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The purpose of this study was to describe and record the experiences of people of color in a community leadership development program. Selected people of color were asked to describe their experiences as participants in the American Leadership program in Tacoma-Pierce County in the State of Washington. The American Leadership Forum (ALF) is a national leadership development program that is *dedicated to joining and strengthening established leaders in order to serve the public good.* ALF has 13 chapters throughout the United States, one of which is in Tacoma-Pierce County. Ten graduates of the year-long program were participants in the study, all of whom resided, at the time of the study, in that local community.

The participants shared stories of their common experiences. These stories were compared to reveal the similarities and differences among them. While their personal backgrounds, familiarity with leadership theory, and careers revealed considerable differences, common themes emerged from the interview data. The

research identified the following themes of their perceptions of the ALF participation: networking, relationships, community commitment, leadership development, personal transformation, family, connectedness over time, diversity, and community impact.

The emergent themes reflect the positive perceptions of the participants' experiences, as well as their disappointments and concerns. They also represent the attitudes and opinions that were most deeply impacted by the ALF experience, as evidenced by their stories.

The findings suggest community leadership development programs have the ability to:

- Enhance professional networks and encourage relationship building
- Empower leaders by developing their leadership capacity
- Develop the image of a positive, centered self as a significant part of effective leadership.

The findings also suggest considerations for the planning of leadership development programs that include:

- Time for reflection and sharing
- Relationship building among the participants of color
- Balancing competing needs for time (i.e., work, involvement in the community, and meeting family obligations)
- A mentor component

- A learning environment that acknowledges and draws upon the diverse wealth of knowledge and experiences brought by the participants
- Time for meaningful dialogue on ethnic and racial diversity.

Recommendations for further research on leadership development and ethnic and racial leadership are included. They include intensive studies in leadership development, leadership development programs, and promoting and sustaining diverse communities.

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Voices of Leadership: Experiences of People of Color in a Community Leadership Development Program

by
Katherine H. Hiyane-Brown

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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

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Katherine H. Hiyane-Brown, Author

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Voices of Leadership: Experiences of People of Color in a Community Leadership Development Program

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

This qualitative study describes the experiences of participants of color in a community leadership development program. The descriptions are provided by the participants themselves, and enable the reader to hear their "voices." The program selected for the study is the American Leadership Forum (ALF), a national leadership development program found in thirteen cities across the United States. More specifically, the study focuses on the experiences of participants of color in the ALF program in Tacoma-Pierce County, an area with a significant population of diverse ethnic communities in the south Puget Sound area of Washington State.

The research design used the phenomenological method, with in-depth interviews of 10 individuals, all men and women of color, who have participated in the ALF program. This study is unique, seeking to identify and record the voices of the participants of color, separate and apart from the other participants in the ALF program. This research has implications that can enhance the community leadership capacity of people of color and encourage their sustained involvement in civic affairs.

Relevance to Leadership in Higher Education

The research findings of this study may also be transferable to leadership development practices that prepare future community college leaders. Community colleges are faced with a leadership shortage that has reached crisis proportions, as claimed by the American Association of Community Colleges, the national organization of community and technical colleges (Kelly, 2002). The crisis is caused by a significant number of community college leaders who are expected to retire at rapid rates, while the preparation of new leaders is not keeping pace (Shults, 2001).

As suggested by a recent study by York (2001), new community college leaders must be able to be attentive to the communities they serve and to be adept at developing community connections. Civic engagement is a necessary responsibility of a college president (Astin & Astin, 2000; Barwick, 2002; Campus Compact, 2000; Wedler-Johnson, 2003). According to a recent article on leadership in community colleges in the *Community College Journal* (Aug./Sept. 2002), "The proponents of presidential civic engagement contend that the involvement of college presidents in addressing public policy issues is critical to the long term success and health of the nation" (p. 28). In the past few years, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times* have included articles that speak to the diminishing voices of college presidential leadership on matters of public concern and of social issues. There is concern that college presidents have not been strong public leaders, "fearful of speaking out on

social, economic, and moral issues, afraid of shattering the delicate coalitions that they have spent years cultivating" (Hoyle, 2002, p. 26).

Data from a survey conducted by Weisman and Vaughan (2002) and commissioned by the American Association of Community Colleges, demonstrated that community college presidents are involved in civic affairs because of their mission in serving their local communities. Nearly 84% had performed community service or volunteer work during the past year. Approximately 57% said they had helped to raise funds for nonpolitical purposes not related to their colleges. Seventeen percent raised funds for political campaigns. They are, according to the study, genuine believers in civic responsibility and engagement. The study provided evidence that community college presidents were actively engaged in interacting with locally based organizations that related to education and economic development.

Community colleges can assume a major role in preparing emerging leadership in their communities as well as benefit from them (American Association of Community Colleges, 1988). They can provide the leadership to support the efforts in community collaboration in partnership with programs like the American Leadership Forum (Heelan, Redwine, & Black, 2000). "It could be the role of the community college nationally to ensure that leaders who will support a collaborative style of leadership and governance are developed and selected for leadership positions" (p. 43). Several community college leaders, administrators and trustees alike, have engaged in ALF activities in various programs across the

nation. In addition to gaining new knowledge and developing skills in the area of leadership, they have been able to extend their networks, and in turn, broadened community support for their colleges.

Citations in the literature (Boone & Vaughan, 1993; Cohen & Brawer, 1996) have identified community colleges as resources, positioned to affect change through community leadership development programs. Community colleges can also assume a leadership role in identifying strategies to build communities inclusive of ethnic and cultural diversity. Their experiences in developing and supporting diverse student populations can be valuable in designing programs for community leaders. In addition to building upon successful leadership development models and exemplary practices, listening to voices of people of color engaged in learning activities can bring perspectives and insights into how such activities can empower leadership for all.

The Problem

As a nation, the United States thrives on the ideals of civic engagement and civic leadership, which promote the common welfare of the people. What is in question is the adequacy and sustainability of the construct of leadership as it applies to present day communities. The United States is a nation of multiple and diverse communities linked by democratic ideals. Chrislip (2000) refers to a new civic leadership that must come from new and diverse sources. He reflects the belief held by many that changes in society and throughout the global world

demand a radically different approach to solving public problems and developing new leadership. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (1995) stated that: "People must move toward an understanding of community intersections, of profound independence, and of the continuing need for one another's experiences and contributions" (p. 33).

The new global society calls for leadership that is reflective of changing demographics and of the dispersion of community power. Unquestionably, democracy is distinguished by the public conversations about the interest of citizens in creating a better quality of life for themselves (Cortes, 1996). As early as the 1800s, Alex de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1841) referenced the importance of the American propensity for civic association that enabled democracy to work. In accordance with the beliefs of political scientists, sociologists, and historians, the concerns for the welfare of a democratic nation rest in the ability of American society to restore civic engagement by the American people.

The National Civic League identifies civic participation as one of the principal components of a healthy community (Joseph, 1990). Markus (2000) identifies the following three beneficial consequences of civic engagement (p. 3):

- Participation makes for better citizens who demonstrate increased knowledge and understanding of community issues.
- Participation makes for better societies. Engagement in community affairs encourages relationships among citizens, and the ability of a

society to coordinate individual action to provide for the collective good.

- Participation makes for better government. Citizens become active participants and contributors to sound public policy.

The most important factor in nurturing and sustaining effective civic involvement is leadership (Markus, 2000). The conceptualization and understanding of civic leadership that is tied to the emerging diversity in this nation is critical to the maintenance of a democratic society. Civic leadership must speak to the interests and needs of a diverse and changing population. The investment of developing and sustaining local and diverse leadership that provides the energy and resources to promote and nurture civic engagement is evident in healthy communities.

A range of empirical evidence establishes that the quality of public life and the performance of social institutions are influenced by norms and networks of civic engagement in American communities (Putnam, 2000). At the same time, much evidence reflects dramatic signs of erosion of civic engagement in the United States.

> In America's urban ghettoes and suburbs, for example, the last several decades have witnessed a silent erosion of social capital (networks and norms of civic engagement). There are more empty seats at PTA meetings and church masses, for example, and fewer of us spend time on public affairs, particularly political activities. Compared with earlier generations, we are less engaged with one another outside the marketplace and thus less prepared to cooperate for shared goals. This decline in social capital helps

> explain the economic and political troubles of our own democracy (Putnam, 1993, p. 106).

Putnam (1993, 2000) is one of the most prolific of contemporary writers and researchers whose studies call attention to the crisis in American society caused by a decline in civic engagement. He calls for a response to the erosion of American civic institutions and practices, and challenges the American public to revitalize democracy by rebuilding social capital in communities.

In addition to the presence of civic engagement of its people, the quality of public life is also determined by the development and continued support of diverse communities. "How we understand and respond to our diversity is essential to any discussion of social policy in this country; especially how we design strategies to strengthen and foster the existence of social capital" (Chang, 1997, p. 141). In spite of the attention given to the need to promote and develop civic engagement and leadership that is reflective of the diversity of communities, a review of the literature revealed limited research on this topic.

This study also found little research that linked the elements of diversity, civic engagement, and leadership and ways in which they can be mutually developed and sustained through professional development programs. The "what" and "how" of civic leadership determined by listening to the men and women of color who have participated in community leadership development programs such as ALF is yet to be fully discovered. If these voices are not heard, how can communities begin to identify ways to cultivate diverse community leadership and

civic engagement of all people? This study provides a starting point to begin a conversation about community leadership—how it is defined, how it is strengthened, and how it can be sustained.

Focus of the Study

This research study was directed by the following primary goals:

1. To describe the American Leadership Forum (ALF), a program that promotes civic engagement and enhances collaborative leadership in communities across the United States as seen through the experiences of a select group of participants of color. The program meets its mission through an established year-long program of leadership development activities, group projects to meet a community need, and sustained support for collaborative work in the community through the networks and relationship developed among its leader participants.
2. To document the experiences, perspectives, and contributions of people of color who have participated in the program of the Tacoma-Pierce County chapter of the American Leadership Forum. Previous evaluation studies completed on the national ALF program have not purposefully documented the perceptions of its participants of color. The ALF program seeks to diversify its participant base to ensure it is reflective of the communities it exists to serve and to promote collaborative approaches to community problem solving. Yet, there is

little evidence that demonstrates the program has been effective in support of community leadership diversity initiatives or in developing collaborative approaches among its participants of color.

3. To provide insights into a community leadership development program as shared by its participants of color. From the individual perspectives of participants of color, the study identified themes that may be helpful in developing concepts of leadership diversity. These themes may also prove to be useful in understanding the transformational processes that participants undergo in a professional development program such as ALF. Ultimately, it is hoped that this research will enhance the study and practice of leadership; specifically, civic leadership that promotes social capital among and across people from different racial and cultural backgrounds.

The American Leadership Forum

The American Leadership Forum (ALF) is a national leadership development program that is *dedicated to joining and strengthening established leaders in order to serve the public good* (Jaworski, 1996). Its mission is to enhance leadership by building on the strengths of diversity and by promoting collaborative problem solving within and among communities. The program began as an effort to develop social capital through the bringing together of established community leaders to work toward community good. The overarching principle of

the organization is one of servant leadership, serving with compassion and heart, thus empowering participants (Greenleaf, 1966; Jaworski, 1996).

Joe Jaworski, a Houston attorney and businessman, and 17 other prominent Americans, many of whom comprise a Who's Who of leadership (John Gardner, James MacGregor Burns, Warren Bennis, Tom Bradley, Harlan Cleveland, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, and James Stockdale), established ALF in 1980 to address the nation's leadership crisis (www.alfnational.org/history.htm). ALF is designed to prepare key leaders across all sectors to collaborate and develop a national network of leaders who accept responsibility for their communities and the nation's shared concerns. The newly established networks are meant to be different from the old established, exclusionary networks. The hallmarks of the program are access, openness, and a spirit of trust. The program goals (Chrislip, Larson, Smith, & Sweeney, 1992) are stated as:

- ALF identifies and brings leaders together, in preparation for collaboration on significant issues.
- ALF heightens each leader's sense of public responsibility and commitment to act, as a servant leader, upon that responsibility.
- ALF enhances skills and competencies, providing the conceptual framework required to meet new leadership challenges.
- ALF increases the ability of each community to solve its own problems and to make public/private initiatives work.

Cohorts, sometimes referred to as classes, of 20–25 community leaders are nominated and selected to participate in the program each year (see Appendices A and B for nomination form and selection criteria). The participants are identified as established leaders in the community because of their contributions to various community organizations and initiatives. The cohort meets once a month in a seminar format with guest speakers who address topical areas in leadership as well as facilitate discussion within the cohort groups. The program offers a concentration of experiential activities in a year-long time frame, with a focus on developing risk-taking, collaborative problem solving, and teamwork among the participants. These activities include a wilderness challenge and retreats. Activities which bring together the graduates across cohorts/classes of the year-long program are developed by a volunteer board of the organization.

In establishing the foundation for the ALF organization, Jaworski took the fundamental teachings of Robert Greenleaf and suggested that the choice which enables true leadership in all situations is the choice to serve life. Jaworski's belief is that bringing the appropriate people together in constructive ways with good information will assist them to create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of the organization or community (1966, 1977). Public leadership is Jaworski's passion. It led him to create a vision for ALF and to build a network of people who would take responsibility for the health and welfare of the community and work for the common good.

ALF has 13 chapters throughout the United States, one of which is in Tacoma-Pierce County. In 1989, a group of community leaders in Tacoma-Pierce County recognized that existing leadership models were ineffective in solving problems. Additionally, changing demographics within the county, a rising crime rate, and a dispersion of community power created ineffective and inefficient uses of scarce community resources. A group of community leaders heard about a program, the American Leadership Forum (ALF), that encouraged collaborative leadership to solve community problems, and believed it could be a vehicle to develop and strengthen local leadership. The program in Tacoma-Pierce County was launched with eighteen community leaders as participants in 1989. New cohorts or classes of 20-25 leaders were selected each year for the next five years thereafter. A total of 159 community citizen leaders have participated and graduated from the program in its six years of existence. Graduates receive the designee of "senior fellows" upon completion of the year-long leadership development program. From the beginning, it was understood between the founders and fundraisers of the chapter in Tacoma-Pierce County that the program would be supported for only a period of six years. After the sixth class graduated in 1995, the chapter was put on inactive status because of the promise of the initial organizers to its financial supporters that ALF was a program with a limited life span. Collaboration among a large majority of the ALF graduates led to the successful restart of the program in 1998 when a new cohort was selected to begin a slightly modified program of activities in 2000. The restart served as a prime

example of what the ALF founders had hoped would happen; the bringing together of a diverse group of individuals who shared a common goal (in this case, the restart of the ALF program) to benefit the larger community (Tanbara, 2000).

Participants in the program continue to be nominated and selected by a committee of graduates working with locally developed criteria that:

> is a snapshot of the leadership in our community and includes established leaders from the arts, corporate, entrepreneur, media, professions, politics/government, community volunteer, education, labor, religion, non-profit and other sectors. Each cohort of Fellows will reflect the rich diversity of the Tacoma-Pierce County community (unpublished work, Tacoma-Pierce County ALF Selection Criteria).

The formal program is 22 days in length, spread over a period of one year. The program begins with an orientation, followed by an outdoor wilderness experience. The outdoor experience provides individual and team events that lead to levels of risk-taking, and to building trust and community within the group. It culminates with a group climb up a mountain peak—an exercise meant to be a test of trust building and teamwork. "The experiences add new dimensions to their visions of themselves and others and what, together, they can do" (American Leadership Forum program overview, internal document). Monthly seminars in the year-long program provide learning experiences to acquire new knowledge on the current theories of leadership, to develop skills in analyzing and discussing the leadership challenges with guest lecturers, and to engage in discussions within the cohorts about community issues.

The cornerstones of the ALF program have not changed since the beginning of the program and are adopted by every chapter. They are:

- Build trust and networks of diverse leaders
- Motivate leaders to be catalysts for community change
- Strengthen collaborative leadership skills in the arts of democracy
- Explore interconnectedness of communities, the nation, and the world
- Explore/enrich personal values
- Understand and empower self and others
- Explore/understand/value diversity
- Inspire leaders to a lifetime of active public engagement.

A final project that addresses a community problem or need is the capstone activity for each class. Often it is the most challenging activity for the class, with individuals championing their own projects. Group collaboration is required and some cohorts meet with more success than others in completing this phase of the program.

After the year's experiences, the participants are considered ALF graduates. These graduates are also referred to as "senior fellows." The program expectation is that senior fellows continue to engage in sustained efforts to improve the community by taking advantage of the networks established with one another.

A report on the impact of the ALF program sponsored by the National ALF resulted in the following major findings (ALF Research Report, 1999):

The Impact of ALF on Participants

- The networking and bonding effects of their ALF experience were clearly the most memorable and beneficial result of the Fellows program. The ability to access, trust, and collaborate with a network of trained colleagues was most often cited as the key to dealing successfully with complex community issues.
- ALF provides mastery in the skills needed for leaders to create effective strategies for community renewal for the 21st century.
- ALF provides experiences that often lead to personal transformation of its participants through self reflection, discovery, and ongoing learning opportunities.
- Fellows find that their ALF experience carries them to new levels of leadership. They learn to collaborate across class, gender, and ethnic lines—developing a deeper understanding of how to work in difficult situations while gaining a new appreciation of a shared mission and vision for the community.

The Impact of ALF on Communities

- The informal collaborative network created among ALF Fellows or graduates resulted in dramatically increased problem-solving skills, greatly enhanced leadership abilities, and a clarification of goals and issues that benefited the existing social structure.
- A heightened sense of community conscience was developed among the Fellows. Markus, in a 1999 study reviewing the ALF curriculum, concluded

that ALF is very successful in strengthening leaders by facilitating the inner journey of leadership. Other evidence he gathered indicated that ALF succeeds admirably in achieving interconnectedness; strengthening and extending connections among private, public, and independent-sector leaders in communities. Markus (1999) also found the civic projects designed to be the capstone activity for the year-long program have been the least successful and least personally enriching to participants. He concluded that:

> The value that ALF fellows and the public derive from most ALF civic projects is not commensurate with the time and effort expended on them; it is in this aspect of ALF programming that reforms are likely to achieve the greatest leverage, increasing the effectiveness of ALF to serve the public good. (p. 3)

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe and document the experiences of selected participants of color in the American Leadership Program, as perceived by the participants themselves. This study looked beyond results of the previous survey instrument with "checked boxes" and responses in a "comment" section. The study attempts to give voice to participants of color about their ALF experiences and to share their reflections of these experiences. It also further attempts to identify emerging themes from the participant stories gleaned from in-depth interviews that may lead to a better understanding of the nature of their development as citizens and leaders in a community. The study also further

identifies and studies patterns that led to themes of the experiences of these participants of color that leads to a greater understanding of how leadership development programs can support and sustain civic leadership throughout all communities.

The research was undertaken using the following assumptions. First, leadership development programs must be grounded in an understanding of the participants' experiences. Secondly, listening, documenting, and examining individual experiences can lead to an understanding of individual transformation. Finally, self-reflection of participant experiences is a valid source for investigating individual transformation.

Significance of the Study

New leadership and non-traditional leadership approaches are needed to restore levels of civic engagement that will revitalize democracy in America. Community leadership development programs like the American Leadership Forum can be a viable way to respond to the call to action heralded by Putnam (1993, 1995, 2000) to revitalize the country. A greater understanding of the ability of leadership development programs to develop and sustain civic engagement can contribute to more effective practices.

This research also contributes to the knowledge base in the area of leadership development. The review of the literature revealed limited research done in the area of transformation resulting from experiences in leadership

development programs as viewed from the stories of participants, particularly from people of color.

Three known research projects were conducted on the American Leadership Forum (American Leadership Forum-Tacoma-Pierce County Chapter, 2001; Chrislip et al., 1992; and Markus, 1999). Previous studies on the national ALF program focused on the program's ability to meet its stated goals and on curriculum content and curriculum design. The first two projects examined the impact of the program on a national level, while the latter was part of a program evaluation process conducted locally by the ALF Tacoma-Pierce County chapter in 2001. This was the first formal evaluation effort conducted by the local chapter since it was established. It consisted of a survey sent to all ALF participants, both past and present, about their ALF experiences. The intent was to measure the program's effectiveness in meeting its goals and the goals of the participants. The chapter's evaluation included a question format in a survey using a five-point scale, asking respondents to rate their knowledge, feelings, and attitudes. It did not include a component of individual or group interviews. This study enriched the survey data that was collected by this researcher and contributed to the overall understanding of the ALF program and its impact on community leadership.

In Tacoma-Pierce County, approximately 30 percent of the population is characterized as Hispanic/Latino, African, Asian/Pacific Islander, and as "other" representing racial minority groups. The ALF program has a history of ensuring, through an intensive selection process, that participants are reflective of the

diversity of the communities they serve. A conscious effort is made to ensure diversity is reflected in the participants in order to promote a greater understanding of diversity issues as well as to increase opportunities to work with diverse leaders and prepare leaders who are diverse.

Greater understanding of the perceptions of the ALF experiences by the participants of color will enhance support for sustained civic engagement of, and leadership by, people of color in the community. Documenting the stories of the participants in this study illustrates the individual transformations that occurred while engaged in and as a result of, the ALF program. These transformations lead to an understanding of how people of color define themselves and the "public culture that defines their status and identities within the cosmos of the dominant (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 348).

The recorded interviews of the participants of color in this study give voice to other participants of color who may not otherwise be heard. Listening to these voices helps to build stronger community leadership development programs that can sustain networks among community leaders. Although this research was not intended to evaluate the program or its activities, the use of empowerment evaluation techniques, specifically documenting the voices of the ALF participants, can obtain valuable insight into building community capacity in Tacoma-Pierce County.

Openness to the experiences of people from different racial backgrounds is significant in its contribution to community building and developing community

leadership capacity. Only with further studies of people of color as individuals, as leaders, and as members of a larger community, can effective leadership in a diverse society be developed and sustained.

Lastly, the results of the study can be used to complement other research in the area of civic engagement, responsibility, and leadership. The themes drawn from the interviews provide information that could be valuable in creating approaches to leadership development for all people.

Research Questions

1. What were the experiences of the participants of color in the ALF program as described by the participants themselves?
2. What is the significance of the ALF experience to the individual participant of color?
    a. What is the significance of the ALF experience to the individual's perception of her/his leadership abilities?
    b. What is the significance of the ALF experience to the individual's commitment to community as described by the participants of color?
3. Are there commonalities in the experiences as described by the participants of color?

Delimitations of the Study

The study focuses on recording the experiences of a select group of individuals of color who participated in the Tacoma-Pierce County ALF program during the years 1989-2000. The study relied entirely on the participants' recollections of their experiences in the year-long program—from their orientation leading up to and including their involvement in present activities for ALF graduates. Research was conducted via one-on-one, face-to-face interviews. The sample included 10 past participants selected to represent the ethnic and racial diversity reflected in the program's participants since its inception in 1989.

The participants were aware of the researcher's interest in gaining insight into their ALF experiences. They were also aware that the participants in the study were all participants of color and because of that knowledge, may have directed their responses toward their feelings around ethnicity and race.

Limitations of the Study

The pool of participants for the study was limited. The total number of past participants of ALF number during the 1989-2001 time period was 159. Of the 159 graduates, 44 were persons of color. The selection criteria developed to select a group of participants to be included in the study were based on the following considerations: 1) participants are graduates of the ALF program between the years of 1989-2001; 2) participants represent a major racial and ethnic group; 3) the group of participants represent each of the ALF graduating classes I-VII; 4) the

group of participants reflect a balance of representation by gender; 5) participants are accessible and willing to voluntarily participate in the study. The criteria were deemed by the researcher to provide broad and diverse representation of the participants in the program in Tacoma-Pierce County.

After identifying an eligible pool of participants for the study, the researcher scheduled interviews with individuals who were available at the time the research was conducted. At the beginning of the interview process, that number had been set at 7 participants; however, after the first few interviews, those who were interviewed suggested other individuals to be included in the study. As a result of these recommendations, the researcher extended an invitation to three additional graduates, who also willingly agreed to participate in the study (see Appendix C for letter of invitation and Appendix D for informed consent for participants). Ten ALF graduates of color participated in the study.

The study was limited to a retrospective look at the interviewee's experiences, some of them occurring as long ago as 12 years from the time of the interviews. The interviews are accounts that are reflective of the participants' personal perceptions and viewpoints.

Researcher Disclosure

The researcher is herself a past participant of the ALF program and brings her perspectives to the study. The ALF organization is of particular interest to the researcher because of her involvement, both past and present, in the Tacoma-Pierce

County ALF program. She is presently serving a 6-year term on the Board of Directors of the ALF Tacoma-Pierce County chapter. She continues to work to strengthen the program and to continually assess its impact on individual participants and the greater community.

As part of her responsibilities as a member of the program planning committee, the researcher was involved in the evaluation of the curriculum for the Tacoma-Pierce County ALF chapter, which resulted in a report entitled *the 2001 ALF Tacoma-Pierce County Chapter Alumni Survey Report*, administered and analyzed by Organizational Research Services, a private consulting firm. Her experiences in coordinating the restart of the program in the community assisted her efforts to review the ALF program through discussion with its graduates. In the course of her conversations, she was able to solicit ideas and specific strategies to enhance the program's activities. It also provided an opportunity for her to reflect upon her experiences in the ALF program. The "stories" that were traded between the ALF graduates was what sparked her interest in the messages behind the stories. Her experiences were consistent with those in her cohort, particularly to other participants of color. The conversations piqued her curiosity about the impact of the ALF experience; hence, her interest in pursuing the answers to the study's research questions.

The researcher has a strong commitment to issues of diversity and of empowering people of color in the communities in which she works and lives. She has found through her personal experiences that the voices of people of color are

infrequently sought. Her belief is that a society which truly demonstrates inclusiveness is one whose leadership is passionate and committed to diversity, and is able to motivate others to question and change the status quo. Her intent is that the study will provide the opportunity for the interviewed participants to be acknowledged and to be heard, so future leaders can continue their work in building diverse communities.

The researcher was personally acquainted with nine of the 10 graduates who were interviewed, primarily through her interactions with them while engaged in ALF activities. There were two individuals that she had met previously in her professional work. The established credibility of the researcher as herself an ALF graduate provided an open and trusting environment for the interviews. After the researcher employed her selection criteria that assisted her in identifying a representative and manageable group of participants in the study, the participants were called or asked to participate in the study. Those who were contacted willingly agreed to participate. The participants appeared to be comfortable in sharing their stories, primarily due to the relaxed nature of the conversations and the sense of trust that was established between the researcher and each individual participant.

