

## RE-IMAGINING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN THE POST-INDUSTRIAL ERA

### Abstract

The challenges of the 21st century, post-industrial society are increasingly complex. They will not be solved by the actions of individual, "heroic" leaders; instead, they require the participation of diverse stakeholders in order to make progress. Through a discussion of the evolution of leadership theory, we demonstrate that theories emerging from a post-industrial paradigm highlight the collective dimensions of leadership in contrast to the leader-centric theories of the Industrial Era. We draw from this literature to problematize the leader-centric nature of community leadership programs in the United States by specifically examining their sponsorship, content, and structure. Finally, we offer a vision for how to re-imagine community leadership programs so that they are more responsive to the complexity of the 21st century by drawing upon collective leadership and postmodern curriculum theory.

### Introduction

Our global society faces a multitude of complex social issues. The 17 areas of the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations are a prime example in which to see that there are many areas progress is needed in our world (United Nations, n.d.). Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) recognize that these complex issues cannot be solved by individual leaders but will require the leadership of diverse stakeholders. At a macro level, leadership theories have shifted from leader-centric to collective perspectives of leadership (Ospina & Foldy, 2016), which parallels the shift from industrial to post-industrial society in the United States (Rost, 1993). The emerging theories recognize the need to understand complex adaptive systems (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009), distinguish between authority and leadership (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009),

and acknowledge that many individuals must work collectively to make progress on complex issues (Ospina & Foldy, 2016).

The nature of 21st century challenges and the trend in leadership theory suggests that more people must become engaged in their communities to address challenges. As leadership educators in higher education who prepare students to exercise leadership in their communities, we began to question the access community members had to leadership development. Community leadership programs (CLPs) surfaced as a pervasive mechanism for developing local community leaders (Azzam & Riggio, 2003; Kaufman, Rateau, Carter, & Strickland, 2012; National Association for Community Leadership, as cited in Porr, 2011). CLPs are formal programs sponsored by local community agencies or institutions that incorporate leadership education

to develop current and future leaders with the goal of improving the local community (Azzam & Riggio, 2003; Fredricks, 1998). From our own experiences with local CLPs, we noticed a gap between emerging theories of leadership and the practice of leadership development in communities. This led to our inquiry about CLPs nationally: Are CLPs aligned with the needs of the 21st century and emerging paradigms of leadership? How might collective theories of leadership or other postmodern theories guide us in developing opportunities for community leadership development beyond CLPs?

In this paper, we demonstrate that although CLPs have been prevalent in the United States since the 1960s, they have not kept pace with the changes in leadership theory. These programs still generally focus on “leader” development, reinforced by the sponsorship, content, and structure of the programs (Azzam & Riggio, 2003; Porr, 2011; Williams & Wade, 2002). Through this process, we seek to show how aligning community leadership development and collective paradigms of leadership may yield more effective responses to 21st century challenges. We describe societal and economic shifts that illuminate why collective interaction among people is increasing drastically in the Post-Industrial Era. Then, we discuss the evolution of leadership theories, focusing on the overarching shift from leader-centric to collective perspectives of leadership. Next, we explain how current CLP models perpetuate a problematic leader-centric paradigm rather than develop collective leadership, leading to misalignment with the needs of the Post-Industrial Era. After situating this imbalance, we draw upon postmodern curriculum theory to provide four recommendations for re-imagining community leadership development opportunities. Lastly, we highlight the limitations of our analysis and note areas for future research.

## Societal and Economic Shifts

Gorey and Dobat (1996) describe three eras in Western economies: (a) the Agricultural Era, (b) the Industrial Era, and (c) the Knowledge Era. The “drivers of wealth” in each era have impacted the “design of society” (Bell, 1976, p. 48). In the Agricultural Era, the driver of wealth was land and labor, and therefore, society was designed around the laborer’s interaction with soil and weather. In the Industrial Era, labor continued contributing to wealth, but it was surpassed by capital, which was needed to purchase manufacturing equipment and pay for research and development (Gorey & Dobat, 1996). Society in this era was designed around “fabrication,” such as harnessing energy to create machines (Bell, 1976, p. 47). In the Knowledge Era, or post-industrial society, wealth is primarily driven by intellect rather than land, labor, or capital (Bell, 1976). The post-industrial society—our current society—is designed around people, including the exchange of information among them.

Although we find “drivers of wealth” to be a limiting way to study social organization, we recognize that they are strongly related. The increase of information exchange in today’s society, perhaps driven by capitalism, has far reaching impacts on our global community. Exchange of information occurs in large volumes and at quick speeds. Bell (1976) argues that this creates an “enlargement of an individual’s world” (p. 48). In the Agricultural Era, a farmer would likely only interact with family members or farm workers/slaves on their land. In the Industrial Era, the majority of workers only needed to interact with the other employees at their company to produce materials. In the Knowledge Era, people are interacting with anyone who can help generate knowledge regardless of geographical boundaries. For example, in one day a person could host a video conference with a hundred people, read numerous articles online from home, or travel to another continent for a meeting. Technological

advancements and globalization contribute to the enlargement of one's world and help facilitate the interaction among people.

The initial scholarship conceptualizing the post-industrial society (Bell, 1973; Touraine, 1971) emerged in the early 1970s, and the turn of the 21st century marks an increased intensity of the technological advancements that are central to the post-industrial society. At the onset of the 21st century, Gulati and Raina (2000) presented new competencies for librarians and information professionals. They recognize information as a critical resource of the Knowledge Era, with electronic media being "the dominant form of information dissemination, storage and retrieval" (para. 4) and thus, representing a paradigm shift for information services. Developments of technology such as the IBM PC in 1981, the Apple Macintosh (Mac) in 1984, SMS messaging in 1992, Skype in 2003, Facebook in 2004, and the iPhone in 2007 show a steady development of technological tools that increase capacity for communication (Hall, 2017). Smartphones now facilitate near constant access to the internet and social media, making interactions among people available from almost anywhere at anytime.

