Discovering the Leadership Skills of Alumni Who Participated In An Adult Agricultural Leadership Development Program: A Case Study

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Discovering the Leadership Skills of Alumni Who Participated in an Adult Agricultural Leadership Development Program: A Case Study

by

Terence Alan Hejny

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
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Major: Human Sciences
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Discovering the Leadership Skills of Alumni Who Participated In An Adult Agricultural Leadership Development Program: A Case Study

Terence Alan Hejny, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2010

Advisor: Susan M. Fritz

This qualitative instrumental case study identified the leadership skills and concepts learned by participants of an adult agricultural leadership development program. Structured interviews were conducted with 15 men and women who were past participants of the Nebraska LEAD Program. Triangulation was used to verify the findings.

The interview transcripts were coded and analyzed for possible themes. Five themes emerged: (a) Personal Understanding of Leadership—definitions of leadership, skills of successful leaders, and thoughts on identifying leaders; (b) Leadership Lessons Learned—experiences in the Nebraska LEAD Program; (c) Leadership Encounters—experiences in leadership before and after their participation in the program, as well as their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with these experiences; (d) Benefits to Classmates—observations about the growth of other program participants; and (e) Perceptions—personal descriptions of community-related leadership abilities. This study identified several leadership skills and concepts that were learned through participation in the program.

It appeared that the participants’ leadership styles may align with some dimensions of servant leadership (listening, empathy, awareness, persuasion,
conceptualization, stewardship, growth, and building community) and transformational leadership (individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence). This study called for further research to identify the leadership theory (or theories) that underpin and guide adult agricultural leadership development programs.
Dedication

I dedicate this work to those who, over 30 years ago had the vision and foresight to see the need for establishing and developing an adult agricultural leadership development program known as the Nebraska LEAD Program.
Acknowledgements

I have envisioned the opportunity to write this section for some time. Throughout my life, I have been very lucky to have been supported by so many people, so I am delighted to have the chance to thank some of them. First and foremost, I want to thank my wife, Pam, for your love and understanding during this journey. During the past six years, when I was studying, reading, researching or writing at night or on the weekends, I thank you for reassuring me so many times with, “it’s just part of the process,” “it’s just another hoop to jump through” and “you can do this.” You have been a true partner in this process with an unwavering faith—more than I, myself had at times. Thank you.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) identifies food, water, climate change, population, poverty and inequality, human health, and forests as major challenges facing our world (Sustainable World Coalition, 2010). Many of these challenges are closely related to the agricultural industry.

For example, a growing world population will require increased food production, placing an immense strain on energy, water, and land (Sustainable World Coalition, 2010). The expansion of agricultural land to meet growing food demands is a great threat to forests, wetlands, mountains and biodiversity in developing countries (Sustainable World Coalition, 2010). Additionally, water use continues to increase worldwide with 70% of the water being used for agriculture (Sustainable World Coalition, 2010). Water challenges are exacerbated by population growth, as it is estimated that almost half of the world’s population will be affected by a shortage of water by 2025 (Sustainable World Coalition, 2010). Agriculture’s expansion in tropical areas is the principal cause of deforestation while increased carbon dioxide emissions and fossil fuel consumption are the major causes of climate change (Sustainable World Coalition, 2010). Climate change will affect food production, health and security, and the economies of our world (United Nations Environment Programme, 2010). All of these issues, (population growth, energy, water, food production, land use, climate change, etc.) are challenges that face agriculture.

Besides its impact on the environment, social issues and health, agriculture is very important to the economy of the United States. The United States Department of
Agriculture (USDA) reported in its 2007 Census of Agriculture that farms in the U.S. received $297 billion for crops and livestock sales while $241 billion was spent on the production of these commodities. The USDA (2007) also reported that U.S. farms received government payments totaling $8 billion and another $10 billion in farm-related income. Agricultural production in the U.S. is focused in four regions: the Atlantic Coast, the Mississippi Delta, the Midwest, and California (USDA, 2007). According to the USDA (2007), “The top five states for the value of agricultural products sold and their percentage of the total value are: California (11.4%), Texas (7.1%), Iowa (6.9%), Nebraska (5.2%) and Kansas (4.8%).”

Agriculture is particularly important to Nebraska’s economy. According to the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, cash receipts from farm and ranch marketing in 2008 contributed over $17 billion to Nebraska’s economy. Additionally, in 2008 Nebraska exported $5.9 billion of agricultural commodities which translates into additional $8.3 billion in economic activity. Every dollar in agricultural exports generated $1.40 in economic activities that include financing, transportation, processing, and warehousing (Nebraska Department of Agriculture, 2008). Agriculture’s total contribution of over $31 billion to Nebraska’s economy does not include authorized payments from the Federal government.

Consequently, in Nebraska, agriculture is a business—a very big business. However, it is much more than that for generations of farm and ranch families who have devoted their lives to the farms and ranches that are the foundation for Nebraska’s agrarian tradition. Farming and ranching is a way of life for many of those who produce the food and fiber for our state, nation, and world. Nebraska’s farming and ranching
industry also provides employment for people in industries throughout the economy in areas that include production, transportation, processing, and the marketing of agricultural commodities and products. According to Dr. Charles Lamphear (2006),

In 1990, 25% of the state’s total employment was directly or indirectly the result of agribusiness activity. In 2002, agribusiness supported nearly 366,000 full and part-time jobs, representing 31% of the state’s total employment. No doubt, agriculture and agribusiness remains firmly entrenched as Nebraska’s number one industry. (p. 3)

The issues facing our changing world and, ultimately, Nebraska agriculture, are frequently discussed, however, solutions and strategies for implementing them are slow to emerge. Agricultural leaders have a role in assisting in the development and implementation of solutions. Building leadership capacity among agriculturalists so that they can become future problem solvers and decision makers is, therefore, paramount.

Effective agricultural leaders are working diligently across this nation to keep the industry of agriculture in the forefront of our nation’s economy. These men and women are not only engaged in raising crops and livestock, they are engaged in agricultural policy development, in agribusiness, and leading grower associations and commodity boards at local, state, and national levels (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2001). Many of these leaders are alumni of adult agricultural leadership development programs (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2001).

Most state-level adult agricultural leadership programs that are operating today trace their beginnings to 1965 when the Kellogg Farmers Study Program was created at Michigan State University with support from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2001). “The goal of the program was to provide agricultural and rural leaders with a broader view of society, as well as a greater sense of the world
and how they fit into the bigger picture” (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2001, p. 1). Adult agricultural leadership programs are found in 38 states and beyond (International Association of Programs for Agricultural Leadership, 2010) and have provided more than 9,000 participants (Strickland, 2010) with “first hand exposure to the global agricultural picture and their leadership role in it” (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2001, p. 1).

Through the years, the management and production skills of Nebraska’s farmers and ranchers have been enhanced through experiences and education based upon the desire to become more competitive and productive. Nebraska’s farmers and ranchers are well equipped to grow crops and raise livestock as they possess the necessary technical skills and scientific knowledge (Nebraska LEAD Program, 2010). However, many fall short in possessing sufficient knowledge of economics, government policy and regulations, energy, water, international trade, and social and cultural understanding—all which ultimately affect their livelihoods (Nebraska LEAD Program, 2010).

Nebraska is a diverse state in regard to its production of food and fiber. This diversity is tied to the state’s regional differences in soil, climate, and topography; collectively, these result in regional agricultural practices. Additionally, Nebraska’s production agriculture diversity presents leadership challenges, including the need for common ground and appreciation of production diversity in order to move the state’s industry of agriculture forward (Nebraska LEAD Program, 2010). Over the years, Nebraska agriculture’s political influence has declined as the population shifts from rural to urban (Nebraska LEAD Program, 2010). Agriculturalists must rely increasingly on their political persuasion skills and less on sheer numbers of rural representatives to impact state-level policy decisions. While Nebraska’s agricultural industry is important to
the state’s economy, not all Nebraskans recognize the importance of agriculture. Future Nebraska agricultural leaders must assist in educating the general public about the importance of agriculture as well as lead the agricultural industry.

In order to build on Nebraska's successful agricultural history, the Nebraska LEAD (Leadership Education/Action Development) Program has taken on the task of preparing agriculturalists for positions of leadership. Farmers, ranchers, and those in occupations that support production agriculture need to acquire a strong knowledge base, relevant exposures and experiences, and important leadership and social skills necessary to respond to the major challenges facing Nebraska and the globe.

Nebraska LEAD Program

In 1981, the Nebraska LEAD Program was established under the direction of the Nebraska Agricultural Leadership Council (NALC). The initial conception of the Nebraska LEAD Program was the result of a collaborative and cooperative effort by representatives of Nebraska’s agricultural industry, the Agricultural Builders of Nebraska (ABN), and the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). Representatives of these organizations recognized the need to promote and develop leaders in agriculture through a non-political, non-partisan organization. Initial financial support for the organization was partially provided by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

According to the Nebraska LEAD Program (2010), the Nebraska Agricultural Leadership Council’s mission is: “To prepare and motivate men and women in agriculture for more effective leadership.” The NALC accomplishes its mission through the Nebraska LEAD Program which continues to be a joint venture with IANR.
According to the Nebraska LEAD Program (2009), the program’s purpose is to:

- Accelerate leadership development of Nebraska’s future agricultural leaders through exposure to diverse topics, issues, concerns, points of view, and innovative ideas.
- Improve leadership skills and abilities; increase knowledge in state, national, and international affairs.
- Prepare the problem-solvers, decision-makers, and spokespersons for the industry of agriculture; while establishing a network of highly motivated leaders.

According to the Nebraska LEAD Program (2009), the program participant criteria include:

- up to 30 highly motivated men and women with demonstrated leadership potential are selected annually from five geographic districts across Nebraska;
- three years of Nebraska residency required;
- participants must be involved in farming, ranching or agribusiness, complete a written application and interview with a district screening committee; and
- the Board of Directors of the Nebraska Agricultural Leadership Council is responsible for the final selection of participants.

According to the Nebraska LEAD Program (2009), program delivery is accomplished through:

- twelve, three-day, theme-driven seminars conducted monthly from mid-September to early April. Over two years, participants visit almost every public and private college and university in Nebraska;
- first-year focus is on local, state and national issues, with a ten-day national study/travel seminar in February; and
- second-year focus is on the global/international community and includes a two- to three-week international study/travel seminar.

According to the Nebraska LEAD Program (2009), program participants are expected to:

- attend all seminars;
- secure spouse’s full support for program participation (if applicable);
- possess a sincere commitment to self-improvement;
- maintain an open mind and interest; and
- pay a modest tuition fee.
According to the Nebraska LEAD Program (2009), support for the Nebraska LEAD Program is provided by:

- Nebraska Agricultural Leadership Council membership dues;
- Nebraska LEAD Alumni Association membership dues;
- numerous individuals, corporations, foundations, and organizations; and
- commitment of in-kind contributions, including: campus administrators, presenters and coordinators, statewide leaders, the University’s (Nebraska) Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and others.

**Statement of the Problem**

Leadership training and development initiatives have been popular in recent years. However, adult rural leadership development program directors know that agricultural and rural community leaders don’t seem to fit the traditional leader mold (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2000). “Grassroots leaders have different motivations and needs than those of traditional leaders” (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2000, p. 6). In addition, the substantial time and financial commitment of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s IANR, sponsors, and participants make it important that the Nebraska LEAD Program be of the highest quality and achieve the expected impacts, not only upon its graduates, but also upon Nebraska’s agricultural industry and rural communities.

Since its inception, the curriculum for the Nebraska LEAD Program has been developed, driven, and refined based on current issue awareness and interpersonal skill development. In its beginning, program planning that resulted in the Nebraska LEAD Program was not informed or guided by leadership theory, similar to other programs that were developed through the same set of initiatives and circumstances. Many programs of this nature started out associated with Land-Grant University departments of agricultural education; 30 years ago these departments did not have faculty steeped in leadership theory. Program evaluation was measured on the development and improvement of a set
of skills based on untested assumptions with guidance and oversight provided by positional leaders in agriculture, an advisory board and a program director. The program’s curriculum reflects the philosophy that leadership skill development is a process, not an event (Fritz, Williams, & Barbuto, 2003) and that each Nebraska LEAD Program participant has varied needs for leadership development training. Currently, a reflection of ongoing change, increases in the complexity and scope (local, state, global) of issues facing agriculture, may provide insight into the leadership skills needed by adults in the agricultural industry.

It is those varied needs for training in leadership development and the opportunity to analyze leadership experiences that make this study significant. At what point in their leadership journey are the Nebraska LEAD Program participants on when they begin the intensive, two-year program? What leadership skills do they already possess? What do they know about leadership and leadership development? What are their thoughts and ideas about leadership? How do the instruction and experiences provided through participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program develop leadership skills? When the participants complete the Nebraska LEAD Program, what leadership skills have they acquired? What are their thoughts and ideas about leadership at the completion of the intense, two-year adult agricultural leadership development program? What leadership theory or theories underpin the Nebraska LEAD Program? This research study identified the type of leader the program is developing, so the leadership development portion can become more purposeful resulting in a more intentional set of outcomes, and hopefully, a stronger, larger set of agricultural leaders.
Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Reinelt, Foster, and Sullivan (2002) noted,

Case studies and leadership stories that capture the complexities and nuances of change appear to be growing in popularity. One of the challenges of using qualitative approaches is the difficulty of lifting up common themes that might enable the field to better articulate theories of leadership development that are rooted in leadership practice. (p. 15)

In order to better identify the leadership experiences of participants of an adult agricultural leadership development program, a research study of alumni of this type of program was important. Identifying the leadership experiences from the longitudinal perspectives of past participants illuminated the value and impact of this program designed for men and women in agriculture. As noted in Figure 1, Study Overview & Program Timeline, this research study determined the type of leaders being developed resulting in future programming focused on improved skill building that is directed at a particular kind of leader or theory. Through the identification of a particular type of leader or theory, a more meaningful set of pre- and post-assessments and program evaluation can be adopted and implemented. The end result will be a more predictable and consistent set of outcomes for those that participate in the Nebraska LEAD Program.

Research purpose. The purpose this qualitative research study was to identify the leadership experiences of adult agricultural leadership training program participants.

Central phenomenon. Leadership skills and concepts learned in an adult agricultural leadership program.

Central question. How do men and women describe the leadership skills and concepts learned through their participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program?
Figure 1. Study overview and program timeline.
**Sub questions.**

1. How do LEAD participants define leadership?
2. What did they know about leadership before participating in LEAD?
3. What did they know about leadership after participating in LEAD?
4. What are their experiences as leaders before and after participating in LEAD?

**Assumptions**

The researcher made several assumptions before entering this research study. The researcher assumed that the research study participants would openly provide honest information regarding their thoughts and ideas on leadership and leadership development. The researcher also assumed that the guiding questions and probe questions would generate, in adequate detail and quantity, relevant information. The researcher assumed that the research participants would understand the questions as intended and that all research participants would share similar meaning with the questions. Relative to qualitative research methodology, the assumption was made that qualitative research is holistic, multi-dimensional, and continually changing rather than being a single, fixed phenomenon (Merriam, 1988).

Finally, the researcher assumed research study participants would welcome the opportunity to be heard as individuals and to reflect upon their participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program.

**Delimitations**

This study was confined to interviewing the men and women who completed the Nebraska LEAD Program from 2005 and 2009. It did not reflect the experiences of over 825 Nebraska residents who have participated in the Nebraska LEAD Program since it
began in 1981. Leadership development programs, including the Nebraska LEAD Program, continue to evolve and affect the way in which its participants develop. As the focus of the Nebraska LEAD Program changes, the results of this study conducted at a different time may yield different results. The homogeneous sampling method utilized in this research study may have also decreased the researcher’s ability to generalize the findings as a major limitation of this interview study was the small sample size. While the Nebraska LEAD Program has over 825 graduates, the total population that was eligible to participate in this study was 150 (five classes of 30 members each); therefore, a sample of 15 participants decreases the ability to generalize the findings. However, qualitative research is not meant to be generalized. It is the reader, not this researcher, who determines the transferability and generalizability of this study. Stake (1995) stated, “The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does” (p. 8). The goal of this researcher was to afford the reader an experience of feeling as if he or she were actually a part of these 15 face-to-face interviews. The understanding gained from this research study may be used to interpret similar situations in different contexts. Therefore, it is not the intent for this case to be generalized; however, thematic generalizability is certainly a possibility.

**Limitations**

This qualitative study asked research participants to recall their experiences regarding leadership skill development that occurred between one to five years ago; therefore, the research participants’ memories and beliefs may have changed over time. The data was gathered by the researcher who conducted the one-on-one, face-to-face
interviews in the research participant’s home, workplace, or mutually-agreed-upon locations.

Hatch (2002) advised against performing case studies within a researcher’s own educational context. “It is just too difficult to balance the sometimes-conflicting roles of researcher and educator when the enactment of both roles is required in the same setting” (p. 47). Hatch (2002) notes that the participants may not be able to respond appropriately to the researcher as researcher rather than educator. Additionally, the researcher may not be able to recognize his own preconceptions.

In this research study, nine of the participants participated when the Nebraska LEAD Program was under the guidance of the previous director; three of the participants participated in the program when there was a change in directors (previous director in year one and for year two, the researcher was the director); and three of the participants participated when the researcher was the director during their two years in the program. The researcher is no longer in his role as educator for the participants, and was able to easily adopt the researcher’s role. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher presented the research study participants with a broad explanation of the research questions. The researcher then asked them to discuss and share the leadership skills, thoughts, and ideas they learned through their participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program. The men and women in this study had the unique characteristic of participating in a two-year, adult agricultural leadership development program.

This study was guided by a constructivist worldview which maintains that universal absolute realities are unknowable (Hatch, 2002). The ontological stance of this worldview accepts that multiple realities exist which are produced by individuals who
experience the world from their own vantage points (Hatch, 2002). It is through each individual’s own lens that knowledge derived from these realities becomes a human construction (Hatch, 2002). We construct our understanding and knowledge through the experiences we live and share with others. Within a research context, constructivism’s epistemology declares that realities are understood in the form of abstract mental constructions that are experientially-based, local and specific (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It is impossible for researchers to be separated and objective in the study as researchers and participants are associated in a process of co-construction (Hatch, 2002). In regard to research perspectives, constructivism encourages qualitative methods for collecting and analyzing data and produces knowledge that is often presented in the form of case studies or rich narratives that describe the interpretations that are constructed as part of the research process (Hatch, 2002). Given the reality under investigation and the perspectives of those who have participated in an adult agricultural leadership development program, constructivism as a worldview provided the appropriate philosophical foundation for this study.

As a proponent of adult agricultural leadership development programs, the researcher realized that his own experiences and bias could affect the collection and analysis of data. The researcher made every effort to remain unbiased and to maintain objectivity. As will be discussed in Chapter Three, the researcher made use of various procedures that minimized any personal bias in the analysis and reporting of the data.

Significance of the Study

While a substantial number of adult agricultural leadership development programs have been developed over the past 30 years, a review of the literature (Chapter Two)
reveals a significant lack of published research on adult agricultural leadership development programs. There are organizations engaging in adult agricultural leadership development, but it appears that these organizations are largely unable to benefit from lessons learned along the way because research is not being published. The studies that have been conducted on adult agricultural leadership development programs have been mostly quantitative in nature. This research study differs allowing for a wealth of subjective evidence that is often undiscovered when the quantitative method of research is employed.

This research study attempted to identify the leadership experiences of men and women during participation in an adult agricultural leadership program over a period of time. The benefits of this qualitative research study were many. First of all, this research study will enhance the Nebraska LEAD Program by providing consistency in regard to the leadership skills development of those who participate in the program. This research study will also provide evidence to sponsors that their investments in the Nebraska LEAD Program are indeed making a difference in the participants. Additionally, the institutional commitment of IANR at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for the Nebraska LEAD Program will be justified. Because of this research study, guidance will also be provided to the members of the Nebraska Agricultural Leadership Council’s Board of Directors and the Director of the Nebraska LEAD Program in establishing linkages between curriculum content and experiences and leadership development. This research study also will benefit other state-level adult agricultural leadership development programs in developing and maintaining a research-based, theory-driven program of leadership study. The information gathered from this study will assist the Department of
Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in the development of leadership studies curricula and leadership training programs. In addition, this research study will provide valuable assistance to those organizations within the private and public sectors in developing leadership programs. Finally, this research study has the potential to enhance the quality of life at the local, state, national, and international levels by providing guidance and direction to the Nebraska LEAD Program in developing future leaders who are poised to implement change in a changing world.

**Summary**

This chapter described a qualitative research study designed to identify the leadership experiences of adult agricultural leadership development program participants. The purpose statement, research questions, and proposed research method were briefly described followed by the related assumptions, delimitations, and limitations. The significance of the study and its potential contribution to the field of leadership development and leadership education were then discussed.
Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

Introduction

As with any research study using a qualitative tradition, the literature review is typically incorporated into sections and researched after themes have been identified within the data analysis chapter. In order to increase the focus of a research study, a pertinent review of the relevant literature is necessary (Patton, 1990). However, Patton (1990) notes, “reviewing the literature can present a quandary in qualitative inquiry because it may bias the researcher’s thinking and reduce openness to whatever emerges in the field” (Patton, 1990, p. 163). Fetterman (1989 in Bryant, 2004) offers guidance regarding the literature review in qualitative research studies, “The ethnographer enters the field with an open mind, not an empty head” (p. 63). Therefore, every researcher must be well informed about their chosen topics. However, in a traditional quantitative research study, the literature review is conducted before any of the research takes place.

This chapter represents a selected review of relevant literature specific to adult agricultural leadership development programs, community/rural leadership development programs, and concludes with a brief overview of leadership thoughts and theories of the 20th Century. The literature reviewed will help to establish the theoretical framework for this study which was to discover the leadership skills and concepts learned by men and women through participation in an adult agricultural leadership development program known as the Nebraska LEAD Program.
Adult Agricultural Leadership Development Programs

**History and background.** Across this nation, capable and competent agricultural leaders are growing crops and raising livestock, leading agribusinesses and agricultural cooperatives, and are engaged in policy development at local, state, and national levels. Many of these leaders have participated in an adult agricultural leadership development program (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2001). Through participation in adult agricultural leadership development programs, participants have acquired valuable skills and are utilizing those skills at the personal, professional and public service levels (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2001). Today, most adult agricultural leadership development programs in existence are structured after the Kellogg Farmer Study Program that was developed in 1965 at Michigan State University (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2001). The W. K. Kellogg Foundation (2001) noted, “The goal of the program was to provide young agricultural and rural leaders with a broader view of society, as well as a greater sense of the world and how they fit into the bigger picture” (p. 1). This same goal continues to guide many of these programs today.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation in *The Legacy of the Ag Leadership Development Program: Rich Heritage Cultivates Future Opportunities* (2001) reported:

- The average program is 15 years old.
- Nearly half of the programs operate out of universities. One-third are coordinated by private non-profit organizations or foundations, and the rest are administered through combinations of collaborative sources.
- Most programs follow similar frameworks. Each is typically 18 months to two years long, and includes 15-30 people who range in age from 25 to 50.
- Program content typically ranges from local to state, national and international issues. Most programs include a national and international travel seminar.
- Nearly two-thirds of the programs indicate there are no other leadership programs with similar goals in their state. Even states where parallel leadership programs exist, directors often view them as augmenting rather than competing with the leadership programs.
• The programs receive financial support from a number of sources, but primarily rely on corporate grants and alumni donations. Other sources include state appropriations, universities and foundation grants. In addition, programs often receive valuable in-kind support that most typically includes university space, equipment, and faculty time.
• Agricultural producers represent about half of all participants. Another 20 percent are from agribusiness. The rest include agricultural organization and rural leaders, government officials, and others involved in agricultural policy decision-making. (p. 2)

Horner (1984) recognized a need for effective leaders, spokespersons, and policymakers in agriculture and described the development of an on-going program (Nebraska LEAD Program) to address these needs. More than 30% of the members of the first class of 30 members that completed the Nebraska LEAD Program now hold gubernatorial appointments on state boards and commissions; while others have been elected to state producer/grower, educational, and professional offices (Horner, 1984). Horner concluded that agriculture and the nation are the direct benefactors of speeding up the leadership development process of those involved in farming and ranching.

As the industry of agriculture becomes more specialized and increasingly challenged by outside groups, its future success is dependent upon local leaders to guide efforts for advocacy and change (Diem & Nikola, 2005; Horner, 1984; Howell, Weir, & Cook, 1982; Hustedde & Woodward, 1996; Mirani, 1999; W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2001).

