

IS IT WORTH IT? A CASE STUDY EXPLORING VOLUNTEERS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Abstract

Volunteer-based organizations are dependent on volunteers to meet the goals of the organization. Identifying and training volunteers as leaders of the organization is one way to increase positive social change in their community. However, there is limited literature investigating the outcomes of providing leadership training to volunteers. This case study determined participants' perceptions of a volunteer leadership training experience compared to observations of the actual leadership training. A focus group revealed three themes that were both supported and refuted by observations of the training: (a) the need for refreshers and follow-up trainings, (b) a disconnect between understanding leadership concepts and applying them in the volunteer scenario, and (c) the transfer of for-profit skills and experience to the non-profit setting.

Introduction and Literature Review

Nonprofit and volunteer-based organizations are dependent on volunteers to sustain and reach their organizational goals (Fuller, 2011). Moreover, long-term volunteers in leadership positions are vital to the sustainability of non-profit and volunteer organizations (Nihart, 2012). Volunteer leaders are an underutilized resource in nonprofit organizations (Cooperation, 2007). However, as volunteer directors are stretched to their capacity, others in the organization must provide leadership to volunteers. One way for nonprofit organizations to increase their capacity is to develop the leadership skills of identified volunteer leaders (Morrison, 2017).

Until the most recent decade, the topic of leading volunteers in any capacity has been untouched by researchers (Jager, Kreutzer, & Beyes, 2009). In

one of the first grounded theory studies on how paid employees lead volunteers, Jager et al., (2009) propose that understanding the behaviors of volunteer leaders is imperative for organizations to fully benefit from their resources. Although the importance of volunteer leaders has been expressed in literature, researchers have yet to describe what identifying, training, and assessing volunteer leaders actually looks like (Morrison, 2017). Moreover, it remains unknown if identifying, training, and assessing volunteer leaders is worth the effort for non-profit organizations with already limited resources (Morrison, 2017).

According to Browne (2014) volunteers lend a hand, lend an ear, and lend a voice; however, they cannot do everything. Volunteers are "willing and able to take on extra responsibilities and [are] interested in other flexible opportunities which might take place

outside the [organization]" (Browne, 2014, para. 5). It takes good volunteer management to insure the "expectations and needs of volunteers continue to be met, and that the skills, interests and passion of volunteers are used to their maximum potential" (Browne, 2014, para. 5). In addition, it is important to remember that some volunteers do not have specialized skills or the willingness and time to take on extra duties within the organization (Browne, 2014).

Volunteer-based organizations play a critical role in the positive progress within a community (Texas AgriLife, n.d.). Moreover, as the economy continues to be a limiting factor, these organizations step-up and provide support to populations in need. Because non-profit and volunteer-based organizations do not generate a profit for their services, they rely on volunteers to carry out their missions under the direction of one or more paid staff members (Morrison, 2017). As the need for non-profit outreach increases so does the strain on these paid employees (Boyd, 2003). One solution to this problem is to shift the leadership roles of the paid staff to a select number of leaders within the volunteer workforce (Morrison, 2017). Leaders influence how employees experience their daily job responsibilities and play a role in their overall happiness at work (Tuckey, Bakker, & Dollard, 2012). However, in non-profit organizations, there is a lack of leadership cultivated within the volunteer ranks (Cooperation, 2007).

Recent literature has suggested a shift in non-profit leadership structures from a top-down arrangement, to more of a team-based leadership approach distributing responsibility across all levels of the organization (Grant & Crutchfield, 2008; Small, 2007). Because of the recent shift in prescribed leadership structure there has been increased push for volunteer leadership development (Conger 1999; Intagliata, et al., 2000; Collins, 2001; Day, 2001; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; Kincaid

& Gordick, 2003; Martineau & Hannum, 2003; Sankar, 2003; Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004), as well as an increased interest, by organizations, in the identification and training of volunteer leaders (Kincaid & Gordick, 2003; Martineau & Hannum, 2003).