Gibson and Longo (2011) argue that given this "significant cultural transformation," a "shift in the notion of leadership is hardly an accident" (p. 5). Bell (1967) illustrates that dominant figures or "leaders" have changed with society from noblemen, soldiers, and priests to industrial chiefs and scientists to white collar workers. Bell predicted that "engineers of the new computer technology" (p. 27) would be the dominant figures of the post-industrial society. There are prominent technology leaders, but we believe the major cultural shift in the Knowledge Era is the critique of "dominant figures" and that leadership is enacted by people who utilize information to better understand and address complex challenges.

As we discuss shifts of leadership in the Post-Industrial Era toward collective perspectives, we

do this in the context of the 21st century. In the following section, we discuss how theories of leadership have evolved over time with specific attention to the shift between industrial and post-industrial paradigms of leadership and the emergence of collective paradigms of leadership necessary for today's society.

## Evolution of Leadership Theory

Our aim in discussing the evolution of leadership theory is to demonstrate how formal theories have progressed at a macro level. At this level the evolution of leadership includes a shift from a leader-centric paradigm to a collective paradigm of leadership. To illustrate the shift we examine the "story most often told" (Dugan, 2017, p. 59), which includes dominant narratives of leadership theory. We recognize that formal theories have historically left out marginalized perspectives and are limited in their application to practice. This is similar to Dugan's note that the Women's Suffrage Movement and the Civil Rights Movements as practices of leadership have been systematically excluded from formal theory in the Industrial Era. However, we examine the dominant narratives of leadership theory because these theories have, in reality, dominated discussions of leadership in the literature and professional associations and, therefore, have impacted the design of CLPs.

**Leader-Centric Paradigm.** Most stories of leadership theory begin with attention on the leader. Leader-centric theories depict the mainstream image of a tall man standing at the front of the room providing instruction or inspiration. The origin of this story begins by theorizing that specific traits such as intelligence, self-confidence, and integrity (Northouse, 2016) make people better leaders. The extended story includes particular skills (e.g., conceptual skills) and behaviors (e.g., task or relationship behaviors) as key characteristics of leaders (Nelson & Squires, 2017; Northouse, 2016). Dugan (2017) classifies these theories that attend to the leader as person-centered theories. Situational

approaches to leadership suggest that good leaders change depending on the needs of the situation or context (Antonakis & Day, 2018; Nelson & Squires, 2017; Northouse, 2016). While attention to skills, behaviors, and situations complicate original trait theories, they primarily focus on the aspects of a “leader.”

Relational theories still depict a person standing at the front of the room, but now that leader is interacting with followers. Northouse (2016) outlines some of the major theories following situational approaches including Path-Goal Theory, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), Transformational Leadership, and Servant Leadership. These are vastly different theories, but categorically they all consider the interaction between a leader and a follower. For example, LMX theory focuses on the dyadic relationship between leader and follower and places followers in either an in-group or out-group depending on how close they are with the leader (Northouse, 2016). Even though there is a relational aspect to this theory, it still distinguishes between leaders and followers with power residing with the leader.

Toward the end of the 20th century, Rost (1993) critiqued leader-centric perspectives of leadership, equating them with an industrial paradigm of leadership. He characterizes this industrial paradigm as (a) having leaders with “certain preferred traits [who] influenc[e] followers to do what the leaders wish in order to achieve group/organizational goals” (p. 97), and (b) equating leadership with good management. In contrast, Rost describes the post-industrial paradigm of leadership as (a) “an influence relationship among leaders and their collaborators who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (p. 99), and (b) a process distinct from management. In this seminal piece, he argued that a new kind of leadership is needed for the post-industrial society, and subsequently, leadership development needs to reflect these changes. Many theorists have built upon the post-industrial paradigm more recently while also challenging the existing dichotomy of leaders and collaborators,

focusing instead on distributed, shared, and collective leadership. Next, we discuss the collective paradigm of leadership that has been emerging in the Post-Industrial Era.

**Collective Paradigm.** Cullen-Lester and Yammarino (2016) explain that “a paradigm shift has occurred within the field—many scholars now view leadership as a property of the collective, not the individual” (p. 174), thus naming the collective as the focus of the new paradigm. Ospina and Foldy (2016) share that “the very idea that leadership for the common good resides within a single individual leader has started to lose currency” (p. 1). Within the post-industrial paradigm of leadership, there is an emerging focus on collective theories of leadership that depict leadership as an activity that occurs within systems. Although this paradigm shift is still evolving, it is clear that the collective is becoming a more prominent dimension of leadership. These theories reflect the societal and economic shifts toward the Post-Industrial Era but are specifically representative of the advanced connectivity of the 21st century.

Dugan (2017) categorizes emerging theories of leadership as vanguard theories. This category includes theories that “[push] on the boundaries of how leadership is understood and manifest” (p. 257). The included theories may change yearly, but in 2017 he includes authentic leadership, adaptive leadership, and complexity leadership. We appreciate the focus placed on the vanguard theory category, because it recognizes that leadership theory is still unfolding. This demonstrates that, as a field, we may be able to identify theories that are emerging without yet knowing where to place them in relation to other theories. To illustrate an emerging collective paradigm of leadership, we describe collective dimensions of leadership as an overarching description of this paradigm and two specific theories, adaptive leadership and complexity leadership, that articulate leadership within systems. While Dugan names authentic leadership as vanguard, it is a leader-centric theory and, therefore, is not discussed in this section.

Collective dimensions of leadership. The

overarching paradigm of collective leadership is still nascent, but scholars are building from several existing theories. O'Neill and Brinkerhoff (2018) explain that collective leadership draws on concepts of shared leadership, democratic leadership, emergent leadership, and distributed leadership. For example, Gronn's (2002) discussion of distributed leadership challenges the dichotomy of leaders and followers and argues that leadership is distributed among groups through activity. Additionally, Pearce and Conger (2003) describe shared leadership as the "interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals or both" (p. 2). The key contribution of shared leadership is that leadership is shared among a set of individual leaders rather than centralized with one leader.