Program planning that resulted in state-level agricultural leadership development programs such as the Nebraska LEAD Program was not guided by a leadership theory context. Many of these types of programs were initiated and associated with university departments of agricultural education which 30 years ago did not have faculty associated with them that were steeped in leadership theory.
**Program design.** Howell et al. (1982), in an analysis of adult agricultural leadership programs based on the Kellogg Farmer Study Program, found these programs to have similar curricular objectives:

- develop among participants the ability to analyze public problems critically and objectively;
- develop among participants an understanding of the economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions of public problems;
- increase the participants’ ability to solve public problems by improving his/her leadership and group participation skills; and
- increase the participants’ understanding of important local, state, national, and international issues. (p. 52)

While adult agricultural leadership development programs using the Kellogg Farmers Study Program have shown much success in creating diverse networks and community issue awareness, Kaufman and Carter (2005) and Kelsey and Wall (2003) recommend that a leadership application project be implemented into the curriculum. This would enable program participants to complete a project of civic engagement and complement the instruction, observations and experiences, and discussions (Kaufman & Carter, 2005). It also has been recommended that a practicum that teaches needs assessments, project development, and change agent skills be incorporated (Kelsey & Wall, 2003).

Barrett and Horner (1989) recommended that in order for the leadership educator to develop strategies to effectively improve leadership skill development for all personality types, an understanding of the psychological profile of adult agricultural development program participants is a necessity. Barrett and Horner (1989) also noted that adult agricultural leadership development program participants were more future-oriented as compared to other groups studied. These future leaders were able to visualize
and create change in order to make a difference and were less inclined to be blind-sided by unforeseen events because of their future orientations (Barrett & Horner, 1989).

Based on the review of literature, it appears that state-level agricultural leadership development programs were designed to develop interpersonal skills and improve the participants' awareness of current issues. Through development in these areas, it was assumed that the participants would then become better leaders. Without leadership theory to guide program development, it appears that some assumptions likely were made.

**Program evaluation.** Many benefits of adult agricultural leadership development programs have been found in reviews and evaluations over the years. The Nebraska Agricultural Leadership Council requested in 2000, and again in 2005, a comprehensive evaluation of the Nebraska LEAD Program. Using a 50% sampling rate, with a standard mail survey methodology, 317 alumni participated in the study. The data sets were merged, resulting in a 92% response rate from program alums (Askren, 2006). Askren (2006) reported that 85% of the participants believed that the program improved both communications and human relations skills which led to increases in self-confidence. Over 50% of the Nebraska LEAD alumni cited significant increases in participation in both appointed and elected government offices, as well as increased participation in organizations at the local, state, and national levels (Askren, 2006). Askren (2006) reported a “significant increase in public participation in community activities and community groups” (p. 7). However, the level of participation was specified and “participation rates may stay the same while more leadership roles are being assumed” (Askren, 2006, p. 7). Askren (2006) also reported that participants had “shared
information accrued from the program with other farmers, ranchers, and business associates” as well as “friends, neighbors, community groups, civic clubs, and commodity clubs and associations” (p. 11). Askren (2006) also reported that 92% of the participants reported an increase in their leadership abilities as a result of their participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program. However, specific leadership abilities were not reported. Askren (2006) reported that several survey participants “suggested more programming on leadership education, including public speaking, how to conduct a meeting, and media training” (p. 15). Askren (2006) also reported,

To nearly all respondents, an important benefit of participating in the LEAD program was the introduction to new colleagues and the friendships that formed. Although sometimes a worn-out phrase, networking remains a huge asset when working behind the scenes or taking on high-profile leadership positions. Twenty-nine respondents specifically noted that networking was one of the greatest benefits they received from LEAD. (p. 8)

Diem and Nikola (2005), in a mixed method research study of the New Jersey Agricultural Leadership Development Program (NJALDP), reported that participants when asked what skill was learned or improved or what was the most useful knowledge that was gained during participation in NJALDP responded: confidence in public speaking, better understanding of the legislative process, networking, learning to articulate opinions, learning about other cultures, a greater degree of confidence and the ability to lead, how to communicate effectively, and time management.

Black (2007) employed a descriptive survey design to determine the outcomes of an agricultural leadership program on the lives of its 262 alums from 10 program classes on a personal, business, and community level over the past 20 years. Black (2007) reported that participants gained personal knowledge, improved in business, had an increased awareness of cultural differences, and are more active in their local
communities. Eighty-six percent of the respondents indicated high levels of change were experienced because of their participation in the program (Black, 2007).

Black and Earnest (2009) were among the first to utilize a comprehensive method to evaluate and measure leadership development program impacts on individuals, organizations, and communities. The Leadership Program Outcomes Measure (LPOM) was administered by Black and Earnest (2009) to 262 leadership program alums as an online survey. Survey respondents were asked to self-assess the outcomes of their program experiences and were able to list facts supporting their self assessments (Black & Earnest, 2009). Black and Earnest (2009) reported that the leadership development program had a positive effect on the individual and organizational levels with less of an effect on the community. At the individual level, 86% of the respondents described improvement in the areas of self confidence, personal power, creative thinking, and personal growth (Black & Earnest, 2009). At the organization level, because of their participation in the leadership development program, 80% of the respondents reported improvement at the professional, business, or organizational levels (Black & Earnest, 2009). Regarding the community level, 70% of the respondents held offices in organizations at the local, state, and national levels (Black & Earnest, 2009).

Additional benefits of participation in adult agricultural leadership development programs included: increased leadership skills; increased involvement in volunteer activities; appreciation for the views of others; increased understanding of personality types; increased awareness of the global economy; increases in personal and professional networks; and broadened perspectives on current issues (Abington-Cooper, 2005; Askren, 2006; Carter & Rudd, 2000; Gordon, Hejny & Simon, 2009; Mirani, 1999).
Specific information regarding leadership skills, concepts, or theories were not reported or described.

While an increase in networking and communications skills certainly enhances the individual’s participation in civic and community development projects, it has been reported that perception of rural leadership development and the leader’s economic status had a negative relationship— the greater the participant’s income, the less program value and satisfaction were reported by the participant (Dhanakumar, Rossing, & Campbell, 1996). Additionally, Kelsey and Wall (2003, 2004) noted differences between quantitative and qualitative evaluation results regarding the change that occurred in knowledge, skills, and behavior related to leadership skills after program completion. Qualitative findings did not support the self-report survey findings. Consequently, leadership educators must be aware that self-reporting survey instruments may be insufficient in measuring the effects of adult agricultural leadership development programs (Kelsey & Wall, 2003, 2004; Kelsey, Pennington, & Wall, 2003).

The majority of the research on program evaluation used quantitative methodology and typically consisted of self-report surveys. Reliance on quantitative data can cover up significant differences among program participants (Patton, 1990). Rockwell and Kohn (1989) recommended using the “post-then-pre” method of self-report evaluation when measuring behavior change. At the beginning of a training program, participants “don’t know what they don’t know” and this unconscious incompetence prevents them from determining baseline behaviors (Rockwell & Kohn, 1989). In addition, many of the research studies (quantitative, mixed, and qualitative) were designed to measure the leadership program’s impact on participant lives and careers,
civic engagement and impact on community development, and interpersonal skill development.

The changes taking place in the agricultural industry necessitate ongoing curriculum changes for adult agricultural leadership development programs. In addition, some parts of the current curriculum need to reflect the context of the participants and the context is consistently changing.

**Future leadership training needs.** Mirani (1999) noted that leadership program participants emphasized the need for additional leadership training programs after program completion. However, specific topics for such training were not identified. Fritz et al. (2003) identified the future leadership training needs of three groups of leadership training participants, which included the participants of an adult agricultural leadership development program. Fritz et al. (2003) concluded that leadership program alumni were interested in additional training on “engaging others in a common vision, inspiring others, attracting the right people for the task, and influencing others” (p. 3). Participants also identified communication skills, working with the media, leadership/management training, and strategic planning as areas for further skills development (Gordon et al., 2009). Gordon et al. (2009) also concluded that leadership educators must understand and select the most effective delivery methods in order to meet the continuing leadership training needs of adult agricultural leaders, which will impact the success of additional professional development opportunities for current and future leadership program alumni.

The potential exists for adult agricultural leadership programs to utilize past successes to cultivate and strengthen the future leaders in the industry (W. K. Kellogg
The W. K. Kellogg Foundation (2001) noted future challenges and opportunities for adult agricultural leadership development programs:

- Linking programs and alumni by regions, interests and other avenues, particularly in ways that capitalize on technology to increase communication and action.
- Networking with clear purposes and goals, such as around specific issues and policies.
- Affecting agricultural policies and practices at multiple levels by forging a national network of program alumni and raising the profile of the programs nationally.
- Addressing gender and diversity in program composition.
- Continuing education for alumni and program directors.

The rate of change taking place coupled with increases in the complexity and scope of the local, state, global issues facing agriculture, may provide a glimpse into the kinds of skills needed by participants as a result of state-level agricultural leadership development programs.

**Summary.** This review of literature on adult agricultural leadership development programs focused on the history and background, program design, program evaluation, and future training needs revealed a lack of published research. There are organizations that are engaged in adult agricultural leadership development, but it appears to this researcher that these organizations are largely unable to benefit from the lessons as research is not being published. It appears to this researcher that no studies have identified the leadership skills and concepts learned by participants through their experiences in an adult agricultural leadership development program as told in their own words using case studies and leadership stories. Quality research on adult agricultural leadership development is important as programs evolve and face new challenges.
Community/Rural Leadership Development Programs

Program directions. Sandmann and Vandenberg (1995) challenged Cooperative Extension to make community action leadership development a primary programming initiative for the 21st century, noting that leadership development is not a program or commodity to be delivered, but that leadership development is a perspective, a way of thinking, and a set of ideas. In order to prepare Cooperative Extension faculty to respond to change, directors of the Southern Region helped establish a professional development program that addressed leadership development and institutional change. Participant pre-test/post-test measures indicated significant increases in decision-making skills by participants who attributed these increases to their participation in the program (Ladewig & Rohs, 2000).

Hustedde and Woodward (1996) provided guidance to leadership educators and communities to consider when designing and developing leadership programs that will produce impacts and suggested that program participants from all walks of life be involved. Leadership educators are questioning the traditional view of leadership which is based on the leader as a hero or heroine and argue that the assumption of the “great man” or “great woman” as a leader is changing (Hustedde & Woodward, 1996). The philosophical changes in defining leadership are known as post-heroic, transformational, and servant leadership (Burns, 1978b; Greenleaf, 1977; Hustedde & Woodward, 1996; Sandman & Vandenberg, 1994).

Hughes (1998), Langone (1992), and Ehmke and Shipp (2007) described how Cooperative Extension served as a change agent in the community development process by expanding the leadership base, equipping leaders with skills to direct change, and by
providing new strategies in order to break down community barriers when addressing the challenges facing rural communities. Participants in community leadership development programs realize that leadership is about influence, confluence, and synergy, and are more likely to use the information and training provided when they identify their leadership training needs and are involved in the planning process (Earnest, 1996; Tacki, Findlay, Baharanyi, & Pierce, 2004). Ricketts and Place (2009) reported in their study that focused on the importance of leadership within the community that effective communication, development of social capital, community engagement, and collaboration across and within communities set successful communities apart from less successful communities. Tabb and Montessi (2000) concluded that a leadership crisis is occurring in both urban and rural communities where leadership positions are held by a small segment of the population, of which few are younger adults.

Kaufman and Rudd (2006) conducted a qualitative study in order to determine the expectations, needs, and interests of local Farm Bureau Board members and based on the results of this study recommended that the Florida Farm Bureau:

- maintain quality field staff as liaisons between local and state levels;
- encourage and support district-level leadership programs;
- develop and facilitate “short courses” on Farm Bureau board governance;
- design and coordinate new member board orientation programs;
- expand recognition programs for local board involvement; and
- continue research efforts that guide local leadership development. (p. 53)

Earnest (1996) recommended that advanced educational programming be made available for those alumni of community leadership programs wanting to pursue a more in-depth study of leadership and also suggested a needs assessment be conducted with alumni of community leadership programs to determine what topics should be addressed in subsequent workshops.
**Program evaluation.** Langone (1992), in a mixed methods study of 2,648 participants of the Community Leadership Program which represented 76 Georgia counties, reported positive program impacts in networking, Extension’s role, involvement, and creating unity.

Communication and collaboration are of utmost importance between organizations that are building and developing community leaders and social capital (Bolton, 2004; Ricketts & Place, 2009). Bolton (2004) reported that there is little interaction between groups that are engaged in local and regional programs and projects, and suggests that social capital is not being realized and, therefore, is not utilized for local and regional initiatives. Walker and Gray (2009) noted that leadership is critically important to rural communities as they compared the leadership practices of leaders who completed a structured leadership development program to leaders who did not participate in the program. Survey results revealed that a leadership training program significantly impacted behaviors of program participants and participants were more likely to challenge the process by implementing new strategies (Walker & Gray, 2009).

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation (2000) studied 23 organizations engaged in developing grassroots leadership, noting these key findings:

- Grassroots leaders have different motivations and needs than those of traditional “positional leaders.”
- Investing in grassroots leadership development leads to increased community well-being and encourages long-term problem solving.
- In developing grassroots leaders, the best results are achieved using a triple focus on the individual leaders, the involved organization, and the community or issue of concern.
- Grassroots leadership works best when the decision to invest in developing grassroots leaders is a deliberate strategy, i.e. intentional, proactive, and consistent.
- Grassroots leaders encourage funders and support organizations to take actions that support the efforts of grassroots leadership. (p. 6)
Leadership development training programs do increase the leadership skills of participants. However, Rohs (2004) stated, “Measuring the Return on Investment (ROI) in training and development has consistently earned a place among the critical issues in the human resource development (HRD) field” (p. 27). Rohs (2004) also noted that university administrators and program sponsors may soon be challenging leadership educators for ROI information. However, Rohs’ research does not target community and rural leadership development programs, but was geared to the ROI of Cooperative Extension faculty.

In recent years, leadership program directors frequently have been asked to provide outcome and impact data for their programs (Reinelt et al., 2002). Reinelt et al. (2002), in their discussion on leadership program outcomes and impact, identified and noted these key findings and challenges:

- Increased demand for and focus on evaluating outcomes and impact.
- Systematically linking program activities and intended outcomes and impacts.
- Aligning program outcomes with activities.
- Focusing on short term outcomes.
- Barriers to conducting impact evaluations. (p. 6)

Reinelt et al. (2002) reported that as an evaluation approach:

Case studies and leadership stories that capture the complexities and nuances of change appear to be growing in popularity. One of the challenges with using qualitative approaches is the difficulty of lifting up common themes that might enable the field to better articulate theories of leadership development that are rooted in leadership practice. (p. 15)

**Summary.** This review of literature on community/rural leadership development programs focused on program directions and program evaluation. It appears there is also a lack of published research on community/rural leadership development programs. The majority of the research on program results was quantitative and typically consisted of
self-report surveys. In addition, the majority of the research studies reviewed was designed to measure the leadership programs’ impact on leadership skills, networking opportunities, understanding the importance of leadership, problem solving skills, and teamwork and collaboration. However, specific leadership skills were not identified. The changes taking place in rural communities necessitate ongoing curriculum changes for community/rural leadership development programs. In addition, some parts of the current curriculum need to reflect the context of the participants and the context is consistently changing. It appears to this researcher that no studies have identified the leadership skills and concepts learned by participants in community/rural leadership development programs as told in their own words through the use of case studies and leadership stories. Quality research on community/rural development is important as programs evolve and face new challenges.

**Leadership Theories: A 20th Century History**

The following is a brief timeline of the historical ideas in leadership during the 20th Century. Thoughts about leadership and leadership research greatly evolved during the 20th Century. It appears that leadership theories changed with the times and that historical events influenced the evolution of theories. In the early part of the 20th Century, individual characteristics or traits of leaders were considered to be different than non-leaders. The “trait” theory gave way to the behavioral theories of the 1940’s and 1950’s where the behaviors of effective leaders were found to be different than the behaviors of ineffective leaders. In the 1960’s and 1970’s, contingency theories described the factors unique to each situation as to determine whether specific leader characteristics and behaviors would be effective. In the 1970’s, Leader-Member Exchange suggested that
leaders form high-quality relationships with some subordinates but not others. The quality of the leader-subordinates relationship was said to affect numerous workplace outcomes. During this time, servant leadership introduced a philosophy that leaders should be servants first. Servant leadership suggests that leaders must place the needs of subordinates, customers, and the community ahead of their own interests in order to be effective. Also in the 1970’s, transformational and transactional leadership were introduced. Transactional leadership focuses on role and task requirements and utilizes rewards contingent upon performance. By contrast, transformational leadership focuses on developing mutual trust, fostering the leadership abilities of others, and setting goals that go beyond the short-term needs of the work group. Charismatic leadership was introduced in the 1970’s and 1980’s and was defined as effective leaders inspiring subordinates to commit themselves to goals by communicating a vision, displaying charismatic behavior, and setting a powerful personal example. A more extensive discussion of the leadership literature may be found in Appendix A.

**Summary**

Chapter Two presented a review of literature related to adult agricultural leadership development programs, community/rural leadership development programs, and a historical overview of leadership literature. The literature review demonstrated the research gap in understanding how men and women who have participated in an adult agricultural leadership development program identify leadership experiences and describe the acquiring of leadership skills and concepts in their own words. In this review of literature, the researcher did not find documentation to substantiate that adult agricultural
leadership development programs and community/rural leadership development programs were informed or guided by leadership theory.

Throughout history individuals and researchers have shared ideas and thoughts on leadership and developed and expanded leadership theories based on events of their time and the society and culture in which they lived. The leadership literature contains nothing specific about the role of leadership theory in guiding adult agricultural leadership development training programs. The research in this study assists in making a connection to the leadership literature and the leadership theory or theories that may inform or guide adult agricultural leadership development programs.
Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes the research approach for this qualitative research study. Guided by a constructivist worldview that uses qualitative methods to answer the research questions for this study was appropriate. Qualitative studies are characterized by: natural settings, participant perspectives, the researcher as a data gathering instrument, extended firsthand engagement, centrality of meaning, wholeness and complexity, subjectivity, emergent design, inductive data analysis, and reflexivity (Hatch, 2002). The intent of this research study was to gather data in order to identify the leadership skills and concepts learned by men and women through participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program as told in their own voices.

Rationale for a Qualitative Study

The need to discover descriptive information on the leadership skills and concepts learned through participation by men and women in the Nebraska LEAD Program supports the use of qualitative methodology. Creswell (2007) describes several compelling reasons why a qualitative study should be undertaken: (a) the research question(s) start with a how or a what, (b) the topic needs to be explored, (c) there is a need for a detailed view of the topic, (d) individuals are to be studied in their natural setting, (e) there is an interest in writing in a literary style, (f) there are sufficient time and resources to spend on data collection, (g) the audience is receptive to qualitative data on the subject, and (h) the researcher’s role as an active learner who can present the story from the participant’s viewpoint is emphasized.
Rationale for the Case Study Tradition for the Qualitative Design

In order to ensure that the researcher discovers the leadership skills and concepts learned by the men and women that have participated in the Nebraska LEAD Program in their own words, a qualitative design was needed for this research study. Qualitative data can show the real meaning of a program for its participants (Patton, 1990). There are five qualitative design traditions and Creswell (2007) describes these as narrative, grounded theory, case study, ethnography, and phenomenological. Table 1 describes the major attribute of each tradition.

Table 1

Types of Qualitative Traditions and Major Attributes of Tradition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Qualitative Traditions</th>
<th>Major Attribute of Tradition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>Reports the life of a single individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounded theory</td>
<td>Moves beyond describing or reporting but acts to generate or discover a theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study</td>
<td>Focuses on one or more cases within a bounded system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnography</td>
<td>Focuses on entire cultural group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenological</td>
<td>Describes the meaning of several individuals and their lived experience of a concept or phenomenon.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Qualitative inquiry and research design* (Creswell, 2007).

To guide the researcher in framing and selecting the qualitative tradition for this research study, the Questions to Ask to Discover Preferred Qualitative Approach (Table 2) developed by McCaslin and Scott (2003) was utilized.
Table 2

*Questions to Ask to Discover Preferred Qualitative Approach*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question to Ask to Discover Preferred Approach</th>
<th>Associated Tradition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. If I could discover the meaning of one person’s lived experience, I would ask ____________ (individual) about</td>
<td>Biography (Narrative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__________.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If I could discover the shared lived experiences of one quality or phenomenon in others, I would want to know</td>
<td>Phenomenology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>about _________________.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If I could experience a different culture by living/ observing it, I would choose to experience ____________</td>
<td>Ethnography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. If I could discover what actually occurred and was experienced in a single lived event, that event would be</td>
<td>Case Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_________________.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. If I could discover a theory for a single phenomenon of living as shared by others, I would choose to discover</td>
<td>Grounded Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the theory of __________.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The five-question method for framing a qualitative research study* (McCaslin & Scott, 2003).

This qualitative research study used case study tradition to discover the leadership skills and concepts learned by men and women who participate in the Nebraska LEAD Program. Creswell (2007) states, “A case study is a good approach when the inquirer has clearly identifiable cases and boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases or a comparison of several cases” (p. 74). Hatch (2002) refers to the works of Yin (1994) and Merriam (1988) when stating that case studies are “a special kind of qualitative work that investigates a contextualized contemporary phenomenon within specified boundaries” (p. 30). “We are interested in them [cases] for both their uniqueness and commonality. We seek to understand them. We would like to hear their stories” (Stake, 1995, p. 1). Hatch (2002) also states that “While it is often a part of
participant observation research and other approaches, interviewing can be the primary data collection strategy in a qualitative project” (p. 23). Qualitative researchers create an event which, through the use of open-ended questions, encourages participants to explain their unique perspectives on an issue and at the same time, allows researchers to listen for other clues and special language that reveals meaning. While the researcher may enter the interview with structured questions, the researcher also is able to generate additional questions in response to participants’ responses as rapport is established. Qualitative research allows for “rich, thick description” (Creswell, 2008) from the research participants. Conducting personal individual interviews was the most effective and appropriate means of collecting data in order to discover the leadership skills and concepts learned through their own voices by men and women that have participated in the Nebraska LEAD Program. In an instrumental case study, the researcher concentrates on an issue, theme, or concern and then selects one bounded case to illustrate this issue (Stake, 1995).

Based on Creswell’s model, the researcher conducted an instrumental case study. The researcher focused on a single issue, leadership skills and concepts learned from a defined group, alumni of the Nebraska LEAD program from 2005-2009 (Creswell, 2007).

Approval

Approval from the graduate committee took place on September 2, 2010. Formal application to the Institutional Review Board at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln occurred on September 3, 2010 and approval for this research study was granted on September 21, 2010. A copy of the official notice of IRB approval is located in Appendix B. Selection of the research study participants began in September of 2010.
Pilot Study Interviews

The researcher conducted pilot interviews in early September of 2010 in order to determine if the interview questions and probes would collect the appropriate data related to the research study question. The two pilot study interviewees were alumni of the Nebraska LEAD Program and were conveniently selected to assist in the development of the research study interview protocol. The pilot interviews provided the necessary evidence that the interview questions and probes would collect the kinds of data related to the research study question and sub-questions.

Sampling

Creswell (2007) refers to purposeful sampling as “a major issue in case study research (where) the researcher needs to clearly specify the type of sampling strategy in selecting the case (or cases) and a rationale for it” (p. 246). In other words, purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select sites and individuals in order to understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2008). The researcher used purposeful sampling in selecting “information rich” (Patton, 1990, p. 169 in Creswell, 2008) participants and sites for in depth study. The sampling method that the researcher chose for the research study was homogeneous sampling. Creswell (2008) states “In homogeneous sampling the researcher purposefully samples individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics” (p. 216). For this research study, the researcher selected 15 men and women that live and work throughout Nebraska, were engaged in production agriculture, agribusiness, or both production agriculture and agribusiness, and had participated in the Nebraska LEAD Program groups XXIII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, and XXVII, thus completing the program between 2005 and 2009. Within the sample of 15
participants, the researcher chose to utilize maximal variation sampling in order to obtain a broader understanding of the leadership skills and concepts learned by men and women who had participated in the Nebraska LEAD Program. The researcher also selected research participants who differed in their career paths or career orientations.

This qualitative research study required greater access to the research study participants as the researcher conducted one-on-one, face-to-face interviews (Creswell, 2008). Gathering information through interviews or observations in participants’ homes or workplaces presents challenges for the qualitative researcher that the quantitative researcher may not face because of the administration of anonymous surveys or questionnaires (Creswell, 2008).

The researcher interviewed all the participants in their homes, businesses, or at mutually agreed upon locations. Participants read and signed the Informed Consent Form (Appendix C) approved by the Institutional Review Board before the face-to-face interviews began. The researcher was aware of the potential for perceived coercion because of the social influence caused by the possibility of the researcher’s relationships with some of the participants, so the researcher carefully followed the recruiting procedures outlined in the plan approved by the Institutional Review Board (Appendix B).

Additionally, this qualitative research study allowed the researcher to record information on self-designed protocols (Appendix D) that enabled the researcher to organize the information provided by each participant (Creswell, 2008). Before each of the face-to-face interviews, the researcher shared with each participant the Interview Protocol (Appendix D) which included: an introduction to the research study, an
overview of the project, and a review of the informed consent form. The researcher also informed the research study participants that they could choose not to participate and could withdraw from the interview at anytime without any repercussions.