Currently, it is recommended that training be provided to volunteer leaders in a method and manner that fits the needs of the organization and the age and ability of the volunteers (Proctor, 2012; Connors 2011). Moreover, Jamison (2003) explains effective training should contain three parts: orientation to the training, refresher trainings that periodically remind leaders of their role in achieving the organization's mission, and team building that brings paid staff members together with volunteers to boost morale and develop a cohesive team. However, Paton, Mordaunt, and Cornforth (2007) point out the lack of, or outdated, volunteer leadership training materials available for non-profit and volunteer-based organizations. Because of this, volunteer-based organizations are in need of contemporary leadership training resources that meet the needs of the modern non-profit organization and volunteer.

The purpose of this case study was to compare the primary researcher's observations of a one-day volunteer leader workshop to the workshop participants' perceptions of the training. The following research objectives guided this study:

1. Identify volunteer participants' perceptions of a volunteer leader workshop.
2. Compare and contrast participants' perceptions of a volunteer leader workshop to observations of the volunteer leader workshop.

Conceptual Framework

The volunteer population in this study consisted of

adult learners. Thus, the conceptual framework was based on Knowles's (1980) theory of adult learning, or andragogy. Knowles (1980, 1984) advanced several assumptions with regard to adult learners:

1. As a person matures, they become more self-directing, and will resist what they perceive to be "forced" learning, or learning under conditions that challenge their autonomy.
2. Adults accumulate experiences that provide a rich resource for learning. This means they have more to contribute to their own and others' learning, they possess a broader set of experiences to connect new learning to, and they have a greater number of fixed habits which may decrease their ability to be open-minded.
3. An adult's readiness to learn is closely related to developmental tasks of their social role. In essence, as people age, their social roles and corresponding expectations change. For example, an adult may move from full-time employee to retired volunteer. This presents new developmental tasks that produce a readiness to learn in order to fulfill their new social role.
4. As people mature, their time perspective changes from future application of knowledge to immediate application, meaning adults are more problem-focused learners. Thus, adult educators should base their curriculum development around problems adults are likely to be experiencing, rather than general subject matter.
5. Internal motivations are more potent than external. While adults may be motivated by external "rewards" such as bonuses or advancements, internal motivations are more important to adult learners.

Applying Knowles's assumptions, the volunteer leader training was developed to provide an experiential learning opportunity for the individuals in attendance. The experiential learning theory, proposed by Kolb (1984), encompasses four fundamental stages. These stages include: concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC), and active experimentation (AE). As the learner progresses through the stages, knowledge is retained through the experience and practice (Kolb, 1984).

With each new concept the participants engaged in an activity (CE) as an introduction, discussed the concept with their peers (RO), worked to apply the concept to a real-world situation (AC), and then concluded by demonstrating what they had learned (AE). The training materials were developed to meet the needs of the volunteer leaders who participated. The intent was to provide realistic applications of the leadership competencies and skills to situations the leaders have experienced in the past.

The volunteer workforce is made up of adults of varying ages. Therefore, the content and delivery of volunteer training must be diverse to meet the needs of the specific volunteers engaged in the learning experience (Connors, 2011). According to Connors (2011), there are broad characteristics that define each generational group. Moreover, in terms of values, each generational group can identify with certain ideals that are uniquely their own. In order for the volunteer training and organization to be successful, the supervisors must learn to communicate in a way each group will understand and identify with (Connors, 2011).

The majority of the volunteer population at Starkville Area Habitat for Humanity who participated in this study are in the Baby Boomer generation category. These volunteers have a variety of life experiences under their belt that have shaped them into a group that is uniquely different than the other generations.

For this reason, a volunteer leader training that allows ample discussion and activity time is both enriching and beneficial for the volunteers and the facilitators (Proctor, 2012). Allowing the volunteers to share their experiences brought a whole new dimension to the learning experience for those involved (Proctor, 2012).