Ospina and Foldy (2016) recognize that the collective dimensions of leadership are still in development and that "terminology is still in flux" (p.1), but they explain that these theories all center the system of relationships as the source of leadership, not the individual or even the relationship. Further, they explain, "The term 'collective' in 'collective dimensions of leadership' implies viewing leadership as a phenomenon that implicates all members of a group rather than one or even several individual members" (p. 1). Ospina and Foldy describe this shift from the individual to the collective as "the importance of shifting attention from the single 'heroic' leader to the emergent processes and practices that help actors interact, co-construct meaning, and advance a common goal unattainable by themselves" (p. 1).

O'Neill and Brinkerhoff (2018, para.

7) provide a chart that highlights five elements that distinguish collective leadership from traditional forms. They show that collective leadership views (a) organizations as systems, (b) structure as connected networks, (c) decision-making as shared and/or rotated, (d) people as inherently capable, and (e) success as an outcome of the diverse perspectives and skills of many (see Table 1). While more time may be needed to situate collective leadership within evolving leadership theory, these common elements clearly distinguish a collective paradigm from a leader-centric paradigm. Within the collective paradigm, there are two frameworks that illustrate the complex interactions among systems and people that we draw on in our discussion of community leadership development. Therefore, we provide a more in-depth review of adaptive leadership and complexity leadership as a basis for our discussion.

Table 1  
*Comparison of Traditional and Collective Leadership*

	<b>Traditional Leadership</b>	<b>Collective Leadership</b>
<b>View of organizations</b>	Organizations as machines	Organizations as systems
<b>Structure</b>	Hierarchy, pyramid	Connected networks
<b>Decision making</b>	Top-down	Shared and/or rotated
<b>Assumptions about people's capacity</b>	People need to be told what to do	People are inherently capable and can be trusted to do the right thing
<b>Beliefs about how success is created</b>	One person has the skill or talent to create success	Success comes from the diverse perspectives and skills of many

Note. This chart comes from “Five Elements of Collective Leadership” by Cassandra O’Neill and Monica Brinkerhoff, published by the *Nonprofit Quarterly* (vol. 24, no. 4). It originally appeared in the article “Five Elements of Collective Leadership for Early Childhood Professionals” (Redleaf Press, a division of Think Small, November 2017), from which “Five Elements of Collective Leadership” was excerpted.

Adaptive leadership. Adaptive leadership is representative of the collective leadership paradigm due to its focus on systems and the collective work of stakeholders needed to make progress within systems. Heifetz et al. (2009) define adaptive leadership as the “practice of mobilizing others to tackle tough challenges and thrive” (p. 14). The tough challenges they reference are called adaptive challenges, which are distinguished from technical challenges. Technical challenges, although perhaps difficult, involve both a clear problem and a clear solution and can be solved through expertise. For example, if a tornado comes through your neighborhood and trees smash into homes, it is clear that the fallen trees and gaping roofs are the challenges and removing and repairing them are the solutions. Private contractors or city departments that specialize in tree removal and roofing companies can be called in to fix the problem.

In contrast, adaptive challenges require learning for both the problem and the means to make progress—often requiring more than a single solution. To make progress, many stakeholders must be engaged in the process. Some of these stakeholders can exercise authority from a formal position, while others must exercise leadership beyond their authority. Many challenges involve both technical and adaptive elements. For example, the residents of homes damaged by tornadoes face the adaptive challenges of adjusting to being temporarily or permanently displaced and dealing with the loss of people or materials. The Red Cross has the authority to provide emergency shelter and food, but other organizations and individuals, such as churches or nearby volunteers, may work together with informal authority to respond to unmet needs (e.g., a nonprofit creating a donation center).

Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT). While adaptive leadership has been around for over 20 years, “formal theorizing on complexity leadership has been around only about half that time” (Dugan, 2017, p. 257). Complex adaptive systems (CAS) are central to this theory in which these systems represent people, hierarchies, organizations, and environments that are networked together (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). These authors posit that within CAS there are three types of leadership occurring: (1) administrative leadership (i.e., leadership stemming from hierarchical bureaucracy to achieve organizationally prescribed goals), (2) adaptive leadership (i.e., leadership that emerges nonlinearly from actors across the CAS), and (3) enabling leadership (i.e., leadership focusing on the entanglement between administrative and adaptive leadership). This theory provides a framework for understanding the interactivity within a complex system in a holistic manner, rather than trying to isolate individuals or activities. Furthermore, CLT is a contextual theory, meaning challenges are embedded in a context and are socially constructed and cannot be disentangled from one another.

Dugan (2017) explains the complexity of CLT by describing ingredients of bread transforming in the baking process where the ingredients become indistinguishable. Instead of focusing on how the flour and eggs interact, CLT focuses on what they are all interacting to create—bread. Although CLT names the role of the individual or agency, which is acknowledged as adaptive leadership, it also recognizes that individuals are acting within complex hierarchical systems. For example, leadership activity occurring after a tornado may occur from a place of bureaucracy such as city government or

from emergent or adaptive activities such as a church congregation cooking meals in the parking lot to feed residents. CLT helps us see that these activities are happening within the same system in ways that cannot always be separated or individually identified.

Adaptive leadership, CLT, and the collective dimensions of leadership more broadly are representative of the present-day Post-Industrial Era and place an emphasis on leadership as a process that is beyond the efforts of one individual. As discussed in the following section, most CLPs in the United States have not recognized the shifts in leadership theory and are largely still operating with a view of leadership that was prevalent among leadership scholars and educators in the Industrial Era. Similar to how Rost (1993) argued for a change in leadership development from an industrial to a post-industrial society, we argue that community leadership development needs to change in order to reflect the emerging collective paradigm of leadership in the 21st century. We begin by discussing the origins of CLPs and then discuss the misalignment between their sponsorship, content, and structure and the needs of post-industrial society.

## Community Leadership Programs Within our Changing Society

CLPs have varied participants, budgets, goals, and approaches, but an aim they share is the improvement of the local community (Azzam & Riggio, 2003). Some programs were designed to address specific challenges such as the race riots in the 1960s or to fill specific vacant leadership roles, while others were implemented to more broadly to inspire citizens to take on leadership roles and create a mutual understanding of community issues (Azzam & Riggio, 2003). CLPs as a form of leadership development began in the late 1950s (Leadership Philadelphia, n.d.a) when the driver of wealth within our society was capital (Bell, 1976). In that time

period, society grew as more people produced more goods, and as such, leadership development was equated with good management (Rost, 1993). As a result, the components of many programs originated from the leader-centric paradigm of the Industrial Era.