All interviews were conducted in person by the researcher. The relationships between the researcher and the participants in the study were appropriate, and were as Seidman (1991) described these types of relationships, "marked by respect, interest, attention, and good manners on the part of the

interviewer" (p. 74). The relationships were built on honesty and an openness that allowed for introspection on the part of the participants and to some extent, risk-taking. Risk-taking was involved because the feelings shared with the interviewer were those that may not have been openly discussed or shared by the participants with others.

Every attempt was made to ensure that the voices of the participants in the study were accurately recorded and directly quoted in written materials, to dismiss any perceptions that the researcher may have inserted her viewpoints in the reporting. There is recognition by the researcher that the meanings gleaned from the interviews are, to some degree, a function of the participants' interaction with the interviewer (Seidman, 1991, p. 16). However, the researcher offered to share with the participants any written transcripts or analyses of their interviews. Accurately representing the various perspectives of the participants was important to the researcher. She clearly explained the participant rights to those that she interviewed to allay objections to the researcher's findings and conclusions of the study.

The issues of class and status posed some initial concern with the researcher during the interviews, but were quickly dismissed because of the ease, comfort, and openness which characterized the mood of each of the participants when sharing their experiences. Some of the participants were more cautious and guarded in their comments because of their professional and public roles in the community.

Others did not make reference to their personal lives, while others provided examples of the impact of their ALF experiences to their personal lives.

Some concerns were expressed by the Board of the ALF chapter in Tacoma-Pierce County about the study. The researcher asked for an acknowledgement that such a study was being undertaken by an ALF graduate. The request prompted board review of policy and procedure on the endorsement of activities undertaken by ALF members. Conversations about the study were pursued by the researcher. The board ultimately acknowledged the study after their questions were answered to their satisfaction by the researcher.

Summary

Studies cite the influence of civic engagement on the quality of public life and the performance of social institutions. Evidence exists that the single most important factor in effective civic involvement is leadership. Recent leadership studies have called attention to the need for leadership development and training programs with a focus on strengthening community leadership. In the past, these studies have been supported by literature on traditional leadership models focused on white male leadership that are hierarchical in nature. A new perspective which acknowledges the presence of civic leadership that reflects the diversity of local communities and the nation is essential to the preservation of democratic principles in American society.

There is growing attention to, and demand for, the development of new, emerging and diverse voices of leadership, although there is scarce research conducted on the effects of community leadership development programs on people of color. This study, based on in-depth interviews with a select group of community leaders of color, can further the understanding of, and increase the knowledge about, leadership and leadership development in community building. This study also, through the interview process, gave voice to those not yet heard or documented among the participants of color.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature on the general topic of leadership is voluminous and continues to grow as organizations change, and accordingly, leadership models must grow to accommodate them. The aim of this study was to add to the body of knowledge by providing insights into leadership development and practice. With that in mind, the review of the literature for this study focused on the following general areas of knowledge: civic engagement and the role of leadership in its development and support, leadership development, and leadership in a diverse and global community. These topical areas acknowledge the following perspectives shared by this study. The first suggests that civic engagement and social capital are essential ingredients of a healthy community and vital to sustaining American democracy. Secondly, leadership and leadership development is critical to the development of social capital. Lastly, work for the common good is essential in a diverse and multiethnic/racial society.

Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is a hallmark of democracy and a civil society. American society is distinguished by democratic ideals and is about focusing on the concerns and interests of its citizens. In a visit to the U.S. in the 1830s, Tocqueville

observed that American society was dominated by the active participation of citizens in associations of all types. He identified the presence of numerous associations and interactions of the citizens within these associations as the hallmarks of American democracy. Since that time, "there has been a wide range of empirical evidence that the quality of public life and the performance of social institutions are influenced by norms and networks of civic engagement" (Putnam, 1995, p. 3).

Publication of Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2000) brought recent national public attention to the concepts of civic engagement and social capital in the United States. Social capital is described as "connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (p. 19). Putnam laments the erosion of social capital in American society, citing downward trends in civic engagement and social capital as measured by participation levels of the American people in political and religious activity, volunteer rates, and connections in the workplace and in informal settings.

Between 1973 and 1994 in the U.S., the number of men and women assuming any leadership role in any local organization decreased by more than 50% and the decline accelerated between 1985 and 1994 (Putnam, 2000). Putnam illustrates the development and decline of social capital by using the example of informal social connections created by bowling leagues. Bowling has been, and continues to be, a popular competitive sport in America. Between 1980 and 1993,

the total number of bowlers in America increased by 10% while league bowling decreased by more than 40%.

> The decline in league bowling threatens the livelihood of bowling lane proprietors, because according to the owner of one of the nation's largest bowling lane chains, the money in bowling is in the beer and the pizza, not the balls and shoes. The broader social significance, however, lies in the social interaction and even occasionally civic conversations over beer and pizza that solo bowlers forgo. (p. 113)

Bowling leagues create social interaction and conversations among the players that in turn, creates shared enthusiasm and a certain sense of community. Putnam's example of the significance of the networks created in bowling alleys prompted national recognition of the critical need to develop and sustain social capital.

Social capital, networks, and norms of civic engagement are characterized by an active participation in public affairs and a focus on the public good rather than on individual ends. Putnam's social capital theory is based on the core idea that social networks have value. His research focuses on a community's ability to develop and strengthen relationships among citizens, to foster norms of trust and cooperation, and to bring about positive social change in America.

Putnam's work is not without its critics. Portes (1998) identified limitations in the definition of social capital and its benefits to the public. The negative effects of social capital include: 1) the fact that strong ties within a group allowed members to bar access to others; 2) the activities of the members of strongly connected groups were limited by the activities of others in the group who were

less able to compete economically; and 3) group participation created expectations of conformity that, in turn, limited creativity.

Putnam, however, is not a single voice in expressing concerns about the decline in civic engagement (Chang, 1997; Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Cortes, 1996; Duhl, 1997; Ehrlich, 2000; Gardner, 1994a; Jaworski, 1996; Markus, 2000; Solo & Pressberg, 1998). Political disengagement and the expression of excessive individualism are of growing concern in contemporary American culture.

> The consequences of this cultural climate include a growing sense that Americans are not responsible for or accountable to each other; a decline in civility, mutual respect, and tolerance; and the preeminence of self-interest and individual preference over concern for the common good. (Ehrlich, 2000, xxii)

Markus' (2000) study on civic engagement focused on organizational and institutional practices that facilitate effective civic engagement. Data was collected from a two-year study using interviews with nearly 200 civic leaders, public officials, and other individuals involved in community organizations and boards in 14 U.S. cities. Findings included identification of local initiatives that engaged residents in effective political action. Civic participation tended to be highest in cities where residents perceived that meaningful opportunities existed for them to get involved. There was high correlation between satisfaction ratings of residents in communities in areas where there is high civic involvement. Conclusions from the study found:

1. Civic engagement matters (Couto, 1997; Markus, 2000; Putnam, 1994; Ramaley, 2000). Residents of cities with high levels of citizen involvement

tend to give high job approval ratings to local government. They also tend to rate their cities highly in terms of neighborhood safety, quality of public education, mutually respectful racial and ethnic relations, and overall pride of residents in their city. Participation enhances the quality of governance, which in turn encourages future participation (p. 38).

2. Community is about individual and collective spirit. Building community is about human beings requiring relationships that need to be supported by organizations and institutions in order to thrive (Solo & Pressberg, 1998). The fundamental premise of community building is collaboration and the belief that if the appropriate people are brought together in constructive ways and provided with good information, they will create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of the community (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). This supports an emerging shared leadership model of collaboration between the established leadership of communities and local citizens.
3. Community building, in an increasingly complex and changing world, is recognized as a strategy to bring about a positive future. Research on community building found that successful communities are those which practice the collaborative advantage (Dionne, 1998; Gardner, 1994b; Henton, Melville & Walesh, 1997; Kenworthy, 1997; Kretzman & McKnight, 1993). The collaboration is characterized by the following elements (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Gardner, 1990; Joseph, 1990):

- A shared culture, with shared norms and values
- Strong stakeholder groups representative of the diversity of the community
- Credibility and openness of process and communication
- Commitment and/or involvement of high-level, visible leaders
- Participation and sharing of leadership tasks by encouraging individual involvement and citizen participation
- Environment of caring, trust, and teamwork
- Interim successes that reward and renew the energies of individuals and groups
- A shift to broader concerns—ability to recognize and deal with complex issues
- Acknowledgement that the community should establish linkages with the larger communities of which it is a part.

A study sponsored by the W. K. Kellogg Leadership Studies Project (Peirce & Johnson, 1998) examined 10 major metropolitan areas in the United States, as did a comparable study conducted by Markus (2000) of 14 U.S. cities. Each of the cities examined met their challenges with collaborative efforts across communities, inviting individuals who were in leadership roles, some of whom represented interests that were never publicly recognized. Successful problem solving occurred in communities where there was communication, coordination, and collaborative action by many entities, institutions, organizations, agencies, and individuals.

Agreement to work toward improving community was a goal common of all stakeholders. As a result of the collaboration, new leadership models emerged, making a positive difference in community renewal and development.

While there is recognition in support of citizen participation that makes for better citizens, better government, and better societies, there is evidence that suggests that one of the most significant factors in sustaining effective, broad-based civic involvement is through civic leadership. Markus' (2000) preliminary research findings of civic engagement identified a critical link between leadership and effective and enduring civic involvement. In fact, collaborative leadership was found to be the single most important factor in nurturing and sustaining broad-based civic engagement.

> Community leadership can be a critical factor in fostering civic engagement, provided leaders nurture a collaborative process that shares information, respects and leverages the diversity of interests and perspectives in the community, builds residents' capacity in the arts of democratic politics, and manages effectively the transition from deliberation to results.(p. 37)

Markus also identified a link between high levels of civic engagement and high performance ratings for city government. High engagement among people in cities can also be detected in racial and ethnic relations. The more people take part in the civic life of their city, the more diverse groups can relate to one another in productive, positive, mutually respectful ways (Senge & Kaufer, 2000).

Leadership and Leadership Development

> We are currently living through such a period of transformation and change. The forces at work in our lives today—political, technological, and social—are as dramatic and powerful as were the Declaration of Independence and the steam engine two centuries ago. The end of the cold war age of ideology, the expansion of world markets, and the knowledge revolution are shaping our future.... (Bradley, 1998)

Bradley described the "unfolding of a new chapter in the American story" requiring new leadership paradigms in a diverse and global community (Astin & Astin, 2000; Cleveland, 1997; Conger, 1992; Green, 1988; Henton et al., 1997; Petersen, 1999). In response to the call for new leadership in changing times, Gardner (1997) stated:

> We need to do a better job of recruiting and preparing community builders, from youth to business leaders, to be effective in this new culture of collaboration... What we need, and what seems to be emerging in some of our communities, is something new—networks of responsibility drawn from all segments coming together to create a wholeness that incorporates diversity. The participants must come to be at home with change and exhibit a measure of shared values, a sense of mutual obligation and trust. Above all, they must develop a sense of responsibility for the future of the whole city and region. (p. iii)

Modern organizations in a democratic society call for leadership that is relational in nature; that is, leaders who use a process of bringing people together to accomplish positive change in communities (Drath, 1996; Heifetz, 1994; Rost, 1991). They are able to practice leadership that is collaborative, legitimate, and promotes citizen participation and responsibility.

The framework within which relational leadership occurs embraces the principles of collaborative leadership (Chrislip & Larson, 1994, pp. 138-146). It incorporates:

- inspiration of commitment and action
- leadership as a key to problem solving
- building broad based involvement sustaining hope and participation.

Legitimate authority or leadership is described as that which occurs:

> ...within a context of a set of values that are supported by their community. Leaders are most accountable when they act in the interest of the group from which they obtained their writ of legitimate authority, as well as when they employ democratic aspects of leadership. (Walters, 2003, p. 3)

Legitimate leadership requires trust generated by the mutual commitment of both leaders and constituents to a common set of norms and goals.

Grassroots organizations have been at the heart of the American communities movement and provide a model that exemplifies relational leadership, legitimate authority, citizen responsibility, and involvement. They are organized on the bases of empowerment of the involved, the inclusiveness of people and diverse perspectives, ethical actions, and actions that are purposeful and supportive of common goals (Lucas, Komives, & McMahon, 1998). They also lay the groundwork for many leadership development efforts.

Communities around the United States have given increased attention to leadership development programs that respond to fill the leadership gap (Brant, 1995; Cruze, 1998; Earnest, 1996; Earnest, Ellsworth, Nieto, McCaslin, &

Lackman, 1995). A study conducted in the late 1990s (Fredricks, 1998) exploring community leadership training programs revealed 650-750 such programs in the United States. These leadership training programs grew from grassroots efforts in communities and cities. They were developed with the belief that communities can change for the better through awareness, networking, and training (Earnest, 1996; Fredricks, 1998; Markus, 1999, 2000). Leadership succession and the diversification of leadership were also anticipated outcomes of these formally organized activities.

Gardner dedicated a significant part of his professional life to the study of community and the role of collaborative leadership. Recommendations from *The Uniting America Series* (2001), which he directed, encouraged government, business, and nonprofit organizations to work together to create increased collaboration. One of the recommendations called for additional funding for leadership development and training for community leaders. The concept that a network of leaders can be joined and strengthened to serve their communities was the basis for leadership development programs such as the American Leadership Forum.

Traditional leadership development programs focused on skills development. However, the new ways in which they are now directed "involve the interconnecting of being and doing. They will connect both competence and character in the pedagogy and practice of leadership" (Scott, 2000). In doing so, a self examination of a leader's perspectives is critical in appreciating differences of

others. Characteristics of an effective leadership development program (Lucas et al., 1998; Heelan et al., 2000; Yee, 1997) are found to include:

- creating a safe environment for learning new behaviors and substantive discourse
- a deliberate creation of support networks
- learning that focus on skills of collaboration
- coaching of new skills and strategies
- mentoring that continues beyond the program's duration.

The focus from "a leader" to a "community of leaders" is the basis of community leadership development programs that are designed to build social capital. They begin by identifying and cultivating persons to become leaders in their respective communities, while at the same time developing strong relationships with others. One of the cited benefits of this approach to community leadership development is a higher level of citizen involvement and volunteer activity (Earnest, 1996; Williams; 2001).

The literature review on the topic of community leadership revealed the extensive research and development efforts of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation in this area. The Foundation's goal has been to "improve the capacity of participants to solve broad problems facing society and to deliver better human services to each social and cultural group in their communities... and lead to strong networking and collaboration" (1998). One of the Foundation's recent initiatives has been in the

area of sponsored leadership development with a program series entitled *Leadership for Community Change*. It focuses on individual skill development and community change for the common good through a multi-year program. The program includes readings, guest lecturers, and skill building activities. A unique feature of the program is dedicated time for study outside of one's professional disciplines as a way of teaching participants about risk-taking.

The *Leadership for Community Change* leadership development program is one of numerous models developed to strengthen collaborative community activities. Successful programs incorporate elements of personal growth experiences, conceptual development, feedback, and skill building, each building upon one another (Conger, 1992). The results of the programs can be found in the following:

- connectedness of individuals and organizations within a community
- understanding of the interrelationships of issues, power, and change in a community
- network that is fostered within and outside the community
- on-going support of leaders in using new skills or strategies.

Leadership development programs provide the means by which community leadership can be developed and sustained in a time of significant change. These organized efforts build on responsible leadership that is collaborative and engaged in purposeful work for the common good. The outcomes of these programs that are sought are civic engagement of citizens, the development of social capital that can

be used to strengthen communities, and leadership representative of the diversity of its communities.

Individual and Personal Transformation

In its extensive efforts to study the development of new leadership, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation surveyed participants at a leadership conference and identified a number of leadership challenges (1998). The first was in the arena of "self" and individual development. Creating opportunities for in-depth discussions on personal challenges is addressed in fellowship and professional development programs. The topics include balancing work and family, risk-taking, developing self confidence, self-preservation, and time for reflection.

The people whose leadership made a difference in their communities are characterized as those who had reached a point in their career where they have achieved success and status, and want to give back to the community that supported their personal and professional success (Henton et al., 1997). They engage in community activities hoping to make a difference, and at the same time, pursue a means to address their personal development needs. "They are civic entrepreneurs that have access to resources—contacts, skills, experience, and credibility" (Henton et al., 1997). These individuals enjoy challenges, particularly the challenge of solving problems. They also value new types of camaraderie they gain through collaborative efforts.

Studies of the behaviors of individuals involved in grassroots organizations conducted by Kieffer (1984, p. 36) found that "community involvement contributed to their feelings of empowerment and of their abilities to implement change." Kieffer (1984) defined empowerment as "the connection between a sense of personal competence and a desire for, and a willingness to, take action in the public domain." Those involved with community activities reported a greater sense of political efficacy, competence and mastery, and personal satisfaction in their work (Adams & Parr, 1998; Bruffee, 2002; Gardner, 1994b; Peirce & Johnson, 1998).

Examining the lives of individuals who are committed to their communities is an integral part of understanding civic engagement and community building. One of the most comprehensive modern studies in this area was documented in *Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World* (Daloz, Keen, Keen, & Parks, 1996). The research sought to uncover, through in-depth interviews, people who were committed in their work for the community and who gave their lives to work on behalf of the common good. The patterns they found across the lives of the people were analyzed from a hundred interviews conducted over several years. The patterns were illustrated by the stories and perspectives of the people they interviewed. The individual characteristics of those committed to work toward the common good which were uncovered in the study included:

- A sense of being in a complex world where life is deeply interconnected
- Recognition of time and space—that systemic change must occur over time

- A preference for collaborative work
- Value nurturing relationships and human connection
- Becoming part of a community that values relationships with others
- Listening to ones' inner voices, the ability to reflect upon ones' own inner world, and a spirit of generosity and forgiveness
- Being sustained by the knowledge there were others among friends and colleagues who share a common purpose.

Daloz et al. (1996) found that constructive engagement with others was the single most critical element of commitment to civic engagement and to helping others in the lives of those they studied. The study also reinforced the significance of human connections and relationships that are found to consistently sustain individuals who work toward the common good.

The study also revealed the following about the people they interviewed: 1) the most frequently cited reason for doing volunteer work was a sense of "feeling good" as a result of meeting people; 2) personal suffering in the participants' families or in a close relationship were motivators to individuals who were driven by a spiritual imperative; and 3) they were individuals who had come to terms with their own limitations and who exhibited a certain degree of vulnerability.

The researchers documented the ways in which the individual efforts of these people were sustained over time and found:

> The people we studied were formed little by little, step by step to become the kind of citizens they are. Their commitment was not skin deep, nor were the daily choices they made impulsive. They

> had grown that way over the years... Moreover, commitment snowballs. Each step builds on the prior one and prepares for the next. As one of the interviewees put it, "We are only asked to take one step that makes another step possible." (Daloz et al., 1996, p. 210)

The stories shared by the participants in the Daloz et al. (1996) study were powerful. According to the researchers:

> Along with this growth in awareness, the stories, images, and symbols that invigorated those communities came to take on richer meaning, igniting the fire of a common imagination, and moving them toward responsible action. At the same time, the very dialogue of their lives—with both their inner and outer worlds—was marked by a quality of confession that enabled them to keep their balance in the midst of the world's complexity, their despair, and their own fallibility.... Almost without their noticing, their roots had taken a fierce and luxuriant hold in the soil of the world, and they had become dedicated spirits, the people we need. (p. 211)

A consistent theme found in the people who were interviewed was the way in which they engaged with people different from themselves.

> They learned again to redraw the boundaries between "self" and "other." Over time, the sense of who "we" are grew larger, more encompassing, as they participated in and grew through communities that both formed and nourished them. As their understanding of community expanded, so did their own awareness of who they were in the wider life of the commons (p. 211).

They were able to develop a sense of comfort and confidence in working within the diverse communities in which they lived. What they discovered about "self" and "other" can contribute to the learning that should occur in addressing issues of diversity.

Diversity of Leadership

> We Americans have often been unable to see deeper than skin color or eye shape to the heart and individuality of all Americans... How successful have we been in building a nation of full and equal inclusion for all? What is society's responsibility, what is the responsibility of the individual? What kind of stewardship will best serve America's emerging cultural pluralism? (Bradley, 1998)

The question of the type of leadership that best serves America's emerging cultural pluralism is one that must be asked. The need to examine the concepts of leadership and diversity in modern times is reflected in the literature (Burns, 1978; Ciulla, 2000; Cobbs & Turnock, 2000; Delgado, 1991; Heifetz, 1994; Hoppe, 1998; Kouzes, 1995; Offerman, 1997; West, 1993; Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1998).

> New leadership voices committed to making a difference in communities are emerging from very different contexts and bring vastly different perspectives and experiences. The diversity of voices was continually identified as an asset in setting the community priorities, and addressing community issues or problems. (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, n.d.)

A study (Markus, 1999) conducted of civic participation found that, almost without exception, the most effective and admired civic leaders were individuals who productively utilized the asset of diversity. Diversity of perspectives and insights can be mobilized to perform community work, make it more inclusive, and thus more effective. The community of belonging that Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers described (as cited in Markus, 1999, p. 21) as:

> Belonging together is defined by a shared sense of purpose, not by shared beliefs about specific behaviors. The call of that purpose attracts individuals, but does not require them to shed their uniqueness. Staying centered on what the work is together, rather

> than on single identities, transforms the tension of belonging and individuality into energetic and resilient communities.

Understanding the issues of diversity is critical to modern day leadership. It can be examined in the context of contemporary society where:

> Most existing models of leadership have been developed and validated with white, male managers working with a homogeneous group of white, male followers. What is needed is a closer examination of what happens to the process of leadership in the more diverse environments that typify today's organizations, and which will even more strongly typify tomorrow's. (Offerman, 1997, p. 2)

Culture influences leadership behavior (i.e., coping with risk and uncertainty) but there remains much to learn about cultural understanding of leadership (Austin, 1998). One's culture and worldview influence the role of leaders and leadership. People from diverse cultural contexts may respond to leadership and empowerment in dissimilar ways, making it difficult, for example, to lead through collaboration. Culture also influences leader-follower relationships and issues of empowerment, values, expectations, and views of what is defined as "good leadership" (Offerman, 1997; Robie, Kaster, Nilsen, & Hazucha, 2002).

Central to the idea of the need to adopt a more cooperative relationship among people is the concept of collaborative and empowering leadership (Astin & Leland, 1991). Empowerment is, in itself, a complex concept. It becomes even more so in the context of leadership representative of diverse communities. The U.S. has a cultural tradition that is consistent in many ways with empowerment of the individual and not the collective (Offerman, 1997).

Cultural tradition dictates the type of leadership behavior and style that is consistent with societal norms. Research conducted in a variety of settings suggests definitions of effective leadership differ depending on culture (Robie et al., 2002). Followers in a given cultural context, for example, expect leader authoritarianism. Empowerment is seen as a dereliction of leader responsibility. Offerman (as found in Kellerman & Matusak, *Cutting Edge Leadership*, 2000) proposed the concept of culturally intelligent leadership that is defined as "a leader's ability to engage in leadership behaviors that require adaptive behaviors" (p. 87). She affirms through her research that cultural intelligence is a key factor to effective leadership in a diverse society.

A review of the literature revealed little research on cross-cultural leadership. There is growing interest in this area, however, largely due to the need to prepare leaders to lead globally. In addressing diversity and leadership, the literature focuses on the United States workforce, which has become increasingly more diverse. The increased presence of women in leadership positions has sparked numerous studies on women's leadership styles and behaviors (Astin & Leland, 1991; Bookman & Morgen, 1988; Gentile, 1994). Other studies from the perspective of leadership diversity (Astin & Leland, 1991; Cobbs & Turnock, 2000; Gentile, 1994; Walters & Smith, 1999) addressed leadership by individuals representing various racial groups, e.g. African American leaders. There were few sources citing studies conducted on Asian American leadership or those of Latinos/ Hispanics, or Native Americans.

Research studies based on racial and ethnic populations were limited in scope, focused on targeted populations. For example, the following areas of study were found: leadership in organizations in Taiwan and Asian women in management (Judge, 2001; Jung & Yammarino, 2001). Research which focused on building civic leadership among people of color was scarce.

A literature search on leadership diversity reflected the increasing presence of women in leadership positions, with numerous sources on women's leadership styles and behaviors (Astin & Leland, 1991; Gentile, 1994). When leadership diversity is addressed from a racial and ethnic perspective, current studies focused on leadership by individuals representing various racial groups, e.g. African American leaders (Astin & Leland, 1991; Cobbs & Turnock, 2000; Gentile, 1994; Walters & Smith, 1999).

Communities in the United States are reflective of the great complexity and diversity found in modern society. In order to be a leader in these diverse communities, the concept Gardner refers to as *wholeness incorporating diversity* is an important one. It is the concept of:

> ...valuing and embracing diversity toward a mutual goal—in the case of community, it is the valuing and acknowledgement of diverse peoples and viewpoints to work toward the common good. It is, in the community sense, a shared culture, with shared norms and values. (1990, p. 116)

James Joseph (1990), President of the Council on Foundations, suggested that the common ground which transcends countries and cultures, religion and race, is the convergence of three ideas. The first is the idea of a civil society; the second,

civic engagement; and third, the idea of personal and social transformation. These ideas emphasize the importance of civic vitality and community building that can transcend differences and become common ground for American communities. These ideas reflect the principle concepts of ALF.

The importance of civic engagement and the development of social capital comprise the characteristics of social life in a community—the people and their relationships to one another. Social capital is integral to the ability of racial and ethnic groups to develop and retain their individual identities and histories, as well as to find the common ground that can bind them together (Chang, 1997; James MacGregor Burns Academy of Leadership, 1998; Putnam; 2000).

Both Putnam (2000) and Chang (1997) speak to generating social capital through the engagement of individuals in community group activities. Joiners become more tolerant, less cynical, and more empathetic to the misfortunes of others. When people lack connections to others, they are unable to test the veracity of their own views, whether in the give-and-take of casual conversation or in more formal deliberation (Putnam, 2000, p. 288).

Putnam challenges citizens to connect with people unlike themselves in order to develop community and support American democratic ideals. As leaders of diverse backgrounds work together, they recognize their common humanity and common ground (Keddy, 2001).