Methodology

For the purpose of this research, a case study methodology was employed to identify volunteer participants' perceptions of a volunteer leadership workshop and compare their perceptions to observations of the workshop itself. One non-profit organization was selected for this study by researchers based on need and availability. A four-hour volunteer leadership workshop was conducted over one day. The workshop was observed and observation notes were recorded. Three months after the training, a focus group was conducted with the workshop participants to determine their perceptions of the training experience. IRB approval was obtained prior to data collection.

The primary researcher collaborated with two external experts in volunteer development to facilitate the leadership workshop. Forty-two leadership competencies identified during a previous study guided the objectives of the training. The training was delivered to volunteer leaders from Starkville Area Habitat for Humanity by the two external experts on February 11, 2016. The workshop participants were purposively selected as leaders the organization's Executive Director. The selected volunteers were invited to the training via email. Attached to the email was an informed consent form, which the volunteers completed in order to participate.

The volunteer leader training was developed to provide an experiential learning opportunity for the

individuals in attendance. We originally planned to follow Jamison's (2003) recommendations for a three-part training; however, due to participants' schedules and time conflicts we were only able to facilitate the training during one session. Because of the limited amount of time for the training, the previously identified 42 competencies were grouped into six families and presented to the participants. Although this was not intended, our modified approach did mirror a typical training opportunity provided to non-profit organizations in the area. After an introduction to the competencies and skills, deeper discussion and hands-on activities were completed for four of the competency families. The participants were provided a handout with the complete list of competencies and skills for them to use as a reference during the training and after its completion.

The primary researcher attended the volunteer leadership training to conduct an unstructured observation of the learning experience. She arrived early and chose a seat away from the area where the participants were going to sit. During the workshop, she took detailed field notes including the time each component took place. She did not interact with the participants during the training. This type of nonparticipant observation was least likely to affect the actions of the group (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015). After the training, she transcribed the observations into a two-column template with the field notes typed into the left column and comments about the experience in the right column for analysis (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

A focus group was conducted three months following the training to give participants enough time to apply the skills and competencies learned in real-world situations within their volunteer organization. The focus group sought to determine the participants' perceptions of the training experience and to what extent they believed they were applying what they learned in their volunteer

efforts. The primary researcher also wanted to determine if the participants would be able to recall the competencies and skills they learned.

All workshop participants were invited via email to engage in the focus group and were provided informed consent to participate. The focus group session attendees participated in a partially structured interview and discussion, with topics both on and off of the intended script (Fraenkel et al., 2015). During the focus group, participants were asked to describe what they did and did not like about the volunteer leader training, their background in leadership roles, and their affinity and capacity to use the leadership skills taught. Additional topics included each individual's level of leadership training in the past, preferred means of completing training, and implementation of leadership skills in the organization.

An audio recorder was used to capture the participants' responses for transcription (Fraenkel et al., 2015). In addition, the primary researcher took handwritten notes during the discussion for use during transcription and analysis. This method of triangulation was selected to increase validity and reliability of the data collected (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

The data was transcribed with assistance from transcribing software that slowed the audio for accurate transcription. A research assistant recorded the exact responses and dialog that occurred during the focus group (Fraenkel et al., 2015). The participant responses were separated chronologically by which individual said them and when they said it. The data from the focus group was then analyzed individually by the primary researcher, the research assistant, and an additional faculty member to identify prominent themes found throughout the transcript. The researchers then met as a group and agreed on three common themes expressed by the participants (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

Findings

The volunteer leader training took place on February 11, 2016 from 10:00am-2:00pm. Ten volunteers were invited and eight volunteer leaders attended the workshop (n = 8). The training was hosted at Volunteer Starkville in Starkville, Mississippi by two experts in volunteer leadership development. The eight volunteer leaders in attendance were selected by the Executive Director of the organization. Participants included three males and five females who were all retired, with an average of seven years volunteering experience with Starkville Area Habitat for Humanity. To ensure the participants' responses remain anonymous the pseudonyms Bill, Todd, Ronnie, Ruby, Cora, Susie, Kendall, and Darla will be used to report the results of the observations. The same names will be used to report the results of the focus group. In addition, the observation findings will be reported in first person from the viewpoint of the primary researcher.