To examine initial leadership approaches of CLPs, it is worthwhile to discuss the origin of the first program of its kind, Leadership Philadelphia, which has served as the “flagship model for over 1,000 such organizations across the country” (Leadership Philadelphia, n.d.a, para. 1). Initially established in 1959 at the University of Pennsylvania, this program started by offering sessions to “selected prominent executives and younger Philadelphians interested in community affairs” (n.d.a, para. 2). By intentionally focusing on individuals with the greatest amount of prominence in the city, the program catered to an exclusive audience.

The organization’s approach has not changed much; current recruitment materials state that a qualified candidate “should be prominent within his or her organization.” And “generally, more than half of the class has earned MBAs or MAs, and more than a quarter of the class hold JD or PhD credentials” (Leadership Philadelphia, n.d.b, para. 5). In addition, the organization’s mission statement, “to mobilize and connect the talent of the private sector to serve the community” (Leadership Philadelphia, n.d.a, para. 1), also establishes that the organization is exclusively for individuals employed in the private sector.

Leadership Philadelphia’s mission and participant selection appear to be well-intended, but these practices align with approaches of leadership from the Industrial Era when top-down leadership was considered most effective (O’Neill and Brinkerhoff, 2018). The use of this language in the recruitment materials and the mission statement, indicates that the program’s focus is not on recruiting participants from all backgrounds and life experiences to this program. This approach is in contrast to collective paradigms of leadership, which inform us that

engaging diverse stakeholders in the process of creating solutions to difficult challenges is a necessity for making lasting progress (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Not all CLPs across the United States are identical to Leadership Philadelphia, however, its structure has served as a model for numerous programs (Leadership Philadelphia, n.d.a). The literature on CLPs demonstrates commonalities in the approaches to leadership and curriculum taken by programs throughout the country. We discuss those programmatic elements below in by focusing on the sponsorship, content, and structure of CLPs nationally. Throughout this discussion we illustrate the leader-centric nature of CLPs in the United States.

**Sponsorship.** To further understand the context of CLP operations, it is important to consider the entities sponsoring (i.e., providing funds, setting goals) and coordinating the programs. In a study of CLPs across the United States, Williams and Wade (2002) found most CLPs were sponsored by a local Chamber of Commerce (51%); secondly, private non-profit organizations (36%); and lastly, higher education institutions (10%). More recently, in a study of CLPs in the state of Ohio, authors similarly identified Chamber of Commerce programs as the most prevalent, followed by independent entities, and lastly academic institutions (Porr, 2011).

Within these categories, sponsorship is often connected to the interests of the coordinating organization. For instance, some land-grant universities with extension programs sponsor rural and/or agricultural based CLPs to further their missions of public service outreach to all citizens of the state (Black, Meltzer, & Waldrum, 2006; Stoecker, Willis, & Lersch, 2009). These types of programs generally have different approaches than programs sponsored by Chamber of Commerce organizations as these seek to serve the needs of local business associations (Porr, 2011).

Regardless of sponsorship type, many CLPs are faced with the challenge of funding. In one study of

programs across the state of California, researchers found that 41% of program coordinators identified funding as a challenge (Azzam & Riggio, 2003). The authors found a majority of programs (55%) were financed using tuition paid by participants or their employers and at least one other method, which included donations from local businesses and fundraising as common methods to acquire the necessary funds. Further described by the authors was how costs, both direct (i.e., program fees) and indirect (i.e., time away from work) can deter lower income community members and sectors with less money available for professional development from participating in CLPs (Azzam & Riggio).

To address adaptive problems in our communities such as health equity, mass incarceration, and food security, we must engage diverse stakeholders in exercising leadership, including low-income community members. CLPs with cost barriers further the dominant practice of those with more economic and social capital having greater access to leadership development. It is important for us to note, that we have come across a number of CLPs that do not charge any tuition to participants and are instead entirely funded by private or public support. Such examples include the Neighborhood Leadership program (Coro New York Leadership Center, n.d.) and the Greater New Haven Connecticut Community Leadership Program (Community Leadership Program, n.d.). Community leadership development offered at no cost to participants facilitates a greater opportunity to recruit and retain the needed diverse participant makeup of programs.

Content. The sponsorship and funding of CLPs plays a role in the overall impact the program can have through its structure and content. Porr (2011) described that the needs and interests of the governing body that oversaw the CLP shaped the content. For example, it was described that Chamber of Commerce sponsored CLPs spent a greater amount of time than other types traveling between locations and sitting in presentations designed for participants to know more about the

community. Even though CLPs were found to take into consideration feedback from participants, the interests of their sponsoring bodies played a significant role in program decisions (Porr, 2011).

Although CLPs vary by sponsor, there are similarities to the approaches that are taken within the program curricula. Through an analysis of California CLPs, Azzam and Riggio (2003) described two approaches. The first and more prevalent approach was an orientation focus and the second was an instruction focus. An orientation approach was described as one "focused on orienting participants to the functions of the community and introducing them to different leaders within the community," whereas an instruction approach was stated to be "focused on teaching participants leadership skills through courses and structured lessons" (p. 57). Their study demonstrated that while the majority of programs (76%) used some form of both approaches, 21% used only the orientation approach, and three percent used only the instruction approach. For programs using both approaches, coordinators incorporated the instructional approach through different methods and for different amounts of program time ranging from 10% to 50% (Azzam & Riggio, 2003).

Programs that placed a greater emphasis on the orientation approach often did so based on the experience and knowledge of the instructors and coordinators (Azzam & Riggio, 2003). Due to budget constraints of these programs, instructors were often alumni volunteers. Porr (2011) described the reason for this as volunteers were more comfortable setting up tours in the community and focusing on networking rather than teaching leadership theory. Some programs, which relied heavily on the orientation approach, were identified to have become more of a meet and greet program rather than a tool for creating meaningful community change (Porr, 2011). Many of the programs that included use of the instruction approach taught individual skills such as communication and conflict management. While individual skills are still needed in collective work, an attention to recognizing the

strengths of others and understanding how to apply skills within a system could shift skill development from leader-centric to collective paradigms.