American society is becoming increasingly more diverse, and the demographic shifts have prompted questions about how we function as a society,

the leadership that is needed, and the common ground to remain cohesive amidst our differences (Chang, 1997). The recommendations introduced by Chang were intended to provoke continuing dialogue about creating a multicultural democracy. They include the following (p. 143-147):

1. Recognize and support different ways of generating social capital. This is accomplished by becoming aware that social capital reflects a wide range of factors including economic conditions, racial experience, linguistic background, and cultural practices and beliefs. Diverse communities identify different ways of generating social capital that may not be readily apparent to traditional societies. Social capital may be found in community activities beyond the traditional civic organizations such as the memberships in the Lions, Kiwanis, and Rotary clubs. It may be found in people and their interactions in the community that reflect the background, cultural practices, and beliefs other than those representing Western European perspectives. Promoting social capital to diverse groups also means helping people to understand that their individual welfare is dependent upon the well being of a larger society and one that shares core values (Chang, 1997).
2. Identify common values that bind a diverse society. This awareness is critical of a society which holds myths that everyone is alike or that people are so diverse that they hold nothing in common.

3. Increase awareness of the interdependence across differences in race, language, and culture. Social capital requires interests for the common good, rather than on individual interests (Putnam, 2000).
4. Invest in leadership development to prepare people who have the skills and capacity to value a diverse society, engage in collaborative processes, develop an understanding of how cultural backgrounds are shaped by world view and behavior, and affirm common values, goals, and challenges across differences in race, language, and culture.

In the Daloz et al. (1996) study, people committed to the common good used their diversity to achieve collective purposes while still maintaining their individual identities and perspectives. Their commitment derived from knowing that they were bound to one another and to the world. These citizen leaders were able to:

> practice an imagination that continually builds bridges across boundaries between tribes, makes connections through the gaps between competing ideologies, dismantles the fortifications around alienated constituencies, forges bonds beneath cynical interpretations, and repeatedly reframes a more adequate embrace of the whole so as to recast prejudice, stereotypes, and inadequate assumptions into forms that are more truthful because they take more into account. (Daloz et al., 1996, p. 202)

The Daloz et al. (1996) study did not focus on the race or ethnicity of the people they studied; however, the people of color shared some challenges in their conversations.

> We cannot draw any definitive conclusions, but having listened to the accounts of their lives, and informed by other studies, we can

> speculate that their commitment often comes at a greater price than it does for others... perhaps the stress of serving as bridges between two worlds, an experience described as "the loneliness and pain of endless and constant translation was a factor leading to ill health. It is harder to find places where they can be at home in the same way that others can, and the choice to forgive one's oppressors bears a cost." (p. 175)

Perfection was almost always mentioned by people of color in the study, feeling that they had to be more diligent than others (Daloz et al., 1996). These individuals felt they not only represented themselves, but also their race. Individuals appeared to use these motivations to engage in work for the common good. Personal suffering moved some to action and "it is impossible to ignore the role that the experience of suffering played in the lives of many who chose to commit themselves to work on behalf of the common good (Daloz et al., 1996, p. 185).

The challenges toward building a community that preserves the diversity of individuals, yet reach for coherence, can be met, according to Gardner (1994), if the following conditions exist:

- a reasonable core of shared values characterizes a community
- members of a community are treated with respect, integrity, and respectful of individual differences
- continuous collaboration and communication among and between all segments of a community.

The interest in the development of a diverse leadership can examine and model practices established by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and local community development initiatives. Their best practices can serve to develop and sustain the

leadership that is needed to develop and sustain engaged citizens and collaboration in today's communities.

Summary

The literature acknowledges that civic engagement and social capital are essential ingredients of a healthy community and vital to sustaining democracy. Recommendations from recent research (Burns, 1978; Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Gardner, 1990; Heifetz, 1994; Kellerman & Matusak, 2000; Schein; 1992; Wheatley, 1992) identify the need for the development of leadership skills that promote collaborative, functioning communities. The call for effective leadership development was made by Heifetz (2000, p. 58) when he said:

> Research is needed on effective leadership education, both for heterogeneous and homogeneous groups.... We have to imagine that it is indeed not only possible to teach leadership, but imperative that through our research we discover and learn how.

Research that explores and identifies leadership development models which capitalize on how best to use diversity as "an asset to be enhanced and put to good use" (Markus, 1999, p. 20) are also critical to the development of community building. These models can provide opportunities for leaders to expand their leadership knowledge and skills and broaden their perspectives while focusing on common goals.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study focused on understanding and describing the impact of the American Leadership Forum (ALF) program in Tacoma-Pierce County on selected participants of color. The study recorded the participants' experiences by describing their experiences in the program. The participants' reflections, in the form of personal statements, were used to identify themes that emerged from the research data. The findings formulated from the emergent themes may be used to provide insights into civic leadership and leadership development.

The study was conducted using qualitative methods of research and the phenomenological perspective. Qualitative research design was deemed the most appropriate to use because of the common features of research theories that according to Moustakas (1994, p. 21) include:

1. Recognizing the value of studying human experiences.
2. Focusing on the wholeness of experience rather than solely on its objects or parts.
3. Searching for meanings and essences of experience.
4. Obtaining descriptions of experience through first-person accounts.
5. Formulating questions and problems that reflect the interest, involvement, and personal commitment of the researcher.

A phenomenological study devoted to understanding the participants lived experiences, from their own frame of reference, best lent itself to examining the research questions. Phenomenology asks, "What is this or that kind of experience like?... it attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9). According to Moustakas (1994), "Phenomenology seeks meanings from appearances... It is committed to descriptions of experiences, not explanations or analyses. Descriptions retain, as close as possible, the original texture of things, their phenomenal qualities and material properties" (p. 59). Creswell (1998) describes the use of the phenomenological approach as "understanding the essence of experiences about a phenomenon" (p. 65). Gall, Gall, and Borg (1999) define phenomenology as "Reality as it is subjectively experienced by individuals" (p. 309). Phenomenology allowed for research that would be dynamic (Merriam & Associates, 2002). The design offered flexibility to allow for emergent themes that could be identified from the participants' experiences. The researcher did not discover a comparable study exploring the experiences of participants of color in a leadership development program, but was able to identify other studies conducted on participants in the ALF program on a national level.

Interviewing was the research procedure selected for the study. Face-to-face interviews provided the research material that included anecdotes and stories as recalled by the participants, and assisted the researcher in developing a greater understanding of the participant's responses to a common event. The interviews

were conversational in nature, and presented future opportunities for reflections on the meanings of the experiences themselves between the interviewer and those who were interviewed, both during and after the interview (Fontana & Frey, 1998; Rubin, 1995; Van Manen, 1990, p. 66).

Sharing stories is a way of selecting details of an experience with others as well as a means by which to enable the storytellers to reflect on their experiences and to make them meaningful (Seidman, 1991, p. 1). Storytelling of lives past and present has been effectively used in learning about the multicultural aspects and understanding of American history (Schlesinger, 1998; Sowell, 1981; Takaki; 1993).

Sharing stories of people of color have rendered voices to people who have been impacted by the racial divide in this country (Stanfield, 1993). Takaki (1993), in referring to a recent study in which he interviewed people of color telling their life history says, "The accounts given by the people re-create moments, capturing the complexities of human emotions and thoughts. They also provide the authenticity of experience." Takaki sought to understand the present through the past and "through the narratives about lives and circumstances" of his interviewees (p. 180). This study attempted to achieve a similar intent—to gain a better understanding of leadership and leadership development through the stories of the participants' experiences. The identification of themes that emerged from the participants' recounting of their experiences was derived from the interview material and was recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

A written survey was administered to all Tacoma-Pierce County ALF graduates in July 2001 as part of an effort to evaluate the effectiveness of the ALF program. The goals of the survey were to assess the impact of the program, to check the alignment of the national program goals with those of the local chapter, and to respond to requests from local community funders to identify specific program outcomes. Respondents were asked to rate their various knowledge, feelings, and attitudes about the program at two points in time: immediately after their completion of the formal year-long program activities, and at the time they completed the survey. The predominant format for the written survey was comprised of questions requiring the use of a five-point scale. There was also an opportunity for participants to respond to open-ended questions in the survey. A response rate of 67.6 % was recorded. General conclusions from the survey included: 1) an increased feeling of connectedness with other ALF participants, 2) an openness to personal growth, 3) an increase in understanding and valuing differences among leaders, and 4) a sustained commitment on the part of individual participants to improving the community. The most common themes mentioned throughout the open-ended comments included ALF's contribution to enhancing networks and connections and increased understanding of leadership and related skills, such as collaborative skills and greater acceptance of others (American Leadership Forum, 2001, p. 30).

The evaluation, the first of its kind undertaken by the Tacoma-Pierce County chapter, provided evidence of affirmation of the program's efforts. The

evaluation was valuable in providing the first formal review of the program by its graduates to the ALF Board. It confirmed the feelings of the ardent supporters of the program of its value to the community as well as to individual participants.

The 2001 ALF survey results were limited in that they did not record the depth and richness of the respondents' experiences. The results did not allow for identification of themes that could be used to specifically identify what the participants perceived was needed to further develop and sustain community engagement. Gaps in the data indicated a need for additional inquiry into the reasons for "little net gain over time" in levels of commitment to community improvement by participants and an understanding for the reasons by some participants who said that ALF did not affect their leadership styles. Specific concerns, issues, and suggestions among participants were not addressed with the use of the survey. Subsequent discussion by the ALF program review committee that coordinated the survey efforts resulted in the desire to supplement the survey results with interviews to seek additional detail or an understanding of particular responses.

The phenomenological approach of this study was able to supplement the previous evaluation efforts by providing a much wider focus beyond the ALF program goals and objectives. It resulted in an opportunity to enhance the organization's ability to understand more completely, the essence of the participants' experiences, notably the experiences of the participants of color.

Research done on ethnic modeling in qualitative research found that ethnically diverse interpretations of reality and styles of knowing continue to be marginalized (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). This study is an attempt to identify and share the marginalized voices within the ALF experience. Diversity in the composition of the selected ALF participants and its attention to issues around diversity in the curriculum are based on the cornerstone principles of ALF and is deserving of further attention.

While this study was not designed to evaluate the experiences of the selected participants or the program, there is value in listening to all voices, as is believed in the underlying principle of empowerment evaluation: "we listen to, respect, and act on what the project's intended beneficiaries have to say about how they are benefiting from efforts made allegedly in their behalf" (Mayer, 1996, pp. 332-333). Reviewing the ALF program through the lenses of the participant experiences provided a valued perspective on the program's ability to construct and sustain community building.

Research Design

Participant Sample

There were a total of 159 community leaders who graduated from the ALF program between the years 1989-2001. At the time of the study in 2001, four were deceased and an unknown number moved their residence outside of Tacoma-Pierce County. Of the 159 graduates, 44 of them were persons of color or 27.7 % of the

total number of graduates. The racial breakdown of the ALF graduates is demonstrated in Table 1 shown below.

Table 1. Racial profile of ALF graduates in Tacoma-Pierce County (1989-2001)

	Number	Percent of Total
White	92	57.9
Black	44	27.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	15	9.4
Native American	3	1.9
Hispanic	5	3.1

In 2001, 40 of the 44 participants of color were available for consideration as participants in the study. Three individuals were deceased at that time. The researcher was one of the 44 graduates, bringing the total of available participants to 40.

There was a serious attempt to ensure that the mix of participants in the study closely represented the diversity reflective of ALF graduates of color across the graduating cohorts/classes. The study employed a combination of sampling strategies. The first was criterion sampling, which dictated that all participants meet the following requirements: 1) They must have graduated or completed the formal year-long ALF program between the years 1989-2001; 2) participants must be persons of color and represent one or more of the following racial groups—Hispanic/Latino, Native American, Asian, Black; 3) each cohort (I-VII) must be represented by at least one participant in the study; 4) the study sample of participants must reflect a balanced representation of female and male voices.

Fifty-five (55) percent of the ALF graduates who were persons of color are male. Forty-five (45) percent are female.

In order for the study to be completed in a reasonable length of time and for the amount of collected material to be manageable, yet provide sufficient data, initial plans were made to interview seven participants of color. The researcher later included additional participants to the study based on recommendations of the participants who were first interviewed. Three additional interviews were scheduled based on the recommendations from other graduates. This was an example of the snowball or chain sampling technique of selecting participants for the study. While use of the technique was not part of the initial plan by the researcher, it provided additional material that was useful to the study.

In requesting volunteers to participate in the study, two graduates were contacted, but were not interviewed. One individual was unavailable to schedule a time for an interview within the time frame of the study, and the other could not be reached because of an illness.

Seidman (1991) suggests two criteria for identifying the number of participants in a study. The first was sufficiency. The selected number of participants reflected a sufficient number of participants to reflect a representative sampling of the diversity ALF graduates from cohorts I-VII. The second was saturation of information. Each participant was able to enhance the data collection and material already collected through previous surveys administered to other ALF graduates. Seidman further commented that: "The method of in-depth,

phenomenological interviewing applied to a sample of participants who all experience similar structural and social conditions gives enormous power to the stories of a relatively few participants" (p. 45). There was evidence found in the interview material, of the diversity of perspectives held by ALF graduates in their stories of their experiences.

Ten persons of color, all graduates of the ALF program in Tacoma-Pierce County, were invited to participate in the study (see Appendix C for letter of invitation). The researcher applied the five selection criteria to assure a mix of representative voices from among all ALF graduates of color from the Tacoma-Pierce County chapter. In addition, she applied the criteria of sufficiency, saturation of information, and data management to determine the number of participants in the study. Information about the 10 participants in the study is outlined in Table 2.

Participation in this research study was voluntary, and every attempt was made to protect the participants' personal identities. The participants did not appear to be concerned of the anonymity of their responses. The participants were fully knowledgeable of their role and the use of the interview material in the research study (see Appendix D for informed consent). They were given the option of disengaging themselves from the study without penalty or to prevent the recording of their interviews, by tape or written record. They also were given copies of the researcher's summaries of their interviews for corrections, deletions, or additions (see Appendix E for review of interview summary). Minor corrections

were made to correct grammatical errors in these summaries, but overall, the summary statements were without revisions.

Table 2. Characteristics of participants in the study

Category	Subcategory	Number of Participants
Race	African American	4
	Asian American	3
	Hispanic	1
	Native American	1
	Pacific Islander	1
Gender	Female	5
	Male	5
Employment/Type of organization	For profit	2
	Not for profit	7
	Other: Retired	1
Years of residence in community	0-10	0
	11-20	4
	21-30	2
	31+	4
Years since participation in year-long ALF program	0-5	2
	6-10	6
	11-15	2

Interview Process

> In universities, people know through studies. In businesses and bureaucracies, they know by reports. In communities, people know by stories. These community stories allow people to reach back into their common history and their individual experience for knowledge about truth and direction for the future. (McKnight, 1995, p. 171)

Interviews allowed individuals to share their stories and to connect their personal experiences to their communities. The richness of their choice of words give others a perspective that is unique and full of descriptive detail that brings emotional impact that can only be provided through first hand accounts. The research data for the study was gathered by taking advantage of this research method of using a face-to-face, one-on-one interview process. The use of interviews was the chosen method, by which research material was gathered because, as Seidman (1991, p. 3) stated: "At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience." The interviews included open-ended questions that allowed for the participants to share some of themselves and the details of their ALF experiences without limitations set by the researcher. In conducting the interviews, the participants were allowed to freely express their own experiences in their own terms. The research was based on the assumption that the perspectives shared were meaningful and able to be made explicit (Creswell, 1998).

The collection of data through interviews employed a combination of two approaches—the informal conversational interview and the use of a general interview guide. A combination of approaches was used for more efficient time management to collect and analyze the interview data.

The informal conversational interview is the more common phenomenological approach to interviewing. It utilizes open-ended questioning to allow for maximum flexibility on the part of the person being interviewed. Interviews in this

instance will reflect the information that the participant considered most significant. With this approach, the interviewer must "go with the flow" (Patton, 1990).

The general interview guide approach enabled the interviews to assume a conversational tone. It provided a framework for the researcher to use when needed, to facilitate conversation between the researcher and the participant being interviewed. The interviews did not follow an identical interview protocol, but allowed the interviewees to select the topics they chose to share.

The researcher did not adhere to the exact wording of questions, nor were they asked in a particular order. The guide ensured that relevant topics were covered and "side-bar" conversations outside of the context of the study were minimized. The research methodology maintained flexibility to afford opportunities for the researcher to engage in a conversation with the participants, which helped to establish rapport, assurance, and trust between the two.

Follow-up questions were asked of the participants in order to solicit specific examples to clarify participants' comments. They were designed to allow for detailed descriptions of the people, event, thoughts, and behaviors from the interviewees about experiences as a participant in the ALF program. The primary focus of the questioning was on the participant's experiences in the area of study; however, the participants were also asked to reflect on the meaning of their experiences. According to Seidman (1991):

> When participants are asked to reconstruct details of their experience, they are selecting events from their past and in so

> doing imparting meanings to them. It is this process of putting experience into language that is a meaning making process. (p.12)

The interviews were conducted between the months of May and July 2002. They were tape recorded with the full acknowledgement and agreement of each person interviewed. Transcripts of the interviews were available to the participants for corrections and clarification after they were transcribed.

The strength of the phenomenological approach in interviewing is that it allows the interviewer to be highly responsive to individual differences and situational changes. The design of this qualitative study was such that, as cited by Patton (1990) the researcher did "not attempt to manipulate the research setting, a naturally occurring event, program, relationship, or interaction." The interview material accurately reflected the participants' recounting of their experiences.

Interview Guide

The following personal data was logged in the records. The data was used to confirm the diversity of the participants involved in the study. All participants were assigned a pseudonym to ensure anonymity.

Personal Data

- Ethnicity and race
- Gender
- Number of years of residency in the Tacoma-Pierce County region

- Representative of one of the following employment categories:
    a) Private, for profit
    b) Private, not for profit
    c) City, county, state, or federal government
    d) Public sector, non-profit
    e) Self-employed
    f) Other
    g) Year of participation in the ALF program

The following questions comprised the interview guide and provided structure to interviews that were conversational in nature and focused on the ALF experiences of the participants in the study.

Interview Questions

1. Primary interview question: What were and continue to be your experiences as a participant in the American Leadership Forum program?
2. Have your experiences influenced or impacted you? Please provide specific examples.
3. Have your experiences influenced or impacted your engagement in the community? Please provide specific examples.
4. Do you have other information that you are willing to share about your experiences?

Confidentiality

The participants were informed that their personal identities would be kept confidential in any published notes and in the final research publication. Pseudonyms were used to identify the transcripts of each participant. Each participant was asked a few questions about her/his background to provide a context for pre-ALF community involvement and post-ALF community experiences. The participants were given the opportunity to review transcripts when they were fully transcribed, to amend them to more accurately reflect their words, and to ensure accuracy of the transcription.

Documentation was obtained through the audio taped interviews and transcripted paper copies. The audiotapes and transcripts were maintained and preserved for analysis. Upon completion of the study, all documentation was destroyed.

Data Analysis

Emerging themes were noted during the interviews as well as from the interview material. The interviews were transcribed soon after they were conducted. Analysis of each interview commenced soon after the interview data was collected and transcribed. The software management program WinMax was used to identify the elements that were commonly found in each interview. The elements from each interview are listed in Table 3 (Appendix F). The elements were then grouped into broader categories, identified as concepts, and are listed in

Table 4 (Appendix G). These concepts were used to develop themes that emerged from the interview data and common to all interviews. The steps, as defined by Creswell (1998, p. 32), guided the steps in the data analyses. They included:

1. Review of all interview data in transcripted form.
2. Extraction of significant statements from each description.
3. Formulation of statements into meanings, and meanings clustered into themes.
4. Integration of themes into a narrative description.

In Step 4, the researcher sought possible meanings and perspectives, including her own, and constructed a description of how the phenomenon was experienced, as suggested by Moustakas (1999, p. 150).

Trustworthiness

> In qualitative research, the understanding of reality is really the researcher's interpretation of participants' interpretations or understandings of the phenomenon of interest. (Merriam, 2002, p. 25)

Merriam (2002), in her response to the trustworthiness of qualitative studies comes about with rigor in research. The rigor is implemented using the concepts of internal and external validity, reliability, and ethics in qualitative research. The following details the specific ways in which these criteria were met in this study.

Internal validity is considered the strength of qualitative research (Merriam, 2002, p. 25). Triangulation was used to strengthen the study's internal validity

with the use of multiple data sources found in two previous research studies on the ALF program and its participants (Chrislip et al., 1992; Markus, 1999; American Leadership Forum, 2001). The researcher's observations and experiences as an ALF graduate were valuable in understanding the ALF program goals and curriculum as she codified the participants' experiences. Summary data from a survey sent to all ALF graduates of the Tacoma-Pierce County chapter in 2001 was used to identify the existence of recurrent themes that appeared in the participant interviews. Themes identified from the two national surveys (Chrislip & Larson, 1992; Markus, 1999) were also used to assist in analyzing the participant interviews and identifying themes.

Providing "rich, thick description" (Merriam, 2002, p. 29) through quotations extracted from each interview was the primary strategy used to ensure external validity. The direct quotations assured that the participants' voices were heard and accurately recorded. Member checking was also used to confirm the validity of the research. The researcher's summaries of the interviews (Chapter 4) were sent to the respective participant for review, revisions, and/or comments. "The interview process can be directed toward minimizing the effect of the interviewer and the interview situation; however, the fact is that the interviewer is a part of the interviewing process" (Seidman, 1991, p. 16). The researcher took great caution to avoid including her conclusions and evaluative remarks in the interview summaries. The few comments that were received by the researcher were primarily grammatical in nature and were not substantive.

While the experiences of each participant cannot be easily replicated, the ALF program is structured to allow applicability to similar situations. Credibility of the data of this study was ensured in the following ways:

- Each interview was tape recorded and transcribed verbatim.
- The questions used were open-ended and relatively nondirective. This method of questioning encouraged the participants to reflect upon their experiences and to share those experiences with the researcher.

The researcher's disclosure provided the basis for understanding the researcher's position or reflexivity—the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 183). The researcher was also careful to document the experiences of the participants as shared by the participants themselves.

Extreme caution was taken to ensure that the research did not attempt to evaluate the experiences of the participants or to judge the quality of their experiences. The conclusions or interpretations reflect, as accurately as deemed possible by the researcher, the voices of the research participants.

Clear description of data collection methods and analyses was a technique used to validate the study.

> A clear account of how early, simpler systems of classification evolved into more sophisticated coding structures and then into defined concepts and explanations. The description should be sufficient to allow a reader to judge whether the conclusions or interpretations are adequately supported by the data. (Mays & Pope, 2000)

Insights from the data were formulated from the type of qualitative data that was gathered, and consistencies throughout the data were identified as themes. Guba (1981) proposed that consistencies should be used as a working hypothesis, to be tested again in subsequent studies. Cronbach (as cited in Creswell, 1998, p. 280) concluded that "social phenomena are too variable and too context-bound to lend themselves to generalization." He places particular emphasis on the importance of interpreting data in context rather than reducing the context to arrive at generalizations.

The rapport between the researcher and the participants resulted in responses that were direct and straightforward, consistent throughout the interviews, and resulted in similar themes to those revealed in other ALF graduate studies. These factors led the researcher to have confidence in the validity of the data.

Limitations

Creswell (1998) noted the following challenges in using interview data in qualitative studies. The researcher of the study was cognizant of these limitations, and followed appropriate interview protocol that was within her span of control:

- The study was limited to the retrospective look at the interviewee's experiences, some of them occurring as far back as 12 years from the time of the interviews.

- The study was dependent on the authenticity of participant's responses in terms of their own leadership skills.
- The findings were based on the researcher's analysis of the experiences as shared by the participants in the study.

The researcher herself is a past participant of the ALF program and was instrumental in its restart in Tacoma-Pierce County. There was every attempt to avoid the researcher's own perspectives or assumptions in data interpretation and analysis. The researcher assumed the role of an active listener who inquired about and listened to the research participants in order to document their experiences.

Summary

The researcher explored and considered several research options. The phenomenological approach was deemed the most appropriate to answer the research questions and to "give voice" to those who otherwise would not be heard. The opportunity for the participants of color to share their lived experiences as participants in the American Leadership program was best revealed using the phenomenological perspective. Hearing participant voices first-hand and listening to their stories provided valuable insights into their experiences in the American Leadership Forum. Enabling the participants to express themselves in the interview process was an empowering experience for some of the participants as they reflected upon their transformation as learners, engaged citizens, and community leaders. The documentation of their experiences and the recorded

voices provided a method by which community, civic engagement, and leadership development was addressed.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Background

The purpose of this study was to examine and characterize the experiences of participants of color in a community leadership development program. The community leadership program from which data was collected was the American Leadership Forum (ALF) of Tacoma-Pierce County, Washington. In this study, 10 past participants of ALF, all persons of color, were identified and selected for participation in the study (see Table 1). Selection of the participants was based upon the availability and willingness of the subjects to engage in the study. Each participant was then interviewed about her/his experience in the program.

The participants' ethnicities were representative of the racial composition of the ALF graduate group: four African Americans, four Asian American/Pacific Islanders, one Hispanic, and one Native American. Five women and five men participated in the study. Those who were interviewed were all established leaders in the community—a primary criterion for selection into the ALF program. They came from ALF classes spanning a period from 1989 to 2001. Some of these individuals have remained active in the ALF organization, serving as board members, committee members, or participants in ALF graduate activities. Participants in the study shared their perspectives, ideas, and feelings about the ALF program and about being an ALF graduate in response to the question: "What

were and continue to be your experiences in ALF?" Follow up questions were used to ask a participant for specific examples of their experiences. The question was purposefully general to enable those who were interviewed to freely describe the ALF program in general or any aspect of it. Participants were aware of the study's focus on the experiences of people of color.

The interview technique employed in this study was specifically designed to enable a free flowing conversation between the interviewee and the researcher. There were no assurances of continuity or consistency throughout the interviews. The interviews varied in length, as some interviewees were more effusive than others. Each selected different areas to highlight and share during the interviews. Except for one, all interviewees were relaxed in the interviews and forthright in their responses. When necessary, follow-up questions were asked by the researcher to: 1) prompt the participant's recollections of the program, 2) clarify participant's remarks, and 3) solicit fuller descriptions of events. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed.

An analysis of the descriptive data collected from the interviews was then developed. Interview data was coded by topics and/or elements common to all the interviews using WinMax, a qualitative software analysis program. These topics and/or elements were further analyzed to produce common themes that emerged from the data.