Volunteer Leader Training Observation. I arrived at the site of the workshop a little before 10am. The workshop was held in the boardroom of Volunteer Starkville. The Starkville Area Habitat for Humanity recently moved their main office into the same building as Volunteer Starkville. The boardroom is a large rectangular room with a large conference table in the middle of the room with medium size caster chairs around the outside of the whole table. At three of the chairs on the right and five of the chairs on the left there was a notepad and a pen for each participant. At the head of the table against the wall is the projection screen with a large easel with a giant post-it notepad propped up on the easel to the right of the projection screen. I took a seat at the end of the table to assume an outside view of the workshop. The workshop facilitators chose the chairs closest to the doors entering into the room.

The participants begin to arrive and choose seats based on who they are familiar with. They talk

amongst themselves until everyone is settled into their seats. The facilitators welcomed the volunteer leaders to the workshop and introduce themselves. Jamey Bachman, Executive Director of Volunteer Starkville, asked the volunteer leaders to introduce themselves and state one goal they each have for the training. Bill began the introductions and the participants move clockwise around the table introducing themselves. Bill did not state his goal for the workshop and as a result none of the other participants did either. Jamey then asked the participants to go around one more time and state their goals. Bill started again and worked their way around clockwise until all participants stated their goals.

Bill explained he was retired military and had been volunteering with the organization for two years. He stated that he felt like he was not active or a leader within his volunteer role. He also did not understand why he was selected to attend the volunteer leader training. However, his goal for the training was to consistently donate time to the organization. The other volunteers quickly chimed in to say he is an incredible leader and a teacher to the episodic volunteers.

Todd has been a Starkville Habitat volunteer for 12 years and his goal is to make the community aware of the organization's potential. Ruby has been a Starkville Habitat volunteer for ten years, before she was involved in an affiliate organization in Jackson, Mississippi. She is involved in multiple aspects of the organization and her goal for the training was to get other people to recognize their leadership potential. Ronnie has served Starkville Habitat since 2012 and works as the coordinator of several subgroups of the organization. His goal for the training was to learn strategies to politely turn down donations. Cora has been involved with the organization for four years and she helps out where she can. Her goal was to learn the processes and procedures in Starkville Habitat and be a good representative of

the cause. Susie has been volunteering for Starkville Habitat for seven years, she serves in multiple roles and her goal was to be more persuasive and gain stakeholders support. Darla originally volunteered at the hospital and was asked to help out with the organization. She was relatively new but has already assumed leadership roles. Her goal was to become well versed in how Starkville Habitat works. Lastly, Kendall, is also retired military, and a specialized volunteer with Starkville Habitat, only volunteering in one role. Her goal was to learn how she could get more involved and define followership.

The introductions took almost 30 minutes and the facilitators began the workshop by asking the participants to work in small groups to develop a list that characterizes a volunteer leader (objective one). The participants worked in three groups: 1) Darla, Kendall, Susie; 2) Bill, Todd, Ruby; and 3) Ronnie and Cora. Ronnie immediately gets up to make himself some coffee leaving Cora there to work on their list alone. Ronnie returned, agreed with what Cora had written down and then began to talk about the status of the organization. The other groups worked together for about five minutes to develop a list and then began to discuss specific things they are currently doing with the organization amongst themselves.

Jamey asked the groups to share their list as she wrote the characteristics on the giant post-it note. Darla, Kendall, and Susie shared first, then Bill, Todd, and Ruby, followed by Robbie and Cora. Jamey then put tally marks by characteristics that were repeated. All groups repeated compassion and the ability to train and teach volunteers. Dedication, selflessness, reliability, patience, and willingness to work were repeated by two of the groups. The three groups then worked to formulate a definition for volunteer leader based on those words.