Past researchers have questioned the magnitude of impact CLPs have on the community, stating that there is much less evidence of community impact than there is of individual impact (Emery, Fernandez, Gutierrez-Montes, & Butler, 2007). Keating and Gasteyer (2012) explain that although community issues may be introduced or discussed by participants, a shared commitment to engage in ongoing collaborations to make progress on these challenges does not occur. Some CLPs have evolved to include a requirement of participants to either individually, or as a group, complete a community service project. For example, a Leadership Sacramento class implemented a program to make repairs and improvements to low-income neighborhoods in partnership with Habitat for Humanity (Metro Chamber, n.d.). These projects are seen as ideal opportunities for participants to apply the knowledge and skills gained to assist in addressing a community issue (Apaliyah & Martin, 2013). This is a positive step, yet the service that is done is often approached in a charity or one-time project-based approach for the community emphasizing that external “leaders” have the ability to solve challenges in short periods of time. Engaging with the community to collectively address root causes of challenges, such as sufficient affordable housing, is likely needed to make progress alongside the community members who have a long-term commitment to the issue.

In the Ford Institute Leadership Program, participants often are required to complete the project by the end of the six month or yearlong program (Etuk, Rahe, Crandall, Sektnan, & Bowman, 2013). Participants may have some knowledge around the issue, but it may not be sufficient to truly understand the root causes of what is occurring and instead are only able to take steps to focus on the symptoms of the issue. As was discussed previously, adaptive challenges require learning of the root cause and must involve multiple stakeholders in the

process. Within CLPs, the time constraint and lack of diverse participant experiences or expertise around the community project contributes to participants’ decisions to focus on addressing technical challenges. Addressing technical challenges may provide some value to the community, however, greater depth is needed to address the adaptive challenges to make lasting change.

**Structure.** In addition to sponsorship and content, the structure of the CLP impacts the leadership development opportunity. The structure includes the parameters of the design of the program. In this section, we specifically focus on time and participants as two major design elements of program structure.

**Time.** Traditional CLPs have the intention of engaging participants in curriculum periodically over the defined length of the program. Frequency and duration vary greatly across locations and content of programs. For example, in Wisconsin, CLPs range from meeting weekly for several months to meeting monthly for over two years (Willis & Stoecker, 2013). Similarly, programs in Minnesota have a wide range of duration from five to 18 months (Scheffert, 2007). The total amount of hours that participants spend in programs is challenging to identify due to the broad variance of program lengths, however, one study across California CLPs found the average time involved to be 70 hours (Azzam & Riggio, 2003). Programs can find it challenging to coordinate time among participants and often require participants to take time away from their employment to participate (Willis & Stoecker, 2013).

The amount of time spent involved in a program matters to overall outcomes achieved. Participants in programs with a greater amount of curriculum time had higher improvements in leadership skill development than participants in

programs with less time (Apaliyah & Martin, 2013; Scheffert, 2007). Although these studies examine individuals' leadership development, something more consistent with a leader-centric paradigm, they demonstrate that the total amount of time matters and is positively correlated with program outcomes.

As described previously, CLPs largely have an agreed upon start and end date. This provides a benefit to the individuals signing up because they know they must only commit to a set amount of time. However, this time expectation centers the program on the participants rather than a community's issue. Adaptive challenges in our communities do not have easy and quick solutions, but rather, actions must be taken consistently over a long period of time in order to make progress.

Participants. While studying CLPs across the United States, multiple researchers have identified demographics of program participants. Most often represented in CLPs were females (Apaliyah & Martin, 2013; Wituk, Ealey, Clark, Heiny, Meissen, 2005) and individuals employed in the private sector (Azzam & Riggio, 2003; Porr, 2011; Wituk et al., 2005). Additionally, the income of participants in CLPs tended to be in the middle to middle to upper middle-class range. One study of a sample of programs across five states found that 80% of participants had annual incomes greater than \$50,000 (Apaliyah & Martin, 2013).

A makeup of individuals with middle to upper middle-class incomes could be due to the tuition that is charged for many CLPs. In the state of California, Azzam and Riggio (2003) found that the mean tuition price was \$907. In another study, researchers identified the tuition prices for agricultural-focused programs had a mean cost of

\$2,974 (Kaufman et al., 2012). For some programs, employers financially sponsor their employees to participate and allow for time off to help relieve the burden on the individual (Willis & Stoecker, 2013). To also alleviate some of the financial burden on participants, programs offer varying amounts for scholarships to participate (Azzam & Riggio, 2003; Stoecker et al., 2009). However, the amount awarded may not cover the full cost of the tuition. In a statewide review of CLPs in Kansas, the average scholarship amount was approximately two-thirds the average tuition price (Wituk et al., 2003).

CLPs could more effectively acknowledge and work to make progress on adaptive challenges by increasing engagement with diverse stakeholders in these programs. Often CLP participants possess some type of financial, educational, or professional privilege that is connected to positional power. Non-positional leaders are either not recruited or selected, and they may not feel they belong in a setting for leadership. Some administrators of CLPs recognized that greater progress on community issues could be made if they were able to more successfully involve individuals who were not traditionally considered leaders (Keating & Gasteyer, 2012). Although they were aware of this need for including others, program coordinators struggled with individuals not believing they belonged due the societal perception of what constitutes leadership. One such example of this was of a program coordinator's attempt at recruiting someone who may have had different experiences than the participants the program usually accepted. The individual "was very engaged in her community, however her supervisor would not allow her to participate because, in his mind, she was not a "leader" ... he actually wrote

it out and testified why she could not participate" (p. 158). It is precisely this leader-centric perspective of leadership that can prevent diverse stakeholders from receiving leadership development.