The researcher used an email letter (Appendix E) as the initial contact in recruiting participants as the potential research study participants may have found it easier to refuse to participate by email than in person or by telephone. The researcher also followed a telephone script when contacting and scheduling the interviews (Appendix F).

**Data Collection Procedures**

Each interview was guided by, but not restricted to, 11 main questions and probes. The researcher used probes when it was necessary for the research study participant to expand on ideas or clarify points that were shared (Creswell, 2008). The research interview questions and probes were created to uncover the meaning of the lived experience and were designed to gather more than data. The open-ended interview questions encouraged the research study participants to share personal opinions and reflections, thoughts and ideas, perceptions, stories and emotions. The open-ended interview questions and “probes” were:

1. Would you tell me about yourself?
   A. Probe: Where did you grow up, education, career?

2. If you were to share with me a metaphor describing you before your participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program, what would it be?
   A. Probe: Is there an image or figure of speech that best described you before participating in the LEAD program?

3. What is your definition of leadership?
   A. Probe: What does leadership mean to you?
   B. Probe: What skills does a leader need to have to be successful?
   C. Probe: How do you know a leader when you see one?
4. Can you give me some examples of leadership experiences you had before participating in LEAD?
   A. Probe: What skills helped you be effective in those experiences? Why?
   B. Probe: Was there anything about these experiences that were not satisfying? Why?

5. Can you describe some of the skills you learned during your time in the LEAD Program?
   A. Probe: What are a few skills or activities that you remember that you learned that you had not been exposed to before LEAD?
   B. Probe: How did you learn these skills?
   C. Probe: Have you practiced these skills since then? How?

6. What parts of the LEAD experience do you feel were beneficial to others in your LEAD class?

7. Since your participation in LEAD, what leadership experiences have you had?
   A. Probe: What informal leadership roles do you play in your life?
   B. Probe: Have you been elected or appointed to positions of leadership?
   C. Probe: Do others perceive you as a leader in your community? Why?
   D. Probe: How satisfied are you with your leadership skills and abilities? Why?

8. What is the most successful recent leadership experience that you had since completing LEAD?
   A. Probe: What skills and behaviors contributed to your success?

9. Are there other leadership skills and concepts that you would like to be able to experience or have more training on?
   A. Probe: Can you give me an example of how this skill (or these skills) or training could have made a difference in a leadership outcome?

10. If you were to share with me a metaphor describing who you are today what would it be?
    A. Probe: Is there an image or figure of speech that best describes you now?

11. In 2025, our world will experience widespread water shortages as well as severe climate change and by 2050, our world’s population will double. What skills and abilities will leaders need to address these changes?
At the beginning of each interview, the research study participants were provided with information regarding the regulations of this research study associated with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) which insures the confidentiality of this research study and the research participant’s willingness to participate. Each research study participant was asked to sign the Informed Consent Form (Appendix C).

The 15 research interviews were audio-taped and all of the interviews were professionally transcribed verbatim. The researcher also took notes on the Interview Protocol documents (Appendix E) during each of the face-to-face interviews in order to keep track of important comments and quotes, body language, and tape tracking. The researcher’s notes were helpful in matching with the transcripts during the data analysis procedures and assisted the researcher in recalling the information. In order to ensure the research study participants’ right to privacy, the transcriptionists agreed to maintain the confidentiality of interviews that they had been contracted to transcribe through the completion of the Transcriptionist Confidentiality Form (Appendix G). The researcher utilized the services of two transcriptionists due to the number of interviews conducted and the amount of data collected. The researcher chose pseudonyms for each of the research study participants in order to maintain their anonymity. In addition, the names of communities, organizations, and individuals described were changed in order to maintain the anonymity of the research study participants. Upon completion of the interview, the research study participants received copies of transcripts of their sessions and were asked for corrections or confirmation that the transcripts were accurate records of the discussions (Appendix H). One participant sent corrections regarding misspelled words. An Interview Transcript Sample is found in Appendix I.
Data Analysis Procedures

This research study examined information from participants that described their personal experiences of participating in an adult agricultural leadership development program through a series of interview questions. The research study participants readily shared their personal leadership experiences; their personal definition of leadership, described themselves before and after their participation in a leadership development program, shared observations regarding their classmates’ leadership development, and personal stories that they felt were significant.

Each of the 15 one-on-one interviews transcriptions was then imported into MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis computer software program. However, before utilizing the MAXQDA software program, the researcher performed a preliminary exploratory analysis of “exploring the data to obtain a general sense of the data” (Creswell, 2008, p. 251). In completing the analysis of the data collected for this research study, the researcher first looked at the responses from each of the participants from the interview questions and sub-questions.

Creswell (2003) suggests a general outline for case study data analysis and interpretation. Due to the large database generated by the 15 transcribed interviews, the researcher utilized the MAXQDA computer software to simplify the grouping of the documentation into one location (Creswell, 2007, p. 165). First, the researcher prepared the data for analysis by editing the transcripts which entailed the replacement of the research participants’ names with pseudonyms. This also included removing and/or substituting information which identified the research study participants. The researcher then saved each document as a “rich text file” (rtf), which was imported into the
MAXQDA program. The researcher read each transcript using MAXQDA and formed initial codes, while highlighting quotes that provide a rich, thick description of the research study participants’ thoughts, ideas, and experiences. Following the tradition of case study analysis, the researcher focused on topic coding in order to interpret and categorize the data as it was being analyzed (Richards & Morse, 2007).

The researcher sorted and aggregated the codes into categories. MAXQDA assisted the researcher in identifying related and duplicate codes. Using MAXQDA’s retrieval function, the researcher read the quotes within the categories and identified patterns and themes. The researcher then reviewed the transcripts in their entirety using MAXQDA to confirm the selected themes, making sure the selected quotes illustrated and supported the selected themes. The researcher used the descriptive quotes from the transcripts to write a descriptive narrative of this instrumental case study. Lastly, the researcher interpreted the data, attempted to draw meaning from a single instance, and categorical aggregations, as well as looking for meaning to emerge from a collection of instances (Stake, 1995).

The researcher discovered that when conducting qualitative research, it is quite easy to gather a large amount of data. Over 200 pages (single-spaced) of data were collected through the 15 interviews. The researcher also discovered that the difficult decisions appear when attempting to “winnow” (Wolcott, 2001, p. 44) the data. Because a large amount of data was collected, determining what to keep and what to discard could be a difficult task. The researcher found that MAXQDA was an excellent tool to assist in the winnowing process.
Researcher’s Role and Potential Ethical Issues

A combined background of education and work in leadership development led the researcher to this study. As an educator for the past 30 years, the researcher has coordinated, facilitated, and provided leadership training for youth and adults. Upon graduation from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the researcher spent the first 17 ½ years of his professional career as the Agricultural Education Instructor/FFA Advisor at the Geneva Public Schools. During that time, the researcher also served as advisor to the Geneva Young Farmers and Ranchers Educational Association (an adult continuing education organization). Additionally, the researcher served as a coach of high school football, junior high football, junior high track and field, high school track and field, and high school volleyball. The researcher then spent the next nearly 10 years as a University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educator. From 2000-2002, the researcher was a member of Nebraska LEAD Group XX and, in 2006, participated in the North Central Region’s National Extension Leadership Development (NELD) program. Since September of 2007, the researcher has served as director of the Nebraska LEAD Program.

Ethical issues were limited in this research study. The researcher followed guidelines suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (2003) to protect the research participants. The two major issues the researcher addressed were maintaining confidentiality of the data and protecting the anonymity of the research study participants. These two aspects of ethical privacy go hand-in-hand. The research participants read, reviewed, and signed the informed consent form and the researcher agreed not to share the specific interviews. The researcher used pseudonyms to protect the research study participants’ identities and also
removed other information that could identify the participants. The researcher deleted the audio recordings when the transcriptions were completed. The transcriptions are locked in a cabinet in the researcher’s office and, after the completion of this study, will be destroyed. The researcher also disclosed to the research participants that the information obtained in this research study was to be used in a dissertation and may be published in academic journals or presented at academic meetings, and that the data would be reported as aggregate data. The research participants also had the right to review the transcripts. The researcher treated the research study participants with respect, seeking their cooperation in the research study. The researcher reported what was recorded or said when writing and reporting the findings of this qualitative research study.

**Methods of Validation**

The strength of qualitative research is validity and it is used to determine if the findings of a research study are correct from the viewpoints of the researcher, the research participants, and the readers of the research study (Creswell, 2003). Creswell (2007) recommends that qualitative researchers engage in at least two of eight primary procedures in order to validate their research study. Creswell (2003) suggests the following strategies: triangulation; member-checking; the use of rich, thick description; the clarification of bias; present negative or discrepant information; spend pro-longed time in the field; peer debriefing; and the use of an external auditor. For this research study the researcher incorporated the following validation strategies: triangulation; member-checking; using rich, thick descriptions; and clarifying researcher bias.

Triangulation included the selection of research study participants who met the research criteria (stated earlier in this chapter). The researcher used the information from
the 15 research study participants in order to provide the opportunity for “direct interpretation of individual instance” and the “aggregation of instances” described by Stake (1995, p. 74). This process included “corroborating evidence from different sources” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208) as the researcher reviewed observation notes and the interviews to locate emergent themes.

The researcher checked the findings with the research study participants. Creswell (2008) describes member-checking as, “a process in which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account” (p. 267). Additionally, all research participants were provided a copy of the findings of the research study for their review with 20% solicited for specific feedback on the research study findings.

The researcher used rich, thick descriptions to communicate the findings of the research study. The researcher intended to “transport readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences” (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). The researcher provided an analysis that included detailed descriptions of the participants (see Chapter Four) and the setting in the research study (Creswell, 2007).

Bias in not a word that is normally used in qualitative research (Creswell, 2008), however, the researcher was reflective in order to create “an open and honest narrative that will resonate well with readers” (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). According to Creswell (2003), the researcher must “clarify the bias the researcher brings to the study” (p. 196). The researcher attempted to put aside personal feelings as the leadership skills and concepts were discovered, analyzed, and illustrated in reporting the findings of those have participated in the Nebraska LEAD Program.
Chapter Four

Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the leadership experiences of adult agricultural leadership program participants. The Nebraska LEAD Program is an adult agricultural leadership development program designed to develop the future problem solvers, decision makers and spokespersons for the industry of agriculture. The scope of this study was limited to the members of Nebraska LEAD Groups XXIII, XXIX, XXV, XXVI, and XXVII who completed the two-year leadership development program between 2005 and 2009. The central question was, “How do men and women describe the leadership skills and concepts learned through their participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program? The following research sub-questions also guided the study:

• How do LEAD participants define “leadership”?
• What did they know about leadership before participating in LEAD?
• What did they know about leadership after participating in LEAD?
• What are their experiences as leaders before and after participating in LEAD?

A total of 15 men and women shared their perceptions of the leadership skills and concepts learned through participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program. The one-on-one, face-to-face interviews consisted of questions that were derived from the research questions and can be found in the Interview Protocol (Appendix D). The analysis of the interviews resulted in five themes related to the research study participant’s perceptions of the leadership skills and concepts learned during the Nebraska LEAD Program experience: Personal Understanding of Leadership, Leadership Lessons Learned,
Leadership Encounters, Benefits to Classmates, and Perceptions. This chapter includes a portrayal of the participants, individual case descriptions, a summary of the emergent themes and findings, and the researcher’s reflexivity. Each case description includes six major areas, five of which were emergent themes. The other major area includes descriptions of the research participant’s background and leadership experiences.

**Background and leadership experiences.** The various backgrounds and leadership experiences of the research participants are presented. The purpose was to inform the reader of the research study participants’ general backgrounds and their pre-LEAD and post-LEAD leadership experiences.

**Personal understanding of leadership.** This section focuses on the research study participant’s personal understanding of leadership. Data that were considered relevant to their perceptions of leadership were their definitions of leadership, skills that successful leaders use, and thoughts on identifying leaders are presented.

**Leadership lessons learned.** The focus of this section in the research study participant’s learning experiences during their participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program are discussed.

**Leadership encounters.** In this section the research study participant’s experience in leadership are discussed before and after their participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program, as well as their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with these events.

**Benefits to classmates.** This section focuses on the research study participant’s thoughts and observations regarding the benefits they believed their classmates received through participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program.
Perceptions. In this final section, the research study participants’ provide self-descriptions and share their thoughts on how they believe they are perceived as a leader in their community.

Introduction of Participants

Qualitative research allowed the researcher to study this case with the purpose of understanding rather than determining a specific outcome (Creswell, 2007). More familiarity with the case is facilitated through a description of the research study participants. While each case provides an introductory description of the individual, this section describes the participants as an introduction to the detailed presentation of findings.

For this research study, the researcher selected 15 men and women that live and work throughout Nebraska, are engaged in production agriculture, agribusiness, or both production agriculture and agribusiness, and had completed participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program between 2005 to 2009. Within the sample of 15 participants, the researcher chose to utilize maximal variation sampling to obtain a broader understanding of the leadership skills and concepts learned by men and women who had participated in the Nebraska LEAD Program. The researcher also selected research participants who differed in their career paths or career orientations. Five of the research study participants were engaged in production agriculture, four were employed in agribusiness, and six were involved in both production and agribusiness. The research study group consisted of eight men and seven women, all Caucasian, and of varying ages. Based on their current age at the time of their interview, three research study participants were in the 25-35 years range, six were in the 36-45 years range, and six were in the 46 years and
older range. The research study participants completed the Nebraska LEAD Program between one to five years ago and while almost all had obtained a college degree, their level of education ranged from a high school diploma to graduate degrees. In regard to the region of Nebraska where the research study participants reside, four participants live in the central part of the state while three live in each of the southeast, south central and northeast regions, and two reside in northwestern Nebraska.

Using pseudonyms for the purpose of anonymity, a summary of information describing the 15 participants is presented in Table 3, Participants Interviewed for Case Study.

**Participant #1 Abraham.**

**Leadership experiences and background.** Abraham was raised in a community in central Nebraska. After high school, Abraham attended college and received a bachelor’s degree. While in high school and college, Abraham was a member of several clubs and organizations, serving in various leadership positions. After college, Abraham worked in media for a few years and decided to go back to college, eventually earning a master’s degree. He then worked in education for a few years before he decided that he did not want to work for anyone, so he started a production agriculture/value-added agricultural business. Before participating in LEAD, Abraham was a member of a school board, as well as several civic organizations and trade associations. He also served in several leadership positions for these organizations. Abraham participated in a community leadership program a few years prior to his participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program. After his participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Abraham has served as president
Table 3

*Participants Interviewed for Case Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age (Range)</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Region of Residence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abraham</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>Production &amp; Agribusiness</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>46+</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Production &amp; Agribusiness</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Agribusiness</td>
<td>Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleanor</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>46+</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Production &amp; Agribusiness</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronnie</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Agribusiness</td>
<td>Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>Production</td>
<td>Northwest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46+</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Production</td>
<td>South Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>46+</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Production</td>
<td>Northwest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Production</td>
<td>Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bess</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>46+</td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>Production &amp; Agribusiness</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwight</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Agribusiness</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mamie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36-46</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Production &amp; Agribusiness</td>
<td>Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
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<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Production</td>
<td>South Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
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<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>Agribusiness</td>
<td>South Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
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<td>46+</td>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>Production &amp; Agribusiness</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

of the school board, president of a national trade association, and serves on the board for a non-profit educational program for disadvantaged youth, was appointed to serve on a state-wide board, and elected to serve on the board of directors for a company.
Personal understanding of leadership. Abraham shared with his thoughts regarding leadership:

For me, leadership is—whether people are born leaders or you learn how to be a leader. I think it’s a little bit of both. I think it’s the environment that you’re raised in, the people that you surround yourself with, but I think there’s something internally, and that drives leaders to be better. And for me, leadership is not about, going out and, taking control and saying, “Follow me, I’m the leader.” It’s more about a servant-type of leadership. Personally for me, I think I’ve been very blessed and, and have been given a lot of opportunities in life. For me, leadership is taking those opportunities that I’ve been given and turning them into, leadership roles—whether that’s being president of an organization or whether it’s being a member of an organization and a follower. I think you can be a leader in all situations and it’s how you conduct yourself just by the situations that you’re in. I guess the best way I look at it is servant leadership. When you’re a leader, you’re always serving people and you’re taking that leadership role and helping others.

Abraham commented on specific skills that a leader needs to have to be successful by adding:

I think the best thing is just, you’ve got to listen. You’ve got to keep an open mind. To me leadership isn’t about, it’s my agenda and that’s the way we go. It’s about here’s the agenda, here’s the situation. That’s the way, that’s the path we’re going travel but there may be a few side journeys along the way, and you have to be open to those. You have to be aware of what’s going on around you and not be so in tune on getting to that final destination. As a leader, you have to be able to be flexible and you have to be able to compromise and you have to be able to listen to others. And so I think that the main skill is listening to others and then also I think leaders really have to be people persons. Leaders have to be able to understand others; they have to be empathetic to others.

Abraham responded that it can be difficult to readily identify a leader:

it’s not about looking at somebody immediately and saying, “Oh, that person’s a leader.” It takes a little time to figure that out. And a lot of times that’s done by example and how they conduct themselves and present themselves and different situations.

Leadership lessons learned. Abraham described some of the leadership skills that he learned during his participation with the Nebraska LEAD Program:
Personality was one of them (that) really stands out. It basically was different personality styles and how to handle different situations with the dynamics within a group. So that was an effective tool and things that I tried to bring back into the different organizations I was in, back into the workplace. I mean, a lot of things we did in LEAD directly affect how I function here in the workplace.

Abraham emphasized his earlier thoughts about servant leadership:

We talked about servant leadership a lot. And that was something that I definitely try to use, but it’s nice to have that constant reminder and the different aspects of being a servant leader. For me it’s just the interaction with people and the interaction with other leaders, people of like-mindedness or I guess, maybe not like-mindedness, but similar goals and objectives in life and similar attitudes about leadership. Not everybody has exactly the same cookie cutter leadership skills or leadership set. One of the things that the LEAD program showed me and taught me is to be a leader in different situations. So, it made me maybe not actively seek leadership, but it’s also made me open to those leadership opportunities.

Because Abraham had participated in a leadership development program before he participated in the Nebraska LEAD Program, he quickly emphasized:

I’ve gone through another leadership program and just some different leadership type of seminars and things of that nature, and the LEAD program was similar to a lot of those which I think is good because they’re all very good leadership programs, so I think that says a lot about the LEAD program and the skill sets that were being taught and being presented were things that I’d already heard and knew, and it was just a great way to keep my development up to speed and just to reiterate some things that I’ve already learned. So I think that was good.

**Leadership encounters.** Abraham described his leadership experiences before he participated in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

I have employees that work for me and I have to be a good leader in those situations. So I had that opportunity a couple different occasions in terms of being a manager in business. It takes leadership in starting a business and everything that goes into that what we’ve done here at the business. And then there, of course, there are volunteer organizations and professional organizations that are directly related to my business.
He shared that it was his listening skills and people skills that assisted him in his leadership experiences before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program: “I think it goes back to listening to others and knowing people.”

Abraham was quick to point out the challenges of time management and delegation in regard to his leadership experiences before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

Something I struggled with was time management skills. Any time I’m asked to be part of an organization in a leadership position, I really have to make sure I can give my time. If you’re going to be in that type of position, you want to give 100%. You don’t do it half way. And a lot of times that comes back to managing time with work, with family, and making sure that you can give the effort in those types of positions that’s required. I’ve turned down some leadership positions simply because of that. I still struggle with delegation. If you’re going be in that kind of position, you have to delegate. You can’t do it all yourself. You have to give other people some of that responsibility. Some of that autonomy for them to do what they need to do, you can’t micromanage in any leadership position. So I think those are skills that I’ve tried to continually work on.

Abraham conveyed during the interview that his experiences in leadership before participating in the Nebraska were mostly satisfying when he stated:

Most of them were good experiences. There are certain situations and certain times when you get into something sometimes it’s just personality (issues) I learned through LEAD and a couple of other leadership programs I’ve gone through is everybody has different personality styles. Sometimes I would get into a leadership position and we’d have committee meetings and you have some that just want to talk. They just want to continually talk! I wouldn’t say any one experience was, was frustrating, but there are certain situations that have come up at certain times that were frustrating. And a lot of it had to do with personalities and the dynamics of those different organizations or those different groups of people.

After his participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Abraham shared:

I’m on like six or seven different boards right now. My wife thinks I’m crazy, but it goes back to that not being able to say no when they couldn’t find anybody else. Those are all great opportunities and it doesn’t all just revolve around what I do in my professional life.
Benefits to classmates. Abraham explained his thoughts regarding the benefits that his classmates received because of participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program when he stated:

Like I said, I’ve been given a lot of opportunities in life to do some of these types of programs. But for some of them, this is the first time they’d stepped out of their box, stepped off the farm to go out to do some of these leadership types of programs, and so it was fun watching some of them grasp some theories or tools that I’d heard before. To see them sit down and be interviewed, and to talk to a reporter, and that they might have that opportunity in a leadership position down the road, you’d see a light bulb go off. Again, that was my world, media. That was something that I had a pretty good grasp of. But, for some of my classmates that had never been in that kind of situation, and for somebody to sit down across from them and knowing that maybe they would have to do this if they were president of an organization or involved in some sort of opportunity where they’d have to talk to the media. It was fun to see! And that one, that one sticks out!

According to Abraham, the communications training played an important role in the leadership development of his classmates. The travel experience was also of great benefit when he explained:

The other part of that was, and this maybe doesn’t have to deal directly with leadership, our travel experiences. Again, I’ve had a lot of opportunities to travel around the country and the world in some cases, but some of our classmates that hadn’t had that opportunity.

Perceptions. Abraham described himself before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program by saying:

I guess to describe myself to be very laid back. One of my life sayings comes out of, James in the Bible. It’s make sure you’re slow to speak, slow to anger, and quick to listen. And I try to use that in my life, that I try to take it all in, very conservative, make sure that we’re making the right decisions. Doing what I do, some people say, “Wow, that was a huge risk.” I’m not a risk taker by nature. I think that’s the best way to describe me is that very, I want look at all angles and all sides and all possibilities before I jump into something or make a decision. I’m not a real hasty decision maker.
Abraham described himself today in this way, “I haven’t changed a whole lot, more confident in dealing with leadership situations. Given the tools that LEAD offered, I think it just made me a little more confident in myself.”

While Abraham continues to be active in his community and has served in several leadership positions, I asked him if the members of his community perceive him as a leader. Abraham responded:

Well, I hope so. I hope so. I think one of the advantages I have is that in the business that we run, it’s so unique and it’s fairly new. People know about us. I hope that people perceive me as a leader simply because of what we’re doing in our business. I’ve also been approached by a couple different organizations about running for some political offices. It wasn’t the right time. I guess that makes me feel good because people are noticing that I must be doing something right or I must be presenting myself. I would hope that some do, but I don’t know.

Participant #2 Mary

Leadership experiences and background. Mary was raised on a ranch located in northwest Nebraska in the Sandhills. Mary was active in the county 4-H program. After high school, Mary attended college and earned a bachelor’s degree. While in high school and college, Mary was active in several organizations and served in several leadership positions. She operates a crop and livestock farm in northeast Nebraska. For several years, Mary also worked at the county FSA office, the State FSA office, and there were times when she was detailed to other county FSA offices. She then became the director for the county development corporation/economic development for a couple of years. Mary now serves as director for an organization that promotes agriculture. Before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Mary was active as a 4-H leader and also with the 4-H Junior Leader program, was active in community organizations, and was also a member of several community philanthropic organizations. After her participation
in LEAD, Mary is still active in the 4-H program, and continues to be active in her community.

**Personal understanding of leadership.** Mary began the interview by sharing her thoughts regarding leadership by saying:

Leadership is when you have a strong feeling or passion for a subject and you acquire the skills to be able to share that passion and make a difference in that field working with followers and convincing followers to go in the same direction you are.

Mary then shared specific skills that leaders use to be successful, “Leaders need to be able to listen and read non-verbal communication, have empathy and compassion, know the subject matter enough to be knowledgeable, network and meet the people.”

**Leadership lessons learned.** Mary then shared some of the leadership skills that she learned by participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

The skills were all-encompassing and were honed in the leadership program. One of the things I really appreciated about LEAD was the very basics of just etiquette at the table so that people had a positive first experience of you as a person, all the way to opening my eyes to think the way other people would think. I realized that my leadership skills were not in the center of the universe. We can always learn, to always to be open to others’ attitudes and skills, and putting it all together.

Mary also describes some new experiences that she encountered:

The meetings we had with state-level and national-level leaders, senators, and knowing the proper etiquette in meeting with those types of people. Networking on a professional level. I’d always networked before, but never on a professional level. Just watching how other effective leaders, very successful leaders, and, and watching other successful leaders in the program develop, helped me decide which skills I wanted to work on harder.