The groups shared their definitions and Jamey wrote their answers on the post-it note. Again Darla,

Kendall, and Susie shared their definitions first, followed by Bill, Todd, and Ruby, and then Ronnie and Cora. All groups included the mission of the organization and achieving the goals and objectives of the organization in their definitions. Meggan Franks, Assistant Director, Student Leadership and Community Engagement at Mississippi State University, mentioned that none of the groups indicate that a volunteer leader is not paid. Jamey pointed out that all of the groups agreed on certain aspects of defining a volunteer leader. She then shows the participants the definition of volunteer leader she and Meggan put together based on literature:

An unpaid individual with a formally defined role within the organization who takes charge and ownership in coordinating projects and programs that build community assets, meet community needs and provide volunteers with a positive experience so that they continue their journey of service while helping to carry out the mission of a nonprofit organization.

The facilitators walked the participants through comparing and contrasting the definitions the groups developed with the one developed from literature.

Jamey then moved to the next objective of the workshop: The importance of a volunteer leader. The participants are instructed to work in their groups to discuss why volunteer leaders are important, especially to Starkville Habitat. The groups shared why volunteer leaders are important to their organization. Jamey wrote their answers on a new post-it note. Once again, the groups share in the same order. The groups shared the following reasons:

- Need someone to lead, to give directions, to achieve goals and objectives of the organization
- Someone to match the volunteers skills/abilities to the needs of the organization

- Can positively communicate/share the needs, resources, goals, results, and provide feedback and appreciation to the team.
- Heart of the organization/represents a cross-section of local community so they can identify other volunteers who can be assets to the nonprofit team
- Volunteer leaders' expertise help the organization accomplish goals

At this point the volunteers once again began discussing things that needed to get done in the organization and frustrations they have with the visibility of the organization. Jamey struggled to get their attention but eventually reminded the participants they are on a strict time schedule and they need to stay focused if they plan to get through everything in the amount of time they have left. Jamey then led the participants through a discussion about specific reasons why volunteer leaders are important to nonprofit organizations based on literature:

- Take charge of a project by coordinating it and taking accountability for its successful completion
- Communicates the details of the project with other volunteers and serves as a resource for them throughout the project
- Organizes, leads, and inspires a group of volunteers before, during, and after the project
- Oftentimes initiates new projects in order to achieve organizational goals
- Represents the nonprofit to other volunteers and to the community

After a short break the facilitators began the second half of the workshop focused on the competencies and skills a volunteer leader should possess according to a previously completed Delphi

study with a panel of nonprofit directors. Jamey distributed a handout and discussed the 42 competencies divided into six families. The participants jotted down the competencies from each family they felt were the most important. Next, Jamey introduced the different volunteer types in a non-profit organization: 1.) Ideal Ian - Skilled and motivated to work within the guidelines, 2.) Trainable Tina - Motivated and willing to work within the guidelines but lacks skills, 3.) Disruptive Dan - Has skills but not willing to work within the guidelines, and 4.) Freeloading Freddy - Disinterested and lacks skills.

The participants had a great discussion about their experiences with each of the four types of volunteers that lasted about ten minutes. The participant groups then shared the competencies and skills they felt were most important from families A - D. Because of time constraints families E and F were discussed but no activities were completed to reinforce them. Jamey marked each competency that was repeated by the groups: Family A - Recruit and mentor other volunteers, Ability to network with others, Delegate and support team activities, Identify strengths of other volunteers, Family B - Ability to teach, Ability to motivate, Willingness to give oneself, Lead by example, Service oriented, Family C - Dedicated, Commitment, Organized, Willingness to go above and beyond, Possess integrity, and Family D - Patience, Positive attitude, Compassion, Conflict resolution, Respect to others, Communication.