An industrial approach to leadership is one that is top-down and "heroic" rather than collective (Rost, 1993), however, to move towards post-industrial leadership development, program coordinators should consider innovative and inclusive practices to allow for individuals to participate even if their employer does not sponsor them financially or provide them time off from work. Having all members of a community involved in learning about and exercising leadership to benefit the community is vital for addressing community issues.

Misalignment with the Post-Industrial Era. Leader-centric perspectives of leadership perpetuate the idea that some people are leaders and others are not. From this perspective, leaders have certain traits, behaviors, and skills. The dominant CLP model described above selects these "leaders" based on merit and credentials, which demonstrates to communities that some people can be trained to be community leaders and others cannot. Furthermore, there are numerous examples regarding the positive individual outcomes resulting from participation in CLPs (see Apaliyah & Martin, 2013; Etuk, Rahe, Crandall, Sektnan, & Bowman, 2013; Goodman, Majee, & Reed Adams, 2018; Majee, Thullen, & Goodman, 2018; Maltsberger & Majee 2012; Porr, 2011; Wituk et al., 2005); however, there are few examples in the literature in which CLPs are documented to have made progress on a community's adaptive challenges. Additionally, the content of many CLPs focus on orientation rather than providing instruction related to leadership development. This practice centers leaders meeting other leaders, which is on par with a leader-centric perspective if those selected are perceived to already possess the traits and credentials needed to

be a leader. However, leader-centric CLP practices can be counterproductive due to its promotion of the idea that "heroic" leaders can alone solve community challenges (Rost, 1993).

Although the idea for CLPs was established in a time-period when the accepted view was that developing an individual will directly correlate to that individual using new knowledge and skills to improve the community (Williams & Wade, 2002), leadership scholars in the Post-Industrial Era point to this not being effective in increasing the capacity of the community to solve problems (Bridger & Alter, 2006). During the time since CLPs emerged, our society has begun to recognize the significance of the collective for addressing complex challenges. These challenges require the engagement of stakeholders who deeply know the challenges at hand. Adaptive challenges also require efforts toward progress over long periods of time, which may not be best sustained by CLP participants on a bounded timeframe.

Throughout the past 60 years, Leadership Philadelphia's program served as a model for many communities across the United States who sought to bring individuals together for greater local change (Leadership Philadelphia, n.d.a). In the time since Leadership Philadelphia's creation, our society has changed drastically. In addition, new thinking around leadership has emerged. Today, there are hundreds of CLPs in existence. The most recent national study to identify the number of CLPs in the United States was by the National Association for Community Leadership (1995) in which they estimated 750 programs to be in existence (as cited in Porr, 2011, p. 97). Now, nearly 25 years later, the actual number is likely greater than that as several statewide studies demonstrate that numerous programs have begun in the past two decades and, many original programs remain active (see Azzam & Riggio, 2003; Kaufman et al., 2012).

Given the ubiquity of CLPs across the United States, it is clear that communities want to develop leaders within their local communities. However,

considering the changes in society and leadership since their design originated, we recommend CLPs align their practices with the needs of the Post-Industrial Era. Through a shift in approach from leader-centric to collective perspectives of leadership, communities may be better equipped to make sustained impact in addressing local community challenges.

## Recommendations for Re-Imagining Community Leadership Development

Dominant approaches to CLPs are not aligned with collective leadership and are limited in their capacity to develop the kind of collective leadership needed in the Post-Industrial Era. In this section, we provide four recommendations for re-imagining community leadership development (summarized in Table 2), drawing upon post-industrial leadership and postmodern curriculum literature. We hope current CLPs will consider how these recommendations can be taken up within current structures to start shifting from leader-centric to collective paradigms of leadership development. However, these recommendations may be more useful in re-imagining community leadership development opportunities more broadly in new ways that do not have existing structures and barriers.

**Centralize the Adaptive Issue, not the Individual.** Traditional CLPs generally select individuals through an application process and place them in small cohorts. Drawing from Heifetz et al.'s (2009) definition of leadership: "leadership is the practice of mobilizing people around tough challenges" (p. 14), we recommend that community members should be brought together around a central issue, not individual merit. Adaptive leadership recognizes that progress on adaptive issues can only be made by engaging diverse stakeholders, not by seeking experts. Therefore, community leadership development opportunities may be enhanced by bringing together diverse stakeholders from many parts of the community. As Heifetz et al. argue, there is a distinction between authority

(i.e., titles, positions) and leadership, and therefore having stakeholders without formal titles or formal authority would be beneficial.

Although leadership occurs through interventions made by individuals, more than one individual needs to exercise leadership to make progress on an adaptive challenge. Designing leadership development opportunities that are inclusive of many stakeholders within a complex adaptive system might enhance what post-industrial curriculum scholars Callejo Perez, Adair Breault, and White (2014) call cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism involves "living in relationship with the world and recognizing the opportunity that relationship, however painful it might be at times, provides for living more authentic lives and building more just communities" (p. 36). Learning leadership in relationship alongside other key stakeholders involved in a central challenge, may provide a stronger foundation for communities to work together.

Program designers may also consider engaging with community individuals and organizations to determine the most pressing community priorities; this might include hosting community dialogues, seeking issues through applications, or drawing upon existing datasets or reports already available in the community. In alignment with Majee, Goodman, Reed Adams, and Keller (2017), we also suggest that community members participate in the design and implementation of leadership development opportunities, since they more intimately know their community's assets and challenges. To ensure a range of stakeholder involvement, new recruitment strategies may be needed to reach beyond those who are currently networked and new funding strategies to include those who might otherwise be excluded by program fees.

An exemplar of centralizing the adaptive challenge and not the individual is the Kansas Leadership Center's Leadership Transformation Grant program (Kansas Leadership Center, n.d.a). Individuals and

community organizations who are working on a central adaptive challenge apply together as a grant team. The grant provides leadership development training for up to 40 people over three years. The result is a large group of community members all working to make progress on a similar challenge who have received similar training to support their shared leadership practices.