The interview summaries, analyses, findings, and recommendations are reported in three parts in this chapter. Part I serves as an introduction to each of the

participants. The participant interview summaries provide the identification of elements of transformation, acceptance, resistance, and frustration shared by each interviewee as they experienced the ALF program. Direct quotations are used liberally to convey a first-hand impression of the participants' experiences and to demonstrate the richness of the interview material.

The number of participants in the study (n=10), the limited size of the ALF program (20 -25 participants per cohort per year), and the community connections in Tacoma-Pierce County make it necessary to ensure the confidentiality of the participant responses. To preserve anonymity, the summaries exclude any and all information that may lead to identification of the interviewees—specifically, age, and place of employment.

Part II describes elements or topics identified and coded for each interview using WinMax. The coded segments were refined to identify themes from each interview. Themes common to all 10 participant experiences were identified by the frequency with which topics were addressed, and by exploring patterns of like and unlike responses.

Part III describes the themes identified through this study. The themes identified were networking, relationships, community commitment, leadership development, personal transformation, family, connectedness over time, diversity, and community impact.

Part IV reviews the commonalities among themes identified in this study with those found in two other studies conducted on ALF and ALF graduates—a

1990-1991 national study of seventy (70) participants in five ALF chapters in the United States focusing on the impact of the American Leadership Forum on the individual, and a study conducted in 2001 of ALF graduates in the Tacoma-Pierce Chapter. The analyses from these studies were used to explore similarities and differences between the experiences of ALF graduates of color participating in this study and those of a larger representative sample of ALF graduates.

Definitions

In order to understand better the context of comments made in the interviews, the following definition of terms and activities to describe the ALF program is included:

- ALF leadership program—a year-long program where a cohort of 20-25 community leaders who meet on a monthly basis to explore leadership issues.
- Check in—a process of initiating an ALF gathering in which participants have an opportunity to share "where they are" at the moment. It is a free flowing session where anything can be shared by any of the participants.
- Graduate program—activities and events designed for ALF participants who have completed the year-long program.
- Orientation—the first session of the year-long leadership program when participants in a particular cohort meet each other for the first time.

- Wilderness experience—a 7-day outdoor experience outside of Tacoma, in a retreat setting. The cohort engages in a ropes course as well as the capstone event, a climb to a mountain top.

Part I: Interview Summaries

Excerpts from the data taken from the interviews of the 10 ALF graduates of color who participated in the study are included in this section. Additional information about them (i.e., employment, years of residence in Tacoma-Pierce County) and the number of years since their participation in the year-long program, are included in Table 2. The data included numerous direct quotations that give a voice to the experiences of these participants. The coding at the end of each quotation identifies the line(s) from the transcripted interviews. The participants are listed below with their pseudonyms.

Paul – Asian American, male

Connie – African American, female

Fred – African American, male

Tina – Asian, female

Helen – Pacific Islander, female

Luke – Hispanic, male

Marie – African American, female

Steve – African American, male

Rebecca – Native American, female

Wayne – Asian American, male

Paul

Paul is an Asian American male, with strong family roots in the Tacoma area. He participated in the ALF program in the early 1990s. Paul was uncomfortable with his participation in the program at first.

> *I was very uncomfortable with the amount of self disclosure that was really expected...I was really feeling inept, and out of my league, and I was sitting with folks that I figured I had no business being there other than he (mentor) told me to be there. And that was it. (28/29; 304/307)*

In conversing about the reasons for his selection into the program, he said:

> *...my father has been very active in the community and I think that one of the things that they were looking at, at least at that time, was looking at people who might be good participants by virtue of the fact that that might be a way of encouraging them to provide more leadership...I also believe that I was there, in large part, because I'm my father's son and so I bring that responsibility to my family....I also have a responsibility to the ethnic community I come from, to use those forums as an opportunity to educate, maybe change something in people's minds, to push some issues forward.... (311/315; 379/380; 372/374)*

Paul chose to highlight the personal benefits of the program throughout his interview. His comments indicated that the ALF experience was a significant experience in his life that transformed him personally and as a community leader.

One of Paul's most significant experiences was the opportunity to reflect on the topic of leadership. The study of leadership provided in the ALF curriculum

afforded him the opportunity to think about himself as a leader in the context of his job and his community.

> *It was a wonderful opportunity for me to begin breaking out of the metaphor that I had in my mind about leadership and as I think back on it, I think we touched on a lot of things that were new and different for me at the time and I have come to understand them better now.... It really began to open my eyes to some different ways of looking at and thinking about the issue of leadership. (60/66)*

> *I think I'm pretty convinced now that I probably know less about leadership than I did before I started ALF and it is not so much that I have maybe the wrong perception of what leadership might be or an incorrect model in my mind. I just really believe that we know very little about what leadership is all about and how that issue is a really critical issue for us today because it does impact so many other aspects of the way we relate to each other.... (104/110)*

Paul also valued the ALF experience for its relationship building, although he shared that he "*really wasn't prepared for the types of relationship building dynamics that were part of the program" (19).* He shared that he became aware that relationship building among ALF graduates was important to ensure a continuing dialogue among community leaders. He shared that his leadership efforts were sustained by the opportunities for him to engage in conversations with other ALF graduates who shared similar values and a common leadership experience.

> *This ALF experience for me, it wasn't like I started it in [year] and ended it in [year] and then, there's a beginning and an end and then I'm just kind of going on. It's still kind of going on for me and I'm still trying to figure this out. (195/198)*

Paul is still very involved in ALF activities and continues to dedicate his time to collaborative community initiatives.

> *I really believe more and more now that we just kinda scratched the surface. (64/65)*

> *I just really believe that we know very little about what leadership is all about and how that issue is a really critical issue for us today because it does impact so many other aspects of the way we relate to each other.... So I think I know in understanding the issue more, I feel I know less about the topic than maybe ever before. (107/110)*

Paul's remarks during the interview indicated that ALF played a significant role in his transformation as a leader. He spoke of his own growth and development and his feelings of empowerment to affect change in the ALF organization. His experiences have empowered him to feel more confident as a leader and have given voice to his ideas of strengthening community leadership based on ALF principles.

> *I think that one of the things that I have been trying to push is us maybe getting out a little bit outside the envelope and working the dynamic of conflict a little bit more and the dynamic of diversity and really trying to push those as far forward and out in front of these new classes as possible. (81/85)*

His continued involvement in the ALF organization sustains his interest and self discovery as he explores leadership, community, and his role as a community leader.

> *I think I've come to appreciate how powerful, the dynamic of leadership can be and how much can be at stake, and so I may be more thoughtful about jumping up and taking those roles, but at the same time, I also understand that leadership is dealing with the unknown and so I think I am better equipped to do that. I'm more*

settled with the fact that sometimes you have to provide leadership and you don't know exactly what you're doing. (127/133)

Connie

Connie is an African American woman nominated to the program by an ALF graduate. Connie recalled her introduction to the program with humor: *"Yeah, my name was sent in. I didn't know you had to be chosen to be selected (laughter). So then, I didn't get in that year, so I was nominated again the following year and I got in. I just said I'm going to do that" (37/42).*

Connie went on to talk about her discomfort with the others in her cohort at the beginning of the program. It was at this time that Connie experienced a family tragedy. She expressed gratitude for the support she received from other ALF participants in her cohort, which eventually put her at ease. Her relationships with those outside of her class were less positive:

I sort of felt people were snobbish and sort of an elite group.... Sometimes there were inside jokes that people knew because they went to the same country club or whatever outside of ALF, so I didn't feel as comfortable with that group as I did our year-long group (cohort)." (14/19)

Connie entered the ALF program with no expectations and was *"ready for whatever came out of the experience. I went in not expecting anything, and I sort of learned that by going into training—that is, just go in and see what is in it for you and what can you give back" (22/24).* She is well connected in several circles in the community, and ALF gave her an opportunity to enlarge her circle of

community networks. *"I think that ALF is one of the few times that I've gone into a group and didn't know anyone" (65/66).*

Connie recalled the group interactions and relationships that developed with others in her cohort helped her to think beyond her first impressions and prejudgments about people.

> *I learned a lot, and I had some prejudice going on about, especially about older white males. My partner was an older white male and I really was able to reassess my own prejudice through that experience.... I am a little more inclusive and looking at people as people and not making any judgment about putting them into boxes and categories. I think it is something we need to work on a continuous basis, but I think my experience with ALF really helped me in that area. (7/9; 60/64)*

The interview afforded Connie the opportunity to reflect on her ALF experiences for the first time since she graduated from the year-long program. She spoke of the continued relationships she developed with others in her cohort, and of the occasions when she saw them after the year ended. At one point in the interview, she asked the researcher to stop the audiotape. She wanted to discuss, in more detail, the relationships she had with others in her cohort; that is, to share in her realization that the relationships she maintained through the years were almost exclusively with other people of color in her cohort. She expressed great surprise upon coming to this realization.

A positive result of the ALF experience for Connie was her return to graduate school. The readings during the ALF program were particularly valuable

to her as a student, and she said: *"They [the readings] are wonderful and I guard them" (270).*

After the interview came to a close, Connie shared additional insights about her ALF experiences:

> *What it did for me is that I had some outstanding leadership skills and ALF validated those. The same as when I went back to graduate school. It just validated what I had been doing. I think I have a lot of natural leadership skills and it was validated through the group. (258/261)*

The ALF program provided Connie with experiences that impacted her on several levels. The first was the opportunity to learn more about herself and her relationships with others, specifically with others in her cohort. *"I think I've shared with a lot of people who were in there (ALF) and people learned from me, and I know that I've been called on to do some things to help with things and get my opinion on things because of that exposure" (135/137).* Secondly, it promoted her professional growth and development as a leader by encouraging her to continue to pursue graduate studies. Thirdly, she shared that the experience was one that validated her sense of self as a leader: *"I think I have a lot of natural leadership skills and it was validated through the group" (260/261).*

The ALF experience did not change Connie's community commitments over time. She continues her community work as she had prior to the ALF experience. Since her participation in the year-long program, she continues to assist other ALF graduates in various capacities. At the present time, her level of activity within the ALF organization is minimal.

Fred

Fred is an African American male and a resident of the Tacoma-Pierce County area for over 20 years. He was nominated by a local ALF graduate who believed him to be a "*caring, potential leader in our community.*" The nominator was also his mentor and *" he wanted to give me some tools to help me and he actually opened the door so I could work with people to help shape the community I live in" (116/118).* He saw ALF as a way to further develop his leadership skills, to expand his community networks, and to identify ways to help the community.

ALF was one of Fred's first experiences in a leadership development program. He valued the opportunities to read the material on leadership theory as covered in the ALF curriculum. He also enjoyed conversing with many of the authors whose readings were cohort assignments.

Fred felt enriched by his ALF experiences, even after thinking about the disappointments he expressed in the interview. He did not have any expectations of his participation in the program, and admitted to agreeing to participate in ALF without knowing about the program. He agreed to do so because of his trust in his nominator who referred to the ALF program as a "worthwhile experience." He described his feelings on the first day of orientation as if the session had just occurred:

> *That first day there when we met at Central there and we were in this room. I was like, what is this.... I showed up that day barely opening my packet that morning, you know. I was very busy in my life at the time, doing other stuff so when this came along, I just didn't know what it was. I just got my packet when we got there*

> *and we selected our buddies and we started experiencing these other people in the room.... I was thinking of these other community leaders that had very important roles and jobs in the community that I don't know who they are, and I thought I knew everybody in the thing. So my experience was very much an eye-opener 'cause here was these people who did wonderful things for their respective jobs and community and I hadn't touched them yet. I looked forward to touching them and once they touched me, you know, mostly spiritually and the whole ALF experience. Wow, this is really great stuff. (20/28; 29/37)*

Fred's personal transformation as the result of his participation in the program can be described by the word "*profound,*" the word that he chose to describe his learning experiences. *"I think I took away a lot more than I gave to the experience and I think I took a whole lot more...it was a free college education—no, not a free college education, but a free life education (238/241).*

Fred mentioned on several occasions during the interview that he found the required readings by Robert Greenleaf, Harlan Cleveland, Harold Gardner, Peter Senge, and Rebecca Adamson were valuable to his understanding of leadership. Fred continues to assimilate the knowledge he gleaned from the leadership materials provided by the program. He recalled the guest lecturers who were introduced as part of the program and shared the names of those who were particularly memorable to him. In the interview, Fred further described sharing the readings of the ALF program with his family and co-workers, taking time at the end of the day to reflect upon those readings. He appeared to have felt, at the time of his participation in the program, value in discussing leadership concepts and practices with others who were interested and focused on the topic of leadership.

He referred to the program as that which enabled him to learn about the processes of collaboration and consensus building.

> *I was enriched from my ALF experience...what I mean by enriched is I learn more than I ever learned before in my life about people and about process (laughter)...so now I know why we have to have this process. It was a great experience because we had community leaders, we had labor leaders, we had government workers, and we had private workers, and we had all those difference people in the room together in our group. Our group, too, was a very powerful group, just because we were hard-headed (laughter). (65/67; 75/78)*

ALF encouraged him to expand his development opportunities. Following his participation in the program and with the encouragement of others, he ran for a statewide position in a professional organization.

Another benefit of the ALF program for Fred was the networking among community leaders. He claimed to have benefited personally from his new networks and as a result, was actively involved in ALF activities, both locally and nationally. He was one of a handful of local graduates who became involved in national leadership meetings. As Fred referred to these events, he expressed that he was enriched and energized by conversations with other participants, many of whom wrote curriculum material which had been shared in the ALF program. Fred's thoughts on leadership emerged as he spoke:

> *I was frustrated because I, well, it's so easy on paper, I can see it happen, read it, but it is really hard to transform into real action. It (the readings and speakers) taught me how to be a better leader....it gave me some skills I didn't have before...it made me a much more caring leader and actually it probably was my downfall because I didn't want to do politics anymore 'cause it was too corrupt. (148/153)*

Fred is for the present time, minimally involved in the ALF organization or its activities, harboring feelings of disgruntlement about the restart of the local chapter and the lost opportunities for ALF graduates to change the way of "doing business" in the community. He shared his disappointments that ALF graduates have not been able to shed their customary ways of "doing business as usual." His sentiments were reflective of other events occurring in his personal life during this time.

Fred was particularly open about his disappointments with the program because it failed to fully integrate ALF participants within each class or across classes, much less within the community. He described his observations as such:

> *The government people stayed together, the teachers communicated with each other. There wasn't much cross, job-wise, which I thought ALF was trying to get to do to move.... All we did was that those guys connected to each other stayed connected and then opened up the door who wasn't connected to make those connections. It failed to, I still think we failed, we failed because we couldn't break down the barriers that have always existed in society as we know as a whole.... We didn't become this utopian community that I thought we were going to become. How can I not read the wonderful readings and these thoughts and not open your hearts and your soul to the world, and I don't think we did that. (269/271; 287/289; 360/361/416/418)*

Fred appeared to be conflicted in his feelings towards ALF. He admitted to having gained from his ALF experiences and to have thrived on his newly acquired knowledge of leadership from being in the program. He was concurrently critical of the program's failure in meeting its goals. He mentioned the need for him to

reconnect with those in his cohort at a future date. He did not share when and how he intended to do so.

Tina

Tina is an Asian female. She was very open in describing her experiences in the program. Her responses were thoughtful, and she readily recalled past situations and events while in the ALF year-long program. She was, in her words, "*thrilled*" to have been selected as a participant in ALF. When asked why she thought she had been nominated for the program, she guessed it was because she was a female Asian, "*There's not too many of them around here, so probably just going to fill a quota here or something to make the list look good" (70/71).* She later commented that she may have been selected because of her work in the Asian community for which she recently received media attention.

Tina recalled she entered the ALF program with an open mind, and with few or no expectations. She claimed to be excited about her invitation to join the program, which occurred shortly after she completed graduate coursework in leadership. Of her first meeting, she stated:

> *I found the whole experience to be exciting, stimulating, enriching in different ways and also, sort of a vehicle that helped me learn a little bit more about myself, what my biases were, what some of my assumptions were, and my expectations of myself and people around me, and of the world around me. (24/28)*

She spoke of the effects of the experience on her "self" and what the experience meant to her personally.

> *It also affirmed something, it made me, I think I would like to use the word validate that I felt, based on the training that I went through, I felt that I could feel pretty comfortable with myself as an individual committed to serving the community and I was on the right path. I was not perfect, but I have done some good things and the experience helped me improve myself, not only as a professional, but also as an individual. (29/35)*

She also spoke to her development as a leader.

> *I say gosh, if this is the way I had to do things, we'll never get anything done. The buck has to stop somewhere, you know, and so, but as I went along, it dawned on me that if I, as a leader in my work, I would take time and listen to people and let them have the opportunity to voice their concern or to provide input. (40/44)*

Tina described her overall experiences as positive and considered the ALF experience as valuable; noting in particular the friendships she developed with others in her cohort, and the networking that widened her support in the community.

Tina was open in sharing the feelings of subtle racism she felt existed in her cohort. She shared that it was demonstrated in the interactions she observed in her cohort's activities and among her fellow ALF participants. *"Yes, I can see it...the interaction I could see it and feel it" (174).* Her observation was that participants *"attached themselves to the people like them" (156).* She proceeded to share her feelings that there were times when the people of color in the cohort were not being heard. It was unclear from the interview whether Tina was referring to herself or to someone else in the group.

> *If there's an idea or an input that is different because the input came from someone from a different culture, a different back-ground....the majority group still, you know, they will brush it*

> *aside or just like to change the subject or go on to something else because it is something they don't quite understand and it's just very hard to convince them to look at that particular idea. (157/162)*

She was unable to accurately put into words what she felt at the time. She hesitated to call the behaviors as racist and said:

> *Maybe racism is too much of a word.... It is very subtle and like I said, I don't think people know what they were doing and probably oblivious to their behavior...I like to think that I am pretty well integrated into both the [names her ethnic background] culture and also, the American culture, and I mean I can be comfortable in any surrounding. At times, I felt that I was left by myself....that I was not, I was not, hmmmm, intentionally engaged in you know, discussion or if I don't say anything, I'm the type of person that if I have something to say, I'm going to find a way to say it....if I was ignored or I was overlooked or something, but there was lots of time that....not lots of time, quite a few times that I sat there and be silent for a whole hour and no one mentioned, like, you know, what about, what do you think, and I observed the same thing with other members of color in the group too, and they could sit there and not say anything for the whole day. (208/220)*

She also provided another example of a person of color in her cohort who, she felt, was treated differently not only because of her race, but because she came from a different socioeconomic class.

> *It looked like that individual was finally accepted, but there was a kind of superficial acceptance because the more she bared herself about her background and everything, the more people said, 'Oh no,' and that sort of thing.... I just did not think the group treated the individual seriously and just tried to act very patronizing toward her. (426/431)*

In the interview, Tina offered suggestions of ways to strengthen the diversity component of the curriculum. She stated that the conversations needed to be bolder and to challenge people to think and act beyond their comfort levels. She

further shared that in her opinion, the topic of diversity needed to be included throughout the entire curriculum rather than as a stand-alone topic. She also added that it was also important for the program to select presenters who were reflective of the diversity of the participants and who could effectively lead discussions on diversity.

One of Tina's outcomes of her participation in the program was her heightened awareness of the need to serve as a mentor. Since her participation in ALF, she has recommended others for community leadership positions, expressed a desire to mentor them, and to acknowledge their leadership potential.

> *I know that there is just a lot more work to be done in the community and I think that one thing that really brought home to me is that I need to be more active in serving as a mentor for people of color. I think there's a real big need for that in this area. If you look around, you know people who are in positions of authority or decisionmakers, we still need to have more people of color to be there sitting at the table. (321/326)*

Tina continues to be actively involved in ALF graduate activities.

Helen

Helen, a Pacific Islander, has been a resident of the Tacoma-Pierce County area for 30 years and still maintains strong bonds with other Pacific Islanders in the community. She was nominated to the program by a colleague who was also an ALF graduate from an earlier cohort. In the initial 20 minutes of the interview, Helen appeared hesitant and cautious about what she talked about, but became more relaxed as the interview progressed.

Helen emerged as a grassroots leader in her community in her work within her immediate neighborhood. She is neither an appointed nor an elected leader, but took the initiative to become involved with projects such as starting an after school program in the community.

Helen's interview was an opportunity for her to share her feelings about the program, some of which she had done publicly with other ALF participants at an ALF gathering. She described her relationships with others in her cohort:

> *I was just telling them how I was touched, you know, spiritual with everyone and then, I learned to be myself and each individual person in my class were all special to me. They were like my brother or my sister.... (362/364)*

Helen shared that her ALF experience for her was about the trusting relationships she formed with other ALF'ers in her cohort.

> *The honesty, being open with each other, learning to trust each other that give me more understanding....I don't know how to say (laugh)....more understanding of other people....you know, instead of judging them for what they are, but getting to know them.... (10/12)*

Helen shared that she felt "different" from others in her class, many, if not all of whom, were unknown to her.

> *But so on my first day, I say to myself, I don't belong here. I don't belong here, but every day that I went in, I learned, and then I begin to understand.... (46/48)*

She harbored feelings of insecurity at the beginning of the program, in part because she claimed she lacked a formal college education and the others in her cohort had a college education. She believed her nomination as a participant in the

ALF program was because of the work she had done in the community, primarily because of her efforts to develop an after school program in her neighborhood.

Helen chose to describe the program's impact on her relationships with her family members. She felt her relationship with her husband grew more positive because of ALF. To describe her increased self-confidence, Helen shared that she was empowered by her experiences, and would proudly say to others: *"I'm an ALF person, of course I can talk. I'm more assertive, more outspoken now" (121).* She was especially proud of her ability to more easily communicate with her husband about her ALF commitments and her work in the community. She was convinced that because she was able to more effectively communicate with her husband, he developed an interest in helping her to organize and participate in community activities.

When asked in the interview whether she considered herself a leader in the community, she responded: *"Not really, I don't—people look at me like that though, but I don't" (268).* She appeared to be uncomfortable with the notion of her role as a leader in her community. Helen openly shared her role in directing social events, such as planning a reception for the Governor on a recent visit to Tacoma, or for a family birthday party, or special event. However, while she was fully aware of, and acknowledged, her role in directing community gatherings, Helen did not associate (at least not in the conversation) her actions with that of a leader. Helen preferred to describe her relationships with her family members and

with others she met during the ALF experience. Her interview contained very little description about her development as a leader through the ALF experience.

In spite of her reluctance to talk about herself as a leader, she provided a testimonial at an ALF event. Helen shared how the ALF experience had touched her spiritually, and of the friendships she developed with those in her cohort. She added she "*learned to be herself*" *(17)* and not to be intimidated by others because of their positions or their educational levels.

Helen was in a more recent ALF cohort than most of the other participants who were interviewed, and continued to feel closely connected with those in her cohort.

Luke

Luke is a Hispanic male. He was not specific about whether he had been nominated by an ALF graduate, like the other participants who were interviewed. His affiliation with a new Hispanic professional organization in Tacoma-Pierce County led to a number of opportunities for greater involvement in community affairs, specifically with non-profit agency boards. He speculated that his involvement in the Hispanic organization led to numerous invitations to join ALF. He turned down the first invitation because of time constraints. He received subsequent invitations, and eventually accepted the opportunity to participate in the ALF program.

Luke's responses were thorough. He appeared to be very confident and comfortable with himself, his career, family, and his commitments to the community. He stated that his experiences with ALF were very positive. Luke did not enter the program with any expectations. He recalled feeling honored to have been selected, because at that time, he was one of the youngest participants in the local ALF program. Luke noted that his development as a leader enabled him to look at the process of consensus building. He stated that as a result of the program training:

> *I attempt to do more consensus building as opposed to, I guess, to any other style of management. I'm more concerned with trying to reach a consensus among the people I'm dealing with and a general understanding and agreement about what we are going to do, as opposed to dictating this is what is going to be done and how it is going to be done. (10/14)*

Luke's commitment to the community was evident prior to his participation in ALF, as demonstrated by his work on nonprofit boards. He spent some time, soon after graduating with his cohort, in activities endorsed by the ALF organization and in ALF graduate activities. He was recently involved in organizing study circles on race, utilizing the strength of the ALF network to gather together a significant number of community leaders to address racism in the community.

Luke spent a considerable amount of time during the interview addressing his commitment to his family-centered activities, particularly those involving his children and their school. In the past few years, he has restricted the number of

commitments for other community activities in which he has been asked to participate because time spent with his family was his first priority.

> *But I have found and have always believed that service within the community was important so I was holding leadership positions away from my personal employment as a volunteer throughout the community and I continue to do that on a steady basis since, although I've had to pare down the amount of time spending on volunteer leadership roles. I've also had to focus on certain points in time, what activities I've had the energy and time to be involved in. My energies have evolved from being community wide to a smaller community which is more faith based. (77/84)*

Luke shared that one of the most valuable outcomes of his participation in the program was the extension of his networks into the community.

> *ALF has provided me the ability to move to a much higher level when desired and because of the networking with the various other graduates of the program who were all leaders in their own right at various levels of the public and private sectors, I'm able to walk in doors much more or much easier than someone who's not involved in ALF, and I'm usually well received and able to meet the objective that I've gone there for and that may be for other beneficial reasons for either people who may be now seeking political office that have asked my assistance and I'm working behind the scenes helping to open doors for them. (94/102)*

> *If I need to talk to [name of another ALF participant] on any level about anything, he's going to talk to me. And so, I might not need it today or tomorrow, but someday knowing he might assist someone. It might not be me, but it may be something I'm interested in and I know people at various levels and various aspects of life. (155/160)*

Luke continues to be actively involved in community initiatives and participates in ALF activities occasionally.