At noon the participants ate lunch while working through role play activities for competency families A through D. During the activities, the participants focused on one aspect of the volunteer organization rather than the organization as a whole, and the groups tended to repeat the competencies they chose for each role play activity. This caused a lack of variation when sharing each group's experience with the activities. For family A, each group shared

how they would delegate and support the team activities of each of the four volunteer types. Each group also discussed the characteristics they would want in a volunteer when recruiting volunteers, and possible barriers that deter a volunteer from serving.

Due to lack of time, the family B activity was a take-home challenge for the participants to teach another volunteer a skill specific to an organization-related task. For family C the participants shared how they would apply their skills of dependability, integrity, and willingness to go above and beyond for each of the four volunteer types. For family D the participants identified instances in the past where a conflict arose. They then labeled the volunteers involved as the four volunteer types and role-played a conflict resolution scenario based on conflict management techniques provided by Jamey.

At 2:08pm the workshop concluded with Jamey reviewing the objectives they covered and challenging the participants to apply what they practiced today in their roles as volunteer leaders. The participants were dismissed and they left the training with their competency handouts and the notes they jotted down on their notepads. As the participants were leaving they made comments about how much they enjoyed the training.

Volunteer Leader Focus Group. The focus group took place on May 31, 2016, just over three months from the date of the volunteer leader training. This date was chosen due to its convenience for the volunteers and to allow the participants time to apply what they had learned during the training. No contact was made with the participants between the training and the focus group. All eight participants who attended the training were invited to engage in the focus group; Darla, Cora, Todd, Ronnie, and Susie attended the focus group discussion which lasted one hour.

The goal of the focus group was to determine the volunteers' perceptions of the training experience and to what extent they believe they have applied what they learned during the training in their leadership roles within their organization. The focus group revealed three themes: 1.) the need for refreshers and follow-up trainings, 2.) a disconnect between understanding leadership concepts and applying them in the volunteer scenario, and 3.) the transfer of for-profit skills and experience to the non-profit setting.

The need for refreshers and follow-up trainings. As we moved through the questions during the focus group the participants often had a hard time recalling specifics about the training and mentioned they needed "to do this [focus group] closer to the time of the training" (Cora). Ronnie agreed with Cora's statement followed by a consensus of agreement from the rest of the group. When the conversation moved to suggestions for future trainings Cora stated again, "if we had something that reinforced what we were doing as a reminder...maybe just an email...then we will be like, Okay. We need to be thinking about that". Ronnie built on Cora's response with, "reminder emails from Jamey, just saying 'have you put this in action yet?' and just pick one or two things...[from the training]".

Susie then suggested Jamey and Meggan] "pick out information...gathered from the [training] and send...several little emails along the way, and then maybe have the [training] again". Susie paused briefly then followed with, "Keep [the training] at four hours, we had a good turnout...it is hard to find time where everyone can do it. I think it is better than breaking it up. You aren't going to be able to get everyone

back...so while you got them...". Moreover, towards the end of the discussion, Todd mentioned that the training was general in nature and he suggested that in the future it could be "tailored to the group...[with] specific examples".

A disconnect between understanding leadership concepts and application. Over the course of the focus group discussion, participants referenced "thinking" about the leadership concepts, but did not provide tangible examples of actual application of the learned leadership concepts and skills between the training and the focus group. In essence, participants seemed to consider the workshop content as suggestions for alternative practices in their role with the organization rather than instruction on best practices to be applied in their role with the organization. Cora stated "It gave us a lot of things to chew on and think about". Todd followed later with "[the training] caused us to refocus some things...think about where we are". When asked about how they were applying their leadership skills to the four volunteer types discussed the training, Darla replied, "I think [the training] gave us a different way of looking at how we are using volunteers." However, during the entire focus group, none of the participants actually provided examples of implementing the competencies and skills while volunteering.