**Leadership encounters.** Mary described her experiences with the leadership prior to her participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

I was in 4-H and my leadership skills were developed there. I worked with the junior leaders and worked with younger people. I think leadership in college roles were seen in different organizations that I was in and the offices that I held in
those organizations. As a young adult in I was involved with leadership in community and philanthropic-type organizations. Sometimes those leadership roles are nothing more than officer roles, but it all helps you develop skills with leadership.

She then paused before she continued on and shared the skills that helped her to be effective in those experiences, “I think empathy and compassion in developing relationships is important. You must develop a relationship and let people know who you are before you can become a leader.” Mary’s response in regard to those previous leadership experiences that was not satisfying:

Oh, many of them! There were times that I thought I was being a leader and nobody was following and I couldn’t figure out why. I think my level of awareness was not where it should have been to understand why I was not being as effective. I think not giving the credit where the credit is due. I think sometimes it was easy to take the credit. I was not remembering to thank the people that really made it happen and not realizing how important that was.

Mary then shared that she has worked for three different governing/policy boards since her participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program, sharing that it was her listening skills and her ability to empathize that has made her more effective as a leader:

Listening because many times the reasons that they gave that they didn’t want the project were not the true reasons. It took a lot of listening and assessment to really hear what those board members were saying. I think the other was then putting my place in their position and letting them know that I totally understood where they were coming from, and to put myself in their shoes so that I could understand, and then assess what would make me change my mind.

**Benefits to classmates.** Through her observations, Mary believes that her classmates benefited from participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

I think the public speaking, being able to speak in front of others. I think the ability to get along even though sometimes we had differing views, to become more compassionate or empathetic, to learn to take people where they’re at, and be able to accept them for who they are. Realizing that the world is all connected and opening our eyes to other people’s beliefs.
**Perceptions.** Mary described herself as “passionate about agriculture” before she participated in the Nebraska LEAD Program. In describing herself today, Mary shared:

Making a difference. That was a goal, at the Kearney seminar where you had to stand up and share. I said that my perfect job would be to raise the awareness and to go out and sell agriculture. That was several years ago. But that goal, voicing that goal, writing that goal down, has changed my life completely and totally. So, one of the things I picked up in LEAD was setting goals.

I asked Mary if the members of her community perceive her to be a leader and after pausing, she replied, “I think they do” and went on to explain:

When there’s a project or an idea that people think would be important for my community, many times I’m called and asked my opinion and to see if I would be willing to work on that idea or that project. So I think they see me as a leader that way.

**Participant #3 Franklin**

*Leadership experiences and background.* Franklin was raised on a diversified crop and livestock farm in central Nebraska. Franklin participated in 4-H and FFA. He also participated in high school and college athletics. During high school and college, Franklin was a member of several clubs and organizations and served in various leadership positions. Upon graduation from college with a bachelor’s degree, Franklin spent several years working for various agribusinesses in several other states. A few years ago, he returned to central Nebraska where he now works for a business that supports agriculture. Before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Franklin was active in his church serving as a member of the administrative council. Since LEAD, Franklin has been elected to serve on two business development/economic development boards and continues to remain active in the church in several leadership positions. He also has assumed increased leadership responsibility in his job.
**Personal understanding of leadership.** Franklin defined leadership as,

“Leadership is when someone can take a group of individuals that come from all walks of life, have many different characteristics and be able to lead them into one common area successfully.” He then added:

There are a lot of different aspects of leadership, but leadership is doing the right thing. We talk a lot about being men of integrity or full of integrity. So whether that’s your honesty or how you relate to people, when I talk about leadership I’m talking about good leadership, successful leadership. And those are the individuals that communicate well, can be trusted, and are honest integrity filled individuals. Leadership has to do with being optimistic and positive.

Franklin shared that a leader can be identified: “By their actions, completely by their actions. You can talk until you are blue in the face, it means nothing. It’s all about how you behave and the actions that you display.”

**Leadership lessons learned.** Franklin then shared the leadership skills he learned while participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

One thing that the LEAD program did for me was it absolutely broadened my horizon both nationally and internationally. I learned how to dress and how to officially address people. I guess a lot of it was just communications. How you communicate with them, how you introduce somebody, how to be more formal and more um, politically correct, more official if you will.

Because of his experiences, Franklin came into the Nebraska LEAD Program having received previous training in leadership development:

I had been exposed to a lot of them (leadership skills) with my previous career whether corporately or through college. A lot of the leadership roles that I’ve held, so I’ve been exposed to a lot of them. I think if anything it just took what I had and just either reminded me or it was a refresher or just added just a little bit more to what I’d already had as a base from a leadership standpoint.

Franklin then shared that he uses these skills for, “I use a lot of my skills in my job in public speaking, writing thank-you notes, written communications asking for things such as requests, and writing grants.”
Leadership encounters. Franklin credits his success to his effectiveness as a leader before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program to:

I was a resident assistant in college, so I received training from the classes and courses. They put you through an enormous amount of training to prepare you for different situations that you might run into when dealing with your peers. A lot of my skills come from just watching other good leaders. I’ll pick out a leader like the CEO of this company is a leader for five hundred employees, I look at the qualities that he has and the skills that he has and I pick out the great ones and those are the things that I’m going to work on to make myself better. I have many of my leadership skills from my parents as well. They exemplified people of integrity.

Franklin shared that he tries to take something good from all the leadership experiences he has had:

I’ve really have not had a boss that I don’t enjoy working for, but I look at other leaders and other companies or other parts of the business and I look at the things that I don’t like about them and the things that don’t work and those are the things I tell myself I don’t want to do. So, a lot of it is just self reflection and taking what you’ve seen from others and taking a positive and building upon those for yourself. Taking the negatives and eliminating those from how you behave.

Since participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Franklin has been given increased responsibilities at work. He recently directed a major project to a successful completion and credits its success to his “Being able to work with people.” He then shared:

I mean when there were multiple contractors, multiple sub-contractors, multiple executives and management within the company, and a board of directors. Whether it’s going out and selling the project or successfully getting it completed under budget and then getting it functional and operational that’s been the success of it.

Benefits to classmates. When asked what the benefits of participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program were to his classmates, Franklin was quick to answer:

It was public speaking without a doubt. I saw the greatest growth in public speaking. Getting people to step out of their comfort zone. It came pretty easy for me; I mean I had already been doing a lot of it. But for the classmates of mine that’s where you see the most growth.
**Perceptions.** Franklin described himself before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program by responding, “Before the program, I was a young, aspiring leader, energetic and ready to take on the political world.” Franklin then described himself today by saying:

I’m about the same, but less politically inclined. I think going into the LEAD program I, I was aspiring to be more of a political figure and today I’m less inspired to be a political leader. I want to do a better job focusing on my career, my role as a person for this organization and be more of a family man. I have children and I should mention that I don’t want to leave my wife and children out. I’m really nothing without my wife and kids. But I want to put more priorities on them. I think when you go into the political realm, you give more priority to the people, as you should do and if you can’t or if you choose not to then you shouldn’t be doing it.

I asked Franklin if the members of his community perceive him to be a leader and he responded:

I suppose they do. I like to think of myself as positive, encouraging, optimistic, common sense and use my head. I’m not going to say I’m the brightest out there, but I think people are not looking for necessarily the most intelligent, but the honesty and integrity filled individual that can go to the table and sit across from people you might disagree with but agree to disagree. But can still move forward without turning it into just a fight or a verbal disagreement.

**Participant #4 Eleanor**

**Leadership experiences and background.** Eleanor grew up on a diversified farm in southeast Nebraska. After high school, Eleanor went to college and earned a bachelor’s degree. She spent several years working in media. Eleanor and her husband have a diversified farming business and Eleanor also works off the farm. Before her participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Eleanor was involved in a Young Farmer Educational Association, in a non-profit organization that fosters skill development in communications, Farm Safety Day (a farm safety awareness program for youth), and Rotary. Eleanor had several leadership roles in these organizations as well as in her local
church. Since LEAD, Eleanor has increased her responsibilities with the Farm Safety Day program, serves as an officer for a youth athletic program, and coordinated a fundraising event to raise funds for research to combat a disease of the elderly.

**Personal understanding of leadership.** Eleanor defined leadership in this way:

Leadership to me would be the ability to step forward, listen, figure out the best positions to have people in to best represent the cause it is that one is working about or for and to share some kind of a vision about what could be.

She then added specific skills that a leader needs to have:

I believe a leader needs organization. A leader needs an open mind to be able to hear different sides of issues, and different ways to problem solve. I believe a leader needs to have a little bit of intestinal fortitude to be able to stand up and sometimes hear the things they don’t want to hear and sometimes to be able to make a hard decision. I think a leader has to care. I think you have to have something that you care enough about to, to be able to, to do those things, to step forward and to stand up for something.

Eleanor then when on to discuss ways how she identifies a leader:

A leader to me is probably going to not necessarily be the person at the front of the room talking, although that person might be a leader. I think the leaders to me are the ones who demonstrate that they are walking the walk. If they are a motivational speaker and they are out telling people about how important it is to care about people and that they take the time at the end of the speech to literally shake the hands and talk to the people that they are teaching, that they care about. Leadership by example, I guess.

**Leadership lessons learned.** Eleanor then shared the leadership skills she learned while participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

The thing that I am reminded of and became more engrained in me is to remember that there are always multiple sides to any issue, no matter what that issue is. And, to try to look at all those factors before making a decision. The other one that strikes me over and over is that people, no matter where they are, no matter who they are all have the same basic wants and needs in life. They need a place to live. They need someone to love and to be loved by. They need sustenance in the way of food and water. They need sanitary living conditions, and not everybody’s got that. And that, you know the international study/travel is the place that brings that home the most. Of course, talking about different leadership styles is important and something we can use on a day to day basis and
that’s something I often think about, my own and those of other people. The public speaking, I know a lot of people probably say that was, the turning point in their LEAD experience and public speaking wasn’t something that ever scared me, so that was a fun opportunity, it was an interesting opportunity.

**Leadership encounters.** Eleanor credits the success of her effectiveness as a leader before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program to:

I like people. I enjoy being with people. I’m organized for the most part. I do care about those issues and organizations that I get involved in and I have found with myself that if I don’t care pretty strongly about it, I don’t stay involved and I don’t step up into a leadership role if I don’t care enough about that.

However, Eleanor encountered some difficulties in her leadership experiences before her participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program and stated, “I would say the biggest problem was the lack of utilizing committees properly.” She quickly added, “The lack of leadership from the co-chairs on this project. Those would be the few things that were the most frustrating.”

Eleanor continues to be active in her community and then described a successful leadership experience since her participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program and credits the success with, “Caring about the cause, working with and developing a very good committee, and being organized.”

**Benefits to classmates.** Eleanor then shared her thoughts in regard to what skills her classmates acquired by participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

Public speaking would have to fall in one of the top areas of the things that were very beneficial for my classmates. I would estimate that for about 90% of my class, public speaking was something they didn’t think they ever wanted to do and I really saw them develop in that. I think the personality profiles and leadership styles were something that was beneficial to all of us. Learning about energy and water and policies, how the federal government works, how the state government works, all of that was very important to our class.
**Perceptions.** Eleanor described herself before her participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

Before LEAD I don’t know if I was as open to all sides of issues. One thing that the LEAD program did was open my eyes to how many other points of view there always may be on any issue.

Eleanor describes herself today as “Open to new opportunities.” I asked Eleanor if the members of her community perceive her to be a leader and she replied:

I believe people do. I believe they perceive me as a leader because they see me as being active in a lot of different things. I believe they perceive me as a leader because of my position in my job. And, and I hope that they perceive me as a leader because they’ve seen me as an integral part of some things that were good for our community.

**Participant #5 Ronnie**

**Leadership experiences and background.** Ronnie was raised on a farm in western Nebraska and participated in FFA when he was in high school. Ronnie received several awards for his FFA participation. While in college, Ronnie was part of a group that coordinated a leadership development conference for high school students involved in agriculture. After receiving a bachelor’s degree, Ronnie worked for an agribusiness in another state for a couple of years before moving back to central Nebraska to work for another agribusiness. Currently, Ronnie works for another agribusiness in central Nebraska. Before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Ronnie served as the chairman for the chamber of commerce agriculture committee in the community where he lived at the time. Since LEAD, Ronnie serves on the chamber of commerce board in the community that he now lives in. He also serves as the chairman for a planning committee that sponsors an annual tour of Nebraska.
**Personal understanding of leadership.** Ronnie defines leadership as, “A strong vision of what you believe in and why you are doing what you do. But then it has to be tempered with the ability to get others to see that vision and to bring them with you.”

Ronnie then provided some skills that he believes that leaders need to have to be successful:

Driven. A technical knowledge of where you are going is not as necessary if you have good people around you, but the key is seeing a bigger picture other than just your specific job so that you know how to grow within the context of your industry or your business or whatever it is you do. The ability to gain cooperation from others in order to bring them along to that vision.

Ronnie explained that a leader can be identified by:

I think that they are outgoing enough that they can quickly communicate what it is they believe in or what they do, the concise elevator talk to communicate in a very short time. I don’t think they necessarily stand out as the most social person in the room. I don’t think that’s necessary. I think it’s more about the feeling of what they believe in and having that vision that is bigger and outside of themselves.

**Leadership lessons learned.** Ronnie then shared the leadership skills that he learned while participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

I was pretty rough around the edges before and I was very focused on just what I’d done. The LEAD program first taught me humility. As I looked around at the other twenty nine LEAD fellows in my class, I thought there’s some really smart, really successful people here. I’m not sure that I fit. I had not achieved what they had. It was a humbling experience from that standpoint. First to focus on Nebraska, then on the nation and then internationally helped me to see the agriculture and what we do in a much bigger context than I ever thought I would experience in my life.

Ronnie then added:

The personality skills, presentation skills, and then just things like how to dress, how to prepare for meetings, how to present yourself and present your group in a formal setting were the things that I’d never really experienced before. LEAD did the best job of taking a kid from a farm and teaching me to represent myself well in front of senators if I needed to. Public speaking, the ability to communicate well and really through the two years it was about communicating and establishing connections for me.
**Leadership encounters.** Before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Ronnie’s leadership experiences were somewhat limited. He did mention that cooperating with others helped him to be effective as a leader. Ronnie shared some of his leadership experiences after his participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

I was fortunate enough to be selected as chairman of the Chamber Ag Committee where I lived at time and until we moved up here. I am on the Chamber Board again along with several committees at work. I continue to be the LEAD Alumni as a committee chair.

**Benefits to classmates.** Ronnie then shared his thoughts regarding the skills his classmates acquired by participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

Obviously the range in age gives us some unique opportunities to sit around and talk before and after seminars. Interacting with people in different stages of their career, and also the public speaking. I saw some of the older guys really develop a better understand the next generation and things that they may want to change. I was somewhat humbled by the people that I was surrounded by but it also challenges you. It encourages you to get busy.

**Perceptions.** Ronnie describes himself before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program as “cocky and pretty rough around the edges. It was just about me.” When reflecting about his leadership experiences before his participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Ronnie shared, “I met a lot of really great people that I still have contact with in my career.” Ronnie described himself today as, “I’m definitely more polished and more poised.” He then added, “I’m more open after LEAD to accepting the ideas of others, although they may be the opposite point of view.”

I asked Ronnie if the members of his community perceive him to be a leader and he replied:

I think that they do and I’m not sure why. I’m continually surprised at the opportunities presented me. Because I don’t always feel that I’ve earned them. I think that there are people better suited. I really do think that I try to do the best I can. I do think people must see me as a leader because of the opportunities
presented, I keep trying to prepare myself more for them and hopefully I’ll be good enough.

**Participant #6 Nancy**

*Leadership experiences and background.* Nancy grew up on a ranch in northwest Nebraska in the Sandhills. Nancy attended grades K-8 in a one room school. Nancy was very active in 4-H. After high school, Nancy went off to college. Before she could graduate from college, Nancy was asked to come back home to the ranch and become involved in its operation. Before her participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Nancy was active in a cattle breed association serving as an officer, served on the county Extension Board, and was a member of her church council. She also served as a 4-H volunteer for several years. Since her LEAD experience, Nancy has become active in a state association for a national commodity organization, coordinates recruitment efforts for a college, and serves as board member for a state-wide educational organization.

*Personal understanding of leadership.* Nancy defined leadership in this way:

> When I think of a leader I think of somebody that I want to emulate. I think they have the ethical and moral thinking that I do. They are community oriented, they are family oriented, they are goal oriented but at the same time they also don’t forget the common person and try to incorporate everybody into the goals and ideas that they have. A leader is not necessarily the person that is always at the forefront. Sometimes it’s the person that can just be the motivator and the pusher of people.

Nancy went to share the skills that a leader must have to be successful:

> I think they need to be very personable. I think people need to be able to relate to them, be a little awed by them and, and the experiences that they’ve had. They need to be able to share the hardships and the trials and tribulations that they’ve been through.

She then added how she identifies leaders:
I think it’s somebody who is confident, they have an aura about them and how they carry themselves and if you have the opportunity to interact with them they are going to want to be informed on who you are, what you do, and show a genuine interest in what you do.

**Leadership lessons learned.** Nancy then shared the leadership skills she learned while participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

One of the largest skills I learned was time management. Also the ability to adjust, you had to be flexible. Some things didn’t necessarily go the way they were planned but you know, it was ok, you did what you needed to do and moved on and at the same time there was so many differences of opinions and backgrounds and beliefs in our group and I think that was something else I learned too was to adjust to the people in the situation, in terms of how to interact.

Nancy then added:

My communication style since the program is totally different that what it was before the program and I learned over, over time that it’s a lot better to be more personable. I incorporate it even in my family life and where I work with my family. So it not only affects my family, it affects my work production, and community involvement.

**Leadership encounters.** Nancy had many leadership opportunities prior to her participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program and was satisfied with these because:

I think the greatest skill I had was that rural education. I had that one-on-one development where it was focused a lot more on you and your development as a leader and as a part of the community and I think that was the biggest step. It just got to the point where my parents made sure I was able to interact with people of an older generation and be in situations where it was important that I forget how old I actually was and act a generation or two above what I should have been. So I think my parents and the upbringing I had along with the school system that I went through had a lot to do with that.

Nancy then shared that there were some disappoints along the way:

I remember we had one on a local group and I had been involved in that organization for a period of time; we were interviewing people for a job and we hired somebody who was the wrong choice. And, I stood up for what I believed in; there was a lot of behind the door stuff that was going on. There have been cases I’ve had to stand up and say that’s wrong, that’s not something that I really want to be associated with.
Nancy then commented on her leadership activities since completing the Nebraska LEAD Program by saying, “I’ve really focused on just one or two main items instead of being, trying to do absolutely everything like I did before the program.” Recently, Nancy has been directing recruitment activities for a couple of organizations and gives credit to the success of these endeavors to, “Communication, etiquette, time management, and organizational skills were very important.”

**Benefits to classmates.** Nancy then shared her thoughts regarding the benefits her classmates received by participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

Many of my classmates were not as involved as much as I was before they joined the program. I see a lot of them running for office and stuff. I communicate with a couple of them and they seem a lot more focused and organized and it’s definitely a change from where we all were when we first started the program.

**Perceptions.** Nancy describes herself before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program, “I had a very professional persona. Not necessarily a personable one, but one that was more on a professional level which unfortunately sometimes people would classify as maybe a little stuck up.” Nancy describes herself today as: “I think satisfied, I’m very happy with where I am as a person, with my beliefs, morals, and ethics. I am very satisfied in my relationships with the people I work, my family, and where I’m at as a leader.

I asked Nancy if the members of her community perceive her to be a leader and she replied, “I hope so. I really do hope so and if not a leader, at least somebody that’s respected and informed. I would also hope that they think of me as willing to help out.”

**Participant #7 Bill**

**Leadership experiences and background.** Bill was raised on a diversified livestock farm in south central Nebraska. In high school, Bill was active in FFA where he
also served as an officer. After receiving his bachelor’s degree, Bill taught school for a few years before returning to the family farm. Before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Bill was elected for a couple of terms on the local school board. He also served an officer of the board for a few years. Bill was also a member of the Young Farmers Educational Association and served in several leadership positions. He also served on the county Extension Board and the 4-H Council. Bill served in several leadership positions for these organizations. Since participating in LEAD, Bill has had an active role in the development of a community center in the town where he lives. He is also serves as chairman of his church board.

**Personal understanding of leadership.** Bill shared his thoughts about leadership telling me, “Leadership is someone leading by example, trust, and communication.” According to Bill, leaders “Have to be open to new ideas, being a mediator between different opposing viewpoints in order to reach a consensus.” He identifies leaders when they are “enthusiastic and reliable.”

**Leadership lessons learned.** Bill shared the leadership skills he learned while participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

Working a crowd, just introducing myself, being able to get up in front of a group of and talk. I came away with a better perspective on the world issues. It kind of humbles me because there are so many outstanding people in the state and in the country and in the world, but you’re not just a small peg. LEAD put us into situations where you may not be comfortable, just through repetition of that it, you become comfortable.

**Leadership encounters.** Bill had several leadership experiences prior to his participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program and was able to be effective as leader on the local school board because, “I was able to empathize with both sides and at the end of the day still be friends with, no matter what their view points were. In a small town you
just can’t afford to be split off.” He was also involved in some community organizations and noted, “Communication was important. I did get frustrated sometimes when leadership wants to get something done, but it was hard to motivate the masses.” After his participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Bill continues to serve in several leadership roles. There were some challenges in one of the organizations that he has a leadership position in and he credits his communication skills as a key to his overall effectiveness as a leader, “I’m more comfortable talking one-on-one to people, finding out where they stand and then be a mediator between them and the ones that think differently.”

**Benefits to classmates.** Bill then discussed the benefits that the members of his LEAD received, “It was a mixed group of agribusiness and farmers. Public speaking and radio interviews for those with a farm background just like me who never had an opportunity to do that, I think they improved a lot.”

**Perceptions.** Bill described himself before his participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program as, “Not as informed, not as worldly or as aware, never looked that much outside of the United States before.” Bill describes himself today, “I’m inquisitive, confident, and better informed, especially on world matters.” Bill then shared with me a recent international travel experience, “International travel would have been too frightening to do if I hadn’t been in the LEAD program.”

I asked Bill if the members of his community perceive him to be a leader and he replied, “Evidently because I usually end up being the chairman or something of any organization. I’ve always said I don’t know if I wanted to be a member of an organization that wanted somebody like me as a chairman.”
Participant #8 Hilary

Leadership experiences and background. Hilary grew up on a ranch located in northwest Nebraska in the Sandhills. After graduating from high school, Hilary attended college, earning a bachelor’s degree. Hilary lives on a ranch in northwest Nebraska and is involved in all aspects of the ranching business. Hilary has been active in 4-H her whole life; as a member, parent, and leader. Before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Hilary had served on an advisory committee for 4-H, was elected to serve on a local school board, and was elected to serve on a policy board for an educational institution. After participating in LEAD, Hilary continues to serve on a policy board for an educational institution and has become more active in her church. She has recently learned to use social media as a method of promoting production agriculture.

Personal understanding of leadership. Hilary’s defined leadership in this way, “Leadership is an ability to inspire people to take a project or to take a risk in looking toward their future. It is encouraging others to follow you in an adventure.” She then went on to say:

The leaders that I’ve seen that are truly successful have an ability to communicate very easily with people. A leader also exhibits a certain level of professionalism that sets them apart from the group so that there is a general notation that this person is someone worth looking to for guidance. A leader is confident and adds a level of credibility to their leadership.

She summed up her comments by saying, “I think it’s really important for leaders to understand that they can do a tremendous amount with their presence, their attire and their speaking ability.”

Leadership lessons learned. Hilary shared the leadership skills she learned while participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program:
The skills that I learned in the LEAD program were slow down my thought process before I speak, so that there is more thought put into what is the opinion that I’m going to state instead of it being such a spontaneous eruption. I learned how to have presence in a room so that you are heard by those people in the room. I think one of the strongest things that the LEAD program does is have you look at your personality type and the type of personality of the ones you are working with. The understanding gained from the international study offered me such a window to the rest of the world. The impact that America has on the rest of the world is phenomenal.

**Leadership encounters.** In one of the organizations that Hilary was involved with prior to her participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program, she felt that the chairman’s organizational skills as well as overall leadership ability contributed to the success of the organization. After participating in the Nebraska LEAD Hilary shared that she continues to be involved with the 4-H program. For her it was, “Finally kind of take a little step back and a break.” However, she was elected to serve on a governing board and finds this to be satisfying because, “I have such a unique position because of where I live and what I do as a rancher as compared to those who have either been involved in education or a business.”

**Benefits to classmates.** Hilary’s thoughts regarding the skills her classmates acquired by participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

My LEAD group was very Ag producer oriented and the largest part of what I saw them gaining from this was the personality skills. There are classmates of mine that have really stepped up and are better communicators. There are those that have become even more active on local boards and state wide boards. I know that they are better speakers.