Marie

Marie is an African American female who has lived in Tacoma-Pierce County for 20 years. She willingly shared her ALF experiences through her stories, which vividly drew visual images of the interactions and conversations of her ALF colleagues. It was sometimes difficult for her to recollect the specifics of her experiences in the program because of the significant time lapse since her participation in the program in the early 1980s. However, in the course of the interview, she recalled several specific examples of situations she and her ALF colleagues encountered as they were going through the year-long program. When asked the reason she joined ALF, she replied:

> *My dad was in the Air Force and that was what he taught me. Whenever you go to a new place, you check out who the people are, you check out what the dynamics are, and you see who the players are. So I thought that if I was going to take over the leadership of [name of employer], I needed to know who the players were—the power players in the Tacoma community. (16/21)*

It was her work on a community board that introduced her to an ALF graduate who nominated Marie for ALF. The director of the local ALF chapter was also mentioned as someone who may have played a significant role in supporting her nomination for the program. She felt honored to have been identified as a leader in the community, and said the following of her nomination:

> *I was really honored by that (being identified as a leader) because it felt like recognition. So I think that the notion that you're recognized by your peers in your community is a really nice thing personally that can happen. (469/471)*

Marie recalled having no specific expectations of the program when she was invited to participate in the program. She shared that she was open about the experiences she might encounter:

> *I think it—well, I guess I get something out of any experience I'm in, so I have to say, Yeah, I probably learned a little more tolerance, you know for other people. I got to see different leadership styles. (348/351)*

During the interview, Marie made frequent references to her relationships with ALF participants in her cohort with whom she developed personal relationships that continue to be maintained to this day. The colleagues with whom she most closely identified were primarily other women, most of whom are also African American. Her conversations were interspersed with numerous references to the strong bonds that developed between herself and this small group of women in the cohort who became a source of support for one another throughout the program. While their cohesiveness as a group enabled them to develop close relationships, it also set them apart from others.

Marie shared that she accomplished her primary objective in joining ALF, which was to gain a greater understanding of the power structure in Tacoma. Her experiences, she related, provided her with the opportunity to view a community organization in action—one that sets goals and objectives and takes action to enable them to be accomplished. Marie asserted that through this experience, she was able to see the value of strategic planning and coalition building to facilitate change in the community.

When describing the program, Marie identified program components she valued because they brought people together to share part of themselves with others. She was disappointed there weren't more opportunities to share discussions among the participants. *"We got to know people on human levels, and it was valuable because it was very revealing about people's character and people's compulsions..." (87/89).*

Marie expressed her discontent with the program's inability to address diversity. To illustrate her frustration in enabling others to understand the issues of white privilege, she related the following story:

> *One of my strongest memories of ALF was when we went to a seminar out at [location]. After the seminar, a bunch of us went out to a bar and it was a redneck bar, doing karaoke and I said, 'I'm not comfortable going into this bar' and I was with [names three Caucasian male members of her cohort]. We went in and it was karaoke and so I did the karaoke with one of them or something like that and...we won. And all of a sudden, I started hearing, 'nigger this, nigger that' you know. It was like, how come this black woman is going to come in and win the prize over our local Emmy Lou. And I kind of said to them, 'I told you I wasn't comfortable; I told you I didn't want to do the karaoke because I don't want to call attention to myself...and now, if I get beat up, you better flank around me, and they had NO consciousness that they had no sense of their own privilege of being able to go into a place and feel comfortable and my NOT being able to go any place and being comfortable because they had just said, everybody is color blind but not realizing that a black woman in a bar with a lot of people doing a lot of drinking in some little place was not a place of comfort for me. All right, so, we had to talk a long time about that because I really kind of said, 'You guys, if you are going to work with the community and stuff, you got to understand about the positions you put people in and what that means, and how uncomfortable that is, and you have to be...." It was like once we were all in ALF, we were all the same. (263/285)*

It was evident through her descriptions that the physical aspect of the outdoor experience was the least enjoyable to her; specifically, the ascent to a mountain peak which she said was for the younger, ambitious types in her cohort.

> *[Another member of her cohort] and I made a decision; we were going to the top of the tree line, you know we were going for the view. We just wanted to be at the top of something and go for the view, and so there was a little group of us. We're just going to climb up to where it feels good, we're going to sit down; we're going to look at what's going on, and then we're going back down, you know, we'll make coffee for you when you come back! You know, what's the deal? ...'cause if you go up, you got to come down, and it gets tiring going up (laughter). I mean, it's miserable and I'm going to be twice as miserable by the time I get down. (72/81; 94/97)*

Marie addressed the issue of leadership succession and sustainability. She stated that the ALF program did not perpetuate the developmental aspect of leadership or deal with leadership succession in the community. There was no mentorship for present ALF participants, or expectations of mentoring other ALF by graduates. She shared her ideas of the various ways in which mentoring within cohorts and throughout the organization could be incorporated into the program.

Community sustainability was another subject Marie felt the ALF program did not adequately address. She posed the question as to whether the goal of the program was to sustain the community or to sustain the ALF organization. In her mind, the focus of the program appeared to have shifted from community to organization. She expressed her dismay that perhaps because of the organization's lack of focus on community, the participants of color were not interested in continuing to support the organization. To illustrate her point, she began reviewing

the list of participants of color from each cohort who had contributed to the organization's fundraising campaign. There were a number of participants of color who were not listed as donors or contributors. She noted the few who made financial contributions were those who had an obligation to the organization, primarily due to their political roles and goals.

Marie recalled her commitment to the ALF organization waned as she became disillusioned by the lack of focus on creating substantive change in the community.

> *I was hoping that ALF would be the kind of, watchdog, or the community voice that something or other that, you know, that might play the role of the emperor has no clothes. (185/187)*

Marie also shared a concern that some of the participants may have had other motives for participating in the program. She noted how individuals used the organization and the networks that were formed as opportunities to advance their own causes and agendas.

> *I think that most of the people came in perceived themselves as fait accompli in some way. 'I am a leader, that's why they've asked me,' as opposed to 'I'm potentially a leader and so let me see how I can use this to grow and to become a better leader.' I felt, I think, almost everybody I know perceived themselves coming to the table fully equipped and that it was the networking that was desirable, but I don't think people felt. I didn't get a sense that people felt like they were being trained to be better leaders. They were trained to be better networkers. (453/462)*

In spite of her disappointments with ALF, Marie believed the organization had a useful purpose and could be used to promote and develop new leadership. In

fact, at the time of the interview, Marie nominated an individual to participate in a future ALF cohort. She said of the individual:

> *He needs to know people in the power structure and people in Tacoma need to know him. So it's a way of networking, it's a way of getting him in there. If you want to know who the players are, and if you want to network, then I think ALF is one of the only games in town that does that. At least this is a sustained dialogue with the possibility of making viable human connections. (402/405; 426/429)*

Steve

Steve is part Native American and African American, and identifies with the African American community. He is a visible and active member of the Tacoma-Pierce County community, serving on numerous local boards and community organizations. Steve was nominated into the ALF program and encouraged to participate by two individuals, both of whom were graduates of ALF and individuals for whom he has great respect.

> *We sat down and we chatted and they said they wanted me to participate in this (ALF) activity and that's about as good as life gets for me is [names mentors]. I guess if they think I can do it, I guess I can do it (laughter). There must be a reason and it will all work out. That's one of the reasons why I joined the American Leadership Forum. (130/132; 136/138)*

Steve entered the program with few, if any, expectations: *"I have very seldom been very disappointed because I don't expect much" (142/143).* Steve's positive attitude demonstrated in the following statement about his joining the ALF program:

> *...well, I've got lots of things to do and this is just one of them and maybe I don't want to continue to do this...but you know, this is a teaching moment for me or for them....this is a defining moment in how we are going to look at ourselves and to look at this group and look at the environment around us. Let's take advantage of that moment and try to create some better definitions about how we interact with people. (69/80)*

He valued his ALF experiences and said, *"I would say that the most important element I've learned from ALF is to better hone my ability to be strategic about moving the proposition forward" (382/383).* Steve continues to be energized by the people with whom he became acquainted in the ALF program.

> *A lot of people that I see in ALF...when you say, what the benefit is of ALF, all the benefits that you can document, but the one for me, that's different from the usual list of benefits, is just the visualization of being in the presence of people that make me better to do good and whatever it is I need to do, that I couldn't get if I wasn't part of ALF. And that's why I come to ALF functions, that's why I nominate other people, because it makes me feel good in order for me to go out and take a positive feeling and translate it, transform it into some hands on.... (299/307)*

ALF, according to Steve, had a significant impact on creating ways to collaborate with one another.

> *I have been in maybe hundreds, maybe a hundred situations where I can sit in a room and see six or seven people from ALF in a room....we have a common approach...there's a percentage increase in that groups' ability to know and understand and move the proposition forward because of the critical mass that those individuals bring...there's certain core issues that you don't have to struggle with and the norming process, those norms have been established and you can move on, while other groups may be trying to figure this out, you've done that, you're able to move on.... (226/241)*

When Steve addressed the topic of diversity within the ALF program, he shared the following:

> *...there were certain people who were not people of color whose representations, portrayal as, and ability to define the world around them, was taken at face value. People of color are asked to prove it...we were always in a position of, I believe this because of this, and people, white people in the organization were able to say, I believe this and it was just accepted. (30/35)*

> *One of the things I also saw in the American Leadership Forum around leadership and race is that black people in my class...there were four of us and people of color seemed to be less curious about leadership in the white community, and white people seemed to be curious about leadership in the African American community. And the people of color thought that the standard, this is my opinion, of attaining leadership in the communities of color was a lower standard and that you didn't have to be as accomplished in a leadership perspective if you were a minority as you had to be as a majority. (90/98)*

The process of selecting ALF participants is, in Steve's view, the element of the ALF program most in need of improvement. He said of the process:

> *It was hard to figure out why and how the group of four or five people had the ability to populate this group (an ALF class). It was, you know, the kind of eye of the needle that people had to pass through to get in....the struggle has been intense on some of the selection issues because I have been sometimes seen as the least cooperative on compromises on race and gender. (322/324; 370/372)*

Steve remains actively involved in the ALF organization and continues to work to improve the selection process.

Rebecca

Rebecca is an urban, Native American woman who has lived in Pierce County since 1986. She was open about expressing her opinions and sharing her experiences in the ALF program. She lamented the fact that interactions among the ALF graduates, including those in her cohort, waned through the years. She admitted to becoming less involved, and subsequently less interested in spending time with her fellow graduates as time progressed.

Rebecca is committed to working with a number of local, regional, and national organizations that assist Native Peoples. The time commitments of her job and her volunteer activities have been demanding, and limit her ability to spend time on ALF activities.

> *...if I participate in something that demands my time, it becomes overwhelming. So I hesitate to get involved in anything like this because I think, what it is, is that there are so few Native People that will join a program like this and be part of it. And so then, when they do, the demands become greater on their time and people wanting to get more information out of them and that's not where I want to spend my time. My work is here.... (12/19)*

Rebecca's description of herself as a leader is as follows:

> *I'm always reminded of that [being a leader], that I am and I don't like to put myself on...like putting myself on a pedestal or putting myself above the people that I'm trying to work with and trying to help them. I do a lot of public speaking, go out in the community, just for that very thing that you just mentioned, about creating an awareness and hoping that people would look at some other way at the Indian person, but I'm called to do a lot of things and I get weary.... (144/149)*

She was able to clearly articulate her reasons for agreeing to join the ALF program after having doubts about her participation.

> *I was hoping that it would create an awareness so that there might be support...what made me decide to be a part of it was that I was assured that there were going to be some powerful people in the community involved and it would be contacts which would lead to support for [name of organization]. (35/38; 47/49)*

Her expectations of her participation in the program, as stated in the previous quote, were specific to the needs of her organization. She made it clear to the organizers of the ALF program that her expectations were to further her work with Native Peoples.

At the time of the interview, it was evident Rebecca thought ALF was a *"nice experience" (74)*, but it fell short of being a significant one for her. She shared what she enjoyed most in the ALF activities in which she participated—the outdoor challenge course and a few of the speakers invited to lecture during the year-long program. Throughout the interview, she repeatedly claimed that she gained very little from her experiences in the program. There were times during the interview when she appeared to be grasping for words to describe the program; and at times she appeared to hesitate to become too critical of the program. When asked whether she nominated others to participate in the program, she said she had recommended other Native People. She admitted, however, that she had not had the opportunity to obtain feedback about their experiences.

When asked what could be done about developing leadership in the community, Rebecca responded by saying Native Peoples needed to first help

themselves. Her community was specifically focused on her people. For Rebecca, her energy was needed to advance her causes and to empower her people. She hoped ALF could play a significant role in providing her with access to community resources to support her goal of helping her people, but according to her, it had not.

Of the interactions of the participants in her class, Rebecca commented that the people of color stayed together during the program and those relationships were ones that continued to this day. She expressed disappointment in the fact that other relationships, even among members in her cohort, were not long-lasting and tenuous at best.

> *I really hear from the people of color...like one on one, rarely from anyone else... I was hoping that it would be different, but it's not. I even had to look at it as how much of this is my own doing, my unwillingness to jump into what the dominant culture operates in the world, and I'm not willing to do that. It hasn't been successful for Native People and I fight that all the time...when I go out into non-Native communities and do things, I always feel like I have to sell myself and I don't like that feeling. (167/168; 170/176)*

Rebecca's comments about the ALF year-long program was that *"it's not working" (203).* Her response to a question about ALF developing a feeling of community was that *"it was not happening" (213).* She did not feel the program addressed diversity issues very effectively, nor was there any support for facilitating learning from the experiences of others.

Rebecca admitted part of her disappointment and disengagement with the program was perhaps due in part to her attitude about Native Peoples.

> *I've looked at this, at other aspects of my life too, I have to accept part of the responsibility myself...I did kind of touch on this—my*

unwillingness to mainstream. It hasn't worked for Indian people, so why would I try to change it. I'm willing to try something new. And that's what I'm doing here...is something new. (250/254)

Wayne

Wayne is an Asian American male and has been a resident of the Tacoma Pierce County area for 20 years. When commenting on his commitment to the year-long program, he said,

Normally when I get involved in something, I read about what their charter is, who has been involved before, and who the officers are....at that point in my career life, I was focused on many other things and so this was like, Okay, I'll do this...don't know kind of what had happened which was something very different for me because, I wouldn't say that I was controlling, but I like to know where I'm going to be...and what the expectation is, so no, there wasn't any real result that I was looking for other than, Geez, this might be a good experience. I don't know much about leadership.... (120/128)

Like others who were interviewed, he expressed initial surprise at his selection for the program. He was nominated by a prominent community member who played an instrumental role in the startup of the ALF program in Tacoma. Questions about the ALF selection process and his own selection to be a participant continue to be a curiosity for Wayne.

...I guess I was a little puzzled over how people were selected you know. ...if I was just in charge of selection, I wouldn't pick half the people there in my class (laughter)...I did feel honored that I would be asked to do so. It seemed like, an experiment, it seemed like it fit a puzzle, a piece of a puzzle that I didn't know...about leadership. I thought it was something that you figured out along the way, by yourself (laughter)....the thing that intrigued me was the idea of having to meet with this group and seeing what

> *advantage this could mean to me personally, you know, and getting to look forward to getting to know different people. (33/37; 56/63)*

Wayne shared his thoughts that the curriculum, particularly the topic of diversity, necessitated a review. His recollection of a discussion on race among members of his cohort was that it became *"pretty heated" (72).* The facilitator for the discussion was unable to cope with the perspectives that were shared within his cohort.

> *We stopped the discussion because we had to move on to some other part...I thought it was very telling about the group that was facilitating the camp, the organization we were working with...it troubled me that the American Leadership Forum hadn't figured out, you know, you are going to have those discussions about real life, that you have to let those happen. (80/85)*

In the course of the conversation about diversity, he shared a comment that he was unsure of the impact of the program on the participants of color or on the participants in general. It was difficult for him to conclude that the experiences in the program had an impact on the level of understanding and value of diversity.

> *I would like to have thought, here again it is not measurable, you would have to go back and ask the others that are non-persons of color...you would have to go back to say, whatever the experience for them, they were better off...that they had [named previous ALF participants of color he knew], somebody that they gained some value in having that diversity as part of the leadership experience that to me, would be telling. (262/268)*

Although Wayne alluded that it was very difficult to measure the impact of ALF on the community, he provided an example of an ALF initiative that benefited the community. He described a project spearheaded by the City of Tacoma in partnership with the Deming Institute. Tacoma was selected as one of two cities

that were part of a study which would test the Deming principles and to investigate whether these principles could be applied to communities.

> *...when Deming came to this community, the difference for selecting us versus any one of the others they were looking at was because of this leadership training (ALF) that we had. They found that very unique and the way the people talked about the community as a whole and how you serve it and it was very much in line with what they were looking for...a community that was willing to try to make these Deming principles to make a change... Ours was leadership, and the other community was the way they approached learning as a community, and they picked us because of the leadership factor and how that was being handed, and of course, we gave them 50 ALF people to interview (laughter). (186/190; 197/200)*

Wayne also identified networking as a valuable part of ALF—that is, getting to know and work with people one might otherwise not have an opportunity to do so. He was part of an ALF class that was able to collaborate on a community project to make a difference in the community, an accomplishment he felt very proud of.

Wayne shared his belief in servant leadership. He has nominated other public servants to participate in the program, because he believes the ALF program can provide a solid grounding in servant leadership theory and practice.

Wayne was once actively involved in the ALF organization, but is no longer. He remains, however, very involved in the community and with community projects initiated by other ALF graduates.

Part II: Analyses of Participant Interviews

The purpose of the study was to identify and describe the perceptions of participants of color upon who were enrolled in the American Leadership Forum, a community leadership development program in Tacoma-Pierce County.

The interviews provided a way of perceiving a common experience from multiple lenses; specifically from 10 participants of color. The interviewed participants shared divergent perspectives of their experiences in ALF—from Rebecca who claimed that ALF has not had a significant impact on her life, to Paul whose personal transformation of his being as a leader started with his ALF experience and is still evolving. The stories that unfolded in the interviews included recollections of personal feelings about other participants while involved in the year long program to perceptions of the program's strengths and weaknesses. Each of the perspectives is legitimate. They lend themselves to an interpretation of the value of the ALF experience to the participants of color who were interviewed. The analysis of the interview material led to an identification of common themes found throughout the participants' stories of their experiences.

The first step of the analyses of the interviews revealed elements threaded throughout the interviews and were coded using WinMax, a software analysis program used in qualitative research. The complete list of elements can be found in Table 3. The depth to which those who were interviewed addressed the topics varied. In some instances, participants mentioned the concept, for example, of leadership. Others expounded on the topic of leadership as it related to specific

ALF readings, or to examples of their application of leadership concepts in the workplace.

The initial coding enabled the researcher to identify key elements introduced in the participant interviews. In order to narrow the number of elements, similar or like elements were placed in aggregate groupings and resulted in a list of 11 concepts as shown in Table 4 (Appendix G).

The concepts were further analyzed by reviewing them in the context of the material within each interview and grouped according to themes. **The identified themes were: networking, relationships, community commitment, leadership development, personal transformation, family, connectedness over time, diversity, and community impact.** While each participant's background, familiarity with leadership theory and practice and career paths differed, common themes emerged from the ALF experience that illustrate conclusions made about community leadership development and people of color.

Part III: Themes

The following themes were identified in the interviews of the participants of color in this study that reflect positively on their ALF experiences: 1) networking, 2) relationships, 3) community commitment, 4) leadership development, 5) personal transformation, and 6) family. They also had disappointments as expressed in the following themes: 1) connectedness sustained over time, 2) diversity, and 3) community impact.

Networking

At times, leaders "lack the ability to find their way around or to develop the network of contacts which give them the necessary know-how" (Smith & Peterson, 1988, p. 163). The experiences as documented in the interviews in this study demonstrate that the ALF program has been effective in providing opportunities for leaders to network and to expand their existing networks within the community. As participants shared their thoughts on the benefits of networks, they said:

> *What works best in ALF are those people who can use it as an opportunity to advance causes and agendas. (G395/396)*
>
> *I was told there were movers and shakers from the community involved and that this would be a good resource for me and [my organization]. (I60/63)*
>
> *I wanted to get to know the power players...and to get the [name of organization] into the general conversation. (G34/36)*

The most frequent response of those who were interviewed in this study described their greatest benefit in terms of relationships they developed with other ALF participants. An increased network was the common theme in all 10 participants' comments as they shared examples of the new relationships they developed, particularly with other ALF graduates in their cohort.

- *I don't think I would have known those people normally if it hadn't been for ALF. The first year of my participation was just full of very meaningful interaction with a group of people that I would never have an opportunity to interact with. It widened my support network for my work. In a sense, it was very valuable. And I enjoy all of my classmates tremendously on a personal level. (D22/24; 137/139)*

- *If it hadn't been for ALF, and I think that our reactions to the process and stuff like that did form some sorts of bonds that continued. (G105/107)*

- *You're thrown together with 24 or 25 other people that you never would have an opportunity to work with otherwise, so you build those relationships. (A210/212)*

- *Because of the networking with the various other graduates of the program who were all leaders in their own right at various levels of the public and private sectors, I'm able to walk in doors much more or much easier. (F95/98)*

The participants provided numerous examples of the networking activities since their involvement in the ALF program. Their networks enabled them to gain increased visibility in the political arena, as well as in the larger Tacoma-Pierce County.

Bonds are created among a group of people who share a common experience. ALF builds on this phenomenon and anticipates that increased networks and relationship building created among leaders who are joined by the ALF program will create greater and stronger collaboration in the community. The examples of increased networking in the interviews demonstrate that the ALF program has been successful in meeting its goal.

The synergy generated from the "critical mass" of ALF graduates working together in the community is what the ALF program aspires to develop within the relationships among its participants. This finding is consistent with findings from a study conducted by Daloz et al. (1996) of people engaged in working for the betterment of their communities. They concluded that, "The single most important

pattern we have found in the lives of people committed to the common good is what we have come to call a constructive, enlarging engagement with the other" (p. 63).

Two participants in this study recognized and spoke of the potential for positive community change—for something greater than what presently exists—because of their participation in the ALF program and the relationships they developed with one another.

- *I have been in at least a hundred situations where I can sit in a room and see 6 or 7 people from ALF in a room. We're working together, we have a common approach. I mean there's a percentage increase in that group's ability to know and understand and move the proposition forward because of the critical mass that those individuals bring. (H227/235)*

- *I was at a meeting last night and we were sitting around doing some stuff and then we realized that all the people sitting around the table had all gone through the ALF experience, and all of a sudden, ALF becomes part of the context in which we're relating to each other. (A223/231)*

On the other hand, two participants expressed disappointment that the cohort relationships waned as the years progressed. They admitted to sharing the responsibility for maintaining their relationships with other graduates, but did not do so because of time constraints and a lack of continued interest in ALF activities.

- *I try to stay active in and to participate in some of the gatherings, but they [ALF] have to keep in touch with people—you know, generally what I see is people fading away. (I8/10)*

- *I have not maintained [relationships] because my time doesn't work that way.... I, every year, say, I'm going to get a little more involved, but I think when I stopped getting involved, I was going to stuff until it became formalized. (G160/168)*

While networking was seen as a common outcome of the participants' experiences in ALF, the question of how best to sustain the relationships among ALF graduates remains a goal for the organization.

The primary examples of networking in the participants' interviews were based on the connections made between ALF participants in their professional roles and as volunteer leaders in community activities. The second theme, relationships, reflects the interpersonal relationships developed between and among ALF members.

Relationships

Relationships among the participants of color within a cohort were more readily observed than relationships with other participants who were not people of color. Seven of the 10 participants observed that their closest relationships were formed among the other people of color in their cohort.

- *We had some interesting discussion because the guys on the other side of this wall...we were all together. (C280/281)*
- *I think that the people of color kind of stuck together. (G162/162)*
- *We had a little stronger relationship with the people of color in my class than I had with others. (J98/99)*
- *I've seen it the same way with the other members of color and so, toward the end, it just seems like, maybe this group here of people of different color would congregate in one area and then the other ones would.... (D229/231)*

During her interview, Connie began to list the ALF graduates in her cohort who she continued to maintain relationships with, and realized they were all people of color. She was taken aback by this realization, and immediately asked to stop the tape recording in the middle of her interview. She proceeded to describe her relationships with others in her cohort who were not persons of color, and realized that she wanted to reconnect with some of them.

Marie shared the following about her relationships with her cohort members:

> *I am much more comfortable when I work in grassroots and community levels and those are the people in ALF I tended to have maintained friendships. I've maintained connections with mainly the female members of my class, and those that were, in fact, more grassroots as opposed to corporate. (59/61; 63/65)*

She makes a clear distinction throughout her interview between those leaders representing grassroots interests and those in the private sector. Marie spoke openly and directly about a distinct separation of people within her cohort between what she referred to as *"the country club or corporate types"* and *"the rest of us."* The "*the country club group*" was comprised of the participants who came from long standing, wealthy, and notable families in the Tacoma area. They generally represented private sector businesses. *"The rest of us"* were participants employed in grassroots organizations or the public sector. The majority of people of color in Marie's cohort and throughout the ALF program in Tacoma-Pierce County were in the category of "the rest of us."

One of the goals of the ALF program is to encourage collaborative efforts throughout the community toward accomplishing mutual goals. The participants in each cohort are selected to reflect diversity—of age, gender, race and ethnicity, careers, and interests representing the public and private sectors. One of the strengths of the programs is the diversity that is sought among the participants, but it is also one of its weaknesses. According to those who participated in the study, the ALF organization and its program of activities has not yet been able to move beyond its intentions of valuing diversity. The work of aligning diverse interests and perspectives toward common purposes is yet to be achieved.

Community Commitment

Those who were interviewed were selected to participate in the ALF program because of their record of community service in Tacoma-Pierce County. They are distinguished by their volunteerism, and particularly for their demonstrated leadership in community initiatives. It would not be unusual to find ALF participants serving simultaneously on numerous local, state, and national boards and organizations in addition to maintaining full-time careers or businesses.

In all cases, the participants in this study continued to maintain a high level of commitment to the community throughout their ALF experiences and into the present. There were variations of the definitions of community among those that were interviewed. Seven participants defined community as the greater Tacoma-Pierce County geographic area and its population. Three participants defined it

much more narrowly—two to a particular racial group, and another to a neighborhood and its immediate surroundings.

At the time of the interviews, nine of the 10 participants who were interviewed were well known within their racial and ethnic communities in the greater Tacoma-Pierce County area prior to their participation in the ALF program. Their participation in the program further enhanced their recognition and visibility within their respective racial communities and the community at large [Tacoma-Pierce County], if only by association as a member of the ALF network.

Some of the participants have reprioritized their activities since their participation in the year-long program due to family circumstances, career changes, and time constraints. Two individuals, Luke and Tina, spoke of becoming more focused in their work in the community. Luke's present priorities are with his spiritual community and family. During his interview, he frequently mentioned his sons and his involvement with their school and extracurricular activities. He continues his involvement with community engagements, including local political activities. Tina addressed the significance in mentoring other people of color to assume leadership positions in the community. She recognized, through her ALF interactions, the importance of having a diverse leadership base in the community. She has subsequently taken on the role of mentor to other people of color whom she identifies as potential leaders.

