skill development and support, the intent of this project was to prepare parents/consumers of the children involved in the Special Education system, Early Childhood Education system, Mental Health system, and/or Social Services system to become members of local collaborative governance organizations and related workgroups. Participation in this project would enable parents to gain the skills and confidence needed to take an active role in local collaborative organizations.

There were four main categories of stakeholders involved in implementation of the training:

1. *Parents* who received training
2. *Mentors* from CLIMB to assist and support the parents
3. *Volunteers* from CLIMB to assist in evaluating the training, with follow-up calls or visits with trainees
4. *State Directors/Staff* from the Family Independence Agency for planning and implementation of collaborative initiatives

Implementation

The curriculum for this program was developed, and many contacts were made. Four CLIMB partners completed mentor training. The project was terminated in March 1997. A letter from Dave Berns described why this decision was made:

First, the number of volunteers to serve as mentors was considerably below original plans. We had hoped to have 80-100 partners recruited and trained. The first session resulted in four trained mentors ready for assignment. Second, the amount of effort and time required to implement and to maintain the project exceeded original estimates. Attempting to recruit, train, match and monitor mentors statewide from a central location was much too grand a project to implement with the limited resources available. Finally, I have accepted a position in another state and will not be able to design and administer alternative strategies that may have made the project successful.

Lessons Learned

Before Dave left, he took some time to reflect upon the experience of this project and what might be done differently for it to be more effectively implemented.

- Numerous contacts with parents and consumers throughout the state confirmed a desire for training and guidance from community partners with more leadership experience. There is definitely a need and desire for a mentoring program—how to administer it is the challenge.
- Administering a project of this nature may work better at a local level than through a state system. The time and energy required to facilitate local contacts and matches is extensive. It is not clear if this investment of resources would be productive.
- A simpler alternative may be more useful and effective. Possible each MSU Extension office could be encouraged to provide support to parents and consumers who become involved on local collaborative boards. If the extension offices or other agencies were routinely available for this purpose, local collaboratives could comfortably refer their consumer members to receive such supportive services.
- The training curriculum developed for this project was well received by the few partners who participated. Its contents are available for others who wish to offer similar trainings for mentors.

U.P. Lead Upper Peninsula

Background

The goal of U.P. Lead was to “do leadership” in a new way. It was an “experiential approach” to community leadership development rather than a programmatic approach. Each county brought together a diverse, multigenerational group of community members for a 2-day workshop, during which time community concerns were identified and groups self-formed to address some of these issues. The intent was to identify what a small group could do in a short period of time to begin to address some of the community concerns.

Implementation

Thirteen of the fifteen counties in the Upper Peninsula participated. MSUE provided a template for the workshop, covering such topics as community visioning, collaboration within communities, working with different personality types, community asset building, getting things done in communities, and dealing with conflict. The county planning teams, comprised of community leaders and others who had participated in previous Extension leadership programs, worked with this template and adapted it for their community. They selected the presenters—this was an important part of the process, realizing that the resources and expertise already exist within their community.

The issues identified included such concerns as community apathy, the breakdown of families, substance abuse, encouraging volunteerism, homelessness, recycling, mentoring, land use planning, unifying divided communities, and the lack of activities for youth. Some of the outcomes include repairing outdoor basketball courts so that youth people have an alternative, wholesome activity; linking up to create a community theater group to unite a divided county; talking in schools to recruit and promote youth volunteerism; and encouraging students and parents to organize and stand up for what is important to them in the schools.

Most counties held follow-ups approximately six months after the first gathering; in addition, there was a 2-day U.P. Lead gathering in March 1997. Participants from all of the U.P. counties came together, shared experiences, learned from one another and through sessions on volunteerism, grant writing, and youth, and learned more about collaborative leadership through an external facilitator. Participants also began to explore working together on common causes and interests across the Upper Peninsula in the future.