**Perceptions.** Hilary describes herself before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program, “Before participating in LEAD I feel that I was more spontaneous in responses, there wasn’t as much thought put into what I was trying to say or trying to encourage people to do.” Today, Hilary describes herself this way:
I think I’m more aware of what I’m saying. I try to put more thought into making statements. I do think it is important to speak from your heart, but do that in a more organized and thoughtful manner so that I’m making the most impact with my statement.

I asked Hilary if the members of her community perceive her to be a leader and she shared, “I believe they do. People call and ask for things because they know that it will get done.”

**Participant #9 Harry**

**Leadership experiences and background.** Harry was raised on a diversified farm in central Nebraska. He graduated from high school and then attended college where he earned a bachelor’s degree. Harry worked in another profession for several years before returning to help manage the family farm. Before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Harry had several leadership roles in the profession he was working in. After participating in LEAD, Harry has become active in several community organizations as well as taking a leadership role in community organizations and county politics.

**Personal understanding of leadership.** Harry defines leadership as:

> It is somebody who recognizes what needs to be done and is willing to be out in front of people. If you want to know if you’re a leader, look behind and see if anyone is following, it’s your ability to recognize things and step out and get in front of a cause and move the group forward.

Harry continued:

> I think in this world there’s so many ways to lead. I think a leader has to have confidence. I’m the type of person who likes to bring people together, so I think outgoing people kind of corral people better and an introverted leader does more directing behind the scenes, isn’t out front leading the group, but yet they are motivating all the other group members to go forward.

Harry described how he identifies a leader:

> I can easily see if people are following them. It’s kind of a gut instinct. I’m kind of the outgoing type, so I look for somebody that has a pleasant smile and
somebody that I would like to be around. If I wanted someone to lead a group of people to invest money I would look for a different type of leader than if I wanted somebody to lead a sales department.

**Leadership lessons learned.** Harry shared the leadership skills he learned while participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

One of the big things I came out of LEAD with is timeliness. I think a lot of people just think whoever’s time is whoever’s time. So that’s made me more critical nowadays on time issues and meetings that drag on.

Harry added the importance of relationship building:

The relationship building I saw in LEAD is an important skill. There’s people in my community that when they need to buy fuel, they call X, Y and Z and whoever has the cheapest, that’s just who they buy from. Our farm has really taken an interest and made it a goal to build relationships with the fuel guys, build relationships with chemical guys, with all of our suppliers. It’s important to us.

**Leadership encounters.** Before moving back to the family farm, Harry was employed in another career area where he served in leadership positions. He credits his effectiveness as a leader to, “I have a desire to help other people succeed and help the group succeed. I’m confident and I can work with anybody.”

After his participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Harry has become involved in politics. He has provided leadership for a conference and credits the success of it to his organizational skills and his ability to build relationships. He shared, “This type of conference had not been done before. We were able to meet and socialize, build relationships, and bounce ideas off each other. I just took the initiative.”

**Benefits to classmates.** Harry’s thoughts regarding the leadership skills his classmates acquired by participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program are:

I really saw some people change over the course of the two years as far as their interactions with each other. I think that LEAD gave them a broad perspective of the current issues facing our industry. They were given different leadership perspectives, personality training, and communications training.
**Perceptions.** Harry describes himself before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program, “Before participating in the LEAD program I was open to new ideas and I don’t know if I’m any different after. I’m just the type that thinks the world changes, be ready for it.” Harry then described himself today as, “Ready to lead, but still ready to learn.”

I asked Harry if the members of his community perceive him to be a leader and he shared, “I do lead things in the community. They see it actively being done. They see my confidence in doing things. I think when you have confidence, and you do step out and do things, I think you get seen as a leader.”

**Participant #10 Bess**

**Leadership experiences and background.** Bess was raised in northeast Nebraska and after high school attended college earning a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree. Bess and her husband operate a diversified crop and livestock farm in northeast Nebraska. Before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Bess served on her county Extension board, on many community committees, and on several school “booster” committees where she held positions of leadership. Since her LEAD participation, Bess has become a member of a state commodity grower board and continues to serve on several community, church, and school committees.

**Personal understanding of leadership.** Bess defines leadership in this way, “Leadership would be being able to understand what would be a proper response to a situation and then be willing to implement that response in a positive manner.” She then added, “Leadership to me actually means being able to see what the crux of the problem is or to see the goals clearly, then being able to direct a route to the solution or goal. According to Bess, successful leaders need to:
I think a leader needs to be open-minded. Definitely needs to be a listener, needs to be a gatherer of knowledge, be able to research and read, and then be a communicator, and then is able to take that knowledge and able to use it in a that is not self-serving.

Bess went on to say:

I personally have changed my way of identifying a leader. I would say now I look for one who is a listener and then is able to take a lot of information and once having all the information, is able to see what the real problem is, the real solution is, and is able to motivate people to positively make a change towards the solution or goal. I used to think that leadership was automatic if you were in a leadership position, if you were a president of a bank, an elected government official, and then you were an automatic leader. Through the LEAD program, I found that that doesn’t necessarily mean so. You may not have a title, but you influence people in such a way that you are a leader.

**Leadership lessons learned.** Bess shared some leadership skills she learned while participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

I think I learned tremendous skills in the LEAD program. I learned that there are certain avenues to take when pursuing change and those avenues include finding the right people with the knowledge, who can help you make changes, and knowing the proper way to approach them, and to interact with them. I used to be uncomfortable with people in higher leadership positions because I hadn’t had very much contact with them before LEAD. Now I’m very comfortable in approaching someone in a higher leadership position. Also, I was able to learn and practice communication skills to use on TV and radio.

**Leadership encounters.** Bess had several leadership experiences in her community before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program and credits her effectiveness as a leader to: “I cared about the issues.” She then went on to share why some of her leadership experiences were not satisfying, “I did not know the proper avenues for creating change, and so would not pursue change.”

Since her participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Bess remains active in community and school organizations and also has become active in a state organization. Bess shares:
I recently led a very big initiative at our high school that actually ended up involving some leaders in another community. It was controversial. A lot of people were on both sides of the issue. I took a lot of phone calls, led meetings, and the issue came to its conclusion recently. The issue that my group was pushing for did succeed. But afterwards, I thought of how much the LEAD program had prepared me for the whole process. I had received phone calls from people, from leaders in the other community pressuring me, they thought I would be intimidated by their calls and I was not intimidated. I knew how to separate the facts from the fiction. I was able to stick with the facts, even when someone was telling me the non-facts.

**Benefits to classmates.** Bess believes that her classmates benefited from their participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program in the following ways:

I would say that a lot of the same things I learned are things that they learned. The proper way to dress, proper way to act, and we all came out more polished. We all ended up more professional at the end of LEAD. Our group learned how to ask more thoughtful questions and improved our communication skills.

**Perceptions.** Before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Bess describes herself, “This sounds a little bit meek, but I suppose like a kitten that would like to get a along with people, above all else.” Bess describes herself today as, “Tiger.”

I asked Bess if the members of her community perceive her to be a leader and she shared, “After this initiative, I think so because they repeatedly asked me to front the issue. I’m also on another committee at our school, so I’m getting added responsibility because of that.”

**Participant #11 Dwight**

**Leadership experiences and background.** Dwight grew up in central Nebraska and while he was not raised on a farm, he gained experience in agriculture by working for several farmers in his community. After high school, Dwight attended college and earned a bachelor’s degree. After college he worked for a couple of years in agribusiness in another state before moving to northeast Nebraska. Before participating in the Nebraska
LEAD Program, Dwight was active in community economic development, a community/area foundation, and in his church. Since LEAD, Dwight has become very active in his profession’s trade association, has a leadership role in a community club, and has become an EMT.

**Personal understanding of leadership.** Dwight’s personal definition of leadership is:

For people to want to follow my example, not have to, but want to. One of the goals that I have through being the leader of an organization is that I want not to be needed. I want my people to be able to run the organization without me and that’s always been a goal of mine.

Dwight added that successful leaders:

Need to have happy people. Need to have people that enjoy what they do. I’ve always given my employees the right to make decisions. As long as they can make good decisions and decisions that they know that I would support, they have the right to step up to the plate and make decisions themselves. I don’t expect any of my employees to work harder than I do. I think leading by example is very important.

According to Dwight, it’s difficult to immediately identify a leader:

I’m not sure you know right away, I think it takes a little bit of time, as soon as you’re tested I think it becomes pretty evident. Anybody could claim to be a leader but, when they’re challenged that’s when it makes a difference.

**Leadership lessons learned.** Dwight shared the leadership skills he learned while participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

One of the most important was the ability to look from another perspective. I think that’s huge as it made me much more tolerant of other views, other people. The communication part of it taught me to communicate with people better and not be afraid to do that, that my thoughts and my view was important and I needed to express it. The Nebraska LEAD program broadened the horizons and I see things differently now, it’s basically just opened my eyes to a bigger world that’s out there.
Leadership encounters. Early in his career, Dwight did not have real defined leadership roles. In his present position Dwight shared, “I had to assume a leadership role there and do it without being offensive.” He discussed some ways that he assisted in the internal procedures in the organization he was working in and attributes the success of the changes made to, “I communicated that there’s a better way to do things. Showing them that there’s a better way to do things, one step at a time.” He did acknowledge that, “There was nothing that was really that big of a hurdle. There was always more good than bad.”

After participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Dwight continues to be active in many community organizations and is involved in his state trade association, serving on its executive committee. He has contributed to the successes of his state trade association by “Just providing the confidence to make those thoughts known. Being able to express myself in a way that represents my trade association and my profession well.”

Benefits to classmates. Dwight’s thoughts regarding the leadership skills his classmates acquired by participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

A lot of it has to do with and bouncing ideas off of each other. But the people that we met through the program are some of the most successful, bright people in Nebraska. They’re just a wonderful resource. I think those people feel the same way was what they gained from being together.

Dwight then mentioned communication skills, “I probably noticed it more in them than myself, just because I’m looking from the outside in, but it wasn’t a dramatic change. If I changed as much as they did, then I know I was better for it.

Perceptions. Dwight describes himself before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program as, “I hate to use the word ‘narrow-minded,’ but I looked at things more funneled than I do today. Today, Dwight describes himself as, “Much more confident,
understanding that I need to be involved, and wanting to. Understanding that these communities that we live in that are small and need people to step up to the plate and assume leadership roles.”

I asked Dwight if the members of his community perceive him to be a leader and he replied:

I sure hope so. I guess a lot of people come in and talk to me just, just asking for advice and, and wanting to bounce things off of me. The mayor comes in periodically and talks to me, even though I’m out of town, can’t vote. I think people understand the fact that the agribusiness has done very well underneath my leadership. I think that, that has a lot to do with it.

**Participant #12 Mamie**

**Leadership experiences and background.** Mamie grew up on a diversified crop and livestock farm in south central Nebraska. Mamie and her siblings were very involved with the day-to-day operation of the family farm. Mamie was very active in the county 4-H program. After graduating from high school, Mamie attended college and earned a bachelor’s degree. Mamie was active in many clubs and organizations in high school and college and served in leadership positions for most of them. After college, Mamie worked in education for a few years before changing careers and working for an agribusiness where she has been employed for several years. Before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Mamie was active in a livestock producer’s organization serving as an officer, volunteered much of her time with the Red Cross, and worked with both 4-H and FFA in her community. Since LEAD, Mamie continues to work with 4-H and FFA, serves on a state committee that promotes animal agriculture, serves on the county Extension board, county zoning board, and is also a member of her church council.
Personal understanding of leadership. Mamie defines leadership this way, “My definition of leadership is kind of a correlation of words: driven, integrity, honesty, and high sense of ethics and values.” Mamie then shared that a successful leader needs to have the following skills:

They need to possess communication skills, in all aspects including written, verbal, and electronic. I think a good leader is organized, but if they are not organized, they will find people to work with them who are and delegate those duties. I think a good leader is a good delegator and is going to surround themselves with people who skills they don’t have in order to make whatever effort or goal it is they’re trying to attain.

Mamie then explained how she identifies a leader:

I know a leader when I see one based on how they position themselves physically in the room, their body actions, and their communication actions. Sometimes it’s with their title or their role. They will have a presence and an air about them that followers typically don’t have. A person can be a leader in one situation and a follower in another situation.

Leadership lessons learned. Mamie shared the leadership skills she learned while participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

Some of the skills I learned were achieving communication with influential people, being able to contact a senator’s office or appropriate government official. Learning the network of agriculture in the state and knowing the who’s and the where’s and the when’s has been very helpful for me in countless situations. I’m better with media communication.

Mamie shared with me that because of her previous career, she had been exposed to some the content before her participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program. She added that she gained an awareness of the technical side of the food processing industry and that it has assisted her in becoming an advocate for the agricultural industry.”

Leadership encounters. She was active several organizations before her Nebraska LEAD Program participation and credits her effectiveness as a leader to
technical knowledge, a willingness to take risks and communication skills. Mamie shared, “Even if it was challenging at times, there was something to be gained from it.”

Since her participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Mamie has acquired additional leadership experiences and she credits her willingness to do the work, her enthusiasm, and her organizational skills to making these experiences most satisfying. She describes an activity she became involved after LEAD:

I’m going to say that’s the youth livestock organization because it was nonexistent, that’s probably a stretch, the kids could do stuff, but there was no organized format to anything. We have received raving compliments from other parents, thanking us for getting something going, for having activities for the kids, for getting them involved at a state and national level . . . be willing to reach out to the kids and continue urging them. So there has to be an energy level when you’re with those kids, and when you’re not with them, to keep them in the know of what’s going on.

**Benefits to classmates.** Mamie explained her thoughts regarding the benefits that her classmates received because of participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

I think our whole group got the most amazing friendships we could ever want. People within our group were very different from one another, but we were around each other long enough that we became very respectful of those differences. I think that there certain people within our group who had their eyes opened immensely. They had never been very far outside of their counties, much less their state and their country. Watching those people grow and bloom into what they’ve become, maybe they went from being a producer who may sit on a local extension board at the very most, to someone who’s willing to run for Corn Board. Wow! I mean, that’s just awesome, to see somebody grow and gain that kind of confidence.

Mamie that added that her classmates’ communication skills changed:

We had people that literally threw up because they were going to have to interview someone one-on-one. Or stand in front of the group. We did those introductions every seminar. We took turns and, and we had one gentleman who really struggled to stand in front of more than two people. He outgrew that by, midway through the first year and he does a wonderful job.
Perceptions. Mamie describes herself before her participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program as, “Random thoughts and actions.” Today, Mamie describes herself as, “Thoughtful, motivated, and efficient.” She went to explain:

I’m a lot more thoughtful about what I will put my time and energy into and how it’s going to affect my family. Formerly it was, “How much time is it going to take me away from my family?” But now, it’s more of a situation where what opportunities may it present to my family in the future? Motivated—I just am. If there’s something I want to do, I am much more motivated to do it because I’m more confident in the skills I have to get it done. Efficient—I have to be because I’ve taken on quite a few roles. The most important roles first are wife and mom. There’s a lot of stuff I try to do to make the world a better place for my family, and their friends and relatives.

Mamie believes that the members of her community perceive her to be a leader:

Because I take on all these roles! I think it’s that I’m willing to take a stand and support that stand. I’m also willing to take a project and run with it. I think most of them know with me, if they ask and I say no, it’s because I really don’t care about that project. It just has to be important to me.

Participant #13 George

Leadership experiences and background. George was raised on a diversified crop and livestock farm in south central Nebraska. Growing up he participated in the county 4-H program. He also participated in high school and college athletics. Upon graduation from college with a bachelor’s degree, he then returned to the family farm. Before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program, George was active in a county livestock producers group, Farm Bureau, served as a volunteer fireman, was a member of his church council, and was a member of a community service group. George has held leadership positions in all of these organizations. After participating in LEAD, George continues to be active in those same organizations. In addition, George has become the president of his church council and has become a member of two philanthropic organizations.
**Personal understanding of leadership.** George’s involvement in 4-H and sports influenced his thoughts on leadership. George defines leadership as, “When someone takes control and assists people to work together and hopefully for the people to get what they want done. According to George, a leader is, “Somebody that people look up to for advice. Look up to because they think the leader is doing the right thing.” He adds that a leader needs to have “Good communication skills, good public speaking skills, and a pleasant personality. It’s not hard for them to talk to people and a lot of people gravitate towards a leader.”

**Leadership lessons learned.** George was quick to respond on what he had learned through his participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

Well, one of the main things I realized is you don’t tell people what to do, you ask them to do something and you usually have better luck. Another thing is how to be a better public speaker. I also came to realize that not everybody is the same, there are a lot of different opinions and sometimes you have to compromise to get what you want done.

George shared more about the Leadership through Communication seminar that takes place at the University of Nebraska at Kearney during the first year. He discussed the activities that were introduced and how those speaking exercises were continued and practiced throughout the rest of the seminars. It was evident that public speaking was an important skill that he had acquired when he commented:

I can speak to people better. It used to be, it took me a long time to try and warm up to somebody or and talk with them. Now I just know you might as well do it right away instead of trying to put it off. I’m able get up and do it (public speaking) on the spur of the moment.

**Leadership encounters.** George shared with me that it was his informal speaking skills that assisted him in his leadership experiences before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program, “I like to talk to people, many times people would ask my opinions and
when I gave my opinion, then they said I need to run for an office. I like being out in the public.”

George also shared a frustration in regard to his leadership experiences before LEAD,

Well, a lot of times in small communities there aren’t a lot of people. It’s the same people that do the same thing over and over again and if you try and ask some people to do something they say well, you’ve got the people that have done it all the time and they need to keep doing it because they do a good job. It’s hard to get some people motivated to do things.

George shared his leadership experiences since participating in LEAD and is active in several organizations within his community. He mentioned that he was re-elected to his church council and is currently serving in his second year as its president. A goal of his church council was to recruit a few more people to join their congregation.

George has called on people in his community, inviting them to visit his church. During the interview, he said:

Before I’d hate to call people or go out and talk to them. After going through the LEAD program, I’ve learned that if you’ve got something that needs to be done, you need to do it right away. If you put it off, you might forget about it or you just won’t do it. If you do it right away, it’s fresh in your mind, it just works better.

**Benefits to classmates.** Earlier in the interview, George had identified public speaking as an important leadership skill. When I asked to George to share his thoughts on the benefits that his classmates received from participating in LEAD, he quickly answered:

Well some of the people were really shy and after they went through the LEAD program they came out of their shell. They learned how to speak better in public. Some of them did not like to speak at all in public and they do really well now.

He also said with me that many of his classmates were from rural areas and he felt that the experience of travel outside of Nebraska was beneficial to their overall development.
George believes the study/travel study seminars seemed to provide his LEAD classmates a glimpse of the world and shared:

Some of my classmates were from smaller towns like me and hadn’t been in big cities. Things like that kind of opened them up to realize there’s a lot more than just being out on the farm that affects you.

*Perceptions.* George considered himself to be “just a farm kid” before he participated in the two-year agricultural leadership development program. Describing himself today, George stated, “You can take the farmer out of the country, but you can’t take the country out of a farmer.”

While George is active in his community and has served in several leadership positions, I asked him if the members of his community perceive him as a leader. George thought for a moment and then responded:

Well, a lot of times they will come and ask my opinion on something, just for a sounding board or something. Since I’ve been through the LEAD program, they say, “What do you think?” or “Would this be a good idea?” I’d say yes or no and they don’t have to take my opinion. But, a lot of people will ask me my opinion on things. I think people know that once you’ve been through a leadership program (pause) even if you aren’t one of the officers, they will ask for your opinion.

**Participant #14 Martha**

*Leadership experiences and background.* Martha grew up on a farm in southeast Nebraska and participated in 4-H and FFA. After high school, Martha went off to college where she earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees. Martha currently works for an agribusiness that supports agriculture. During high school and college, Martha was a member of several clubs and organizations and served in various leadership positions. Before her participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Martha was a member of several work teams for her agribusiness employer. Since LEAD, Martha has served as an
officer in a professional development organization, was a conference co-chair for an annual state-wide meeting, and also serves as a member of her church council.

**Personal understanding of leadership.** Martha shared that “Leadership is the ability for a person to effectively lead a group of people that have the same goals and the same objectives.” Martha explained, “It is also crucial for a leader to first be a servant, getting into the servant leadership of serving and working with people than just facilitating, dictating, or telling them what to do. Martha emphasized by repeating that “Leaders need to be of service first to the people.”” She stated:

I think they (leaders) need to be trustworthy and responsible. They need to be very effective at working with people as far as interpersonal skills. They need to be empathetic, knowledgeable, intelligent with what it is they are working with or what it is they are trying to accomplish.

Martha then explained to me that she determines how good a leader is by the observing the followers. She says:

Noticing how effective their followers are in doing their jobs, if the followers seem to know what’s going on, are, happy, competent, and doing an effective job then I know that the leader, that person must be a good leader and must be good enough at getting the job accomplished.

**Leadership lessons learned.** During the interview, Martha shared the skills that she learned because of her participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

I think some of the important skills that I developed were to be more confident, and to be a little more assertive with things. At the seminar at Chadron, one of the lessons was on gender differences and leadership. I’d really not thought about that a whole lot, but actually helped me get some things accomplished here with my current job . . . just made me realize how to approach people that are of different gender, different age. It made me a more confident and able to accomplish those things. I think that it (LEAD) also was a good reminder for me to have to step up to the leadership role at some point in time so that things can be accomplished. It was way to help me improve my leadership skills, apply them, and network. Just some of the role models we had in our group, you know some of the people were at different levels and some were very, very effective leaders and I saw where maybe I excelled a little bit above. So it just kind of helped me gauge myself and
see what I wanted to improve. I think the knowledge I gained from the international agricultural part of the program was important. I’ve done a lot with leadership personalities and how those all relate, but it was just good to see it in more of an adult or peer group setting than it was you know in a classroom or a college setting.

**Leadership encounters.** Martha recounted that she had many leadership experiences in 4-H and FFA, in high school and college, and as a community volunteer. Before she participated in the Nebraska LEAD Program, she explained to me the skills that made her an effective leader in those situations:

I think the skills in learning of all or some of the knowledge or the purpose of those organizations helped me understand what kind of leadership role was required of me. Another thing that helped me was a speech teacher in high school that really got me out of my shell and really made a huge impact as far as helping me communicate what it is I wanted to say. The FFA was huge as far as getting me used to some different activities, making me step outside of my comfort zone and the 4-H activities as well, just trying to be a well rounded person were some of the key things. And then my profession has made me to have to learn and prepare, and work with the community in that aspect.

After her participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Martha continues to serve in several leadership roles. She credits her effectiveness to:

(It) made me realize that I am learning all this stuff but I have to apply it and I have to practice using those skills. It was really awkward the first time I went in there and was really assertive, but it’s helped me implement it and train myself to be more assertive. It’s also made me not as afraid or timid to ask questions. I’m not the most inquisitive in nature and it’s made me think about things in different view and I guess question them a little bit more rather than just thinking ok that must be the way it is. It’s made me ask more of the whys.

**Benefits to classmates.** I asked Martha to share her thoughts on how her LEAD classmates benefitted from participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program and she relied:

I think the public speaking was a really important skill for some of them as some of them just didn’t have a lot of public speaking experience. I also think that some of them benefited from the Social Issues seminar. I’m a very open minded and empathetic person, but I could tell that some of them were a little more close minded and I think that this seminar got them to think outside the box a little bit. I also think that some of the presentations that covered the basic leadership and
personality types helped some of them understand why they don’t necessarily connect as well with people. Hopefully this made them more aware of their personality type and how they need to work with other people.

**Perceptions.** In describing herself before participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Martha stated that, “I was somewhat unsure of myself and needed a little bit of a confidence booster. I was unsure of what exactly I wanted to do and the career path I was taking.” In describing herself today, Martha explained:

I am much more confident. I would also say that I am a lot more assertive, and more knowledgeable about community issues as well as state wide and international agricultural issues. I think that it has really helped me be more open minded, and to have different perspectives on things, and instead of just accepting the way things are, I am willing to step up and change things a little bit more. If there’s a meeting or something that’s not going well, I’ve been a little more assertive on trying to facilitate or change the way that the meeting has actually gone. I can tell it has improved my public speaking skills as well. I think that it is just overall been a great program for me. It’s been a great program for my family as well. I know my husband has seen a change in me. My supervisor has seen a change and said I am much more confident because of the program. I just think it’s challenged me to be more aware of issues that are going on overseas and before I maybe, you know maybe glanced over some of the things but didn’t really think about how it really impacted me and so I think it’s just, just made me realize more of the knowledge that we have to have and how things are changing globally.

I asked Martha if the members of her community perceive her to be a leader and she replied:

I think so, mostly because I make it a point to know what’s going on in the community. With my job, of serving others, I’m always trying to get out there and help others. I also think that just being visible is really important. Providing a lot of services to the community and serving on other committees within the community really helps too.