The transfer of for-profit skills and experience to the non-profit setting. Focus group participants consistently referenced their previous for-profit work experience in explaining their ability to lead volunteers in Starkville Area Habitat for Humanity. While several participants acknowledged

that the training was new to them, they also indicated that the concepts were not new. There was no clear distinction between where learning from their previous experiences ended and new learning from the training began. For the participants, the training was used as a reinforcement to what they already learned throughout their various career paths. Cora exclaimed, "I think that it's any experience that we have had professionally or whatever has laid the groundwork for knowing how to relate and appreciate other people's gifts and abilities and try to bring those out". Later, Susie redirected the conversation back to previous work experience with, "You know we were talking about how our past has led us to know some of the stuff already". Darla added, "[the training] reinforced some things we may have learned at some point, but may have forgotten. Susie's reply, "it had slipped to the back", garnered laughter and agreement from the group as a whole.

Conclusions / Recommendations

Non-profit organizations rely on volunteers to carry out their mission and goals. These organizations recognize the importance of volunteer leaders, however they do not always take advantage of the leadership abilities of these unique volunteers. As non-profit organizations continue to address an increasing need in communities across the country, they must find a way to increase their capacity without exceeding the capability of their paid staff. However, as organizations with limited resources, it is necessary to invest in effective volunteer development and leadership capacity building. For this qualitative case study, a leadership workshop was developed and delivered to volunteer leaders identified in Starkville Area Habitat for

Humanity. The workshop was observed and observation notes were recorded and analyzed. Three months following the training, a focus group was conducted with workshop participants. The workshop observation was compared and contrasted with the focus group discussion to gain a richer understanding of the perceived value and effectiveness of the leadership training.

Knowles's (1980) first assumption of andragogy is that adults' self-concept is one of self-directing rather than dependency. In particular, adults will resist structured learning that challenges their autonomy, or ability to choose what and how they learn. In this instance, it was observed that the adults participating in the training, while voluntarily attending, asserted their autonomy by moving freely around the learning space and electing to talk about components of the organization that were not being addressed in the workshop. Additionally, in the focus group discussion, workshop participants noted their need for reminders and follow-up contacts. This further indicates these volunteer leaders felt a need to direct their own learning in a way that best suited them.

The second assumption of andragogy is that adults bring a significant amount of prior experience to their learning (Knowles, 1980). Workshop participants in this study not only had a considerable amount of work experience, but most had also volunteered for Starkville Habitat for a number of years. As Knowles (1980) indicated, this can aid learning in that an adult not only has a larger quantity of experiences but also a wider variety of experiences to connect new learning to, providing for a richer learning experience and a deeper understanding. However, adults may acquire a greater number of fixed habits and patterns of thought that restrict their ability to be open-minded (Knowles, 1980). While it was clear from the observations that participants drew from their previous experiences to understand and

apply the leadership concepts during the workshop itself, the focus group discussion indicated that participants had greater difficulty articulating the transition of their for-profit experiences into application in the non-profit organization after the training. This may indicate that a greater emphasis is needed on unfreezing for-profit experiences so that volunteer leaders can approach their role in the non-profit organization free of pre-conceptions about leadership. Having workshop participants clearly articulate the ways in which non-profit and volunteer leadership differ from for-profit leadership may provide a means of assisting with unfreezing prior experiences to allow for new application of their understanding.

Knowles's (1980) third and fourth assumptions have to do with readiness and orientation to learn. Adults encounter "teachable" moments when a change in their social role provides a new developmental task. In the case of our participants, most had been volunteering for a number of years and had already distinguished themselves as leaders. This may mean that their "teachable" moment with regard to leadership in their volunteer role was passed. Therefore, it may be more important to identify volunteers with leadership potential who are approaching a change in social role, from volunteer to volunteer leader, and thus are faced with a new developmental task, volunteer leadership.