Lessons Learned

At the U.P. Lead gathering in March, during intensive visits to Iron and Baraga counties, and in conversation with others involved in U.P. Lead, several key lessons have been identified:

- The greatest effect of U.P. Lead has been the *equality of voice* experienced by the multi-generational groups. The youth were targeted deliberately and genuinely. The powerful impact of high school students sitting down and having an equal voice with others within the community, including city managers, school board members, and other concerned citizens, was expressed by nearly all participants.
- Similarly, U.P. Lead projects brought together *diverse groups of people*. Participants had the opportunity to meet, interact, and network with others within their community that they had not known before.
- Rarely does such a diverse group sit down together. This led to many examples of extremely effective *collaborative efforts*—people with common interests and complementary strengths are currently collaborating on issues of concern within their communities.
- U.P. Lead participants are very active people. They are not necessarily in leadership roles of community-based development initiatives; many consider themselves “*do-ers*” rather than “*leaders*.”
- It is important to deal with the realities of people’s schedules: those for whom CLIMB is related to their work can be more involved; this is very difficult for those who are interested in their community but do not have *flexibility in their schedules* for meetings and workshops.
- While an on-going process of leadership development is more difficult to sustain than a short-term project with tangible results, the ripple-effects will be felt for a long time. Each participant, on a *continuing journey* of leadership development, takes with him/her new ways of looking at and practicing community leadership.
- *Leadership takes commitment!* U.P. Lead projects are very valuable, but also very time-consuming.
- In addition to commitment, *numbers do count*. In some cases, the issue-based groups were too small for enthusiasm to be maintained; people expressed feeling isolated.

In addition, Arthur Himmelman, who spoke at the U.P. Lead gathering, identified some general principles for working with communities:

- Be accountable—follow through with what you propose/start
- Be respectful
- Don’t let your passions get the better of you
- Celebrate your accomplishments, big or small

Youth Enrichment Summer (YES) City of Holland

Background

The Youth Enrichment Summer (YES) program was started 4 years ago. It began as a summer employment program for at-risk youth, inspired by such programs as Upward Bound and Head Start. As the Human Relations Director with the City of Holland, José Reyna grew increasingly aware of the critical issues facing youth—gangs, violence, drugs—and recognized the importance of meeting the needs of youth.

The original intention for this project was to “occupy the kids’ time.” Its goal was to direct participants into being productive employees, with private industries supporting the program for the sake of grooming good employees. There was no leadership component, and it was considered very academic. This was in large part due to a mandate from JTPA (the Job Training Partnership Act, a federally funded Title II program, which provides youth employment training).

Over time, José has developed the program based on leadership models and the needs of youth and their families—the educational component builds upon these needs, from health to artistic expression, covering subjects from wellness to economic development to art appreciation. Several CLIMB partners have helped in defining and developing the leadership component, and some have also served as resource-persons.

Implementation

There were 12 students involved the first year (1993). That summer, they were involved in a mural creation project at the Civic Center and in cleaning up graffiti throughout the city. It was an employment and skills program, operated by the Intermediate School District. The educational component of the program was largely based on a pre-determined curriculum; this wasn’t the hands-on learning that students wanted and respond best to, so revisions were made for the following year.

In 1994, there were 20 participants (50 applicants); 1995 also had 20 participants (80 applicants); 1996 had 50 participants (200 applicants). The students who participate are selected based on JTPA standards (low income, 14-21 years old); they must also commit to the duration of the program, and parental support is required. Parents must be willing to get involved; for example, attend some training sessions and/or participate in counseling. Applications are prioritized with input from teachers and the courts based on who would benefit most.

The program continues to evolve. The name has changed to Youth Enrichment *Services*, as it is in the process of growing from a summer program to one which is year-round. This will allow for a greater impact in the students’ lives. The strategy has changed from, “How do we make the youth fit into our program,” to “What is important to the youth? How can these needs be addressed?”