Rebecca is one who chose to focus all of her energies toward causes to promote her particular racial group. For her, community is defined not as the

Tacoma-Pierce County community, but by the racial group for which she is identified. Her present focus is based on her recognition that there are specific needs in her community she can best attend to. She was a participant who became impatient with the ALF organization in its ability to confront community issues and described working within the ALF network as *"a lot of talking and listening and nothing really achieved from it" (89/90).*

Participation in the ALF program sustained, if not developed, an awareness of community and community involvement among the participants of color who were interviewed. Each had examples to share with the researcher of the types of community activities they directed, if not initiated. All participants expressed a desire and commitment to continue with their community work in spite of the lack of sustained collaboration among ALF graduates as well as their on-going concerns about their time and family obligations

Leadership Development

The participants' leadership skills were enhanced by the ALF year-long experience program. Several participants in the study spoke of acquiring new knowledge about leadership and of strengthening their leadership skills through their ALF experiences. For example, Paul made reference to becoming more collaborative on the job as a result of his experiences in ALF. The ALF curriculum readings by leadership theorists such as Greenleaf, Cleveland, and Senge, and the various guest lecturers, were cited as instrumental in enabling him to review other

leadership models and critically examine his own leadership style. Paul has since come to the realization that learning is a continuous process, and he continues to learn as he engages in conversations with other ALF members. Fred was the most enthusiastic about the readings and classes on leadership. He spent a considerable amount of time during the interview mentioning specific readings and seminars that inspired him. His participation in ALF inspired him to new learning and introduced him to what became "a life-long education." Several of the participants mentioned they learned and practiced consensus building skills with colleagues on the job and/or within their family groups after having developed these skills in the ALF program. Participants also acquired skills in becoming more inclusive and accepting of diverse views; mentoring and mentorship; and practicing a more caring and ethical leadership style. Participants felt that the experiential activities, such as the Wilderness Experience and class project were critical in gaining a greater understanding of the collaborative process. Fred's participation in several national ALF activities broadened his knowledge and perspectives on leadership, enabling him to not only realize the importance of community commitment, but the importance of his work and the work of others in ALF toward implementing community change.

The ALF program supported, if not developed, participant interest in leadership and leadership studies. Tina, at the time of the interview, had recently completed her graduate work in leadership prior to her involvement in the ALF program and was able to apply her new knowledge and skills to those relevant parts

of the ALF curriculum. Shortly after her ALF participation, Connie completed graduate coursework on leadership. The ALF program provided the capstone experience for Paul's graduate study on the subject of developing community leadership capacity. Tina was able to practice the leadership skills she learned in ALF as well as those she acquired during her recent graduate studies.

There were numerous examples provided by the participants of their increased knowledge and understanding of leadership concepts and theories as a result of their ALF experience. The interview process afforded them an opportunity to reflect upon their experiences and to become more fully aware of its impact on "self." It is also evident from the interview material that the learning continues for some, and leads to stories of personal transformation.

Personal Transformation

Participants shared expectations that their involvement in the ALF program would provide opportunities for them personally and professionally. The participants described their feelings about their selection as an ALF participant as an honor, a sign of confidence, and recognition for their work. One participant described her ALF experience as one that validated her skills as a leader. Another participant said the acknowledgement affirmed his leadership role in the community.

There is evidence that the participants who were interviewed were open to a degree of risk and new challenges, as exemplified in their attitude to commit to a

leadership program they knew very little about. Fred noted that during the orientation session, he was unfamiliar with the other participants and realized the opportunity to become acquainted with them: *"Here were these people who did wonderful things for their respective jobs and community that I hadn't touched yet" (C32/34).*

The majority of participants who were interviewed agreed to participate in the ALF program with few, if any, expectations. Upon their selection, they maintained a positive attitude and were open to their experiences, even with little knowledge of what the program entailed.

- *I have operated the majority of my life with very low expectations and...I have very seldom been very disappointed because the distance between what I expected and what I received was so great and ALF is on that list of tremendously great rewards out of low expectations. (H141/145)*

- *I didn't bring any prejudice, any predisposed thoughts about the whole process. (C130)*

- *I didn't expect anything. (B5/5)*

Several agreed to participate on blind faith and did so only because they were nominated by trusted colleagues or mentors in the community.

- *I got the call from [name of mentor] and I asked him the question, Why me? He told me, [name], this is something you should do, so just do it [participate in ALF]. I said, Okay. I say yes because he told me to. I had no idea what it was. (A302/309)*

- *I guess I can do it. I mean, I would trust both those people with my life. There must be a reason and it will all work out—that's one of the reasons I joined the American Leadership Forum. (H130/138)*

Marie was new to the community and was made aware that ALF might be a vehicle to become better acquainted with key decision makers. She was convinced her participation had helped her to observe the inner workings of the community. She later mentioned she had recently nominated someone to participate in the ALF program to better acquaint him with the community, much like it had enabled her to become more familiar with those in influential positions.

> *Getting to know the power players, getting people to know a little bit about [name of organization], and so that people would be aware of that and I could get the name of [name of organization] in the general conversation. And so it was to get support for [name of organization] and to get to know the power people. (G33/37)*

The program components most frequently mentioned in the interviews were the selection process, orientation session, wilderness experience, and the diversity unit. The selection process was mystifying to participants. In recounting their thoughts about how and why they were selected, some expressed their surprise and a feeling of pride that they had been nominated. The orientation session provoked emotional responses in the discussions with at least half of the interviewees. They described themselves as feeling "*scared,*" "*unprepared,*" "*curious,*" and "*excited.*" The wilderness experience in the year-long program was considered an exciting physical challenge by two participants who were interviewed. Marie was particularly hesitant about participating in the ascent up the mountain and was animated in recalling the experience:

> *I don't have really have great knees and so [another ALF colleague] and I made a decision. We were going to the top of the*

tree line, you know we were going for the view. We just wanted to be at the top of something and go for the view. (72/75)

You super achievers go up and do all this stuff. We're just going to climb up to where it feels good, we're going to sit down, we're going to look at what's going on, and then were going back down, you know, we'll make coffee for you when you come back. (78/81)

You know, what's the deal? What's the deal? You know, 'cause if you go up, you got to come down, and it gets tiring going up. I mean, it's miserable and I'm going to be twice as miserable by the time I get down...it taught me a lot about competition and what I felt about competition and how I looked at it. (94/97)

Participants provided examples of personal growth experiences gained from their exposure to new people and ideas, ranging from an increased awareness of one's growth potential to developing one's self confidence.

- *I found the whole experience to be exciting, stimulating, enriching in different ways and also, sort of a vehicle that helped me to learn a little bit more about myself, what my biases were, what some of my assumptions were, and my expectations of myself and people around me and of the world around me. I felt that I could feel pretty comfortable with myself as an individual committed to serving the community and I was on the right path. I was not perfect, but I have done some good things and the experience helped me improve myself, not only as a professional, but also as an individual on a personal level. (D24/35)*

- *It was a personal test you know...that was good. I found out that I was much stronger than I thought I was. (G545/546)*

- *...a rewarding, personal experience. (C86/86)*

- *It had a profound effect on me personally. (C190/190)*

- *I am more confident of myself. (E138/138)*

- *I got introduced to some ideas, some theories about leader-ship...I guess I get something out of any experience I'm in. I*

learned a little tolerance, you know for other people, I got to see different leadership styles. (G346/352)

- *It was professionally very meaningful for me. (A339/340)*

The participants shared their ALF stories as growth experiences, stretching their minds and physical selves to acquire new knowledge and skills. Participating in the research study provided an opportunity for some to reflect upon their newly acquired learning as a result of their ALF experiences.

The lack of opportunities to translate their learning into action was frustrating to some of the participants. This, however, was not going to prevent them from becoming involved to better their communities. As one participant described his experiences:

The ALF experience for me, it wasn't like I started it in [year of his participation] and ended in [end date of year-long program] and then there's a beginning and an end, and then I'm just kind of going on. It's still kind of going on for me and I'm still trying to figure this out. This ALF experience for me, really, has been something stretched out over almost a decade now. (A195/200)

Family

Balancing the demands of a successful career, family, and community commitments poses challenges for ALF participants. The participants who were interviewed recognized the value of family and time devoted to family activities.

I've had to pare down the amount of time spending on volunteer leadership roles...My energies have evolved from being community wide to a smaller community which is more faith based, more closely and very definitely related to my religious beliefs and the school that my children attend. I'm focusing on them [names

children] because I don't want to miss them growing up. (F82/85; 18/19)

Eight out of 10 participants who were interviewed made reference to family or family members without prompting from the researcher. Family was mentioned in the context of time—time for family activities or sharing ALF experiences with a family member. Participants valued their family relationships and were making conscious efforts to provide a balance in their lives. Two of those who were interviewed shared examples of the positive changes that occurred between them and family members while practicing skills in collaboration and consensus building learned in the ALF program. Four of the interviewees specifically mentioned sharing their reading material with spouses and discussing leadership topics introduced in an ALF program session. One participant described having developed a stronger relationship with her husband. She attributed this to a direct result of her increased level of self confidence and the open communication she learned while in the program.

Connie retired from her position since her participation in the year-long program. She continues to engage in part-time consulting work, while devoting a considerable amount of time assisting family members. She maintains her involvement in community activities at the level she did while working full-time.

All of the participants interviewed in this study expressed strong family values. ALF had become a significant part of their lives during the year-long program, and they appeared to have shared their experiences with a member or

members of their family. They also continue their commitments to family in spite of their increasingly busy schedules.

The Disappointments

Two participants were accepted into the ALF program with clearly defined objectives. The others had few expectations of their involvement in the program, and they were minimally stated. Yet, they all expressed a level of disappointment with their participation, the program, or the ALF organization. In analyzing the interview material, there were common elements in the participants' responses that were identified as disappointments or program weaknesses. The elements or topics were noted from each interview. Like concepts and areas of disappointment were subsequently grouped. Common themes were then formulated based on these groupings. The themes that emerged around the participants' disappointments were: 1) lack of connectedness sustained over time, 2) diversity, and 3) community impact.

Connectedness Sustained Over Time

The participants in the study, except for the two most recent graduates, spoke of a lack of connectedness with other ALF graduates, both from within their own cohort group as well across cohorts. Three participants continue their ALF connections, with two assuming high visibility within the organization by serving on the board or as chair of key committees. Participants attended at least one

activity sponsored by ALF or initiated by ALF members, depending on the type and timing of the event. Those who were interviewed and who did not continue their ALF connections over time attributed their diminished involvement due to time constraints, family obligations, and conflicts with other volunteer activities.

- *There are few members, say, even from our class that continues to be active in the things that are being offered. (I11/12)*

- *I'm not doing as much now as I should, but that's my own fault because I've been so busy traveling and then having a little accident with my knee. But I need to make a decision about that—whether I would continue. (B121/124)*

- *But for a time after graduating with my leadership class, I was more involved in the actual ALF and its activities than I am currently, which demanded a lot of time. (F74/76)*

One participant perceived her lack of participation in ALF as a lost opportunity, but was unsure and unwilling to become part of an organization that, to her, appeared to have become aligned with the elements of a corporate culture and organization.

> *In terms of being able to maintain the relationship, I have not maintained it because my time doesn't work that way. I keep in the back of my mind saying that I know it would be good for [name of organization] if I could make myself more present, you know, just to keep [name of organization] in the hopper, also to see what contacts are doing....you know, it's good to schmooze. Every year I say I'm going to get a little more involved, but I think when I stopped getting involved when it became formalized. (G160/168)*

A few participants shared that they experienced a feeling of melancholy in continuing the ALF connection. Fred's interview revealed a degree of sullenness in his attitude about the organization:

> Researcher: *Have you sustained your involvement in the ALF organization?*
>
> Fred: *I send them a check. I was involved back then, but I really haven't done a lot since then. I haven't been to any event, not one event.*
>
> Researcher: *Was that because you are too busy or just choose not to?*
>
> Fred: *I choose not to. I just choose not too. I don't know whether I was mad at ALF or just mad at myself for not being there. (441/448)*

Maintaining connections between and among ALF graduates over time is a goal of the organization. According to the tenets of the organization, these connections, if sustained, can enhance collaborative efforts in building networks among ALF participants to impact positive community change. Paul recognized the importance of staying connected in his interview:

> *One of the ways I've been able to sustain it [ALF experience] for myself is I get an opportunity to talk about this stuff with people such as yourself. I don't know whether I would have that opportunity. I feel like I have more of an opportunity to do that with you and other people because I went through this ALF experience...I've tried to have those discussions with some other people, and they are like, kind of glazed over and it's kind of like... "What?" (A273/280)*

The participants who expressed disappointment with a lack of connectedness with ALF were cognizant of their waning lack of interest in the organization. Having become disgruntled with the organization or its actions at some point, these participants appeared to have come to the realization that they did

not have the time or energy to continue to maintain their relationships with other ALF members in light of other priorities in their lives.

Diversity

Graduates expressed dissatisfaction with the diversity aspect of the ALF program and curriculum. The program's diversity component has as its goal Exploring/Understanding/Valuing Diversity. Three of those interviewed in this study shared their perceptions that their ALF experiences enabled them to be more appreciative of the diversity of perspectives shared by their ALF colleagues. All three valued the opportunities that enabled them to learn from one another. They shared, for example, that the year-long ALF program provided an opportunity to assess one's own prejudices. The cohort membership was purposively designed to be diverse, and brought together people in the community who might not otherwise have an opportunity to interact with one another.

While some admitted to overcoming their stereotypes and developing a greater appreciation of diverse viewpoints, there was a general feeling experienced by all of the participants in the study that discussions about race were avoided and not sufficiently addressed. They expressed that the diversity component in the curriculum could be greatly improved to provide more meaningful discourse on the topics of race and diversity among the participants. Paul, a strong supporter of the program had many positive comments to share about his experiences, but also expressed his concerns about the diversity component of the curriculum.

- *I think that we did not go as far as could have been to those areas that are uncomfortable areas. We had a very brief discussion on diversity and at the time, and that was [early 1990s], things were different then, and diversity was an issue but not as large an issue or an issue that everybody had on their mind as it is now. But we just brushed against that issue and then, I think, we retreated. (65/70)*

- *People walked on eggs, on egg shells when talking about diversity. It's just when they say, Okay, you know, we have opinions about this issue, but let's just be politically correct here and not voice our true feelings. I don't think that they really dug down deep enough to draw out the example that represented the different culture or backgrounds. If there was a conflict between the different views, they did not address it well or they would think that the expectation, that is the way it should be done and if anyone had a different opinion about it, then that is just not right. (D247/255)*

- *We stopped the discussion because we had to move on to some other part. I thought it was very telling about the group that was facilitating the camp [an ALF activity], the organization we were working with, and a little bit of suspicion. I wouldn't say suspicion, but it troubled me that this, the American Leadership Forum, hadn't figured out, you know. You are going to have those discussions about real life, then you have to let those happen. (80/85)*

The participants shared a common observation that people of color within their respective classes gravitated to one another. The general observations that were shared by them include the following: 1) there were occasions within their cohort, when a distinct separation occurred between the people of color and others who were not people of color in the cohort, and 2) the program structure did not appear to provide adequate opportunities for the group to be fully integrated and welcoming to the satisfaction of the interviewed participants.

> *We still hug each other very passionately, the classic hug. I think he [another graduate] understands that people of color aren't all like what you see on TV, real jobs, real families that are trying to do right, do the right thing. I think this was the experience. I still think we failed, we failed because we couldn't break down the barriers that have always existed in society as we know as a whole. We never did, although we sat down and had dinner together. (C284/292)*

Marie had powerful stories to share about the ability of her cohort members to address diversity. She said, *"We never really got to explore some of those differences and when we approached race, people would avoid it" (286/287).* She recounted an incident during one of the ALF sessions when she and other members of her cohort, specifically a group of Caucasian males, invited her to visit a local bar in a small community. While in the bar, they became engaged in a karaoke contest, which they later won. Shortly afterward, someone in the bar started yelling derogatory comments about her. She went on to further describe the incident by relating the conversation she had with the ALF colleagues who were with her in the bar:

> *I told you I wasn't comfortable, I told you I didn't want to do the karaoke because I don't want to call attention to myself...and now, if I get beat up, you better flank around me, and they had no consciousness that they had no sense of their own privilege of being able to go into any place and feel comfortable and my not being able to go anyplace and being comfortable because they had just said, everybody is color blind, but not realizing that a black woman in a bar with a lot of people doing a lot of drinking in some little place was not a place of comfort for me. All right, so we had to talk a long time about that because I really kind of said, you guys, if you are going to work with the community and stuff, you got to understand about the positions you put people in and what that means, and how uncomfortable that is, and you have to be. So some sort of training that would have given people the idea about*

> *it. It was like once we were all in ALF, we were all the same, but we weren't all the same and we never really got to explore some of those differences and when we approached race, people would avoid it. (265/287)*

Rebecca was candid in sharing her feelings about herself as a person of color and the disappointments about ALF relationships between and among the participants.

> *I was hoping that it would be different, but it's not. I even had to look at it as how much of this is my own doing—my unwillingness to jump into the dominant culture, and I'm not very willing to do that.... When I go out into the [racial groups outside of her own] and do things, I always feel like I have to sell myself and I don't like that feeling. (170/176)*

An aspect of the program that led to criticism throughout the tenure of the ALF program, as well as concern from the participants is the selection process that is used to identify future participants in the program. One participant said of the selection process, *"The struggle has been intense on some of the selection issues because I have sometimes been seen as the least cooperative on compromises on race and gender" (H270/270).* The process has the capacity to create racial tensions, since it can have the appearance of sifting through people as an exclusive, private organization might. In fact, there were, and probably still are, community members who are critical of the ALF organization because of its elitism.

The concerns about diversity among the participants who were interviewed are derived from the ALF member selection process, the curriculum, the program of activities, the facilitators, to the interactions among participants. These concerns were openly shared with the researcher as they recounted their feelings of

frustration and discomfort. It was evident they were not given an opportunity to adequately address their concerns in ways they could be heard.

Community Impact

The primary mission of the ALF program is *"dedicated to joining and strengthening established leaders in order to serve the public good."* One of the organization's goals is to "*increase the ability of each community to solve its own problems and to make public/private initiatives work.*"

Differing views were expressed by the participants of the study in reference to the impact of the ALF organization and its activities on the community. The participants were varied in their responses, with some focusing on program outcomes and others on the interactions and relationship building in the community. Those who were positive about their experiences noted projects or activities that had been accomplished as a result of ALF.

- *There was the Deming project which is unusual and tried to focus on domestic violence and tried to change the system and make some improvements and I think we did. But when Deming came to this community, the difference for selecting us versus any one of the others they were looking at was because of this leadership training we had. They found that very unique and the way the people talked about the community as a whole and how you serve it and it was very much in line with what they were looking for—a community that was willing to try to make these Deming principles to make a change in society, not just an industrial complex or Deming principles of quality already been proven. (J1814/192)*

- *I have looked; I have been in maybe hundreds, maybe a hundred situations where I can sit in a room and see 6 or 7*

> *people from ALF in a room—we're working on the emergency food network issues and I look at the 9 members of the board and 4 of them have been through ALF. We have a common approach—it creates a better group. When you start to look at several people in the room, there are certain core issues that you don't have to struggle with and the norming process, those norms have been established and you can move on, while other groups may be trying to figure this out. You've done that, you're able to move on, so I think it's been tremendously impactful to this community. (H228/241)*

Two other participants named specific projects in the city that were initiated by ALF graduates. They included sponsorship of study circles on race, the establishment of the Pierce County Resolution Center, and Forum 21. Forum 21 was founded by ALF graduates with the intent of identifying innovative and creative ways of community collaboration. The organization eventually provided seed money to support project start-ups, with the ultimate goal of supporting creative and innovative approaches to community problem solving. One of the projects it funded was the continuation of the ALF program in Tacoma-Pierce County.

Three of participants who were interviewed appeared to have given their experiences and the program considerable thought prior to the interview. Marie had the most to share about her concerns, sharing her perspectives and giving examples of situations that left her feeling dissatisfied with the program results.

> *It felt like there was a form [the ALF program] that was given, you know, a structure that was given. This is the structure, so let's figure out what we are going to do with this structure as opposed to before the structure is even done [completed]. What does it really take to sustain a community? So, we didn't have that as one of the tracks. One of the tracks was not in community sustain-*

> *ability—that was a critical absence because that would have allowed us to talk about these various perspectives and positions and how do we sustain relationships and how do we sustain them by degrees, by equivalency. (555/564)*

She lost interest in the ALF program because of its increasing formal and rigid structure as it evolved from a program centered on community to one focused on itself.

> *So what sustains a community, those were not dialogues, you know, how do we sustain the organization and so I think that I would have allowed more people of color to contribute to it. But as it was, it still stays and it still feels like the old boys club even though it has old girls in it. It's old girls acting like old boys. (570/574)*

When Marie described the ALF program, she said, *"I think that it is a structure that is more culturally appropriate to certain people more than other people" (G112/114).* She also expressed her disappointment with other participants and the attitude they brought with them into the program.

> *I think most of the people came in and perceived themselves as fait accompli in some way. "I am a leader, that's why they've asked me," as opposed to "I'm potentially a leader and so let me see how I can use this to grow and to become a better leader." (453/456)*

Fred was a participant who was dissatisfied with the ALF organization and its program, as evidenced by his sudden disinterest and disillusionment with the program's direction. Shortly after his participation in the year-long program, Fred became involved in ALF activities locally and nationally. His network among ALF graduates became extensive as he traveled to regional and national ALF meetings and became acquainted with a number of ALF graduates from other chapters

throughout the United States. He became one of the leading local advocates for the program.

Fred was quoted as saying the program had a profound effect on him personally. However, when looking at the impact the program had on the greater community, and for the greater good, Fred was convinced that it hadn't happened.

> *I think there was something that in the community that we could have done or I thought that, in my opinion, should be doing... We didn't become this utopian community that I thought we were going to become. How could I not read these wonderful readings and these thoughts and not open your hearts and your soul to the world? And I don't think we did that. I was thinking, was anybody else reading the readings? (360/364)*

Fred saw ALF and the community as *"doing business as usual" (416).* He was expecting something different—the interactions between the leaders in the community and action toward solving problems happening in a different way. He says of his involvement, *"I was involved back then, but I really haven't done a lot since then. I haven't been to any event, not one event" (444/445).* When asked whether it was because he was too busy, or just chose not to, he replied, *"I choose not to, I just...I just choose not to. I don't know whether I was mad at ALF or just mad at myself for not being there" (447/448).*

Paul was less judgmental, but also shared his criticisms of the program. He remains actively involved in ALF activities and invested a considerable amount of time on curriculum changes in the year-long program. He was positive in describing his experiences in ALF, but continues to search for ways in which the

program can empower the graduates to impact community problem solving and change.

- *I really believe more and more now that we just kind of scratched the surface. (65/65)*

- *The model [ALF] is very similar to the model that I went through in [date of his participation]. I think that one of the things that I have been trying to push is us maybe getting out a little bit outside the envelope and working, you know, the dynamic of conflict a little bit more and the dynamic of diversity and really trying to push those as far forward and out in front of these new classes as possible. (80/85)*

- *When I reflect about working on ALF and thinking back about my experiences—the need to really push that envelope. Everything, I think, is open, open territory in that I'm not convinced that the wilderness experience is the only way to have that, you know, the relationship building, the team building and those types of dynamics come to play. (91/95)*

In ascertaining whether the ALF program had a significant impact on the community, Paul looks for projects or activities in which ALF learnings are brought to the situation. *"The real test is where you have a situation where it has nothing to do with ALF and you are outside of your role as ALF class XX member and you're dealing with somebody" (242/244).* He cites an example of a real time situation in which two known ALF graduates were in conflict over a community issue and were practicing avoidance rather than getting together to discuss their differences.

> *I hope that ALF is making a difference, but I think that sometimes it is business as usual outside of ALF activities and that's a real test for ALF. You know, it's not only how you deal with other people in your class inside and outside of ALF, but it is also how you deal with other people who have gone through similar*

> *experiences, ALF experience out there where people can see you and are taking cues from the way that you end up doing business as a leader. (259/265)*

In spite of the fact that participants who were interviewed had few expectations of the program, they openly shared their disappointments. There was an unspoken expectation that the networking, the relationship building, and the skill building experiences of trust and collaboration would have resulted in a new community dynamic. From their perspectives, that dynamic had not yet evolved and things continued to operate "as usual."

In addition to the themes uncovered in the study, there were general observations made by the researcher around gender, ethnicity and race, longevity in the community, and the time at which the participant was engaged in the year-long ALF program. The following observations were made by the researcher based on the interview data.

Gender

Gender differences were noted in the perspectives of the participants who participated in the study. First, the female participants in the study alluded to the personal relationships with other ALF members that evolved from their experiences. All of the female participants commented that relationship building was a significant outcome of their ALF leadership experience. They frequently referred to new relationships forged during the year-long experience, specifically with other women in their cohort groups. Connie and Marie, for example, referred

to the relationships with other women of color. The bonds that were forged, particularly in the stories that Marie shared in her interview, appeared to have set this small group of women apart from the rest of their cohort. Connie's interview included examples of her continued relationships with other women of color well beyond the year-long experience.

The male participants, on the other hand, spoke of their increased networking in a context related to their jobs or as community volunteers. The relationships most frequently addressed by the male participants were in reference to widening their professional networks in the community. Fred was an exception. He often referred to the personal relationships he developed with others in his cohort, although those relationships have not appeared to have continued through the present time.

Profession/employment, profit and nonprofit

The interviews revealed no obvious differences in experiences that may be directly attributed to the type of employment held by the participants in the study or their work in either the profit or nonprofit sectors. Seven of the participants worked for nonprofit organizations. Two participants worked in for-profit organizations and one is a retiree. Fred and Marie made references to the fact that although the cohorts were a diverse and heterogeneous group, their perceptions were that ALF graduates continued to conduct business as usual—working and socializing within their like and kind. Fred was quoted as saying people in ALF

were conducting business as usual and *"just hanging on to their piece of the pie."* Marie made a distinct separation between the "*country club types*" and "*the others.*" Other participants in the study did not make reference to differences attributed to employment types among participants.

Age

There were no notable differences in perceptions and attitudes that can be attributed to age differences expressed among the participants of color who participated in the study.

Ethnicity and race

Perceptions and attitudes attributed to the participants' self awareness as people of color were observed as each of the participants proudly identified herself/ himself with a particular ethnic or racial group. All participants shared their perspectives of the interactions among and between members of their cohort, particularly during their participation in the year-long program. Examples of having been stereotyped by the non participants of color were mentioned by two participants in the study.