*Design with the Context in Mind.* Emerging post-industrial leadership theories emphasize attention to the system in which individuals act. Complexity leadership recognizes that there are many complex adaptive systems interacting all the time, and adaptive leadership relies on diagnosing the system before acting (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). These theories call our attention to the context in which leadership work needs to occur. Therefore, we suggest designing leadership development opportunities with careful attention to the context of the learners and place.

Considering context requires us to continually acknowledge the history, spirit, and narratives of our space. In contrast to the numbing effects of modern-day curriculum driven by accountability measures, Callejo Perez et al. (2014) describe a new approach to curriculum that attends to context, place, and sensory elements. Aesthetic curriculum “encompass[es] the unity, interconnectedness and emergent qualities of experiences” (p. xiv) in contrast to education that is absent of context and emotion.

To embrace the full aesthetics of context, program designers could begin by exploring diverse perspectives of community history, not just the dominant narratives. This may include understanding the narratives of the organizations connected to the leadership development opportunity and their individual history and their role within the community. Drawing from aesthetic curriculum theory, leadership educators might look to music, art, or architecture to learn about context. For example, a community that experienced a devastating tornado might communicate that

history through new architecture, commemorative artwork, or musical narratives. These aesthetics may provide context for understanding whether the community was unified or divided during the aftermath and what narratives about leadership exist in the community.

An example of a community approaching leadership development with context in mind, is Greensboro, North Carolina. Food security work in Greensboro was catalyzed by being named the number one metropolitan area with food hardship in 2015 (Food Research and Action Center, 2016). The Weaver Foundation has provided focused funding on this issue to establish The Food Project (Weaver Foundation, n.d.). After a year of financial investment into local organizations, they started to invest in leadership development for the various stakeholders to build capacity within and across the organizations. They have hired local leadership developers to work with existing government committees and nonprofit organizations to develop and enhance their leadership work (E. McCollum, personal communication, February 21, 2019). We believe more community-based leadership interventions like these are occurring, even if they are not yet mentioned in the literature. More research to find contextual leadership development is needed to understand where and how it is happening as well as its impact on leadership practices.

*Expand Beyond Traditional Notions of Time.* Learning does not begin and end with the punch of a timecard. Instead, curriculum is occurring all around us all the time. Roth (2014) argues that all curriculum is in-the-making, characterizing curriculum as “the never-ending movement of life” (p. viii). Yet, people who think about leadership through mainstream perspectives often want quick and packaged curricula. This might be motivated by credentialing, such as listing trainings on a resume or meeting an organization’s requirements for professional development. While networking and knowledge of city departments may be conducive to time limited sessions, complex adaptive

challenges require learning for both the problem and the solution and require engagement of diverse stakeholders over time (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Reynolds and Webber (2004) write:

Control is not the only ghost in the clock of curriculum—to use the predominant modernist, mechanistic, metaphor—it is the ghost, which actually runs the clock. It is time to put this ghost to rest, let it retire peacefully to the land of no return and to liberate curriculum to live a life of its own. (pp. 9-10)

What would it look like to liberate leadership development curriculum? What if leadership development curriculum was not delivered as an intervention with a start and end time such as a workshop, year-long program, or class? What if leadership development curriculum was liberated from time and was viewed as an ongoing opportunity to engage in leadership curriculum through a learning community?

Callejo Perez et al. (2014) say, “We shake our heads at homes built without front porches and subdivisions without sidewalks and consider them as reason why we no longer connect with our neighbors” (p. 11). They share this to illustrate that the way we design our curricular spaces matters. The standard architecture of CLPs was designed in the Industrial Era before many of the technological advancements of the Knowledge Era facilitate communication at a faster pace. The creation of the internet, online learning platforms, and social media allow us to learn and communicate outside of face-to-face gatherings. Community members can learn about their government through websites and YouTube videos, they can interact with online learning modules, and they can network through social media. These interactions do not replace the value of face-to-face interactions, but they expand learning opportunities beyond in-person gatherings. How can we leverage this expansion of time to increase community leadership capacity?

Program developers might consider mechanisms

that foster a flexible connection between time and curriculum. Having continual access to leadership development workshops, texts, coaches, or peer groups could help create a flow in their learning and leadership practice. Instead of emphasizing any particular opportunities for two-day trainings, five leadership coaching sessions, etc., there could be an acknowledgement that adaptive challenges in the post-industrial society require ongoing work and that the leadership development opportunity creates a learning space for community members to engage in that challenge through a leadership lens that will continue to evolve for as long as needed. This would require that resources are available to the community members long-term.

The We-Lead Model for community leadership development (Majee, Goodman, Reed Adams, & Keller, 2017) is an example of a program challenging the traditional notions of time. Instead of trying to fit community projects into a time-bounded program structure, they have connected participants to adaptive challenges after formal training. Following completion of the CLP formal curriculum, program graduates join other community stakeholders who are already working to address a particular issue. Program graduates can choose the area in which they are involved and are therefore more committed, because it is something that aligns with their interests. Together as a coalition, this group of community stakeholders and CLP graduates represent diverse perspectives to collectively exercise leadership to address community issues from a holistic perspective (Majee et al., 2017). This allows participants to become involved in issues they care about for an open-ended amount of time.

Another example that challenges traditional notions of time is the Kansas Leadership Center’s online platform, Your Leadership Edge, that is available to program alumni (Kansas Leadership Center, n.d.b). This platform creates an ongoing place for participants from multiple programs to continue engaging in leadership development independently as needed or through video calls periodically.

Prepare Content While Being Flexible. Because post-industrial curriculum relies so much on context and a diverse set of participants within a complex adaptive system, it can be difficult to make instructional plans. We recommend preparing for curricular experiences but also being flexible when implementing the curriculum. In our experience, it has been worthwhile to have sets of terms, concepts, and ideas that we hope to teach and then engage with the learners through experiential pedagogies (e.g., case-in-point) that use the current moment to help decide what learning might happen. If you have already covered a certain concept and the opportunity presents itself again to teach about that, you may choose to let that opportunity pass by in hopes of another uncovered opportunity. This practice can meet learning goals but lets the group and the lived experience determine the order in which we learn those concepts. This requires preparation, because the educator must be ready to teach about the concepts that are available to them in that moment. A flexible approach to content aligns with the dynamic nature of collective leadership that emerges through group interactions.