Lessons Learned

If he were to start such a program elsewhere, José would do a few things differently. He would seek to:

- Increase the level of parental involvement and support from the start
- Give staff the tools they need to deal with the variety of issues which they encounter
- Increase the duration of the program
- Have a period of the program when the students are housed together for more intensive interaction, training, and dynamics
- Work with participants and their parents to recognize their ability to generate and use power in their communities
- Apply for a grant to help community groups organize, with the expectation that leaders—in politics, business, etc.—would emerge from these communities

Other lessons include:

- The need to limit the number of participants for quality and flexibility of the program

- Donor expectations can sometimes inhibit the flexibility of a program—so it is important to be able to convince donors of the effectiveness of this approach so that they allow the flexibility that YES requires to succeed in enriching the lives of the youth.
- It is important to be willing to take risks, keep your vision, know that you're not doing it for yourself, involve other people, and learn to deal with frustration. He also stressed the need to be flexible, and willing to learn and adapt, rather than becoming defensive.

Youth Violence Prevention Coalition Ingham County/City of Lansing

Background

The Youth Violence Prevention Coalition (YVPC) was created to address increasing community concern regarding the issue of violence, and youth violence in particular. It was established in 1994 as an outgrowth of efforts by the City of Lansing, the Mayor's Transition Committee on Public Safety, and the Ingham County Board of Commissioners. Mayor Hollister and the chairperson of the Ingham County Board of Commissioners jointly appointed twenty-one community members to serve on the YVPC. Members were selected from public and non-profit agencies, community and neighborhood organizations, schools, businesses, private citizens and parents. It is largely funded by a federal grant; staff and resources have also been provided by many other sources.

There are four community goals of the YVPC:

1. *School/Community Violence Prevention Programming*
2. *Parenting/Care-Giving*
3. *Educational Success for Youth at Risk*
4. *Community Mobilization*

CLIMB, through Joe Lessard (MSUE-Ingham County) and Leah Harris (Michigan Council on Crime & Delinquency), was involved in the fourth goal, *Community Mobilization*. The intent was to increase the capacity and commitment of community members to become pro-actively involved in the social development of young people through implementation of a community-wide mobilization strategy. Together with local communities, its mission is to facilitate and coordinate the development and implementation of a comprehensive, community-wide plan that provides for the safety of children in homes, schools and neighborhoods.

Implementation

As part of the effort to mobilize the community, CLIMB supported the National Issues Forums (NIF). NIF training has been offered by MSU for many years, but before this time it had not been implemented in the community. NIF is a tool for stimulating dialogue on different topics, enabling groups to work through issues systematically—from information sharing and disclosure to deliberation, decision making and action planning. CLIMB provided scholarships for two partners to receive training in facilitating NIF.

A great deal of planning went into organizing the NIFs, and two were carried out. One group met at Immaculate Heart Catholic Church on alternating Saturdays to have three full days (over the course of six weeks) to talk about "Growing Up At Risk." The League of Women Voters focused on the topic, "Kids Who Commit Crimes—What Should Be Done About Juvenile Violence," spending two Saturdays in the spring of 1996 to discuss this. They focused on about four topics related to juvenile violence, worked through the issues, came to a greater understanding, and realized how interrelated the issues are which affect juvenile violence. They also came up with recommendations for community-based actions that can be taken to reduce the problem of juvenile violence.

The grant from CLIMB provided the opportunity to connect with people in many ways and at varying levels. For example, the NIF and community mobilization component expanded the community's awareness of the community initiative to prevent violence. It also enhanced public awareness of specific agencies and people working in these agencies to prevent violence.

Lessons Learned

- Leadership is drawn from people most impacted by an issue—those who can comprehend that change through collective action is desirable and worth working for.
- Leadership training must connect with the people most invested in the *issue* rather than simply those most interested in *leadership*.
- People are tired of talk—they want action.
- “There are so many demands on people—you have to make it as easy as possible” for them to get involved. The NIFs are an excellent tool—but require too much time. It is very difficult for people to devote three full days to attend the NIF. It might be possible for more community members to participate if the NIF is condensed or adapted to a one-day program—but still do justice to the issues and develop recommendations for action.
- The NIFs were not very diverse; Leah thinks that perhaps a form of Dialogue Circles on Racism could be adapted for a more diverse group to have dialogue on youth violence.