The participants all made references to their work in their respective ethnic communities. Four participants made specific comments attributing their ethnicity and race as a primary factor in their selection as an ALF participant.

Longevity in the community

All of the participants were residents of the Tacoma-Pierce County community for 10 years or longer. There were no notable differences observed in perceptions between those who were born to the area or natives of the community, and those who were transplants to Tacoma-Pierce County.

Year of participation in the ALF year-long program

The two participants who most recently participated in the year-long program were more noticeably excited about their experiences in the ALF than those who had completed the program in earlier years. Their excitement was demonstrated by the level of enthusiasm in their voices when describing their experiences, their descriptive detail of their participation in the program, and examples of their continued contact with those in their cohort. These two individuals, Tina and Helen, had the most recent and hence, most vivid memories of their ALF experiences.

There was no evidence of a consistent pattern in the level of community involvement pre- and post-ALF experience for the participants in the study. Two individuals, Fred and Rebecca, appeared to have become somewhat disconnected from the larger community, as well as from the ALF organization since their participation in the year-long program. Luke continues to be involved, but shared his need to limit his focus from community activities to a more focused effort on family. Three participants, Paul, Steve, and Tina, are presently involved in the

ALF organization to varying degrees. A fourth, Fred, had been actively involved in the ALF organization earlier on, but has since spent less time and effort on ALF activities.

The themes identified in the research study revealed the common elements of the experiences of participants of color in the ALF experience. They addressed both the positive elements and disappointments of the participants' experiences. Other studies on ALF identify similarities of some of the experiences shared by participants in this study. Part IV discusses the similarity of the identified themes.

Part IV: Similarity of Themes of ALF Studies

Other sources of data were used to note similarities or differences in themes identified in various studies, primarily those studies previously completed to evaluate the ALF program. One such study was conducted locally within Tacoma-Pierce County. In July, 2001, the American Leadership Forum chapter of Tacoma-Pierce County undertook the task of gathering information to assess the program (ALF, 2001). A research organization was contracted to survey past program participants. The survey was sent to all 136 former program participants in the spring of 2000. There was a response rate of 67.6%, with 92 completed surveys. Of the past participants who responded, two-thirds were Caucasian. Respondents who were persons of color were represented as follows: African-American—12.0%; Asian or Asian-American—7.6%; Hispanic/Latino(a)—3.3%; Native American—1.1%, Multi-racial—3.3%; and missing data—10.9%.

The survey asked respondents to rate knowledge, feelings, and attitudes at different points in time while in the ALF program, and after their participation in the year-long program. There was also an opportunity to reply to open-ended questions. The survey identified patterns where the ALF experience was thought to have a measurable impact. The following five areas of leadership skills and attitudes were identified by the participants:

- Diversity in leadership—
  a) Participants network more with diverse leaders and increasingly accept diversity.
  b) Participants improved their communication skills and exposure to diversity issues.
- Skill building—
  a) Participants became better listeners, became more collaborative and sensitive to group functioning.
  b) Participants increased their appreciation for the need to balance planning and group processing before taking action.
- Commitment to community involvement—
  Participants maintain high levels of commitment to community improvement and action.
- Building relationships and trust among participants—
  a) Participants consistently feel more connected to their own classmates versus other graduates.

b) Overall, ALF alumni feel most connected to other ALF participants one year after graduation versus current time.

- Openness to personal growth—

  Participants were more open to growth and change.

- Other themes in open-ended comments—

  a) Enhancing networks and connections.

  b) Increased understanding of leadership and other skills.

  c) Greater acceptance of others.

The themes identified by the participants of color in this study were consistent with the patterns identified by the ALF graduates who responded to the 2001 study in the areas of: 1) skill building, 2) commitment to community involvement, 3) building relationships and trust among participants, and 4) openness to personal growth. The 2001 study developed major findings from a sample where two-thirds of the respondents were Caucasian and one-third identified themselves as African American and Asian or Asian American. A significant difference between the two studies was on the topic of diversity. The present study enabled a closer examination of the perceptions of the people of color who participated in the Tacoma-Pierce County ALF program. It provided a more in-depth perspective of the elements of the program that the participants appeared to be most focused on, and their perceptions of their experiences. For example, some of the participants of color in this study indicated a concern about the absence of meaningful dialogue on the topic of diversity as well as a feeling at times, of

being separated from the larger group, i.e. from the other participants who were not people of color.

In 1990-91, one of the first research projects on the American Leadership Forum was conducted on a national basis (Chrislip et al., 1992). Part of that study focused on the impact of the ALF program on individual participants. Seventy (70) ALF participants were randomly selected from five different ALF chapters from among the national network, one of which was the Tacoma chapter. None of the participants in this current study acknowledged participating in the 1990-91 study. Content analyses of the transcribed interviews were conducted by the researchers. The following were the major findings of the study, which specifically examined the impact of the program on the individual.

- Networking/Bonding – Constituted the strongest general factor described by the ALF participants.
- Behavioral Change/Personal Growth – A large number reported changes in attitude and behavior, specifically in the area of collaborative behavior. One-third of the interviewed participants described a greater willingness to confront issues and a greater appreciation for other points of view.
- Coalition Building/Creation of a Collaborative Climate – The creation of a diverse network of community leaders with a heightened awareness of community issues was referred to as a significant program impact.

- Specific Leadership Skills – Participants identified strategic planning, goal setting, creating a vision, and development of a mission as skills obtained or strengthened by ALF training.
- Developing Collaborative Networks – The level of activity of the ALF network was noted. The ALF participants supported each others' causes and recommended each other for community boards and activities.

The results of the 1990-91 national study closely parallel the results of this research study, as well as the 2001 alumni participant survey. Table 5 displays the parallel themes found in all three studies. They are:

- Networking – Enhanced professional and personal networks in the community, particularly among the ALF graduates (aka Fellows).
- Community commitment – Involvement and leadership in numerous community activities; mentorship.
- Leadership development – Learning and practicing collaborative leadership, consensus building, appreciation of diverse viewpoints.
- Personal growth and transformation – Greater self esteem, openness to diverse viewpoints and people.

Table 5. Similarity of themes in ALF studies

Current Study	Local Chapter Alumni Study (2001)	National Study (1990-1991)
NETWORKING		
ALF has enhanced professional and personal networks and community connections. Alumni feel closest to those in their respective cohort as contrasted with relationships to those in other cohorts. Relationships tend to diminish as time passes.	ALF's contribution to enhancing networks and connections: • Ongoing personal contact with ALF alumni appears to lead to feeling connected. • Feeling connected to other ALF alumni is connected to community leadership activities and greater commitment toward community improvement Alumni most likely to move to action on leadership activities with classmates soon after graduation, and diminish somewhat as the years go by	ALF is achieving goals of: • Creating networks of community leaders • Promoting readiness to collaborate on community issues among ALF fellows Alumni are contacting, connecting, and consulting with one another on a regular basis

Table 5. Continued.

Current Study	Local Chapter Alumni Study (2001)	National Study (1990-1991)
COMMUNITY COMMITMENT		
ALF projects have engaged collaborative efforts in the community. Projects have enhanced quality of life in the community. ALF graduates often serve together on community board and committees in the city and in the county; these associations reinforce collaboration and relationship building. Continued commitment to community: • Serving on numerous local and regional boards • Mentoring other emergent leaders • Serving a select group or groups • Supporting ALF initiatives and projects The on-going connections To ALF have occurred Primarily because of being asked to serve on the local ALF chapter activities and/or to support ALF during their annual giving activities.	Alumni commitment to community is maintained over time	ALF projects have enhanced quality of life in the communities. Networks created by ALF have great potential for impact on future community issues. ALF is strong and flexible, with chapter adaptations to local communities.

Table 5. Continued.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT		
• Learning about and practicing collaborative leadership • Become more inclusive and accepting of diverse views • Learning and applying consensus building • Principles of servant leadership • Mentoring and mentorship • Caring, ethical leadership	• Connections with others that they may not have otherwise connected with in the community • Understanding of leadership • Increased understanding and value of collaboration and collaborative skills • Increased understanding and value of diversity	• Coalition building • Bringing together of diverse entities with special interests to solve a problem • Building of trust • Capacity to deal with confrontations and hostility • Strategic planning • Learning how to run effective meetings • Capacity to bring about community change
PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION		
Pursue additional formal education in leadership. Affirmation of self. Personal relationships and bonds have formed between ALF graduates within a cohort. Most notably, those mentioned have been among other people of color.	Increase in general self-confidence.	Empowerment of others to create a collaborative climate Personal growth and behavioral change: • Greater collaboration • Willingness to confront issues • Greater open-mindedness • Greater patience Support groups or regular gatherings of classmates take place after year's program

Table 5. Continued.

FAMILY		
Alumni mentioned and recognized importance of family and family relationships, some of which were supported and promoted by ALF involvement		

This research study explored these themes to the extent that the participants themselves desired to relive their experiences vicariously through the interviews. The 1990-1991 and 2001 studies, as well as the current study, corroborate the strongest element of the ALF program—its ability to create networks, particularly with other ALF participants.

The 2001 study revealed positive and a few neutral ratings of the ALF experiences by the participants. Most respondents to the study chose to comment on the impact of ALF on their lives and on their leadership style. One-fifth of the respondents reported that ALF increased their understanding and value of diversity. The 1990-91 study and the present study identify a need for more focus and discussion on race issues in the program curriculum. This recommendation is consistent with the statements of several of the people of color in the study who were disappointed in the lack of discourse on the topic of race and diversity.

Summary

The American Leadership Forum (ALF) is a nonprofit organization whose mission reads: "Dedicated to joining and strengthening established leaders in order to serve the public good. It enhances leadership by building on the strength of the diversity of its participants and by promoting collaborative problem-solving within and among communities." The program goals include the following:

- ALF identifies and brings leaders together, in preparation for collaboration on significant issues.
- ALF heightens each leader's sense of public responsibility and commitment to act, as a servant leader, upon that responsibility.
- ALF enhances skills and competencies, providing the conceptual framework required to meet new leadership challenges.
- ALF increases the ability of each community to solve its own problems and to make public/private initiatives work.

This research study focused on the perceptions of a group of 10 participants of color of their ALF experiences. The study revealed the emergent themes of **networking, relationships, community commitment, leadership development, personal transformation, and family**. The themes support the ALF program goals in the areas of collaboration, public responsibility, and skills development. Additional themes voiced by the participants as they cited their disappointments of their experiences focused on **connectedness over time, diversity, and community impact.**

The following chapter will identify the findings of the study based on the themes identified in the interview material of the study's participants. It will also discuss the implications of the results of the study; specifically the identification of the themes and ways in which they relate to the literature on civic engagement, civic leadership, and leadership diversity. The recommendations based on the findings of the study will also be outlined as well as the recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter begins with a summary of the research study and its findings. Following this introduction is a discussion of the conclusions drawn by the researcher in response to the research questions about the participants' perspectives of their experiences in the American Leadership Forum program (ALF) and how these perspectives compare with the literature on leadership and civic leadership. The chapter concludes with recommendations for practice as well as for further research. Direct quotations taken from participant interviews are used throughout the chapter to support the findings. Some quotations are repeated for the purpose of connecting the individual participant stories to those of the other participants. In other cases, the quotations were found to be "rich, strong, and valuable" in their original form. They gave voice to the participants in ways that could not be more effectively expressed by the researcher.

Purpose

The United States is built on the ideals of civic engagement and leadership that promote the common good. It is a nation that thrives on the freedoms afforded individuals, but at the same time attends to what Cornel West (1993) calls "the public square." The vitality of any public square, he claims, ultimately depends on

how much we care for one another and the quality of our lives together in community. Putnam (1993) found in his research that an indicator of a healthy civic community is its social capital, defined as "the networks and norms of trust and reciprocity that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (p. 19). Inherent in the success of American communities is the emergence of leadership that is reflective of the diversity of its people and whose efforts are based on an understanding of diversity and how it enriches the whole—wholeness incorporating diversity—a term used by John Gardner (1990, p. 116). The most important factors in nurturing and sustaining effective civic responsibility are leadership and collaboration.

The purpose of the study was to gain insight into the consciousness of individuals as they participate in a leadership development program and was not meant to develop or support hypotheses. One of the ways in which civic leadership is developed and sustained is with community leadership development programs (Chang, 1997; Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Couto, 1997; Cruze, 1988; Dionne, 1998; Earnest, 1996; Earnest et al., 1995; Jaworski, 1996; Tanbara; 2000).

The study explored the experiences of a group of participants of color in a nationally recognized leadership development program that has as its primary focus the development of civic minded leaders. Its purpose is descriptive and exploratory. More specifically, the goal of this study was to gain a better understanding of how these community leaders perceived their ALF experiences, and to characterize the impact of the experience on their lives. The research was

initiated with a question asked of a group of 10 leaders of color who participated in the study.

Patterns, comprised of a compilation of common topics, emerged from the interviews of the participants of color. Upon further analysis, these patterns were later organized into themes, which when summarized, provided a set of findings that can be used to explore the impact of leadership development programs such as ALF on community leadership and community.

Methodology

The study was conducted using the phenomenological perspective to answer the basic research question: "What were the experiences of the participants of color in the American Leadership Forum program as described by the participants themselves?" This approach in research design was deemed as the most appropriate methodology to allow for research that is dynamic, rich, and reflective of the experiences and emotions the interviewed participants had to share with the researcher.

The research centered on in-depth, open-ended interviews of 10 Tacoma-Pierce County community leaders of color. All 10 interviewees had participated in the formal, year-long American Leadership Forum (ALF) program between the years 1989-2001. The leaders participating in this study included a select group of men and women who had been nominated for, and subsequently participated in, the community leadership program. They were invited to participate in the study by

letter or personal communication, either by phone or in face-to-face conversations. All participants were willing and eager to participate in the study and did so voluntarily.

The use of interviews as the method of inquiry provided a rich data source and "gave voice" to leaders of color in the Tacoma-Pierce County community who participated in ALF. More specifically, the interviews afforded the researcher personal perspectives that were not solicited as a part of the ALF program evaluation process conducted by the local ALF organization. From the researcher's perspective, the voices of people of color are often marginalized in the community because they often speak of change from the status quo. In doing so, these voices share perspectives that are not of the mainstream thought, are risky, and often unpopular. The interviews provided a method by which these voices were allowed to be heard and the participants' ideas and perspectives recognized.

Each interview was approximately 90 minutes in length and conducted at a location of the participants' choice. The interviews were audio taped with the participants' full knowledge and consent. The interviews were transcribed soon after they were held. Revisions were made to the interview format by the researcher as new insights were gained after each interview. Significant topics were identified by noting the length of time each participant spent on a concept or topic and the frequency with which the participant mentioned each concept or topic. The computer software program WinMax was utilized to organize these topics for further segregation into common themes. The themes that were

generated included the following: community networking, relationship building, family, leadership development diversity, collaboration, and personal transformation. The themes provide a framework for the findings resulting from the study. The analysis of the data in this research study provides an understanding of how a select group of community leaders perceived their experiences as participants in a leadership development program.

The ALF program has brought value to the leadership experiences of the participants in the study and is recognized as a successful community initiative. It is also perceived as capable of becoming even more successful in encouraging and supporting community change through increased collaboration. The intent of this inquiry was not to evaluate the ALF program, but rather to gain a better understanding of how community leaders participating in ALF perceived their experiences in the program, and to characterize the impact of these experiences on their lives. Recommendations for programmatic changes in the year-long program, as well as activities for ALF graduates gleaned from the participants, will be shared with the program committee for their future consideration. The study can also be used to frame future research about civic leadership development and community building.

Limitations of the Study

This study represents a small, qualitative inquiry of people of color and their experiences in a leadership development program. The researcher advises

caution in formulating broader implications of the study. It is difficult, and not within the scope of this study, to determine the extent to which the findings of this study were influenced by variables such as race and ethnicity, age, gender, profession, relationships with one another, or longevity in the community. Further research in this area will be invaluable in supporting future initiatives to develop and sustain community leadership among people of color.

Validity

Merriam (2002) states: "Reality in qualitative inquiry assumes that there are multiple, changing realities and those individuals have their own unique constructions of reality" (p. 25). The participants in this study had unique stories to share of their ALF experiences. Validity was established using the following methods as outlined by Merriam (2002): 1) The data collected from the interviews were checked against the researcher's observations and understanding of the ALF program (as an ALF graduate herself). The researcher observed that the participants in the study were comfortable in sharing their thoughts and opinions during the interviews. 2) The participants' interviews for this study contained descriptions of ALF events and graduate interactions that were similar to some accounts in previous ALF studies. The similarities included descriptions on relationship building, development of networks, and community commitment. 3) Member checks were conducted as participants in the study reviewed the researcher's summaries of their interviews for accuracy. 4) The researcher

submerged herself in the data collection by actively listening and engaging, when appropriate, with each participant. The participants appeared to be pleased with the opportunity to share their experiences with the researcher. They engaged in lengthy interviews that resulted in interview data rich with stories of their experiences in the ALF program.

Findings

This section begins with a discussion of the findings that address the research questions posed by the study.

1. *What were the experiences of the participants of color in the ALF program as described by the participants themselves?*

In analyzing the interview transcripts, the participants' perceptions of their ALF experience can be best described in terms of eight themes. **The emergent themes identified in the participant interviews were: networking, community commitment, leadership development, personal transformation, family, lack of connectedness sustained over time, diversity, and community impact.**

2. *What is the significance of the ALF experience to the individual participant of color?*

   a. *What is the significance of the ALF experience to the individual's perception of her/his leadership abilities?*

Participation in a leadership program enhances the professional and personal networks among people, and encourages the development of strong,

lasting relationships. The ALF program recognizes the importance of relationship building in community problem solving. The first step to forming a relationship is collective identity (Bordas, 2000); the second is to access power and presence to promote mutual advancement and community collaboration. A shared sense of community is a frequently cited area of emphasis among community based movements. The single most important pattern found in the Daloz et al. (1996) study about citizens who dedicated their lives to the common good was a "constructive, enlarging engagement with the other" and the need for people to be dependent upon, and interdependent with, networks of belonging (p. 63). Research on community leadership development (Brant, 1995; Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Cruze, 1998; Daloz et al., 1996; Vandenberg, 1993) demonstrate that an anticipated result of relationship building and networking is the development of social capital in the community with capacity to institute social change from within.

The value in networking is the support leaders can provide one another in their efforts to initiate community change. The challenge to effective networking is two-fold: 1) to ensure relationships formed by the common experience, in this case the ALF year-long program, are built on a foundation of mutual respect and trust; and 2) to ensure that these relationships are sustained to support individuals in their work. Sustaining relationships is critical to sustaining change in the community. According to Daloz et al. (1996): "People who try to go it alone are rarely able to sustain their commitment. Committed people need to know that there are others like themselves striving to live lives committed to the common good." (p. 217)

There are challenges for the ALF organization and its participants. The first will be to identify ways to sustain the relationships that were formed between members of a cohort during the year-long experience. Second, these relationships must be sustained through the years to enable maximum opportunities for collaboration beyond the boundaries of the experience. It is a challenge that has been brought to the attention of the organization in participant surveys, and one that has yet to be met.

The development of an image of a positive, connected, centered self is a significant part of effective leadership. Participants in the study shared their feelings of affirmation as leaders upon reflecting on their ALF experiences. According to Daloz et al. (1996), of committed citizens they interviewed, "...they employ images that give positive form to their own sense of self" (p. 146). A study conducted by McCormick (2001) linked the relationship between leader self-confidence and leadership success. He surmised that:

> The social cognitive model of leadership has relevance to leadership training since it proposes that for someone to be successful in a leadership role, he or she must have a healthy sense of personal effectiveness as a leader. This model implies that enhancing leadership self-efficacy should be an important objective for those responsible for improving the quality of leadership in organizations. (p. 31)

Daloz et al. (1996) note that the notion of a positive sense of self was particularly important for minorities who were interviewed (p. 146), as did the researcher in this study. The readings from Martin Luther King, Rebecca Adamson, and Robert Greenleaf in the year-long program, for example, lent

themselves to a sense of identity and pride to some of the interviewed participants of color, while others gained these feelings through their interactions with guest facilitators and with one another. The ultimate goal in working with people of color is to enable them to move toward transforming themselves into strong individuals first, and then into strong leaders.

Stories shared by the participants in this study and those in the Daloz et al. (1996) study noted that there was pressure not only to represent themselves as leaders, but to represent a group, i.e. women, Asians (p 183). The feeling of being "a voice" representing an ethnic group was particularly felt in the Asian participants who were interviewed. They not only felt they were speaking for all Asians in the community, but they were selected because they became the representatives of that constituency.

Empowering leadership for people of color by encouraging a strong voice is a laudable goal for leadership programs. Leadership development programs that support participants of color in acquiring new knowledge, developing new skills, and developing a greater awareness of community issues will lead to increased effectiveness as leaders. New skills and perspectives can be learned, even among established leaders. The transformation of individuals, as a result of professional development experiences, leads to a sense of growing self-esteem that is vital to the sense of empowerment and that one can make a positive difference (Daloz et al., 1996, p. 34).

Leadership development programs have the ability to empower leaders by developing their leadership capacity. Programs can prepare leaders by providing opportunities for professional growth that include training in collaborative building techniques, diversity, change strategies, leadership theory, and topics deemed to be essential to the practice of effective leadership. Markus (1999) identifies the need for ALF participants to

> ...acquire a multifaceted perspective on the most important issues of their time, and to understand the interrelations among those issues. Leaders must have substantive knowledge and insight if they are to engage others in appropriate action to address matters of common concern. (p. 12)

People of color in leadership positions, such as those interviewed in this study, often rise to provide grassroots leadership in communities. Grassroots leadership involves risk-taking, often going against mainstream thought and traditional leadership hierarchies (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 1999). Leadership development training for grassroots leaders should not only require the development of a set of skills, but also allow leaders to practice those skills in a low risk environment where they can feel safe to step outside of their comfort zone as well as to take risks. A study of grassroots organizations (Vandenberg, 1993) demonstrates a significant connection between community involvement and feelings of empowerment. It suggests that organizations such as ALF can provide leadership development opportunities for leaders of color by developing their leadership skills and, in turn, create feelings of empowerment among those leaders to affect community change.

The reflection of the experience and sharing the experience with others is a part of leadership development. The interviews conducted for this study acted as a catalyst to encourage the participants to reflect upon their learning as a participant in the ALF program. Some felt their learning was stimulated by being in a room with other ALF participants, sharing a common experience that provided a level of established trust. This finding exemplifies the concept described by Markus (1999) that addresses the need to identify ways to continually connect group and individual learning to the matter of interest; that is, joining and strengthening established leaders to serve the public good.

Some of the participants who were interviewed were still processing their experiences years later. Jaworski (1996, p. 130) stressed the importance of time for reflection that is often lost in what he coins as "the trap of over activity."

> It [maintaining time for reflection] must be a regular discipline and it must continue throughout the life of the undertaking, because the purpose of the enterprise will continue to evolve. The re-nurturing must take place in the midst of and as a part of that evolution.

The importance of time set for self reflection and self study in order for social action as the basis for leadership development toward building community for the common good. The challenge of providing time for reflection and study in the ALF program is a difficult one, given the multiple interests and needs of its participants in addition to the demands of time placed on community leaders.

b. What is the significance of the ALF experience to the individual's commitment to community as described by the participants of color?

Balancing work, involvement in the community, and meeting family obligations were significant factors in the lives of community leaders who are already highly engaged in the community. The level of community involvement among the ALF participants who were interviewed were compromised because of family or work obligations. Family is a powerful influence throughout the lives of the participants in the study. Reconciling obligations between a career and family has been traditionally a dilemma for women, but increasingly a dilemma for men. Competing demands will continue to be an issue for leaders, and societal expectations of the roles they play may be intense and stressful for them.

People of color often find themselves representing "their kind" in numerous venues; too often setting them up for failure to meet their obligations or creating additional stresses of having to represent their individual interests as well as those of a group. Some retreat from their obligations because they become so over-whelmed, while others may go through a process of setting priorities. The result may be a diminishing presence of diversity at the table.

The possibilities for volunteerism are endless in a community desiring citizen participation and positive change. Yet an individual's time is a precious commodity. Community leaders of color in the study have multiple demands on their time—from their ethnic and racial groups, their family, their profession, and the greater community. There is a realization among those who were interviewed

that in order to enhance their community, they must be present at the table to represent their perspective and increase the presence of others like themselves.

3. Are there commonalities in the experiences as described the participants of color?

The relationships between the participants of color in a cohort were stronger than with other participants who were not people of color. Examples provided in the interview material indicate the participants of color felt more comfortable being with other participants of color. There is comfort with being around people like ourselves. Participants of color who found themselves placed outside of their comfort zones—in a time and place and with people relatively unknown to them—sought out one another. In her book on the advancement of women and people of color in executive ranks, Morrison (1992) refers to the natural tendency to relate more easily to people who are similar to oneself.

The single most important pattern found in the people studied by Daloz et al. (1996) is what they call a "constructive, enlarging engagement with the other" or the need for people to be dependent upon, and interdependent with, networks of belonging (p. 63). This tribalism meets the need to belong and to share common ground with others whom we (whatever the group) recognize as one of us. Aligned with the concept of tribalism is the interaction with what is coined an "encounter with otherness" (Daloz et al., 1996, p. 65)—the interactions with others who are different and whose differences go beyond ethnicity, nationality, or culture. This is one reason why ethnically based employee groups are active and valued. There are

also numerous successful leadership development programs focused on providing training targeted to specific ethnic or gender groups. There are pros and cons to either strategy.

Common themes emerged from the participant interviews centered on the ALF program structure and its activities in addition to those that directly addressed the research questions.

The development of a strong mentor component may be a valued element in leadership development programs. Mentoring is a form of social support in which individuals with more advanced experience and knowledge (mentors) are matched with lesser experienced and knowledgeable individuals (protégés) for the purpose of advancing the development and career of the protégé (Sosik & Lee, 2002, p. 19). Mentoring has been identified as an effective means of leadership development (Daloz et al., 1996; Morrison, 1992; Sosik & Lee, 2002). Some participants in the study indicated a need to be mentors to others who could also contribute to the community, as well as the possibility of having to be mentored themselves. A mentoring environment can extend influence beyond that of the individual. It can also create an expectation of commitment on work on behalf of the larger good (Daloz et al., 1996, p. 46).