**Participant #15 Thomas**

**Leadership experiences and background.** Thomas was raised on a diversified farm in southeast Nebraska. He was active in 4-H and FFA and served as president in
both of these organizations. After high school graduation, Thomas started farming and
became active in the Pork Producers at both the county and state level. When he has time,
Thomas also works part-time at the family agribusiness. Before participating in the
Nebraska LEAD Program, Thomas served in leadership positions with the Pork
Producers. He has also served many years on the school board, serving in all the
leadership positions at one time or another. Since LEAD, Thomas remains active with the
Pork Producers, is finishing his term on the school board, and has served as board
member for a state-wide educational organization.

**Personal understanding of leadership.** Thomas said that leadership can come at
all levels, “I realized leadership can be beyond a county commissioner, state legislature,
but we need it at all levels . . . need(s) to be a listener, need to very patient.” He then
added that eye-contact and non-verbal (communication) are important to a successful
leader.

**Leadership lessons learned.** Thomas shared the leadership skills he learned
while participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

Well, the LEAD program allowed me to be able to speak in front of people. I
thought I had done a lot of that prior to the LEAD program, but it really, really
opens you up. So, the communication skills were a big one. Not being afraid to
speak to higher-up people and realizing that the local voice can be heard and does
make a difference.

Thomas continued to discuss the communication skills that he developed in the Nebraska
LEAD Program which he continues to use today, and concluded with, “When your
family tells the difference in you, by the time you’re halfway through that program, that
makes you feel pretty good that you actually are applying what you learned.” He then
added, “I’m one of those that had no college experience, and this just made up for that like you wouldn’t believe.”

**Leadership encounters.** Thomas had several experiences in leadership positions before participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program. He credits a “patient, listening personality” as helping him to be effective as a leader, but added, “there’s defeat, failure, disappointment, people that are not educated on the issue come forward and can make you feel pretty bad, feel pretty low. You still do what you feel is right.” Since his participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program, Thomas continues to be involved in many of the same leadership positions, “I’m at a time now where our sons are coming into the farming operation. Feel I’ve done better with the things I was already involved with.”

However, he has been assisting with training new school board members:

And that’s just something I’ve been involved with that has linked the experience with the new people. I don’t want to say inexperienced, but just new people on the board that really doesn’t know which way to head. And then when the new board member tells you how valuable it was, it really makes you feel good.

**Benefits to classmates.** Through his observations, Thomas believes that his classmates benefited the most in the communication training because of their participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program:

We had everything from a LEAD fellow in our class that had never spoken in front of people before to another LEAD fellow that had high school drama and speech experience, so we had top to bottom. But by the time two years was done, they were not all on the same page. That’s impossible, but it really brought them along.

He concluded with:

Everybody had their strengths and helped others along with their weaknesses; I’d say more inexperience than weaknesses. It seems like you watch how that group of 30 gels, how they all rise to the top, and you just come out of that program raring to go and do that with others that you work with, whether it’s in your occupation, a board you serve on, anything.
**Perceptions.** Thomas described himself before participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program as, “Before LEAD, I was thirsting to further my leadership skills. I had been involved in a lot of organizations and been voted chairman and president of a lot of smaller groups, but was really thirsty for more.” Thomas describes himself today as:

I’m busy and I’m going in a lot of directions. I stay stress free doing it, somehow. I take a lot on, and (am) able to handle the load. I enjoy being busy. Life goes pretty fast. I enjoy making a difference in the time that we have. I’m just a long ways from being complacent.

I asked Thomas if the members of his community perceive him to be a leader and he replied:

I feel they do. That’s not the goal, to hear that you are or think that you are, but it sure makes you smile when you can go out and make a difference and bring people up to their potential just through your own leadership.

**Summary of Emergent Themes**

This research study focused on the leadership skills and concepts learned through participation in an adult agricultural leadership program. Fifteen alumni were interviewed in 2010 over a period of two weeks regarding their perceptions of their experience while participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program. The research study participants revealed their perceptions of leadership and the leadership skills and concepts that they and their classmates learned through their participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program.

In completing the analysis of the data collected for this research study, the researcher first looked at the responses from each of the participants from the interview questions and sub-questions. The researcher performed a preliminary exploratory analysis of “exploring the data to obtain a general sense of the data” (Creswell, 2008, p. 251). Following the tradition of case study analysis, the researcher focused on topic coding in
order to interpret and categorize the data as it was being analyzed (Richards & Morse, 2007).

The researcher then sorted and aggregated the codes into categories. MAXQDA assisted the researcher in identifying related and duplicate codes. Using MAXQDA’s retrieval function, the researcher read the quotes within the categories and identified patterns and themes. The researcher then reviewed the transcripts in their entirety using MAXQDA to confirm the selected themes, making sure the selected quotes illustrate and support the selected themes.

As the transcripts were read and re-read, key words and key phrases were identified for common threads from each of the interviews. Initial themes emerged as common words and phrases were identified from each of the transcripts. The identified words and phrases were coded and the emergent themes revealed a story from study participants. Five themes were found in all transcripts and evidenced by the representative 190 quotations.

Overall, the interview data identified the leadership skills and concepts learned through participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program. Research study participants revealed commonalities in describing the leadership skills and concepts they learned as well as the leadership skills and concepts learned by their classmates.

The participants in this research study were of various ages, genders, education levels, and career orientations. Additionally, within the research study group there were varying degrees of leadership experiences. Each interview was filled with positive statements regarding the leadership skills and concepts learned by the research study participants and their classmates during participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program.
Personal understanding of leadership. The research study participants possess working definitions of leadership, describe skills that successful leaders use, and have definite thoughts on identifying leaders.

When defining leadership, the research study participants shared the following: “Leadership is not about, going out and, taking control . . . it’s more about a servant-type of leadership” (Abraham). “The ability to step forward, listen, figure out the best positions to have people in to best represent the cause” (Eleanor). “Leadership is when someone can take a group of individuals that come from all walks of life, have many different characteristics and be able to lead them into one common area successfully” (Franklin). “Leadership is someone leading by example, trust, and communication” (Bill). “To recognize things and step out and get in front of a cause and move the group forward” (Harry). “For people to want to follow my example, not have to, but want to” (Dwight). “Assists people to work together . . . for the people to get what they want done” (George). “Leadership is the ability for a person to effectively lead a group of people that have the same goals” (Martha).

In describing the skills that leaders need to have to be successful, the research study participants shared the following: “You’ve got to listen. You’ve got to keep an open mind” (Abraham). “Leaders need to be able to listen . . . have empathy and compassion” (Mary). “Needs an open mind to be able to hear different sides of issues” (Eleanor). “The ability to gain cooperation from others” (Ronnie). “I think they need to be very personable” (Nancy). “Have an ability to communicate very easily with people” (Hilary). “A leader has to have confidence” (Harry). “A leader needs to be open-minded . . . a listener, needs to be a gatherer of knowledge, be able to research and read, and then
be a communicator” (Bess). “Communication skills, is organized, a good leader is a
good delegator” (Mamie). “Good communication skills, good public speaking skills, and
a pleasant personality” (George). “Leaders need to be of service first to the people”
(Martha). “Eye-contact and non-verbal (communication) is important” (Thomas).

When responding to “how can leaders be identified,” the research study
participants shared: “Sometimes you don’t identify (a leader) right away” (Mary). “It
takes a little time to figure that out” (Abraham). “By their actions, completely by their
actions” (Franklin). “They are walking the walk . . . Leadership by example” (Eleanor).
“I think it’s somebody who is confident” (Nancy).

I used to think that leadership was automatic if you were in a leadership position . . . I found that that doesn’t necessarily mean so. You may not have a title, but you
influence people in such a way that you are a leader. (Bess)

“I’m not sure you know right away, I think it takes a little bit of time, as soon as you’re
tested I think it becomes pretty evident” (Dwight).

Based on the interviews, the research study participants have developed their own
personal understandings of leadership.

Leadership lessons learned. The leadership lessons learned during their
participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program was illustrated by Abraham when as he
shared, “Not everybody has exactly the same cookie cutter leadership skills or leadership
set. One of the things that the LEAD program showed me and taught me is the aspects of
being a servant leader and to be a leader in different situations.” For Mary it was . . . “the
very basics of just etiquette at the table so that people had a positive first experience of
you as a person.” According to Franklin, “I learned how to dress and how to officially
address people . . . a lot of it was just communications.” Eleanor added . . . “to remember
that there are always multiple sides to any issue, no matter what that issue is.” Ronnie
explained:

The LEAD program first taught me humility . . . as I looked around at the other
twenty nine LEAD fellows in my class; I thought there’s some really smart, really
successful people here. I’m not sure that I fit. I had not achieved what they had. It
was a humbling experience from that standpoint.

Nancy added that she learned, “the ability to adjust, you had to be flexible. Some things
didn’t necessarily go the way they were planned but you know, it was ok, you did what
you needed to do and moved on.” For Bill it was, “Working a crowd, just introducing
myself, being able to get up in front of a group and talk.” Hilary added, “The
understanding gained from the international study offered me such a window to the rest
of the world.” Harry learned that, “The relationship building I saw in LEAD is an
important skill. Our farm has really taken an interest and made it a goal to build
relationships.” Bess shares, “I used to be uncomfortable with people in higher leadership
positions because I hadn’t had very much contact with them before LEAD. Now I’m very
comfortable in approaching someone in a higher leadership position.” Dwight shares that
for him, “One of the most important was the ability to look from another perspective. I
think that’s huge as it made me much more tolerant to other views, other people.” Mamie
stated, “Some of the skills I learned were achieving communication with influential
people, being able to contact a senator’s office or appropriate government official.”

According to George, “one of the main things I realized is you don’t tell people what to
do, you ask them to do something and you usually have better luck.” Martha explained
that, “I think some of the important skills that I developed were to be more confident and
to be a little more assertive with things.”
Thomas shared, “Well, the LEAD program allowed me to be able to speak in front of people.” There certainly appears to be a variety of responses from the research study participants regarding the leadership skills and concepts learned through their participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program. The research study participants indicate through the interviews that their participation increased their communications skills, self-confidence, and human relations skills. Overall the findings reinforced what has already been reported in prior research by Askren, 2006; Carter and Rudd, 2000; Mirani, 1999; Abington-Cooper, 2005; and Gordon et al., 2009.

**Leadership encounters.** All of the research study participants were involved in previous leadership experiences of varying degrees before and after their participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program as evidenced in their involvement in civic organizations at local and state levels. Many of the research study participants reported they had been members of 4-H and/or FFA (Mary, Franklin, Ronnie, Nancy, Bill, Hilary, Mamie, George, Martha, and Thomas). Based on the interviews, several of the research study participants responded that they have increased their leadership experiences since participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program. Nancy, Hilary, and Thomas reported that they have decreased their leadership experiences since participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program. Overall, the research study participants indicate through the interviews that their participation in community and/or state organizations increased after their participation in an adult agricultural leadership development program. These findings also reinforced previous research by Askren (2006) who reported “a significant increase in public participation in community activities and commodity groups” (p. 7). In addition, the interviews of the research study participants indicated that while participation rates
for some alumni may stay the same, or in some cases decrease, leadership roles have increased and supports previous research by Askren (2006).

**Benefits to classmates.** To Abraham it was the communication skills that his classmates most benefitted from during their participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program as he shared, “To see them sit down and be interviewed, and to talk to a reporter, and that they might have that opportunity in a leadership position down the road, you’d see a light bulb go off.” For Mary, “I think the ability to get along even though sometimes we had differing views, to become more compassionate or empathetic, to learn to take people where they’re at, and be able to accept them for who they are.” Franklin shared, “It was public speaking without a doubt. I saw the greatest growth in public speaking” as it was for Eleanor when she said, “Public speaking would have to fall in one of the top areas of the things that were very beneficial for my classmates.” Ronnie stated, “Interacting with people in different stages of their career, and also the public speaking.” Nancy explained, “Many of my classmates were not as involved as much as I was before they joined the program. I see a lot of them running for office and stuff.” For Bill it was, “Public speaking and radio interviews for those with a farm background just like me.” Hilary explained, “There are those that have become even more active on local boards and state wide boards. I know that they are better speakers.” Harry added, “I really saw some people change over the course of the two years as far as their interactions with each other. I think that LEAD gave them a broad perspective of the current issues facing our industry.” Bess stated, “The proper way to dress, proper way to act, and we all came out more polished.” “I probably noticed it more in them than myself, just because I’m looking from the outside in . . .” was how Dwight referred to the communications skills.
learned by his classmates. Mamie shared, “I think that there certain people within our group who had their eyes opened immensely. They had never been very far outside of their counties, much less their state and their country.” According to George, “They learned how to speak better in public. Some of them did not like to speak at all in public and they do really well now” as Martha agreed, “I think the public speaking was a really important skill for some of them as some of them just didn’t have a lot of public speaking experience.” Thomas also shared that it was indeed, communications skills as, “We had everything from a LEAD fellow in our class that had never spoken in front of people before to another LEAD fellow that had high school drama and speech experience.” A common thread regarding the research study participants’ responses on how their classmates benefitted from participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program was communications skills, self-confidence, human relations skills, and increased participation in civic organizations. The findings reinforced what has already been reported in prior research conducted by Askren, 2006; Carter and Rudd, 2000; Mirani, 1999; Abington-Cooper, 2005; and Gordon et al., 2009.

**Perceptions.** This theme consisted of threads that included self-descriptions of the research study participants before their participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program and at the time of the interview, and what they believe to be their community’s perception of themselves as leaders. Based on the interviews, most of the research study participants reported rich, purposeful self-descriptions such as: Bess described herself before, “meek . . . like a kitten that would like to get along with people” and today as a, “Tiger.” Thomas describes himself before, “I was thirsting to further my leadership skills” and today as, “I enjoy making a difference in the time that we have.” Martha
describes herself before, “unsure of myself and needed a little bit of a confidence booster” and today as, “I am much more confident.” Dwight describes himself before as, “I looked at things more funneled” and today, “Much more confident, understanding that I need to be involved.” Mary describes herself before as, “passionate about agriculture” and today, “Making a difference.” Ronnie describes himself before as, “cocky and pretty rough around the edges. It was just about me” and today as, “definitely more polished and more poised.” Mamie described herself before as, “Random thoughts and actions” and today as, “Thoughtful, motivated, and efficient.” Abraham described himself before as, “slow to speak, slow to anger, and quick to listen” and today as, “I haven’t changed a whole lot, more confident in dealing with leadership situations.” Eleanor describes herself, “Before LEAD I don’t know if I was as open to all sides of issues” and today as, “Open to new opportunities.” Franklin describes himself before as, “a young, aspiring leader, energetic and ready to take on the political world” and today as, “I’m about the same, but less politically inclined.” Harry describes himself before as, “I was open to new ideas and I don’t know if I’m any different after” and today as, “Ready to lead, but still ready to learn.”

The study participants indicated they have a better understanding of themselves today as compared to before their participation in an adult agricultural leadership development program. This finding is reinforced in prior research (Askren, 2006). Based on their responses in regard to how their communities perceive them as leaders, almost all responded that they believed that the members of their communities saw them as leaders. Responses included: “I think people know that once you’ve been through a leadership program even if you aren’t one of the officers, they will ask for your opinion”
(George). “I hope so. I really do hope so and if not a leader, at least somebody that’s respected and informed” (Nancy). “I believe they do. People call and ask for things because they know that it will get done” (Hilary). “Evidently, because I usually end up being the chairman or something of any organization” (Bill). “I believe people do . . . because they’ve seen me as an integral part of some things that were good for our community” (Eleanor). “I hope so . . . because people are noticing that I must be doing something right or I must be presenting myself. I would hope that some do, but I don’t know” (Abraham). “I think they do . . . many times I’m called and asked my opinion and to see if I would be willing to work on that idea or that project” (Mary). “I do lead things in the community. They see it actively being done” (Harry). “I think so, mostly because I make it a point to know what’s going on in the community” (Martha). “I sure hope so. I guess a lot of people come in and talk to me just, just asking for advice and, and wanting to bounce things off of me” (Dwight).

A common thread regarding the research study participants’ responses on how they are perceived as leaders in their communities appears to be their participation in organizations within their communities and information sharing with others which supports the findings of Askren (2006).

**Researcher’s Reflexivity**

Creswell (2008) refers to *being reflexive* as the opportunity for the researcher to “discuss your role or position in the research study” (p. 58). As the researcher, I believe that I am in a unique position to do this as I was a member of Nebraska LEAD Group XX from 2000-2002 and have served as the current director of the Nebraska LEAD Program since September of 2007.
The first theme, *Personal Understanding of Leadership*, provided the research study participants, who are Nebraska LEAD alumni, the opportunity to define leadership in their own terms. I find it most gratifying that the research study participants mentioned such terms and phrases as: “serving others,” “stepping forward, listening, figuring out the best positions to have people in to best represent the cause,” “assisting a group to work together,” and “effectively lead a group of people that have the same goals.” This is what leadership means to them. These are their definitions. Through the interviews, the study participants shared their thoughts regarding the skills they believed a leader needs to have to be successful and included the following: “listening,” “have an open mind, empathy and compassion,” “has to care,” “gain cooperation from others,” “be aware of what’s going on,” “organizational skills,” “communications skills,” “be a delegator,” and having “confidence.” It appears study participants understand that there are several skills that a leader must have in order to be successful. The study participants shared ways that they identify leaders and responses were “all over the board” and included phrases such as: “leadership does not have to be positional,” “a leader is identified by his (her) actions,” “it takes a little time to figure that out,” and “sometimes you don’t know right away.” The responses were quite varied. It appears that the previous leadership experiences, participation in an adult agricultural leadership program, and current leadership experiences as well as outside influences such as participation in other leadership programs and level of education influenced the research study participants’ personal understandings of leadership.

The second theme, *Leadership Lessons Learned* had a very common feel for me. As I listened to the interviews and read and re-read the transcripts, I thought about the
leadership lessons that I had learned when I was a Nebraska LEAD participant. For me, it was such things as properly introducing speakers and presenters, understanding the proper protocol when meeting elected officials such as governors and congressmen, becoming informed of the issues at state, national, and international levels, being flexible and adjusting to the situation, and understanding and working with those whose personalities are different than mine. I saw things differently after participating in the Nebraska LEAD Program. I now had new perspectives and understood that there are multiple sides to issues. I gained a lot of confidence in myself and my abilities. I also believe that I gained courage as I was not afraid to deal with conflict and to take risks. Had it not been for my participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program, I am almost certain that I would not have taken the Extension Educator position in Cass County and I am certainly that I would not be the Director of the Nebraska LEAD Program.

The third theme, Leadership Encounters also had a very common feel for me. Like several of the research participants, I had been involved in 4-H and FFA. I was a 4-H member as well as a 4-H parent for several years in addition to being a UNL Extension Educator who assisted in directing a county 4-H program. Additionally, I served as a FFA advisor for several years. As I listened to the interviews and read the transcripts, I recalled a line from the 4-H creed, “I pledge . . . my hands to larger service” (UNL Extension in Lancaster County/4-H & Youth, 2010) and a line from the FFA motto, “living to serve” (National FFA Organization, 2010). As the research study participants told about their previous and current leadership experiences, a common thread among them was “service,” of giving their time and talents in order to serve others. I understood that many of the research study participants received some of their first leadership
experiences by participating in these organizations. Like many of the research study participants, I, too, had served in various leadership positions at local and state levels in areas such as 4-H and FFA, my church board of trustees and administrative council, my community’s chamber of commerce agriculture committee, and as an officer in several professional organizations. It is here, where I began to understand what effective leadership is, what worked, and what did not work in the operations and functions of these organizations.

The fourth theme, **Benefits to Classmates** resonates very clearly with me because of my observations of my classmates as well as the observations of the individuals I have had the pleasure of working with over the past few years as director of the Nebraska LEAD Program. I have witnessed firsthand the improvements made in public speaking by those have been participated in the Nebraska LEAD Program. I recall one participant that could barely put two sentences together at the first seminar during the first year and at the annual banquet and recognition ceremony at the end of the program, delivered a well-prepared, ten-minute speech. Some of the other benefits that I have observed in those who have participated in an adult agricultural leadership development program are: increased listening skills, an increased understanding of others and what is happening in their lives, an increased awareness of the issues and challenges facing our society, and an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others, and make a difference in their community, organizations, and industry. I have also witnessed first-hand the transformation from narrow-mindedness to open-mindedness in many of those who have participated in the Nebraska LEAD Program.
The fifth theme, *Perceptions* is quite interesting to me. As I reflect back on my experiences in the Nebraska LEAD Program, in describing myself before and after participation, I feel that I was pretty much the same when I started the program as when the program ended. Of course, I was a little more confident, I communicated a little better, and I had a better awareness and understanding of the issues. However, my participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program created awareness and fueled a passion in me that revolved around wanting to do more for others to help them grow and develop. I wanted to contribute more to making a positive difference in the lives of Nebraska residents. Am I perceived as a leader in my community? As many of the research study participants responded, “I hope so.” That too, is my response, “I hope so.” Similar to many of their responses, over the years, I too, have been asked my thoughts and opinions on projects and issues, have been asked to serve on various civic and professional organization governing boards, and have been nominated for job positions. Do we ever really know?

**Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the study results. By utilizing the case study tradition, Chapter Four revealed the recollections of 15 men and women who participated in the Nebraska LEAD Program between one to five years ago. The cases were presented, the procedures of coding the data were briefly described, research themes emerged, were presented and discussed, and the researcher provided reflexivity.
Chapter Five

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to identify the leadership experiences of adult agricultural leadership training program participants. The aim was to speak directly to the men and women who participated in an adult agricultural leadership development program known as the Nebraska LEAD Program.

Conclusions

The conclusions are presented using the research questions and end with the conclusions linking the interviews to the leadership theories (Sample Interview Transcript is located in Appendix I).

1. How do LEAD participants define “leadership”? The research study participants generally described leadership as someone moving a group or cause in a direction or towards a goal that has been mutually agreed upon. In defining leadership, many participants used words or phrases such as: “leading by example,” “trust,” “compromise,” “integrity,” “as a servant,” “honesty,” “vision,” “service,” and “communication.” These responses were indicative of the theme, “Personal Understanding of Leadership.”

2. What did they know about leadership before participating in LEAD? Participants found leadership experiences prior to the LEAD program to be satisfying because of their: “desire to help others,” “communication skills” (including listening), “caring about the issue or cause,” “previous leadership training” (4-H, FFA, work), “empathy and compassion for others,” “confidence,” “ability to interact and work
cooperatively with others,” “technical knowledge,” and the “leadership abilities of others.” Participants found leadership experiences prior to the LEAD program unsatisfying because of: “personality issues within the organization,” “time management,” “my level of awareness was not where it should have been to understand why I was not being as effective,” “inability to delegate or give others responsibility,” “apathy and lack of motivation of the group,” and “difficulties of dealing with change.” These responses were indicative of the theme “Leadership Encounters.”

3. What did they know about leadership after participating in LEAD? Participants learned the following about leadership because of their participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program: public speaking and communication, an understanding of servant leadership and other leadership styles, ability to present themselves in a professional way and use the proper etiquette, increased use of time management, understanding of protocol for meeting with authority figures, developing networks and building relationships, understanding of personality types and group dynamics, awareness of state, national, and international issues, ability to work cooperatively with people, implement change, and increased confidence.

Based upon observation, the research study participants believed their Nebraska LEAD program classmates benefited in the following areas: improved public speaking and communication skills, increased understanding of personality types and leadership styles, an increased awareness of the issues, increased empathy, increased participation in local and statewide organizations, and a commitment to helping others. These responses were indicative of the themes, “Leadership Lessons Learned” and “Benefits to Classmates.”
4. What are their experiences as leaders before and after participating in LEAD? Participants had varying levels of leadership experiences before and after their LEAD involvement. Based on their comments, it appears that both the number of organizations and level of leadership (regional, state, national) in these organizations have increased since their participation in the program. However, a few participants indicated they have decreased (one’s taking a break) their involvement in community organizations after LEAD in order to focus on improving current leadership roles. These responses were indicative of the theme “Leadership Encounters.”

Leadership theory linkages. Based upon the information gathered in this study, it appears that participant leadership styles may align with some of the characteristics of servant leadership and transformational leadership. Specifically, participant responses lean toward these servant leadership characteristics: listening, empathy, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, growth, stewardship, and building community (Additional information may be found in Appendix J, Elements of Leadership Theories in Participant Responses). Participant responses also lean toward the following transformational leadership characteristics: individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence (see in Appendix J). However, additional research will be necessary in order to validate these conclusions.

Recommendations

While a substantial number of adult agricultural leadership development programs have been developed over the past 30 years, a review of the literature revealed a significant lack of published research on adult agricultural leadership development programs. The studies that have been conducted on adult agricultural leadership
development programs have been mostly quantitative in nature. This research study differed allowing for a wealth of subjective evidence that is often undiscovered when the quantitative method of research is employed. It is certainly possible and important to recognize that some of the themes that emerged in this study also were impacted by influences outside the context of the Nebraska LEAD Program. Because of the qualitative tradition of study, the researcher believes it is not necessary to determine the degree to which the influence was due to participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program or due to outside influences.