Regarding orientation to learn, Knowles (1980) suggests that adult learners are problem-focused, with a perspective of immediate application. The workshop observation indicates that participants were highly engaged when discussing current issues they saw in Starkville Habitat. They focused on the content that held immediate applicability for them. Furthermore, it was clear from their stated goals for the workshop that few, if any, were seeking to improve their leadership effectiveness within the organization. In addition, during the focus group discussion, there was nearly no reference

to application of the concepts from the workshop, rather they spoke about the workshop content as "something to think about". This may indicate that participants were not met with situations which called for their application of the workshop content quickly enough for them to intentionally apply what they learned. This may also explain their request for occasional reminders, which indicates that they wanted to apply what they had learned, but the occasion to apply their learning was not immediate following the training. Moreover, participants' stated goals for attending the workshop indicated a clear difference between their perceptions of the knowledge and skills required to be a volunteer leader and those leadership competencies identified by experts in the preceding Delphi. Perhaps the lack of application of learning articulated in the focus group was the result of this mismatch of perceptions regarding the learners' needs.

Finally, Knowles (1984) indicated that internal motivation of adults is more potent than external motivation. During both the observation as well as the focus group, participants expressed appreciation for and enjoyment of the training. Further, the personal goals they expressed at the beginning of the workshop indicated all participants were intrinsically motivated to attend the leadership workshop, as there was no reward or incentive provided by Starkville Habitat or Volunteer Starkville. Clearly these participants were interested in developing their ability to serve the organization.

As there is a relative dearth of literature on the effectiveness of various leadership training models to build leadership capacity among volunteers in non-profit organizations, a number of recommendations can be gleaned from this study. First, it is important that adults have some autonomy in their learning, and that educators act as guides and facilitators for learners who construct their own learning. Research indicates that volunteer training should be provided to volunteer

leaders in a method and manner that fits the needs of the organization, utilizing teaching methods and a learning environment appropriate for learners' age group and skill level (Conner, 2011; Genis, 2008; Proctor, 2012;).

Encouraging volunteer leaders to be involved in the identification of needs, planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning (Knowles, 1980) could increase effectiveness. Although we were unable in this study to include follow-up workshops or activities that involved both volunteers and paid-staff, as suggested by Jamison (2003), it is recommended that an effort be made to provide opportunities for volunteers to collaborate with paid staff in skill-building activities. In addition, resources should be provided to volunteer leaders periodically, as a reminder of the organization's goals and their roles in achieving them, as well as to allow for immediacy of application.

Second, adult learning benefits from teachable moments, which occur when new developmental tasks arise as the result of a social change (Knowles, 1980). If an organization wishes to teach its volunteers to lead, they must identify and select those approaching the social change from volunteer to volunteer leader, as opposed to those who have already entered successfully into a volunteer leader role. In addition, as Browne (2014) stated, some volunteers may not have the desire to step-up and take on a larger role within the group. Special care should be taken to identify volunteers who are willing and able to lead the group, or volunteer burn-out, or even drop-out, could result from the efforts. If the organization is experiencing a lack of non-profit leadership, expanding volunteers' ability to lead can combat retention problems and encourage more volunteers to continue their service (Culp et al., 2009; Cooperation, 2007b). Moreover, it is recommended that directors devote time to identify leadership competencies and skills that match the needs of the organization and the

strengths of the volunteer leaders (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004; Intagliata et al., 2000).

Third, adults cannot be separated from their experiences. In fact, Knowles (1980) suggests that adults largely define themselves by their experiences. Thus, as with this training, volunteers' experiences must be acknowledged and incorporated in the learning. However, attention should be paid to unfreezing prior experiences so that learners may be more open-minded in acquiring and applying new learning.

In addition to recommendations for practitioners, this study provides recommendations for further research. Due to the abundance of literature suggesting a need for leadership in non-profit and volunteer-based organizations it is first recommended that this line of inquiry remain open and researchers continue to explore the viability and utility of identifying and training volunteers for leadership roles. Moreover, because leadership training materials are out-of-date and impractical for the structure of non-profit and volunteer-based organizations, along with current literature, it is recommended that efforts are made to provide relevant training materials to organizations who recognize the value of trained volunteer leaders (Paton, et al., 2007). In addition, research should be conducted to determine what efforts are being made to support and evaluate those volunteers who are in leadership roles and the impact of volunteer leader development on organizational outcomes.

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