These complex interactions would be too unpredictable to implement a prescribed curriculum. Therefore, the selection of the leadership educator or facilitator is also important. Facilitators may benefit by having some familiarity with the leadership issue being addressed, but we suggest their expertise be more process- than content-oriented. Facilitators who have a deep knowledge of collective leadership theories and experience exercising leadership can provide a touch point for community members. Their role includes creating a holding environment and creating urgency through disequilibrium (Heifetz et al., 2009).

An exemplar leadership development technique that embraces flexibility is leadership coaching. Leadership coaches can touch base with community members individually and can coach around specific

content driven by the needs of the individual (Reiss, 2009). While this technique is focused on the individual, this can be accomplished from a collective paradigm by helping the individuals consider how they are exercising leadership in the context of other stakeholders. A leadership coach may be able to ask questions and provide tough interpretations in ways that help those being coached consider their role in the complex adaptive system. After learning some common leadership language, the community members could work together through peer coaching and learning communities to continue the process of leadership learning.

Table 2.

Recommendations for Re-Imagining Community Leadership Development

<p><b>Centralize the Adaptive Issue, not the Individual (structure)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring community members together around a central issue</li> <li>• Engage the community in selecting the central issue</li> <li>• Use recruitment strategies that go beyond networking</li> <li>• Use funding strategies that do not exclude stakeholders</li> </ul>
<p><b>Design with the Context in Mind (sponsorship, content)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge the history, spirit, and narratives of space</li> <li>• Embrace an aesthetic curriculum</li> <li>• Engage music, art, and architecture to learn about context</li> </ul>
<p><b>Expand Beyond Traditional Notions of Time (structure)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design curriculum that is flexible with time</li> <li>• Recognize that adaptive challenges require ongoing learning</li> <li>• Make resources available long-term</li> </ul>
<p><b>Prepare Content While Being Flexible (content)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply pedagogies that allow for flexibility</li> <li>• Emphasize facilitation to support process-oriented content</li> <li>• Use leadership coaches, peer coaching, and learning communities</li> </ul>

## Limitations and Future Research

In this article we have argued that, at a macro level, most CLPs do not align with collective paradigms of leadership; simultaneously, we recognize that there are CLPs operating outside of the trends identified within the CLP literature. There are aspects of programs that challenge traditional sponsorship, content, and structure. By limiting the scope of our discussion to macro trends, it is possible that we have not fully represented the innovative programs that challenge traditional norms. Yet, we see this as an opportunity for future research. The programs discovered through this inquiry that align with collective paradigms of leadership were found primarily through program websites and not in the scholarly literature. Therefore, we recommend a mixed method study of current CLPs and other community leadership development opportunities that is driven by a collective leadership theoretical framework. A survey of current community leadership development opportunities including their sponsorship, content, and structure, would help

map the landscape of opportunities that are focused on collective dimensions of leadership. Furthermore, qualitative analysis of their program components may help illuminate the unique characteristics of these opportunities.

Secondly, the four recommendations provided in this paper were developed through conceptual scholarly work. We recognize that for those operating under current constraints of funding and time, implementing our recommendations may be challenging. This is why we chose to offer a range of recommendations for re-imagining community leadership development broadly. A comprehensive survey as previously described would be valuable for understanding the landscape of community leadership development opportunities, but studying each of the four recommendations may also be valuable. Using case study methodology could help us learn from programs in their existing context. We particularly think finding cases of programs that challenge the traditional notions of time would help re-imagine community leadership development.

Ultimately, more research is needed to understand how to align community leadership development with emerging leadership theories. Starting with programs that align a portion of their program with collective paradigms may be worthwhile to investigate instead of waiting to find a program that integrates collective dimensions holistically.

Another limitation to our inquiry is its U.S.-centric perspective. Our goal was to understand how CLPs have developed and influenced communities in the United States, however, future studies that seek to expand practices of leadership development would be strengthened from a global perspective. Making progress on global issues, like the Sustainable Development Goals, requires leadership from countries across the globe. We especially recommend attention to community leadership development in countries that are more collectivist than the United States. We posit that collective dimensions of leadership may be more culturally ingrained and could provide guidance to individualistic cultures shifting to collective leadership development.

Scholars interested in studying community leadership development from a collective paradigm may benefit from “matching method to lens” (Schall, Ospina, Godsoe, & Dodge, 2004, p. 156). Many of the studies found on CLPs sought to understand the leadership development of individuals. If studies are to illuminate the collective dimensions of leadership, as opposed to leader-centric perspectives, methods that seek to understand collectives would be valuable. These studies may include quantitative studies on indicators of community impact or ethnographic studies of community groups and their leadership practices.

For those considering research in this area, it is important to acknowledge that the evolving nature of leadership theory requires us to study something in motion. Therefore, researchers may need to recognize the current assemblage of collective leadership theories while also being open to how it changes.

## Conclusion

In this paper, we have problematized the leader-centric nature of CLPs in the United States, including their sponsorship, content, and structure. We demonstrated that leadership theory has shifted from leader-centric to collective perspectives of leadership, which parallels a shift in the United States from an industrial to post-industrial society. We provided a summary of key leadership theories that represent emerging, post-industrial theories: collective dimensions of leadership, adaptive leadership, and Complexity Leadership Theory. After visualizing the problematic gap between current CLPs and emerging leadership theory, we offered the reader four recommendations for re-imagining community leadership development. While scholarship exists on collective leadership and CLPs separately, we argue this theory to practice gap needs to be ameliorated.

It is imperative that more communities exercise collective leadership to address complex social issues. Leadership development may enhance the capacity of communities to address these issues if they more closely align with collective paradigms rather than leader-centric paradigms. The complex challenges of our 21st century, post-industrial society will not be saved by the “heroic” leader. It is important to stop perpetuating the leader-centric paradigm of leadership through programs that are meant to only network those with existing privilege. Instead, we need community leadership development opportunities where diverse stakeholders can come together around common issues alongside leadership educators to enhance the practice of collective leadership to address complex social issues.

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