A mentoring component in the ALF program can address a number of issues and concerns raised by the participants in the study that include: a) lack of connectedness with other graduates from other cohorts, b) sustained involvement in ALF activities, and c) support of community involvement. Relationships among

community leaders can be sustained over time with mentoring of other leaders and ongoing interaction among participants in a shared community experience.

Leadership development programs are effective when they provide a learning environment that acknowledges and draws upon the diverse wealth of knowledge and experiences brought by the participants. Building community acknowledges the diversity of its people bound by a shared sense of purpose. Whether leaders work in business, government, or nonprofit organizations, leaders must be comfortable operating across multiple sectors and engaging multiple interests" (Markus, 1999, p. 13). People of color in leadership positions seek programs where diversity of experiences, perspectives, and insights are recognized and used to affect creative problem solving.

Prejudice: Prejudice remains as a barrier to leadership and is not adequately addressed in many leadership development programs. Morrison's (1992) study (pp. 34-35) of managers describes the issue of prejudice as such:

> The perception of differences as weaknesses limits advancement opportunities for white women and people of color. Prejudice is defined as the tendency to view people who are different from some reference group in terms of sex, ethnic background, or racial characteristics... In other words, prejudice is the assumption (without evidence) that nontraditional managers are less competent or less suitable than white male managers... Ethnic and sex differences are sometimes used, consciously or not, to define "inferior groups" in a kind of caste system.

Not all discomfort comes from prejudice, but may also arise out of a lack of familiarity and interaction with people of color outside of work (Morrison, 1992, p. 49). This type of discomfort is evident in this research study, as participants cited

examples throughout their program experiences of feeling disconnected from other participants, and in some instances, isolated and set apart from others.

Leadership styles: The presence of diverse leadership styles must be acknowledged. Minorities in the community are advocates for change and embrace leadership models that promote something other than the status quo (Bordas, 2000, p. 12). Delgado similarly identifies standards for leaders of color in higher education that require them to be homeostatic; that is, unchanging and non-critical of existing social relations and institutional practices (as cited in Aguirre & Martinez, 2002). This observable fact leads to an awareness among people of color that their voices are often marginalized because they speak either with little formal authority or credibility. Empowering leadership among people of color to overcome the stereotypes and prejudice is a laudable goal for leadership programs.

Shared sense of purpose: Leadership development can be engaging and support new and emerging leadership of people of color. The identification, review, and discussion of how these differences can work toward a shared vision should be an integral part of any leadership program. It is important to note that the intent of programs such as ALF is not to resolve the conflicts and issues related to diversity, but to acknowledge and value the diversity that exists within a community. The primary focus of building leadership in building community is the acknowledgement that:

> Belonging together is defined by a shared sense of purpose, not by shared beliefs about specific behaviors. The call of that purpose attracts individuals, but does not require them to shed their

> uniqueness. Staying centered on what the work is together, rather than on single identities, transforms the tension of belonging and individuality into energetic and resilient communities. (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1998, p. 21)

Markus' (1999) commentary on the leadership role of diversity serves as a reminder that:

> Diversity is not an end unto itself. The challenge of leadership is to foster the alignment of interests and action required to achieve worthwhile collective purposes while at the same time maintaining sufficient latitude within which individuals may pursue their various visions of the common good, as well as their private lives. (p. 21)

The lack of meaningful dialogue about diversity leads to feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration among people of color. The topic of diversity is an emotional one, and people of color often feel that such conversations are not of sufficient depth to warrant true learning and understanding. Valuing diversity cannot be achieved by a unit of study or by simply calling together a diverse group of individuals.

A better understanding of diversity can be supported by programs such as ALF, by promoting meaningful discourse among people on the topic. The study conducted by Daloz et al. (1996, p. 109) confirms the importance of dialogue in understanding "self" and the relationship to others:

> The practice of dialogue is foundational to meaning-making and to the moral life.... The people we interviewed can hold steady in the face of complexity because they have learned to balance the dialogue between self and others well. They value settings where opinions are diverse and dialogue is open.

When developing the ALF program, Jaworski (1996) recognized that group conversations among the participants around diversity and community building would be challenging. He seized the opportunity for a leadership model that would lead to coordinated action and new insights; ultimately leading to a way of collaboration among a diverse group of people. Toward that end, he recognized that dialogue was necessary for effective collective leadership. "When people sit in dialogue together, they are exercising leadership as a whole. This is nothing less than the unfolding of the generative process. It's the way that thought participates in creating, but it can only be done collectively" (Jaworski, 1996, p. 116). It is clear from the Daloz et al. (1996) study that the need for conversation and dialogue with others was found to be a critical element in finding one's place in the life of the wider commons (p. 42).

In reflecting upon the conversations of the ALF participants interviewed in the study, the conversations occurred, but the opportunities for processing of these contradictions were "left at the table." This may have occurred, in fact, for reasons that include: 1) lack of time for self reflection, 2) lack of time for dialogue among participants within the context of the program schedule of activities, and 3) weaknesses in the program (i.e. goals, content, structure) to address complex issues such as diversity, and 4) loss of focus on the program goals of collaboration and community change.

The goals and the structure of a leadership development program should be clearly defined and shared with program participants. The

dissatisfaction expressed by the participants of color may have resulted because of the lack of their understanding of the ALF program and its program goals. In fact, lack of clarity of the program goals may have led to expectations of the participants of color who were interviewed that could not be met by the program.

People of color are often advocates for change and embrace a leadership model that promotes something other than the status quo (Bordas, 2000, p. 12). The participants' dissatisfactions, as revealed through the interview material, supported Bordas' observation. Their concerns included a feeling of the lack of sustained relationships over time, the lack of community change, the lack of attention to diversity, and the way in which "things continued to be done in the same way" and support

Eight of the 10 participants of color interviewed in this study were employed in the nonprofit, public sectors of the community. Their primary work and interests were focused, as evidenced through their interviews, on improving communities to benefit the common good. They are aligned with grassroots leadership, much like other people of color in communities that involve risk-taking, often going against mainstream thought and leadership hierarchies (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 1999).

Perhaps the ALF organization is a contradiction in a way that is not yet recognized by people of color. The ALF organization is comprised of leaders in the community—those who hold positional power in traditional hierarchies. The purpose behind the organization is, however, to move beyond traditional

hierarchies and mainstream culture. So, is there a contradiction between that which the ALF organization is striving toward—the diminishing of the old ways and approaches to community and the building of new collaborative approaches that are not always doing business as usual? The frustrations of the interviewed participants of color may be caused by tension between the duality of goals. It may also be caused by the inability to implement change quickly—that is, over the course of the year-long program. The focus of the ALF program to create new realities is reflected in the words by Senge (as cited in the Introduction of Jaworski, 1996):

> In the West, we tend to think of leadership as a quality that exists in certain people.... We search for special individuals with leadership potential, rather than developing the leadership potential in everyone. We are easily distracted by what this or that leader is doing, by the melodrama of people in power trying to maintain their power and others trying to wrest it from them. When things are going poorly, we blame the situation on incompetent leaders, thereby avoiding any personal responsibility. When things become desperate, we can easily find ourselves waiting for a great leader to rescue us. Through all of this, we totally miss the bigger question: "What are we, collectively, able to create?".... Leadership exists when people are no longer victims of circumstances but participate in creating new circumstances. (pp. 2-3)

ALF is about creating new futures for communities through collaborative leadership and collective work.

The importance of an orientation to the purpose and goals of a leadership development program cannot be minimally stated. The agendas that are brought to the experience from a diverse group of people often mask the purpose of the experience and goals of the program. The differences in individual perspectives

and leadership styles can be focused and aligned for collective purposes, or, as in the phrase coined by Gardner (1990), of "wholeness incorporating diversity."

The expectations of the program may not have been met by each participant of color in the ALF program, but there is general agreement that the program has the capacity to impact and sustain community change and has not yet reached its potential. Further studies can explore how that may be accomplished within the framework of a leadership development program. Meanwhile, the recommendations to improve the program gleaned by the interviews may be helpful in strengthening the program's ability to sustain a greater impact on individual participants, as well as to affect community change.

Recommendations Based on Findings

The following are suggested areas for further research generated by the study. The findings of this study suggest important implications directed at enhancing the professional development programs and opportunities for people of color. Participants in this study described the elements of the leadership development program that enabled them to extend their networks in the community. Existing networks were seen by some as traditionally based; that is, to be able to maintain the status quo.

The participants in this study acknowledged recommendations to improve the leadership development program. The results of this study can be used to effect changes in the ALF program in the following ways:

1. Individual and group reflection cannot be overemphasized. It involves "engaging collectively in dialogue to surface the lessons and insights" (Markus, 1999, p. 29). The program must assume risks in facilitating conversations, particularly around the topic of diversity. Staying focused on the community and work for the common good will help to alleviate the tension caused by differences among participants and create a common purpose for all to work toward.

2. The use of mentors was mentioned by several participants in the study. They attributed their present successes to their mentors, naming professional colleagues, family members, and community members. Mentors for the participants included, for the most part, other people of color. Participants recognized the significance of mentorship for their successes, as is found in other studies addressing the support of people of color (Daloz et al., 1996; Zelinski, 2000). They also spoke of the need to mentor others, particularly those leaders "in waiting."

The buddy system that is currently in place provides minimal support and the role of the buddy needs to be more clearly defined. It was suggested that a mentorship component within the program be designed to provide a support system for participants in the year-long program and beyond. It was also suggested that participants be coupled to create heterogeneous pairings of "unlike" people. Another suggestion was that a mentor program be established which paired participants from different cohorts. It is with this arrangement that relationships

across cohorts can be established. Such relationships can begin to establish a wider network of participants working collaboratively on community issues.

3. A review of the diversity unit is needed. Specifically, revisions in the program should be explored in the year-long program in terms of content, the design of activities in support of a dialogue on diversity, and more able facilitation of the topic.

The participants of the study agreed that the diversity curriculum can be vastly improved. Several voiced a concern that conversations among ALF participants need to push people "to the edge"—to take the risk of engaging in the hard conversations that makes one feel uncomfortable. The development of dialectical thought and the ability to recognize and work effectively with contradictions, either by resisting closure or by reframing one's response to compose a more inclusive synthesis (Daloz et al., 1993, p. 120) should be a desired outcome in the ALF program.

4. An orientation to ALF program goals and objectives may alleviate the frustration and concerns about the program and its intent. The program tenets must also be shared throughout the program to focus the participants on the goals of the program that overcome individual differences and take on a broader community perspective.

5. The adoption of a systematic method to assess the effectiveness of the ALF program on an on-going basis. Chrislip (1994) suggests a process that measures the effectiveness of a collaborative effort. The use of interviews of

individual participants or focused groups will add to the richness of data that may be collected by the use of surveys or questionnaires.

6. There is agreement that the ALF program has a greater capacity to impact and sustain community change. Further research can explore how this may be accomplished within the framework of the program as conceived by Jaworski 1996) and other founders. Meanwhile, the suggestions to improve the program, as shared by the participants of this study, may be helpful in strengthening the program's ability to empower individuals as well their as their collective selves.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. Further research can test the validity of the patterns that were identified in this study. The study involved a small sample of participants. The population of participants that can be involved in a future study increases with each new cohort. The study may be enriched by looking at other variables that affect participant responses such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, and profession. A more extensive study that involves a group of Caucasian participants would enrich the research on the ALF program. The results would confirm or negate the insights as to similarities and differences between the two groups of participants.

2. The study also identified differences in experiences and perceptions among those interviewed. Differences in perceptions may be attributed to a number of variables—gender, age, race and ethnicity, familiarity with the community, or the year in which they participated in the program. A study focused

on the impact of these variables as they may have influenced the experiences of the participants may be noteworthy.

3. Culture influences leadership behavior. The literature review for this study found a limited number of studies that provided an overview of this topic. Instead, there was reference to numerous studies that looked at specific ethnic and racial groups and their perspectives on leadership. An annotated bibliography on the subject of the cultural influences on leadership and community building would be valuable in pursuing further research in this area.

4. Developing viable training and development opportunities for people of color is a secondary outcome of this study. Morrison's study (1992) on development programs identified the basic questions one should be asking:

- What kinds of training components will be included, and how structured will the training be?
- Who is eligible for the program?
- How "public" will the program and the participants be?

Answers to these questions can be obtained through further research on the effectiveness of various leadership development models.

5. Research conducted by Daloz et al. (1996) examined the lives of people who were committed to the common good. Their work is integral to citizen participation and responsibility in maintaining community. Further studies to investigate the validity of their findings to people of color would be valuable in the effort to promote and sustain diverse communities.

Summary

Civic engagement can shape behavior to encourage a democratic, civic culture (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). One way to shape this culture is through the establishment of programs such as ALF, which support the development of social capital and civic leadership.

This phenomenological study identified and noted the perceptions of participants of color in the American Leadership Forum (ALF), a leadership development program that promotes collaboration and civic responsibility. The findings of the study share insights into relationship building, leader empowerment, and the value of diversity within the context of leadership development. It is the researcher's intent to review the participants' comments and to share the findings of this study for all who are concerned about civic responsibility and leadership development among people of color.

Organizations such as ALF provide opportunities to empower new forms of leadership. It reinforces the notion that:

> Leadership is determined by the extent to which people take responsibility for participating in leadership... because leadership is a property of the relationships people form when they are doing something together... and is therefore affected by the quality and nature of those relationships. (Drath, 1996 as cited in Markus, 1999, p. 23)

Like other leadership development initiatives, ALF sought to take advantage of the collective and individual capacities to help solve community problems. It applies the principles evident in the research that social capital and collaborative problem

solving allows for better functioning communities. ALF was seen as a means to (and continues to) provide an opportunity for community sustainability through linkages between networks of community leaders (ALF Tacoma-Pierce County, 2001; Chrislip et al., 1992; Markus, 1999). "One of the results of successful collaboration is that people are empowered and energized by their engagement in collaborative projects" (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). The realization that individual participation and group collaboration can effect community change is a powerful message to ALF participants, as well as to the greater community.

The participants willingly shared stories of their experiences, which included positive outcomes such as networking opportunities with other leaders in the community, professional and personal development opportunities, and newly acquired knowledge and skills in the area of leadership. While the majority of those who were interviewed for the study agreed their participation in the ALF program was beneficial and had value, there were a few who openly shared their trepidations about giving their full endorsement of the program. The participants in the study shared in the recognition that ALF had not yet reached its goal of impacting real and significant change in leadership. They also expressed their dissatisfaction with their inability to sustain relationships with others in the program over time and as a result, to make a significant difference in the community. The participants were particularly open about sharing their disappointments over the topic of diversity, noting the absence of meaningful dialogue on the subject.

This research suggests ways individuals and organizations can enhance the success of people of color at an individual and community level. Using civic responsibility and social change is one approach that can be applied as a basis to strengthen individual self-efficacy and leadership roles and activities in their communities.

The findings in this study suggest that leadership development programs can effectively create networks and relationships among community leaders. These relationships should lead to people who:

> see their commitments to particular people, groups, and concerns as finally a part of the survival and prosperity of the whole earth community.... The people who cannot ignore the interdependent, systemic reach of their own actions—the ripple effect of words, decisions, and behavior. (Daloz et al., 1996, pp. 15-16)

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CLASS XI
NOMINATION FORM

Return to ALF office by September 19, 2002

Please complete all the following information for nominees to the next class of the American Leadership Forum. You may or may not choose to discuss your nomination with a potential candidate. All nominations will be reviewed by the Selection Committee. ***Please duplicate this form for additional nominations.***

_____ _____
Nominee's Name Title

_____
Company/Organization

_____
Mailing Address

_____
City/State Zip Code Telephone

City of Residence _____

Gender _____ Age (30s, 40s, etc.) _____ Ethnicity _____

Nominee's Category or Profession (check one):

___ Arts ___ Professional ___ Labor
___ Corporate ___ Politics/Government ___ Religion
___ Entrepreneur ___ Community ___ Non-Profit
___ Media ___ Education

List the specific leadership positions and community involvement activities of this nominee:

OVER....

I have known this nominee for _____ years and I recommend this person because:

What other Senior Fellows might be a reference for this nominee?_____

_____

If this candidate is selected for an ALF Class, would you be interested in serving as an informal mentor for him/her?

____Yes ____No

Nominator (please print)_____ Phone_____

Please attach a brief bio or resume for your candidate

Please do not assume the Selection Committee will know about your candidate. The detailed information you provide on and with this form greatly enhance the Committee's discussion and decisions. Thank you for this nomination.

APPENDIX B

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR ALF FELLOWS

Each class of Fellows is carefully selected to reflect the rich diversity of the Tacoma-Pierce County community. Every effort is made to include diversity of gender, ethnicity, age, and geographic representation of the city and county. The class is intended to form a snapshot of the leadership in our community, including established leaders from the arts, corporate, entrepreneur, media, professions, politics/government, community/volunteer, education, labor, religion, nonprofit and other sectors.

Outstanding Leadership and Potential
Participants must have demonstrated leadership ability, as evidenced by their achievement of positions of significant responsibility and leadership. These positions must be exceptional for the participant's age and a pattern should exist which would indicate that his/her acceptance of responsibility will continue through life.

Professional Stature
Candidates will be evaluated on the basis of their excellence in or contributions made to their profession or occupational field.

Commitment
Candidates should have a demonstrated commitment to serving others. Their personal objectives should reflect a concern for the future of the community and the nation.

Integrity
Candidates should have demonstrated the highest standards of personal and public honesty and morality, and proven their worthiness of public trust.

Creativity
Each candidate should show, both professionally and through civic involvement, unusual creativity in identifying and creating opportunities and in solving problems.

Initiative
Each candidate should have demonstrated leadership ability in situations where personal initiative was critical to the creation of an opportunity or the solution.

Contribution to the Community Beyond the Profession
Candidates should have demonstrated excellence in leadership outside their professional or occupational field, in areas which benefit the larger community and which demonstrate a genuine concern for fellow citizens. While the scope of community involvement may vary, the evidence and quality of commitment to others is critical.

Citizenship
Each candidate should be dedicated to the institutions of the United States and the values of American society. Although candidates may be involved in political activities, specific party affiliation or overall political orientation is irrelevant.

Energy
Candidates must have the energy level and stamina which will sustain them in assuming demanding public leadership roles.

Capacity to Commit Attendance to the Program
Each Fellow is expected to attend all program sessions unless prevented from doing so by an emergency. It is mandatory that each Fellow attend these program components: Orientation, the Wilderness Experience, Taking Stock Retreat, and Commencement.

2/20/02

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF INVITATION TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS TO THE STUDY

3533 Olympic Blvd. W.
Tacoma, WA 98466

Dear :

I am working on a project for my dissertation with a focus on the experiences of participants of color in the American Leadership Program (ALF) Tacoma-Pierce County. As a past ALF participant in Class VI and person of color myself, I would like you to consider participating in this project. I found limited research that identifies the experiences and voices of participants of color in leadership development programs. The purpose of the study is to identify insights into the experiences of people of color who have participated in ALF so what is learned from the study can further the development and support of leadership in our communities.

The time commitment I ask of you is approximately two hours total. This includes a short phone call, an interview of approximately an hour and a half, and potentially a follow up conversation to clarify any questions I may have as I am analyzing the interview data. Your participation will be anonymous in documents or presentations generated from the interview.

I appreciate your consideration of helping me with this endeavor. Without the generosity of people who are willing to share their experiences, studies like this could not move forward. I will be calling in the next seven days to follow-up on this letter and ask if you will participate in the project. If you agree, then we will set an interview time at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Katherine Hiyane-Brown

APPENDIX D
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

School of Education
Oregon State University
Corvallis, OR 97331

Title of the Research Project:
Shared Experiences: Perceptions of a Community Leadership Program by Participants of Color

Investigators:
Dr. Betty Duvall, Professor; Katherine Hiyane-Brown, Doctoral Student

Purpose of the Research Project:
This study will describe the experiences of participants of color in a community leadership program, specifically the American Leadership Forum of Tacoma-Pierce County. The purpose of the study will be to identify insights into the experiences of people of color as participants in a leadership development program. The study will identify and study patterns in the experiences of these participants that will lead to a greater understanding about how leadership development programs can support and sustain civic leadership.

Procedures. I understand that as a participant in this study the following events will occur:
I understand I have been selected as a past participant of the American Leadership Forum (ALF) chapter of Tacoma-Pierce County. I understand that I have been identified from among the group of past participants because of my racial/ethnic background that is considered to be inclusive of the term "person of color." The following best describes my racial/ethnic identity:

- ❑ Asian or Asian American
- ❑ Black or African American
- ❑ Middle Eastern or Middle-Eastern American
- ❑ North African or North African-American
- ❑ Pacific Islander
- ❑ Hispanic or Latino American
- ❑ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ❑ If none of the above choices apply, please provide your own description:

  _____

- ❑ Decline to respond

During the interview process, I understand that Katherine Hiyane-Brown will ask me questions about my experiences participating in the American Leadership Forum program of Tacoma-Pierce County. The interview will be approximately one to one and a half hours in length and will take place at my convenience. It is possible that I will be

contacted in person or by telephone for follow-up information. The interview will be audiotaped, unless I request that it not be. At any time during the interview, I may request that the tape be stopped. I may also request at any time to stop the interview or refuse to answer a question. The audiotape will be returned to me or will be destroyed, whatever I choose to have done at the end of the study.

Forseeable Risks and Benefits:
The researcher foresees no risks. Potential benefits to participation in this project may include insights into civic leadership development, leadership development, and leadership development programs. There will be no other personal benefits.

Anonymity or Confidentiality
Any information obtained from me will be anonymous. I will be identified by a pseudonym. In the transcript of my interview as well as in any reports or presentations on the study. My real name will not appear anywhere but this document. Either Katherine Hiyane-Brown or a paid typist will transcribe the tape recording. The audiotape will be returned to me or destroyed at the completion of this study. Paper copies of the transcript of the interview will be destroyed and digital copies will be deleted/erased when the study has been completed.

Voluntary Participation
I affirm that my participation in this study is completely voluntary. I understand that I may either refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions. Additionally, I may decline to answer any questions during the interview. If I withdraw from the study, information I have provided will be destroyed and not included in the final report.

Questions about the study
I understand that any questions I have about the research study or specific procedures should be directed to Katherine Hiyane-Brown at 253-566-5022 or Dr. Betty Duvall at 541-737-5197. If I have questions about my rights as a research participant, I should call the Institutional Review Board Coordinator at 541-737-3437.

My signature below indicates that I have read and that I understand the procedures described above, and I give my informed and voluntary consent to participate in this study. I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date Signed

_____
Participant's Printed Name

_____ _____
Participant's Present Address Participant's Phone Number

APPENDIX E

LETTER SHARING INTERVIEW SUMMARY WITH PARTICIPANTS

January 6, 2003

Dear :

I have enclosed a summary of the interview that we had regarding your participation in the ALF program. These summaries are meant to "introduce" you to the reader and are meant to be brief. I would appreciate your review of the summary text that includes direct quotations from the transcripted tapes of your interview. Please correct any of my inferences, assumptions, and/or conclusions that I have included that may be misleading or incorrect. I will be including these summaries in one of the chapters and want to be sure that they accurately reflect your feelings and opinions.

In these summaries, you have been identified by a letter, rather than name, to protect your identity as an interviewee. You will be identified by a pseudonym in the actual dissertation text.

Should you correct all or any part of the summary, feel free to do so in the form that is easiest for you—red-lining the material or writing comments on the summary sheet or a new sheet. I am in the process of finalizing the draft of the chapter in which these summaries will be included, and would appreciate your response, edits, or corrections by **January 20th** if at all possible. I have enclosed a self addressed stamped envelope for your convenience. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that you have no corrections or additions and find the summaries accurate and acceptable.

Again, thank you very much for your assistance. I am hoping the final draft can be presented to my advisor by the end of the month for her review and comments. If you have any questions, or wish to talk with me about your summary, please feel free to call me at the following:

Home: (253) 565-7486
Office: (253) 566-5022

Mahalo nui loa,

Kathi Hiyane-Brown
3533 Olympic Blvd. W.
Tacoma, WA 98466

APPENDIX F

Table 3. Elements identified in participant interviews

	A Paul	B Connie	C Fred	D Tina	E Helen	F Luke	G Marie	H Steve	I Rebecca	J Wayne
Bonding		X	X	X	X		X		X	X
Affirmation of self		X		X	X		X			
Collaborative leadership	X			X				X		
Learning about leadership	X							X		
Mentorship				X			X			
Values centered	X									
Dealing with diversity	X Not well		X Not well	X Not well			X Not well	X Not well	X Not at all	X Not well
Diversity of perspectives		X		X			X	X		
Consensus building				X						
Networking	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community problem solving	X					X		X		
Education	X	X								
Opportunities	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		
Caring, ethical leadership			X		X					
Servant leadership										X
Impact on co-workers	X		X	X				X		X
Seeing the potential	X		X	X		X		X		X
Family	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
New friendships		X		X	X		X			
Spiritual		X			X					
Community						X faith			X racial	
More inclusive		X								

Table 3. Continued

	A Paul	B Connie	C Fred	D Tina	E Helen	F Luke	G Marie	H Steve	I Rebecca	J Wayne
Program										
Time concerns						X		X	X	
Orientation	X	X	X	X						X
Wilderness	X	X			X		X		X	
Diversity	X		X	X		X	X			X
Readings		X	X				X			
Weaknesses										
Community impact	X		X	X		X	X		X	X
Increased awareness									X	
Racial issues			X	X			X		X	X
Needs results									X	
Going beyond	X Pushing the envelope/ Diversity			X More direct & challenging						
Wilderness	X Structure									
Selection process				X			X			X
Continued involvement	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N

APPENDIX G

Table 4. Concepts identified in participant interviews

Concept	Definition
Leadership	Theory, style of self and others, community leadership
Race	Racism, racial issues, racial differences
Self	Professional development, self esteem, values
ALF program/curriculum	Reference to program topic, impact of program, program outcomes
Motivation to join	Expectations of the program to themselves, to their jobs, to the community
Relationships among ALF graduates	Relationships within the cohort, relationships between cohorts
Relationships in the community	Networking within the community
ALF program outcomes	Expectations of outcomes, expectations of program
Family relationships	Family member support, interaction with family member(s)
Emotions/Feelings	Participants' feelings while in the program about other graduates
Work relationships	• References to impact on the work environment, on the job, with colleagues in the ALF organization • References to the organization, continued involvement and level of commitment, i.e. as a board member, committee member, financial supporter