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

U.P. Lead Workshop Template

Day 1

- ◆ Opening remarks/welcome
- ◆ Exploring and Sharing Our Experiences of Community and Leadership: The Seven Views of Leadership
- ◆ Break
- ◆ Leadership Assessment Activity
- ◆ Lunch
- ◆ A Look at Diversity
- ◆ Dealing with Conflict in Communities, Families and Organizations
- ◆ Break
- ◆ Planning for Change/Vision in Communities
- ◆ Reflection

Day 2

- ◆ Town Meeting: Community Projects
- ◆ Power in Communities
- ◆ Break
- ◆ Working within the Political Process
- ◆ Lunch
- ◆ Our County: Our Jobs, Our Economy, Our Lives
- ◆ Group Discussions: Our Issues
- ◆ Break
- ◆ Prioritizing the Issues
- ◆ Forming the Teams and Beginning to Plan: “What are we going to do about it?”
- ◆ Where do we go from here?
- ◆ Reflection

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

Letter to Potential Participants

Kristin Kroll, CLIMB Research Associate

310-C Natural Resource Building ♦ Michigan State University ♦ East Lansing, MI 48824 ♦ 517-353-1898

April 24, 1997

(name, address)

Dear (name),

Steve Nelson has perhaps talked to you about my coming to Iron County to meet with the U.P. Lead group to talk about your experience in this community project. Let me take a few moments to describe to you what I hope to do and why.

The purpose of these projects was for you as a community to come together around an issue that you felt was important. CLIMB and U.P. Lead wanted to stand with you in what you decided to do, in the hopes that through working together, you would develop as a community group and leadership would result. In cooperation with CLIMB and U.P. Lead, I am talking to people in Iron and Baraga Counties to learn from you about why it is that you are involved in this community project, how leadership is practiced within your group, and whether these ideas about leadership and community development have spread to other groups—like churches, schools, etc.

It is very encouraging to see what you have done as a group. This provides the opportunity to come together as a group to talk about it and to realize, together, what you have learned by being involved in the theater group or kinship mentoring project. It may even be the case that this time of talking about what you have learned will help you as you think about planning other projects; it may also help other communities facing similar issues—when they realize how you have dealt with certain issues, they can learn from your experience.

We will meet from 1-3:30 on Tuesday, May 6, at the library conference room in Crystal Falls. We'll have snacks and beverages available. This will be a time of meeting as a group to talk about the project—who participated, why and what was accomplished. We will also talk about some of the events that affected you as a group, talking about what decisions needed to be made, who made them, and how.

Over the next several days, I will meet with you individually, at a time that is convenient for you, for approximately an hour. During this time, I hope that we can just talk about your experience in the group, and whether this has affected your involvement within your community in any other ways.

After these interviews, we'll come back together as a group to talk about what I have learned from you, whether you have any clarifications or corrections, and any other issues or comments you may have thought of during the week. This will be on Friday, May 9, also from 1:00-3:30 at the library.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the number listed above. I look forward to meeting you and talking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Kristin M. Kroll

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

Interview guide

These are proposed questions to guide the discussion. I will seek clarification and depth on points of interest which emerge through the discussions.

- 1. Tell me about your project—what have you done?**
- 2. Why did you get involved?**
- 3. Have new people gotten involved, or were you all involved from the start?**
- 4. What are you most proud of about this project—individually, as a group?**
- 5. What advice would you give to others interested in a similar project?**
- 6. What have been some of the major decisions that you as a group have had to make for this project? How have these decisions been made? Who has made the decisions?**
- 7. Who do you look to for leadership in this group?**
- 8. Do you consider yourself to be a leader?**
- 9. What have you learned through participating in this group? How has this happened?**
- 10. What have you learned here that you have taken elsewhere (e.g., to the schools, church groups, other community group)? Where? How?**
- 11. What did you hope to get out of participating in this project—as a community group? As an individual? To what extent has this been realized?**
- 12. Where do you see this project going? Your group? Yourself as a community member (and leader)?**

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