The insights gained from this study will provide guidance to the members of the Nebraska Agricultural Leadership Council’s Board of Directors and the Nebraska LEAD Program director. This guidance could include articulating overall program content with experiences as well as leadership curriculum and experiences.

Based on the participants’ responses, there appears to be an increase of participation and increased levels of leadership roles by program alumni in community and state-wide organizations. Consequently, this study provides compelling evidence to sponsors that their investments are contributing to the development of agricultural leaders.

Land-Grant universities such as the University of Nebraska-Lincoln must have their educational programs grounded and guided by research. This study suggests the research underpinning component for the Nebraska LEAD Program is comprised of servant and transformational leadership. Future program revision should reflect a stronger reliance on servant and transformational leadership theories.
This research study also will benefit other state-level adult agricultural leadership development programs. It is hoped that this study will inspire these organizations to identify the leadership theory or theories that will guide their program direction.

Exploring why respondents were reluctant to talk about the future may warrant programmatic consideration.

In addition, the results of this study could provide valuable insights to those private and public organizations that develop and administer leadership programs.

**Limitations.** It was determined before the study began that an adequate target number of individuals to be interviewed was 15. Though the small number of research study participants permitted an in-depth exploration critical to the purpose of this study, the small number was undoubtedly the greatest limitation of this study.

This study was also confined to interviewing the men and women who completed the Nebraska LEAD Program from 2005 and 2009. It did not reflect the experiences of over 825 Nebraska residents who have participated in the Nebraska LEAD Program since it began in 1981.

**Implications of future research.** Qualitative research provides the opportunity to dig deep and understand the perspectives and meaning that participants attribute to their life experiences (Creswell, 2007). When pursuing the answer to a research question, the researcher has to decide which answers to probe and which to set aside for future study. Based on this study, opportunities for further research can be recommended.

While this study identified the leadership skills and concepts such as communications skills, self-confidence, and human relations skills learned by participants in an adult agriculture agricultural leadership development program, it is recommended
that a quantitative study be conducted. Additional research that can confirm or challenge the findings of this study would also add to the literature.

The researcher also recommends that future evaluations be conducted using pre-and post-program assessment instruments such as the Servant Leadership Questionnaire and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire in order to measure the impact of adult agricultural leadership development program experiences on the leadership behaviors of its participants.

Another interesting research study would be to examine alumni motivations for participating in an adult agricultural leadership development program, something of which was beyond the scope of this study.

Nearly all of the study participants spoke of their earliest leadership experiences occurring in 4-H, FFA, high school and college, and, generally, involved some type of elected position. There is potential for further exploration regarding the formative and predictive power of these early leadership experiences.

During the past 30 years, the Nebraska LEAD Program has consisted of siblings, spouses, and more recently children of those who previously participated. Is there a ripple effect associated with leadership participation that inspires and motivates those close to the participants?

This study also revealed that the participants’ leadership styles may align with some dimensions of servant leadership and transformational leadership. Based on the interviews, research study participants display the following servant leadership characteristics: listening, empathy, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, growth, stewardship, and building community and the following transformational leadership
characteristics: individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. It is recommended that a quantitative study be conducted on servant and transformational leadership to verify the results.

A final potential research study that is recommended would be a longitudinal study of an adult agricultural leadership development program. A longitudinal study would track the members of a class starting with their participation, studying and measuring the program’s short and long term impacts, and also determining if leadership perceptions and behaviors evolve with age and experiences.

Summary

Five themes emerged in this study: Personal Understanding of Leadership, Leadership Lessons Learned, Leadership Encounters, Benefits to Classmates, and Perceptions. Additionally, through the stories shared, it appears that the participants’ leadership styles may align with the dimensions of servant leadership and transformational leadership. Future research was then presented. The most important discovery made by this researcher was the meaning the participants received from their leadership experiences. They are outstanding advocates and leaders for the agricultural industry, who freely give their time and talents in service to others. It is my hope that this qualitative study will catalyze additional research that will guide adult agricultural leadership development programs.

"True leadership must be for the benefit of the followers, not to enrich the leader."

—John C. Maxwell (Trinity Western University, 2010).
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Appendix A

Historical Overview of Leadership Literature
Historical Overview of Leadership Literature

The following is a brief overview of the leadership literature. This summary provides an overview of the leadership theories, thoughts, and ideas developed proposed over time.

Lao-Tzu was an ancient Chinese philosopher of the Sixth Century B.C. Lao-Tzu, in his work, *Tao Te Ching*, believed that enlightened leadership is service and that a leader must put the well being of all above self (Lao-Tzu in Wren, 1995). According to Lao-Tzu, a leader who is selfless enhances self, and can attain this by leading in a nourishing manner without seeking credit. Lao-Tzu believed that a leader could, from watching the movements of water, learn that timing is everything and, that like water; a leader must be yielding because a leader does not push, and then followers do not resist and resent (Lao-Tzu in Wren, 1995). Like water, a leader mixes or works well with everyone (Lao-Tzu in Wren, 1995). Additionally, Lao-Tzu believed that leadership could be compared to being a facilitator as a leader’s presence may be felt, but the group often runs itself (Lao-Tzu in Wren, 1995).

Plato and Aristotle were ancient Greek philosophers, whose writings discussed several key leadership issues such as the recruitment of leaders, the role of the leader and the leader/follower relationship (Wren, 1995). Plato defined his theory of leadership in his work, *The Republic* and insists that “Philosopher-Kings” remain separate and distinct from the followers (Wren, 1995). These “Philosopher-Kings” were born to lead, as they are the most capable, that they should be identified and instructed in the art and theory of leading others. Plato believed that thinking separates the leaders from the followers, that leadership is about thinking and that philosophers are the thinkers (Wren, 1995). Aristotle
disagreed with this mentor, Plato, regarding the “Philosophy-King” leadership theory. Aristotle believed that leadership was not based on a family hierarchy, but was based on education, so that followers and kings were to be equal (Wren, 1995). According to Aristotle, there will be times when some lead and there will be times when others lead, that one must learn to follow and obey, and then one will be prepared to lead and command (Wren, 1995).

   Niccolo Machiavelli believed that a leader must utilize any means necessary to maintain individual power and is considered to be the “father” of power and influence (Machiavelli in Wren, 1995). Machiavelli in The Prince, believed that a leader must be in control of his followers and that there are two ways to lead; by law and by force and that the “end justifies the means” (Machiavelli in Wren, 1995). Machiavelli wrote that all men are not good, so the leader does not have to be good (honest), the “Prince” should appear to have good qualities, but must be able to change to the contrary (Machiavelli in Wren, 1995). According to Machiavelli, the “Prince” should say the right things, stand for the right things, speak about a vision for the future, but maybe not act on them, and a leader must be able to deceive followers if necessary (Machiavelli in Wren, 1995).

   Thomas Carlyle in On Heroes, Hero Worship, and the Heroic in History (1841) proposed “the hero as king.” Carlyle suggests that a country should find the ablest man, raise him to power, and worship him and the result will be the perfect country (Wren, 1995). During this same time frame, Leo Tolstoy’s thoughts about leadership were based on a more situational approach. In War and Peace (1863), Tolstoy stated, “rulers and generals are history’s slaves.” According to Tolstoy, the situation defines the leader as
the leader happens to be there, as they then become the symbols of the time (Wren, 1995).

W.E.B. Du Bois was the first black man to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard and was instrumental in the development of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People. In 1903, Du Bois wrote in *The Talented Tenth* that it would be the exceptional men that would save the Negro race. According to Du Bois, this “talented tenth” would be trained to help the American black community “pull itself up by its own bootstraps” (Wren, 1995). He proposed finding the most worthy ten percent of the minority, educating them and then allowing them to lift up the other ninety percent (Wren, 1995).

In the early 1900’s, Frederick W. Taylor, the founder of scientific management was able to quantify the leading of people. Taylor’s techniques were based on studies in efficiency, time, standardization, goal setting, money as a motivator, and work issues (Hofstede in Wren, 1995). Taylor’s work, considered the forerunner of Management by Objectives proposed the “piece rate” and “shovel” theories and advocated shorter working hours and more frequent rest breaks (Hofstede in Wren, 1995).

Mary Parker Follett in *The Giving of Orders* (1926) provided many ideas in regard to human relationships that are common today. Follett (1926) wrote that orders can often cause an attitude of hostility and that people obey orders if previous habit patterns are appealed to or new ones are created. Follett (1926) shares that orders do not take the place of training, that it is the situation or circumstances that should guide the leader when giving orders. Follett (1926) recommended the use of participative leadership and that people should be included in this process. Orders should be the
composite conclusion of those who give them and receive them, an integration of the people involved, and the current situation while remembering that the situation is constantly evolving (Follett, 1926).

Mohandas Gandhi, who was educated in law, dedicated his life to the achievement of a better life for the downtrodden. Gandhi did not profess to be a leader while working for the independence of India and the unity of Hindu and Muslim. Gandhi practiced “satyagraha” – truth force; or more specifically nonviolent resistance (Gandhi in Wren, 1995). Satyagraha excludes violence in thought, speech or deed as Gandhi advocated self-discipline, self-control, and self-purification, believing that intelligent public opinion is a most potent weapon (Gandhi in Wren, 1995). Gandhi stated, “follow what I stand for rather than me” (Gandhi in Wren, 1995, p. 75). Despite the fact that millions followed his leadership, he disclaimed followers (Gandhi in Wren, 1995).

Research on theories of motivation began in the early 1940’s in order to understand human behavior and to gain insight on what causes people “to move.” Abraham Maslow in *A Theory of Motivation* (1943) proposed that humans are motivated by five basic needs which are from lowest order to highest order: physiological, safety/security, love/interpersonal relationships, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow (1943) believed that humans need to satisfy their lower needs such as physiological (food, clothing, shelter) before they can move upward to meet the next need such as safety/security. According to Maslow (1943) humans are a wanting animal and will work to attain their needs. Maslow’s classic Hierarchy of Needs Theory assists leaders in understanding the motivation of their followers and provides the foundation for the motivation theories that would follow.
Max Weber in *Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (1947), maintained there to be three pure types of legitimate authority: rational grounds which is based on a bureaucratic or legal authority, traditional grounds which is based on a legacy or traditional authority, and charismatic grounds which is based on exceptional sanctity, heroism, exemplary character or charismatic authority. Weber (1947) added, “The term charisma will be applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities” (p. 48).

Douglas Murray McGregor in *The Human Side of Enterprise* (1957), proposed the X and Y Theory that relied social science to make human organizations more effective. The X Theory places reliance upon an external control of human behavior, that people are lazy, and that they must be supervised when working (McGregor, 1957). Theory Y relies heavily on individual self-control, self-direction, and that people can work independently (McGregor, 1957).

David McClelland in *That urge to achieve* (1966) described the “n Ach men” which was in contrast to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory. McClelland (1966) proposed that humans are motivated towards something, rather than as Maslow theorized in acquiring (or wanting) something. McClelland (1966) suggested that humans have three fundamental needs: the need for achievement, the need for affiliation and the need for power. McClelland (1966) also proposed that these three needs exist at the same time in varying amounts. According to McClelland (1966), the presence of achievement, affiliation and power needs can indicate how an individual will behave; allowing a leader
to recognize which need is dominant in an individual and will thus affect the way in which this individual can be motivated.

Frederick Herzberg in *One more time: How do you motivate employees* (1968) discussed his Two Factor Hygiene and Motivation theory. During his research, Herzberg found specific factors that caused employee dissatisfaction. Herzberg (1968) wrote that there are two areas, which act upon the motivation of employees—hygiene factors and motivators. Herzberg (1968) described hygiene factors as those items that cause dissatisfaction among employees. Examples of hygiene factors include job status, pay, job security, working conditions, interpersonal relationships, company policies, and administration. Herzberg (1968) described motivators which include achievement, recognition, increased job responsibility, job enrichment and new opportunities. Herzberg (1968) proposed that hygiene factors must be satisfied first and noted that improving hygiene factors will not cause an employee to become motivated to produce more or do a better job, but will reduce employee dissatisfaction. Herzberg (1968) believed that an employee that is not satisfied cannot be motivated. Herzberg (1968) also concluded that motivators when compared to hygiene factors will have a longer term effect on employee’s attitudes and while a job may have to be enriched again, this should not occur as frequently as the need to address hygiene factors.

In *An empirical test of a new theory of human needs* (1969), Clayton Alderfer revisited Maslow’s needs theory. Alderfer (1969) consolidated Maslow’s five levels of needs into three and titled his contribution to organizational behavior as the ERG Theory. Existence (E) refers to the human being’s concern with basic material motivators (Alderfer, 1969). Relatedness (R) refers to the motivation that humans have for
maintaining personal relationships (Alderfer, 1969). Growth (G) refers to a human being’s internal desire for personal development (Alderfer, 1969). Alderfer (1969) suggested that more than one need may motivate at the same time and that a lower need does not necessarily have to be met before one can move to a higher need level. Alderfer (1969) proposes that if an individual can not satisfy a higher level need, he/she may regress to increase the satisfaction of a need that he/she can easily satisfy, which is known as the frustration-regression principle. Alderfer (1969) advised that a leader must realize that a follower may have several needs to be met, and should the leader focus on only one need at a time, then the follower may not be motivated.

Robert Greenleaf launched the modern servant leadership movement in 1977 with his essay, The Servant as Leader. Greenleaf’s theory of servant leadership was based on Herman Hesse’s short novel, Journey to the East, the story of a band of men on a mythical journey who are accompanied by an apparently simple servant, Leo. Being a servant first, was Leo’s key to greatness. Greenleaf (1977) suggested the leader as a servant to others is one who is always listening, searching, and expecting to find better ways of doing things. There is a natural feeling that one wants to serve first, and then with a conscious choice brings one the aspirations to lead (Greenleaf, 1977). Greenleaf (1977) coined the terms “servant leader” and “servant leadership.” A servant leader possesses the following qualities: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, growth and building community (Greenleaf, 1977). Greenleaf subsequently published additional essays on various aspects of servant leadership.
James MacGregor Burns in *Leadership* (1978a), his descriptive research on political leaders, introduced transformational leadership. Burns (in Wren, 1995, p. 101) defined transformational leadership as a process where “leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality.” Burns (in Wren, 1995, p. 101) makes the distinction between transformational and transactional leadership by defining transactional leadership as “Such leadership (that) occurs when one person takes the initiative in making a contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things.” Burns (1978b) proposed that transformational leadership creates an important change in the lives of organizations and people.

Bernard Bass in *Leadership and performance* (1985) suggested a transformational leadership theory that was based on James MacGregor Burns’ 1978(b) initial classification of transformational and transactional leadership. Bass (1985) identified transformational leadership behavioral factors and labeled them the “Four I’s”: Individualized Consideration, Intellectual Stimulation, Inspirational Motivation, and Idealized Influence. Individualized Consideration is characterized by the transformational leader who is able to diagnose, elevate the needs and further develop each of their followers (Bass, 1985). Intellectual Stimulation is characterized by the transformational leader who stimulates their followers to view the world from new perspectives, encourages thinking and imaginations, and questioning the status quo (Bass, 1985). Inspirational Motivation is characterized by the transformational leader who is able to articulate a simple vision, provides a sense of purpose, and allows the follower to excel and take advantage of opportunities (Bass, 1985). Idealized Influence which is characterized by the transformational leader who becomes the source of motivation for
their followers, and who often functions as a role model, mentor, and coach (Bass, 1985).

Bass (1985) also identified independent factors that influenced the leader based on an exchange of either reward or punishment, or transactional leadership and include:
Contingent Rewards, Management-by-Exception Active, Management-by-Exception Passive, and Laissez-Faire Leadership. Bass’ full range model of leadership contains both transformational and transactional leadership and his model focuses on the behavioral factors previously mentioned.

Huseman, Hatfield and Miles (1987) developed the equity sensitivity construct that suggests that individuals “react in consistent but individually different ways to perceived equity and inequity because they have different preferences for equity” (p. 222). Equity sensitivity defines three primary classes of individuals: benevolents, equity sensitives, and entitleds. Benevolents are considered as “givers, entitleds are noted as ‘takers,’ and equity sensitives are denoted as those that have a general preference of equality in their input/output ratio relative to the relational partner” (Huseman et al., 1987).

Jane Howell and Bruce Avolio in *Transformational leadership, transactional leadership, locus of control, and support for innovation: Key predictors of consolidated-business-unit performance* (1993), studied transformational and transactional leadership in relationship to a locus of control and support for innovation as key predictors of unit performance. Howell and Avolio (1993) found that transformational and transactional leaders have different effects on performance, satisfaction, and effectiveness, and those effects can be positive or negative.
In 1994, Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio developed the Full Range Leadership model, assessment (Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, aka MLQ), and training program. Full Range Leadership describes a continuum of leadership skills including both transformational and transactional.

Larry Spears in *Reflections on leadership* (1995) identified ten characteristics of servant leaders in the original writings of Robert Greenleaf. The ten characteristics are: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of others, and building community. Spears (1995) emphasized the servant leader’s first priority is service over leadership.

Bernard Bass in *Is there universality in the full range model of leadership?* (1996), studied the universality of the Full Range Leadership model. Bass (1996) proposed that the full range model of leadership has some degree of universality and suggests that a leader can be high in both, low in both or a combination of either.

John E. Barbuto, Jr. in *Taking the charisma out of transformational leadership* (1997) reported that there is a difference between charismatic and transformational leadership. Barbuto (1997) suggested that a leader may be transformational without necessarily employing a charismatic style and a leader that employs a charismatic style of leadership may not be transformational. Barbuto (1997) proposes that the term “inspirational” may be more applicable than “charismatic.” Inspirational leaders conceive and articulate goals that lift people up, carry them above conflicts and unite them in their pursuit of worthy objectives (Barbuto, 1997).

Fred Luthans and Bruce Avolio (2003) defined authentic leadership as leadership from individuals who are true to themselves and through their transparency “positively
transforms or develops associates into leaders themselves” (p. 243). Kouzes and Posner (2002) in *The leadership challenge* describe authenticity as “finding one’s own voice.” In *Authentic leadership: Development and validation of a theory-based measure*, Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, and Peterson (2008) developed and tested a theory-based measure of authentic leadership using the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) which encompasses leader self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing. Self Awareness: To what degree is the leader aware of his or her strengths, limitations, how others see him or her and how the leader impacts others? Transparency: To what degree does the leader reinforce a level of openness with others that provides them with an opportunity to be forthcoming with their ideas, challenges and opinions? Ethical/Moral: To what degree does the leader set a high standard for moral and ethical conduct? Balanced Processing: To what degree does the leader solicit sufficient opinions and viewpoints prior to making important decisions? Walumbwa, et al. (2008) concluded that a positive relationship exists between authentic leadership and supervisor-rated performance.

John E. Barbuto, Jr. and Daniel W. Wheeler in *Scale development and construct clarification of servant leadership* (2006) developed subscale items to measure 11 potential dimensions of servant leadership: calling, listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, growth, and community building. Results of this study produced 5 servant leadership factors: altruistic calling, emotional healing, persuasive mapping, wisdom, and organizational stewardship; with significant relations to transformational leadership, leader-member exchange, extra effort, satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006).
Appendix B

Institutional Review Board Approval
Terence Hejny  
Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication  
330 Wenzel Ctr Eagle, NE 68547  

Susan Fritz  
Dean's Office for Agricultural Research Division  
207 ASH, UNL, 68583-0704  

IRB Number: 20100911045 EX  
Project ID: 11045  
Project Title: Leadership Skills and Concepts Learned by Participants in an Adult Agricultural Leadership Development Program  

Dear Terence,  

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as Exempt Category 2.  

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval. 09/21/2010.  
This approval is Valid Until: 09/14/2011.  

1. The approved informed consent form has been uploaded to NUgrant (file with -Approved.pdf in the file name). Please use this form to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the informed consent form, please submit the revised form to the IRB for review and approval prior to using it.  

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:  
* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which, in the opinion of the local investigator, was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;  
* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;  
* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;  
* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or  
* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.
UNL | NUgrant

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6865.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IRB

Attachments: No Data
Appendix C

Informed Consent Form
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Project:

Leadership skills and concepts learned by participants in an adult agricultural leadership development program.

Purpose of Research:

This study will assist in identifying the leadership skills and concepts learned during participation in an adult agricultural leadership program. The information discovered in this study will assist the Nebraska LEAD Program in modifying existing curriculum and/or developing new curriculum in order to better prepare its participants for future leadership positions. You must be 19 years of age or older to participate. You were invited to participate in this study because you have participated in the Nebraska LEAD Program.

Procedures:

The interview to discuss your experiences will require approximately 60 minutes of your time and you will be asked to read and sign this Informed Consent Form, allowing the interview to be audio taped. The information you share will be held in strict confidence. The interview will consist of approximately 10 questions. Questions will focus on leadership skills and concepts. The interview will take place in a location that is convenient for you. Again, the interview will be audio taped to ensure that all responses are recorded.

Risks and/or Discomforts:

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this study. In the event of any problems resulting from participation in the study, psychological treatment is available on a sliding fee schedule at the UNL Psychological Consultation Center at 402-472-2351.

Benefits:

There may be no direct benefit to you as a participant in the research; however, you may find the interview enjoyable and reminiscent of your experiences as a participant in an adult agricultural leadership development program. Additionally, the information you provide will contribute to helping improve the leadership development for those who participate in the Nebraska LEAD Program in the future.

Confidentiality:

Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not be included in the project or other documents. A pseudonym will be used in place of your name in transcripts of the interview and if any responses are cited in any other documents.

Page 1 of 2
The data will be stored in a locked drawer in the principal investigator's office and will only be seen by the investigators during the study and for not more than three years after the study is complete. Results from the study may be shared with stakeholders, funders, and faculty in an effort to meet the leadership development needs of the Nebraska LEAD Program participants. The information obtained in this study may also be published in academic journals or presented at academic meetings, but the data will be reported as aggregate data.

Compensation:

There will be no compensation for participating in this research.

Opportunity to Ask Questions:

If you have questions about this research you may call the principal investigator, Terry Hejny, at any time at 402-472-6810. You may ask questions before, or during the study, either by contacting the principal investigator at the telephone number above or by email: thejny1@unl.edu. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject that have not been answered by the principal investigator or to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Institutional Review Board at 402-472-6965.

Freedom to Withdraw:

Participation in this research project is voluntary and you are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in the research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

[Box to Check] Check if you agree to be audio recorded during the interview.

Signature of Research Participant:

Signature of Research Participant

[Signature]

Date

Name and Telephone Number of Investigator(s):

Terry Hejny, Doctoral Candidate, Principal Investigator
Office: 402-472-6810

Susan M. Fritz, Ph.D., Secondary Investigator
Office: 402-472-9559
Appendix D

Interview Protocol
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL – LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND CONCEPTS

Project: Leadership Skills and Concepts Learned by Participation in an Adult Agricultural Leadership Development Program

Interviewee: _________________________ Date & Time: ________________

Title/Job Position: __________________ Location: __________________

Pseudonym: _________________________ Interviewer: __________________

Introduction: I want to thank you for taking time to be interviewed today. What we discuss will be recorded and later transcribed. I will be asking you to review the transcription with the notes I make regarding my understanding of what you say. It is important that I am representing your views. It is also important the transcription be verbatim so that I do not paraphrase something you said with an incorrect interpretation; therefore, please be prepared to see any “uhs” or “ohs” that may be said. If I use any quotes in the final written paper, those words will not be present.

Project Overview: This study will assist in identifying the leadership skills and concepts learned during participation in an adult agricultural leadership development program (known as the Nebraska LEAD Program). The information discovered in this study will assist the Nebraska LEAD Program in modifying existing curriculum or developing new curriculum in order to better prepare its participants for future leadership positions. The information gathered from this study will also assist the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in the development of leadership studies curricula and leadership training programs, respectively. You were invited to participate in this study because you have participated in the Nebraska LEAD Program.

In this research study, I am interested in identifying the leadership skills and concepts that you learned while participating in an adult agricultural leadership development program.

Review of the Consent Form (Have them read and sign consent form if they agree to participate)

I am interested in your thoughts and ideas about leadership development. I want to know your perspective, so please feel free to discuss your views. As the interview progresses if at any point you need me to clarify something, you have a question, or you’d like to stop the interview, please let me know. Are you ready to begin?
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<tr>
<th>Counter #</th>
<th>Question #</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Would you tell me about yourself?</td>
<td>A. Probe: Where did you grow up, education, career?</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>If you were to share with me a metaphor describing you before your participation in the Nebraska LEAD Program, what would it be?</td>
<td>A. Probe: Is there an image or figure of speech that best described you before participating in the LEAD program?</td>
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</table>
| 3.       | What is your definition of leadership? | A. Probe: What does leadership mean to you?  
B. Probe: What skills does a leader need to have to be successful?  
C. Probe: How do you know a leader when you see one? |
<table>
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<th>Counter #</th>
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<td>4. Can you give me some examples of leadership experiences you had before participating in LEAD?</td>
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<td>A. Probe: What skills helped you be effective in those experiences? Why?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>B. Probe: Was there anything about these experiences that were not satisfying? Why?</td>
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<td>5. Can you describe some of the skills you learned during your time in the LEAD Program?</td>
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<td>A. Probe: What are a few skills or activities that you remember that you learned that you had not been exposed to before LEAD?</td>
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<td>B. Probe: How did you learn these skills?</td>
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<td>C. Probe: Have you practiced these skills since then? How?</td>
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<td>6. What parts of the LEAD experience do you feel was beneficial to others in your LEAD class?</td>
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<td>7. Since your participation in LEAD, what leadership experiences have you had?</td>
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<td>A. Probe: What informal leadership roles do you play in your life?</td>
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<td>B. Probe: Have you been elected or appointed to positions of leadership?</td>
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<td>C. Probe: Do others perceive you as a leader in your community? Why?</td>
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<td>D. Probe: How satisfied are you with your leadership skills and abilities? Why?</td>
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<td>8. What is the most successful recent leadership experience that you had since completing LEAD?</td>
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<td>A. Probe: What skills and behaviors contributed to your success?</td>
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<td>9. Are there other leadership skills and concepts that you would like to be able to experience or have more training on?</td>
<td>A. Probe: Can you give me an example of how this skill/these skills or training could have made a difference in a leadership outcome?</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>10. If you were to share with me a metaphor describing who you are today what would it be?</td>
<td>A. Probe: Is there an image or figure of speech that best describes you now?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11. In 2025, our world will experience widespread water shortages as well as severe climate change and by 2050, our world’s population will double; what skills and abilities will leaders need to address these changes?</td>
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Appendix E

Script for Initial Email Message – Invitation to Participate
Script for Initial Email Message – Invitation to Participate

(Today’s date)                                                                  IRB Number: 20100911045 EX

Dear (name of Nebraska LEAD Alum):

I fully understand the impact that the Nebraska LEAD Program has made in your life and that is why I am asking for your help. I am inviting you to participate in a research project intended to identify the leadership skills and concepts learned by participants in an adult agricultural leadership development program.

An interview to discuss your experiences will require approximately 60 minutes of your time and will include completion of an informed consent form. The interview will take place in a location that is convenient for you. Additionally, the interview will be audio taped to ensure that all responses are recorded. Questions will focus on leadership skills and concepts. If you are able to assist me with this research, please respond by replying to this message indicating your intention. Also, please include a telephone number; so that I may contact you to set up the date, time, and location of the interview.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this study and any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not be included in the project or other documents. A pseudonym will be used in place of your name in transcripts of the interview and if any responses are cited in any other documents. The data will be stored in a locked drawer in the primary investigator’s office and will only be seen by the investigators during the study and for three years after the study is complete. Results from the study may be shared with stakeholders, funders, and faculty in an effort to meet the leadership development needs of Nebraska LEAD Program participants. The information obtained in this study may also be published in educational journals or presented at educational meetings, but the data will be reported as aggregate data.

If you have questions about this research you may call the primary investigator at 402-472-6810. You may ask questions before, or during the study, either by calling the primary investigator at the telephone number above or by email: thejny1@unl.edu If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject that have not be answered by the primary investigator you may contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Institutional Review Board at 402-472-6965.

You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigator or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

There may be no direct benefit to you as a participant in the research; however the information you provide will contribute to helping us improve the leadership effectiveness of those who participate in the Nebraska LEAD Program.
I hope that you will consider assisting me with this research.

Sincerely,

Terry Hejny, Primary Investigator

Dr. Susan M. Fritz, Secondary Investigator
Appendix F

Telephone Script to Determine the Date, Time, and Location of the Interview
Telephone Script to Determine the Date, Time, and Location of the Interview

P.I.: Good morning (afternoon, evening, etc.), (first name of research participant):

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research project intended to identify the leadership skills and concepts learned by participants in an adult agricultural leadership development program. Do you have any questions about the research project or what is required of you as a participant?

Participant: (if they have questions, I will answer them . . . if not I will proceed)

P.I.: I’m calling you to find out your availability the week of Monday, (month, date) . . . so that we can schedule a 60 minute block of time for the completion of the informed consent form, conduct the interview and determine the location for the interview.

Participant: (their response)

P.I.: (my response will be dependent on their response) . . . this (date and time) will work for me. Can we conduct the interview at your home or would you rather we met at the (extension office, school, church, etc.)?

Participant: (their response)

P.I.: (my response will be dependent on their response) Great, I will meet you at your home on (date and time) . . . Or . . . I will contact the (extension office, school, church, etc.) and find out if there is a private room available on (date and time) and then get back to you ASAP to confirm the interview.

Participant: (their response)

P.I.: (name of research participant), I look forward to meeting with you to discuss your experiences as a participant in an adult agricultural leadership development program. At this time, do you have any questions about the research project or what is required of you as a participant?

Participant: (their response)

P.I.: The day before our scheduled interview, I will give you a courtesy call to remind you of our interview date, time and location. Should your schedule change and not allow you to participate on (date, time, and location), please call me on my cellular telephone at 402-326-3166. We will then reschedule another date, time and location.

Participant: (their response)

P.I.: (name of research participant), I look forward to meeting with you on (date, time, and location) and again, I want to thank you for assisting us in a research project intended to identify the leadership skills and concepts learned by participants in an adult agricultural leadership development program. Good bye.

Participant: (their response)
Appendix G

Transcriptionist Consent Form
Transcriptionist’s Consent Form

I, ____________________________, hereby agree that I will
(Name of transcriptionist)
maintain confidentiality of interviews that I have been contracted to transcribe for the following
research project: Discovering the leadership skills and concepts learned by participating in
an adult agricultural leadership development program. This means that I will not discuss or
share any tape-recorded or transcribed data with any individuals other than the researcher, Terry
Hejny or his supervisor, Dr. Susan Fritz. When the transcriptions are complete, I will return all
audiotapes and/or will transfer all electronic files to the researcher. Upon confirmation of receipt
of these files by the researcher, I will destroy the originals.

__________________________________________  ____________________________
(Signature of transcriptionist)                  (Date)
Appendix H

Interview Validation Form
Interview Validation Form

Title of Project: Leadership skills and concepts learned by participants in an adult agricultural leadership development program. (IRB Number 20100911045 EX)

Dear Research Participant:

Please review the attached transcript of our recent interview regarding leadership skills and concepts learned by participants in an adult agricultural leadership development program. Feel free to note all content errors that you find in order to make all the information as accurate as possible. Also, indicate your level of approval for your part in the project by placing an “X” on the appropriate statement below. Thank you.

_____ I approve of the interview transcript without reviewing it.

_____ I approve of the interview transcript without changes.

_____ I approve of the interview transcript with noted changes.

_____ I do not approve of the interview transcript.

(Signature – typing your name below constitutes your signature)

_____________________________________ (signature of research participant)

(Date – typing in today’s date constitutes the day)

_______________ Date

(Email this “form” to Terry Hejny at thejny1@unl.edu)

_____________________________________ Terry Hejny, Principal Investigator
Appendix I

Sample of Interview Transcript
I’m here this morning with Dwight. Dwight, would you tell me a little bit about yourself?

Dwight: Um, yeah. I’m originally from Nebraska. Um, I grew up in Central Nebraska. Um, I graduated from high school there then went to college here in Nebraska graduated a bachelor’s degree. Out of college I went to work in an agribusiness in another state. I met my wife there. And then she and I moved here to northeast Nebraska a couple years later and we have been here ever since (laugh).

Dwight: So we’ve been here, I’ve been here 18 years.

Super! Super! If you were to share a metaphor with me describing you before you participated in the LEAD program, what would it be?

Dwight: Umm…I’ve, I don’t know, umm…

P.I.: Or an image? Or a figure of speech? But something that would describe you before you went through the LEAD program.

Dwight: Yeah, before, ah, um, I was prob-, probably more, um, ah, I hate to use the word “narrow-minded,” but, but things, I, I looked at things more, more funneled than, than what I do today. Um, things…it, it just changed the way I look at the world, I guess. Things were more narrow.

OK. Very good! Dwight, what would be your definition of leadership?

Dwight: Um, the ability, I think, just for, for people to, to want to follow your, your example. No, not have to, but want to. And, um, I think one of the, one of the goals that I have through being the leader of a agribusiness is that I want not to be needed. I want my people to be able to do, to run the business without me and that, and that’s, that’s always been a goal of mine.

OK. So what specific skills does a leader need to have to be successful?

Dwight: Um, I think he needs to have happy people. I think he needs to have people that, um, enjoy what they do and, um, I’ve always given my employees the, the, um, the right to make decisions. And as long as they can make good decisions and decisions that they know that I would support, I mean, they, they have, they have the right to step up to the plate and make decisions themselves.

Are there any other things that a leader needs to make those followers follow?
Dwight: Umm… I think just leading, leading by example, as well. I mean, I don’t expect any of my employees to do something or, um, to work harder than I do. And, um, you know, I think leading by example is very important.

P.I.: How do you know a leader when you see one?

Dwight: Umm, I’m not sure you know right away, but I, I think it takes a little bit of time, you know, as soon as, as soon as you’re tested I think it becomes pretty evident. And so, I mean, any, anybody could, might claim to be a leader but, um, but when, when they’re challenged it’s, it’s, that’s when it makes a difference.

P.I.: OK. Can you give me some examples of leadership successes and experiences that you had before participating in LEAD?

Dwight: Umm…

P.I.: And not necessarily successes, but just leadership experiences that you’ve had.

Dwight: Uh huh. (short pause) Um, I really didn’t have lead-, you know, real defined leadership roles prior, I, I was, I, I wasn’t the president of the agribusiness . . . prior to LEAD and so, umm…

P.I.: What about during high school, college…

Dwight: Yeah.

P.I.: …any sports teams…

Dwight: One…

P.I.: …clubs?

Dwight: …there is one thing. I’ll refer back to the business here, I guess.

P.I.: OK.

Dwight: Back, back when I came here in, I was very young, mid-twenties or so and, um, and I went to work for three gentlemen, the youngest of which was in the late 50s.

P.I.: Uh huh.
Dwight: And, um, and I basically changed the way we did everything within the business when I was 25 and, um, two of the gentlemen were my peers, one was my boss.

P.I.: Uh huh.

Dwight: And we, we changed absolutely everything within the business. And when, when I came here we had one computer. Um, we weren’t analyzing our financial information the way that I thought they should have been done, and so we, we changed from, from the very get-go. And that, and that was with people that, um, were older than my dad…and so, I had to assume a leadership role there and do it without being offensive.

P.I.: Uh huh.

Dwight: And, and basically telling, you know, not, not telling but, but, um, but showing them that there’s a better way to do things.

P.I.: OK. So what skills helped you to be effective in that experience?

Dwight: Um, communication skills. I mean, there’s, ah, I think it’s, it’s a big deal simply because, um, there’s a right way and a wrong way to approach people. I mean, you can be offensive…when you change things it’s easy to be offensive, I think, especially to people that are, you know, have been, been doing it for so many years. And so I think, I think, um, you know, the way that, um, I communicated that there’s a better way to do things.

P.I.: So you, you mentioned change…

Dwight: Uh huh.

P.I.: And was there a process that you went through on that change? I mean, to get them to buy in to this new system?

Dwight: There was, and it was, it was, um, kinda one step at a time. Ah, we went from, um, our, our analysis of some of our financial information changed completely from what it was originally.

P.I.: Uh huh.

Dwight: Um, everything went to, to automation, went to computers and, um, very much more detailed than what, than what was been, being done in the past. And so, um, but yeah, it was just, ah, the, taking the step to the next, the next phase, you know. And so, um, but it was automation.
P.I.: OK. When you were going through that process, was there anything about that experience that wasn’t satisfying to you?

Dwight: Ah, that, that’s a good question. Um, I enjoyed it. I did. I mean, I was, I, I was younger and, um, but, but just the fact that, um, you know, there are outside parties that review our finances and, and proving every time that they were here…

P.I.: Uh huh.

Dwight: … it solidified the fact that what we were doing was right.

P.I.: OK.

Dwight: And so, then once that began it, it snowballed on itself.

P.I.: OK. There wasn’t any roadblocks or times when you were thinking, “Oh, man!”

Dwight: Uh huh.

P.I.: (laugh) Did you have any of those types of moments?

Dwight: We did, yeah.

P.I.: (laugh)

Dwight: (laugh) There was, yeah, um…but nothing that, that was really, um, that big of a hurdle. I mean, there was, there was always more good than, than, than bad.

P.I.: OK. Can you describe some of the, ah, skills that you learned during your time in the LEAD program?

Dwight: Yeah, ah, one of the biggest things, I think, was just the ability to, to look from another perspective. I think, I think that’s huge. Ahh, sometimes I think that we get a bit set in our ways and, especially the older you get, I think that you do. And, and, um, it made me much more tolerant of, of other, of other views, other people. Um, just different ways to look at things and, and, ah, I think that was, that was the biggest thing.

P.I.: Besides that, getting that other perspectives and so forth, was there any other skills or activities you were exposed to at LEAD that you hadn’t been before?
Dwight: The communication part of it, I think, yeah, and I know to referring back to that but…

P.I.: Uh huh.

Dwight: …but it, it taught me to, umm, communicate with people better and not be afraid to do that, you know, to, and, and that, that my thoughts and, and my view was important and I needed to express that, so…but the communication, I think, again, was really important.

P.I.: And how, how did you receive that training? What specifically happened to, to give you that skill?

Dwight: We were forced to do it. (laugh)

P.I.: (laugh)

Dwight: It, it started with the Kearney seminar …

P.I.: (laugh)

Dwight: …and, um, and I had spoken in front of people before but not to that degree and, and not of that importance. And, um, you know, and once, once that process began it, it would come easier and easier and easier…

P.I.: Uh huh.

Dwight: …to where it was, you know, not just myself, but several in my group, you just couldn’t shut us up…

P.I.: (laugh)

Dwight: …and so… (laugh)

P.I.: (laugh) So, have you, ah, so let’s look at those communication skills. Have you practiced those skills since the LEAD training?

Dwight: Well, yeah, I’m involved in, um, several, um, trade organization programs and, and, ah, I’ve taken some leadership roles within those. (sigh) And so, with that, you know, I’ve been asked to speak, um, in front of people. I’ve, I’ve visited with, ah, both of our U.S. Senators and our three representatives from Nebraska in Washington, D.C. I’ve done that, um, over the last several years, I’ve done that. And so, um, yeah, through my trade associations I’ve, I’ve, I’ve done quite a little bit of that.
P.I.: You’ve, you’ve been able to practice that then. Let’s think about your classmates as a whole. What parts of the LEAD experience do you think was beneficial to them? What did *they* get out of it?

Dwight: You know, a lot of it I think has to do with, within that working and, and bouncing ideas off of each other. Um, I’m very close to several of my classmates yet, and I’m sure you’ve heard that a lot. But the, but the people that we met through the program, um, are, are some of the most successful, bright people in Nebraska. And they’re just a wonderful resource. And I, I think those people feel the same way that I did, you know, was that they just gained from, from being together.

P.I.: Uh huh. Did you see any changes in their confidence or their public speaking, going through the program with some of them?

Dwight: I probably noticed it more in them than myself, just because I’m looking from the outside in, but, but it wasn’t a dramatic change, you know. If I changed as much as they did, then I, you know, I was better for it.

P.I.: OK. Since your participation in LEAD, you’ve talked a little bit about your involvement with your trade association…

Dwight: Uh huh.

P.I.: …and so forth, so that would be one of the things that you’ve done.

Dwight: Uh huh.

P.I.: Is there anything else that you’re involved in, as far as leadership…

Dwight: Yeah.

P.I.: …here in the community? Or at home? Or anything like that?

Dwight: Yeah. I, I’ve always been involved in the community, um, through, I was the president of the community club for several years here in town.

P.I.: Uh huh.

Dwight: And, um, and no longer but I, I was, um, I’ve become an EMT since I was in the, the LEAD program and, and involved with the ambulance…

P.I.: Uh huh.
Dwight: …here in town, but, um, most of my leadership roles have been within, um, my trade association, on their Board of Directors, I’ve been on their, um, Executive Committee, umm…

P.I.: So you get to work with William then, quite a bit?


P.I.: (laugh)

Dwight: I, I’ve been a, I was also the chairman of the government relations committee of my trade association since my LEAD program participation.

P.I.: Dwight, but, do you think others in the community perceive you as a leader?

Dwight: Um, I sure hope so.

P.I.: OK.

Dwight: I think that that is true, umm…

P.I.: Why would you think that they would perceive you as a leader?

Dwight: Well, I’ve…I don’t know. I guess a lot of people come in and talk to me just, just asking for advice and, and wanting to bounce things off of me. Um, the mayor comes in periodically and talks to me, even though I’m out of town, and can’t vote. (laugh)

P.I.: (laugh)

Dwight: And so, and so, but, um, but I, I think, I think people understand the fact that, well, I think part of it too is the fact that, you know, that the agribusiness has done very well…

P.I.: Uh huh.

Dwight: …you know, underneath, underneath my leadership. And so, I think that, that has a lot to do with it.

P.I.: Sure! How satisfied are you with your leadership skills and abilities right now?

Dwight: Probably not very. I, I think that, that they can go, you know, I think we’ve just scratched the surface. I think it’s come a long way, but I think that there’s, there’s much more out there.
P.I.: OK. Since you’ve completed LEAD, can you think of one successful leadership experience that you’ve had since then?

Dwight: Probably the, back to the trade association, um, I was one of the youngest members on their, their board, um, and, um, and a very active member. And I was not involved prior to LEAD.

P.I.: OK.

Dwight: And the trade association has been a big part of my life over the last several years.

P.I.: So what skills and behaviors that you have, have contributed to your success in your participation with the trade association?

Dwight: Ah, the communication again.

P.I.: Uh huh.

Dwight: And then just providing the confidence, you know, to, to make those, those, um, those thoughts known. Umm, and just being able to express myself in a way that, that represents my, my trade association and my, and my profession well.

P.I.: Uh huh. Are there any other leadership skills or concepts you’d like to have more training on?

Dwight: Ahh… (long pause) None that come to mind. I mean, there’s, there has to be something.

P.I.: OK.

Dwight: None, none that come to mind at this point. I’m sorry.

P.I.: That’s OK. As we move on here, if you were to share with me the metaphor that would describe you today…

Dwight: Uh huh.

P.I.: …what would that be?

Dwight: Ahh…much more confident, um, just…not, not only, you know, understanding that I, that I need to be involved but wanting to. Um, understanding that, that, um, that these communities that we live in that are, that are small like the one I live in…
P.I.: Uh huh.

Dwight: …needs people to step up to the plate and, and, um, and to assume leadership roles. I mean, our, our, our town has a thousand people in it, and the population’s not increasing. Our schools are, are basically maintaining where they’re at.

P.I.: Uh huh.

Dwight: And, ah, and that’s with people trying. And, you know, we’re, we’re trying to, to better our town, you know, increase employment and population. But, um, but it’s just hard.

P.I.: UH huh.

Dwight: You know, it’s hard to do that.

P.I.: Dwight, in 2025 our world will experience widespread water shortages as well as severe climate change, and by 2050 our world’s population will double. What specific skills and abilities will leaders need to address those changes?

Dwight: Uh huh. I think, as well as those, I mean, an-, any, any changes that are, that are to that magnitude it, it’ll take (laugh), it’ll take, um, you know, people to, with the foresight to, to understand what the, you know, what the problems are and how to, to how to best address them. And so, um, whether it’s, you know, population growth or, you know, shortages of water or food or whatever, it’ll just take people to have, um, the, the foresight to, to see what’s coming and then address it in the best way that you can.

P.I.: OK. How would they go about getting the population to understand what’s happening?

Dwight: Yeah, um, the, I mean, back to communication, I guess. Um, just making sure that, that the people understand what’s coming and, and, um, and then delivering that in a way that’s understandable for people.

P.I.: OK. Dwight, is there anything else you’d like to add about what you’ve learned during your time in the Nebraska LEAD program?

Dwight: Well, that, I’m sure you’ve heard this from everyone, but the Nebraska LEAD program, I mean, it changed my life. It really did. Not that it was, it wasn’t, it wasn’t good before, but it just broadened the horizons. I mean, yeah, I know I’ve said this too many times, but, but I see things differently now. I, I really do. And, and, um, just like our international study/travel seminar, we were in three very different countries and, um, just making you
appreciate what we have and, and, um, understanding how great this country is and, and the opportunities that are in front of us. I mean, we live in the greatest country that’s ever existed. I mean, people that are poor can, can die wealthy. And, and that wasn’t always true.

P.I.: Uh huh.

Dwight: And, um, and how blessed we are to have, have food and, and shelter and, and, um, but just a, just a…it’s basically just opened my eyes to what, what a bigger world that’s out there.

P.I.: Very good! Thank you!

Dwight: I’m glad to do it.
Appendix J

Elements of Leadership Theories in Participant Responses
### Elements of Leadership Theories in Participant Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Servant Leadership</th>
<th>Transformational Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abraham</td>
<td>“you’ve got to listen”</td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Leaders have to be able to understand others; they have to be</td>
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<td></td>
<td>empathetic to others”</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Idealized Influence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“a lot of times that’s done by example”</td>
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<td>“Things that I tried to bring back into the different organizations I</td>
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<td>was in, back into the workplace. I mean, a lot of things we did in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>LEAD directly affect how I function here in the workplace”</td>
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<td>Mary</td>
<td>“need to be able to listen”</td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I think the empathy and compassion in developing relationships”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“many times I’m called and asked my opinion”</td>
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<td>Conceptualization</td>
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<td>Franklin</td>
<td>“By their actions, completely by their actions. You can talk until</td>
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<td>Idealized Influence</td>
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<td>you are blue in the face, it means nothing. It’s all about how you</td>
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<td></td>
<td>behave and the actions that you display”.</td>
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<td>“it absolutely broadened my horizon both nationally and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>internationally”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Getting people to step out of their comfort zone.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eleanor</td>
<td>“open my eyes to how many other points of view there always may</td>
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<td></td>
<td>be on any issue”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“ability to step forward, listen”</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>“who demonstrate that they are walking the walk”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I think a leader has to care.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Quote</td>
<td>Servant Leadership</td>
<td>Transformational Leadership</td>
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<td>Ronnie</td>
<td>“I’m more open after LEAD to accepting the ideas of others, although they may be the opposite point of view”.</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>I stood up for what I believed in. There have been cases I’ve had to stand up and say that’s wrong, that’s not something that I really want to be associated with.”</td>
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<td>Idealized Influence</td>
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<td>Bill</td>
<td>“I was able to empathize with both sides”</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I’m better informed, especially on world matters”.</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hilary</td>
<td>“an ability to inspire people to take on a project”</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Inspirational Motivation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The understanding gained from the international study offered me such a window to the rest of the world. “</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>“Our farm has really taken an interest and made it a goal to build relationships”</td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I have a desire to help other people succeed and help the group succeed.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bess</td>
<td>“Definitely needs to be a listener”</td>
<td>Listening</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“You may not have a title, but you influence people in such a way that you are a leader”</td>
<td>Persuasion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I cared about the issues”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Quote</td>
<td>Servant Leadership</td>
<td>Transformational Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dwight</td>
<td>“I think leading by example is very important.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Idealized Influence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“For people to want to follow my example, not have to, but want to.”</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Idealized Influence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Nebraska LEAD program broadened the horizons and I see things differently now, it’s basically just opened my eyes to a bigger world that’s out there.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I guess a lot of people come in and talk to me just, just asking for advice and, and wanting to bounce things off of me”.</td>
<td>Conceptualization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mamie</td>
<td>“credits her effectiveness as a leader to technical knowledge, a willingness to take risks”</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“for having activities for the kids, for getting them involved at a state and national level ,be willing to reach out to the kids and continue urging them”</td>
<td>Building Community</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>“Somebody that people look up to for advice. Look up to because they think the leader is doing the right thing.”</td>
<td>Conceptualization</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“one of the main things I realized is you don’t tell people what to do, you ask them to do something and you usually have better luck”</td>
<td>Persuasion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“realize there’s a lot more than just being out on the farm that affects you”</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“They will come and ask my opinion on something, just for a sounding board or something.”</td>
<td>Conceptualization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>“very effective at working with people as far as interpersonal skills”</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“They need to be empathetic”</td>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
<td>Inspirational Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Noticing how effective their followers are in doing their jobs”</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
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<td>“knowledge or the purpose of those organizations helped me understand what kind of leadership role was required of me”</td>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
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<td>“I think that it has really helped me be more open minded, and to have different perspectives on things, and instead of just accepting the way things are I am willing to step up and change things a little bit more.”</td>
<td>Inspirational Motivation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I'm always trying to get out there and help others.”</td>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
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<td>Growth</td>
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| Thomas | “Has linked the experience with the new people. I don’t want to say inexperienced, but just new people on the board that really doesn’t know which way to head. And then when the new board member tells you how valuable it was it really makes you feel good”.

“Everybody had their strengths and helped others along with their weaknesses”

“bring people up to their potential just through your own leadership” | Stewardship                                                                                                                 | Growth             | Growth                      |